Back when Arthur Godfrey was actually wearing bell bottomed trousers instead of just singing about them—back in his Navy days—the future "Huckleberry Finn of radio" decided he wanted to be more than an ordinary seaman.

But just like the real Huck Finn, Godfrey was short on mathematics. A higher rating called for a good helping of geometry and trigonometry. So Arthur enrolled for a course in math with a famous correspondence school at Scranton, Pa. It was a one year course, but Godfrey mastered it in six weeks. He got his rating, all right, and he's been climbing the success ladder ever since.

Every so often on the air Godfrey harks back to those days and reminisces about his mail-order education with "dear old Alma Mater down in Scranton." That's how he fondly describes the fabulous 60-year-old institution known throughout the globe as International Correspondence Schools—"Alma Mater" to nearly five million Americans and to another million people all over the world.

Arthur Godfrey is just one of the members of what the 400-man faculty at I. C. S. likes to call, "The Bootstrap Brigade."—famous men whose lives are a living proof that the United States is still the great land of individual opportunity. Like John Garand, inventor of the famous rifle so familiar to millions of GI's. Young Garand was a 12-year-old floor sweeper in a spinning mill when he invented a way to pain bobbins by machinery instead of by hand. His boss gave him a raise, and a few years later Garand invested that extra money in a course in engineering with I. C. S.

Prominent names in this "Up By His Own Bootstraps" Battalion read like a Blue Book of American industry. Eddie Rickenbacker and Jesse G. Vincent, Packard executive and designer of the famous Liberty motor of World War I, all I. C. S. "schoolmates." When the National Association of Manufacturers awarded Modern Pioneer medals to the 572 men who had made the greatest contributions to society in the past generation, it discovered that 59 of them were members of the I. C. S. "Bootstrap Brigade."

"They get all of the credit," says tall, dignified Admiral George S. Bryan, now dean of the I. C. S. faculty. "I. C. S. did not educate these men. They educated themselves It was their ambition and their get-up-and-go that did it. They studied with us because they needed study materials and I. C. S. just happened to be there. If there had been no I. C. S. they'd have found some other way."

But the story of how this educational empire "just happened to be there" is a bootstrap history in itself. Back in the 1880's a Pennsylvania newspaper editor named Thomas J. Foster was shocked by the growing number of coal mining accidents. He started a quiz column to teach mining safety. So many miners responded that he started a separate school, teaching a few courses in coal mining techniques by mail. (Philip Murray, president of the C. I. O., was an I. C. S. mining student when he was a young man.)

Mr. Foster really started something. Today I. C. S. teaches the world from school buildings in London, Madrid, Cape Town, Buenos Aires, Bombay and other faraway cities. The 2,000 subjects that make up its 400-course curriculum are printed in English and Spanish, and help spread the American gospel of self-education from the Yellowstone to the Yangtze; from Brooklyn to Borneo.