

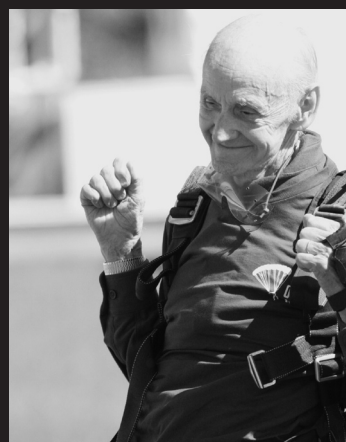
# FREEDOM

TO DREAM

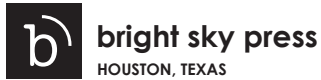
# COURAGE

TO ACT

JOHN DEMERS AND PAIGE DAWSON



*The First Nine Decades of C. Jackson Grayson*



2365 Rice Blvd., Suite 202  
Houston, Texas 77005

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## PREFACE

**I** FIND MYSELF EMPATHETIC TO MICHEL DE Montaigne, who wrote his autobiography about 400 years ago in Bordeaux, France. He had studied law and served for thirteen years as a magistrate in the Bordeaux parliament. But he became tired of intrigues of law and politics and retired to his medieval chateau to answer the age-old riddles *Who am I? What do I know? What should I do?* He considered himself an “unpremeditated philosopher,” writing continuously for many years and producing a tome of 1200 pages. He wrote near the end of it: “I hope death finds me still planting cabbages.”

In one important way we are alike. His philosophy was that a person can master events by mastering his or her attitude toward them. Amen. Yet in many other ways we differ. First, I don’t like cabbages. Second, I choose not to retire and write an autobiography, but to never retire and to invite others (John DeMers and Paige Dawson) to ask the same questions. Based on what they see, and hear, I want them to give me *their* answer to these questions. I’m looking forward to reading what they have to say.

In the meantime, I’m not going to stop planting and implementing ideas. Right now, I’m planning to transform the entire US public education system. Over to you, John and Paige. And please—not 1200 pages!

*Jack*



# INTRODUCTION

**I**N CELEBRATING HIS NINETIETH BIRTHDAY, Dr. Charles Jackson “Jack” Grayson looks to his great-great-great-uncle for a certain kind of inspiration.

Hailing from a tiny rural bend in a north Louisiana road called Fort Necessity, Andrew Jackson Grayson must have taken his name seriously, compiling a list of risk-taking firsts that rivals those of his namesake, the great American hero and president. This Grayson traveled beyond the limits of nineteenth century civilization in the 1840s, west to California and south into Mexico, painting birds and other wildlife that Americans along the East Coast had never seen before. These works can still be viewed today at the University of California, Berkeley, the artistic legacy of a man widely admired as “The Audubon of the West.”

Through important periods of his life, Andrew Jackson Grayson organized wagon trains that left barely-tamed outposts like St. Louis to cross uncharted expanses on the way to California. At one point, with winter coming on, Grayson chose a southern route to the Pacific, survived the hard journey and prospered buying real estate in San Francisco, while another group chose to head north and cross the snowy Sierra mountain passes in hopes of a shortcut. Tragically, few members of the northern group, the Donner party, survived to enjoy the rewards of their perseverance and sacrifice.

Today, at an age when most people are devoted to golf or even

less active retirements, Jack Grayson works to follow in his ancestor's footsteps. He goes into the office every day to show Americans (and others around an increasingly connected world) things they've never seen before. He still tries, especially in terms of business productivity, to help people, metaphorically, to prosper in Gold Rush San Francisco rather than perish in the snowy Sierras. Given the daunting unknowns facing American business in the twenty-first century, he is still very much organizing wagon trains across uncharted territory.

Jack believes in freedom, but not the kind that's easy, cheap, empty or entitled. As he is a three-year Navy veteran of the South Pacific during World War II, really, how could it be? In fact, if you listen long enough, you realize he uses the words "freedom" and "dream" frequently—sometimes in the same sentence—and a profound relationship between them is implied. To Jack Grayson, the greatest gift this country has given both the world and him is the freedom to dream and act to achieve personal dreams. When such freedom is allowed to flourish, Jack believes, there is no challenge too difficult to overcome, no adversary too powerful to confront. Dreaming and acting toward a better time, a better way and a better world is what freedom empowers. To Jack, it's what freedom *does*.

For anyone who figures a man with so much success in business would have to be serious, a man with so much success in government would have to be somber and a man with so much success in academia would have to be boring, meeting Jack Grayson is a shock. He seems, at any moment, both tremendously alive and irresistibly playful, giving himself over to quiet laughter at any good story—whether his own, a longtime friend's or a complete stranger's. Though he did once hand down his own set of laws, Jack seems less excited when he gets to tell someone a Great Truth than when that person suddenly verbalizes it. Only then does Jack nod gently, the ultimate satisfied smile spreading across his face. He sees himself as a lifelong teacher, which means that the only thing he really has to wake up and do each day is *learn*.

