

Two Horatio Algers

By Joel Seligman

The Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans annually recognizes renowned leaders who grew out of humble beginnings to achieve success and demonstrate commitment to philanthropy and education.

In the past two years, two remarkable alumni members of our Board of Trustees have been recognized: Bob Goergen '60 and Ed Hajim '58. Bob and Ed demonstrate startling resilience, tireless work ethic, and genuine commitment to giving back to their communities.

Bob has been a trustee since 1982 and served as chairman from 1991 to 2003. He was a member of last year's class of Horatio Alger honorees. Bob says the word *Meliora* has shaped his approach to challenges because it means never being satisfied, always trying to improve. Bob persevered through harrowing childhood experiences.

He spent time in foster care while his young mother struggled to raise two boys through rocky marriages and on her own. His mother held him to a high standard and was firm that Bob do what was expected of him. Bob loved school and sports and discovered he enjoyed being a leader as a crossing guard in elementary school. His SAT scores and strong basketball prowess earned him a full scholarship to Rochester, where he was elected to the student council and served as chairman of the finance board and president of the Interfraternity Council.

Bob graduated in 1960 with a bachelor's in physics and went on to earn an MBA from the Wharton School of Business. His career has included research and development at Eastman Kodak, manufacturing at Procter & Gamble, the advertising agency McCann Erickson, and management consulting with McKinsey & Co. He is the founder, chairman, and chief executive of Blyth Inc., one of the leading marketers of candles, home fragrances, and home décor products in the world.

For five decades, Bob has played a significant role in the University's development. His support and counsel have led to consequential improvements to scholarship, teaching, research, and campus life. With his wife, Pamela, and the Goergen Foundation, Bob has contributed more than \$70



LEADING BY EXAMPLE: Trustees Bob Goergen (left) and Ed Hajim “are true embodiments of the Horatio Alger legacy ... and today are giants in the history of the University.”

million in total philanthropic commitments to many institutions.

Their contributions to Rochester have supported undergraduate programs, funded an annual award for excellence in teaching, enabled a new athletic center on campus, and facilitated interdisciplinary research. In 2007, we opened the Robert B. Goergen Hall for Biomedical Engineering and Optics, a 100,000-square-foot academic building that houses the University's Institute of Optics, the Department of Biomedical Engineering, classrooms, laboratories, and faculty offices. “I came from a dysfunctional family,” Bob says. “But ... [t]hrough my education and goal-setting personality, I achieved familial and financial success. Now I want to educate and encourage less fortunate young people so that they too can grow and reach their full potential.”

Our Board Chairman Ed Hajim is among the individuals who will receive the Horatio Alger Award this year.

Ed traveled a long journey through personal hardship to where he is today, spending time in foster care, in an orphanage, and deprived of any reliable parental involvement for many years.

Through his own initiative, Ed qualified for a Naval ROTC scholarship that made it possible for him to attend college. He chose Rochester and enrolled in 1954 in what became his “first real home.” He earned a BS in chemical engineering in 1958, and subsequently earned an MBA degree with

distinction from Harvard Business School in 1964.

Throughout a highly successful career in investment management and financial services, Ed has generously committed time and resources to a variety of leadership positions. Together with his wife, Barbara, and the Hajim Family Foundation, Ed has provided financial support to a variety of charities, including education, health sciences and health care, arts and culture, conservation and preservation, and recreation.

Ed became chairman of the Board of Trustees in 2008, and soon after made a transformational gift commitment of \$30 million to the University—the largest single donation in the University's history—in support of engineering and applied sciences. This was during the tumultuous 2008 economic recession. To honor this extraordinary support, in 2009 the University dedicated the Edmund A. Hajim School of Engineering & Applied Sciences. Ed has provided more than 200 scholarships to deserving students at Rochester, Harvard Business School, the University of Vermont, the University of Denver, the University of San Diego, Westchester Community College, the Brunswick School, and Middlesex School.

As true embodiments of the Horatio Alger legacy, Ed and Bob overcame significant obstacles in their early lives. They are today giants in the history of the University of Rochester. **R**