Class of 1953

H. Ross Perot has known the meaning of leadership and hard work from an early age. Growing up in Texarkana, Texas, Perot held various jobs throughout his childhood, including breaking horses and buying and selling garden seed, bridles, saddles, horses and calves. He joined the Boy Scouts of America and within 15 months became an Eagle Scout. Perot continued to hone his leadership skills while at the Naval Academy, serving as class president his second and first class years and developing the Honor Code that remains in place today. He served as first battalion commander during his first class year and chairman of the Honor Committee.

At graduation, Perot was selected as one of the 15 midshipmen who contributed the most to the development of leadership and example, an award that was presented by Admiral Turner C. Joy, '16. Perot served four years a sea on a destroyer and aircraft carrier. He was honorably discharged in 1957, shortly after marrying Margot Birmingham. After the couple settled in Dallas, Perot joined IBM as a salesman in the Data Processing Division.

In 1962, with a $1,000 loan from his wife, Perot formed Electronic Data Systems (EDS), as a one-man data processing corporation. Over the next 22 years, EDS became one of the world's largest technology service firms, a multi-billion corporation with more than 70,000 employees. After selling EDS, he formed Perot Systems Corporation in 1988, a computer services company, helping to take the public in 1999. Today, Perot serves as the chairman emeritus of Perot Systems, which now has annual worldwide revenues of more than 1.77 billion.

Although Perot's business success is unprecedented, it is his dedication to his country and his humanitarian spirit that sets him apart. In 1969, he spearheaded and funded a three-year campaign to end the brutal treatment of American prisoners of war in Southeast Asia. For these efforts, Perot was awarded the Medal for Distinguished Public Service, the highest civilian award given by the Department of Defense. Most notable is Perot's organization of a successful rescue mission when two of his EDS employees were taken hostage by the Iranian government in 1979. Ross organized and directed the rescue mission resulting in the EDS employees and the entire team returning without injury.

Perot's philanthropy cannot go unnoted. He has worked with the Pentagon for years to provide the finest doctors in our nation to treat severely wounded soldiers. Through the Perot Foundation, he has contributed more than $200 million to worthwhile causes. He has also been extremely generous to his alma mater, providing funding for many major renovations such as Dahlgren Hall, Smoke Hall, Memorial Hall, Mahan Hall and the Armel-Leftwich Visitors Center. As well, Perot served as chairman of the Naval Academy Board of Visitors in 1970, appointed by President Richard Nixon.

Perot's most meaningful accomplishment is his family – his wonderful wife Margot, five children and 15 perfect grandchildren.