After earning a bachelor's degree from Tulane University, a

master's from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania and a doctorate from Harvard Business School, and after serving as a professor on four esteemed campuses and business dean on two of them, Jack has read more than his share of books. But what's most striking is how little of what he knows seems academic, literary or the least bit second-hand. Beginning on the same hard-scrabble north Louisiana farm that gave the world his great-great-great-uncle, Jack has pulled together a resume that's as quirky as it is long. How many certified public accountants, for instance, spent time as a reporter for a daily newspaper? How many newspaper reporters spent time as an FBI agent? Or as an importer-exporter? Or as a private pilot? And really, how many veterans of such diverse endeavors find themselves on the boards of multinational corporations or appointed to the Cabinet by the President of the United States?

Many who know Jack would agree that his wisdom comes not only from the many things he knows but also from the many things he's done. The latter shapes the former, it seems, and opens the door to no small number of highly entertaining yarns.

Take, for instance, the time when Jack was a young reporter for the *Item* in New Orleans. He wrote his first-ever news story about a murder and his editor kept sending it back, demanding a shorter and shorter lede, or opening sentence. Becoming frustrated, even though he'd never written a single word for a newspaper before, Jack decided to give his editor precisely that: a single word. "Dead," the cub reporter pecked out, then hit the typewriter's carriage return to add a short second paragraph: "That's what the man was when the police found him."

Or the time George Shultz, who served as President Nixon's Secretary of State and played many other roles in the White House, asked Jack to be the nation's only director of price controls, a job he'd later describe in a book as "an eclectic mixture of economics, power, pressure and politics." Once Jack heard the job description he replied, "But I don't *believe* in price controls." A shrewd judge of both people and politics, Shultz thought for a moment and then



smiled. “Exactly,” he said. “That’s why I want you to run them.”

Jack’s work in terms of business innovations, methodologies, awards and recognition has been well-documented over the decades. In 1990, *Business Week* said of him, “Few, if any, individual Americans have done more during the last 20 years to shape the country’s economic future for the better.” The same could be said for the twenty-plus years that have followed the article.

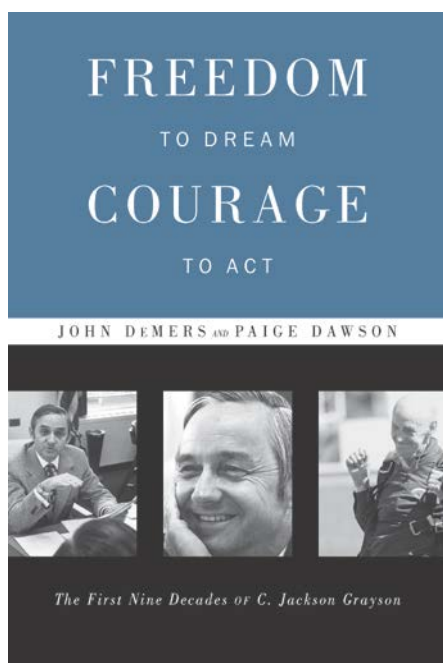
“The journey begins where you are,” Jack often tells visitors to his own egalitarian, low-walled cubicle among six-dozen others at the American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC) in Houston, a nonprofit benchmarking, best practices and knowledge management organization he founded shortly after his White House experience. Speaking these words, Jack aspires to sound hopeful, reassuring—even when the guidance he ends up giving to companies, cities, states, nations and, increasingly, education systems, may seem traumatic, verging on the surgical. That’s because Jack actually *is* hopeful, actually *is* reassuring. He believes in the ability of human beings, individually but particularly working as a team (thus the low walls at APQC) to get very large things done in real time.

To know and understand Jack Grayson, however, it isn’t enough to begin where *he* is now, as pleasant a pastime as that may be. You have to peel away nearly nine decades of living and working, moving back into an earlier century and, to include Andrew Jackson Grayson, perhaps the century before that. You have to journey backwards, slipping past people who are no more and places that are no longer the same. You have to start at the beginning.

**BE INSPIRED. ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY.**

**From Louisiana Farm Boy, Navy Vet, Reporter and Business School Dean to Presidential Advisor, Founder of APQC and Co-Founder of The Houstonian, Jack Grayson Has a Story to Tell, America Should Listen**

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Jack Grayson has been a tireless advocate of quality and process improvement for over half a century and introduced the world to the concepts of best practices and benchmarking. This biography chronicles Jack's journey and captures the passion and essence of this remarkable, beloved man—still hard at work at 91 as he works to transform our US education system.

His vision and leadership have directly impacted thousands of organizations globally in his roles as:

- founder and executive chairman of the American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC),
- co-founder of The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa,
- creator of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award,
- a member of President Nixon's cabinet as the Chairman of the US Price Commission, and
- dean of business schools at Tulane and Southern Methodist University.

Going far beyond the boundaries of his business resume, however, Grayson formed his point-of-view through experiences as a farmer in Fort Necessity, Louisiana, a newspaper reporter, an FBI agent and a private pilot as well as a husband and father. He served the US Navy as a gunnery officer in the South Pacific during WWII, lived in Paris as a writer and lost his heart to a geisha. Throughout his colorful endeavors, Grayson's ninety-plus years are most notable for their reflection of his philosophy of freedom.

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“What a marvelously wonderful life! Jack’s book was as much an inspiration upon reading as knowing him for over twenty years and living within his dream, while watching him stimulate others to action. As one who has been stimulated to act by Jack, I can vouch that his dreaming is contagious and creates in others the desire to be a better human being. Thank you for being Jack Grayson!”

– **GREGORY H. WATSON**

*Past Chairman, American Society for Quality*

*Past Chairman, International Academy for Quality*

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“*Freedom to Dream, Courage to Act: The First Nine Decades of C. Jackson Grayson* offers a fascinating insight into one of the most creative people I have ever known. Having worked closely with Jack Grayson from 1968-1975 and observed his relentless pursuit to change our country through improvements in our education system and our economy, I have no doubt that he will long be remembered as one of the outstanding thought leaders of our time. Never content with the status quo, this academic gypsy, entrepreneur, author, public servant and patriot has pushed the boundaries of creative thought and action at every stage of his professional career. Every organization with which he has worked and the people within those organizations are better for his having passed their way. I was one of those whose life was changed forever as a result of knowing and working with Jack. This biography provides a glimpse at this remarkable man, his dreams and his journey. As he has always been fond of saying: ‘Things don’t just happen; someone has to make it happen.’ For the first 90 years of his life...Jack did! And, he’s still going strong! I can’t wait for the next chapter!”

– **BOBBY B. LYLE**

*Founder*

*Lyco Holdings Incorporated*

“Jack Grayson is the epitome of life-long learning. Over the years I have been collaborating with Jack, I had heard snippets of many of his learning experiences described in the book. It was a real delight to get the ‘full story’ in the biography. Jack Grayson has made and continues to make significant contributions in business, education and other fields. *Freedom to Dream, Courage to Act* provides a shining example of how to lead a full and rewarding life, and I highly recommend the book as an excellent read to gain insights for excellent leadership and life skills.”

– **TERRY HOLLIDAY, Ph.D.**  
*Commissioner of Education*  
*Commonwealth of Kentucky*

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“Having known Jack Grayson for over 40 years, I never cease to be amazed by his knowledge, his productivity, enthusiasm and desire to change the business world. I am convinced that much of this has been accomplished by his dedication to his personal health and fitness programs. He is one of the few people I have known who have actually ‘grown healthier as they have grown older, and not the reverse.’”

– **KENNETH H. COOPER, M.D., M.P.H.**  
*Founder and Chairman*  
*Cooper Aerobics Center, Dallas, Texas*

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“In this age of discussing why you CAN’T do something, it is delightful to follow the life and multiple careers of a person who seeks out problems and gets them solved. In founding and growing APQC, Jack led his employees to the ideas and authority to make the needed difference, but we always knew in reaching out for the innovative (and perhaps riskier) solution, Jack would be there at crunch time with more ideas. Let’s hope for the sake of the country that his recent education initiative turns out to be his most successful of all.”

– **CARL G. THOR**  
*Owner/Artist, JarrettThor Fine Arts*  
*Former President and Director of Measurement, APQC*  
*Member, Board of Directors, APQC*

“Jack Grayson is a truly great American icon whose love of country and his fellow man drives his innovative and restless spirit to constantly strive to improve the human condition not only in the United States but throughout the world. To Jack Grayson, the greatest gift this country has given both the world and him is the freedom to dream and act to achieve personal dreams. With that twinkle in his eye and smile on his face, Jack has given that same gift to so many, for so many years and through his own actions inspired them to have the courage to succeed. Knowing Jack personally, working with him, learning from him, being inspired by him and being able to refer to him as a friend and colleague, is a gift that I will cherish forever. The book is an extraordinary treatise about one of the truly great individuals of our time who helped shape the annals of history by teaching others to embrace the *Freedom to Dream* and the *Courage to Act*.”

– **MICHAEL P. PERICH**

*Friend and Colleague*

*Systemwide Coordinator Continuous Improvement*

*Montgomery County Public Schools*

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“Few individuals have accomplished more, or been as effective, in changing the direction of the free enterprise system in fundamental and lasting ways than Jack Grayson. Certainly no one has more dramatically raised the level of awareness of productivity and quality or restored American businesses and education better. I have been fortunate to share part of this remarkable journey with him and experience his magic and ability to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit in others.”

– **LISA HIGGINS**

*President and COO*

*APQC*

“To meet Jack Grayson once is to be inspired by his optimism, vision and energy. This tale of a remarkable life will inspire anyone to dream. But more importantly to dare... You only have to meet Jack Grayson once to know he’s a remarkable man. He fills a room with new possibilities and the courage to dream. I can only wonder what new mountain Jack will climb next. If ever you feel this world holds no new expeditions, read this book. Jack forged new paths against much more formidable obstacles than lack of oxygen. And delightfully he took many of us along those journeys. Jack Grayson is one of America’s great orchestrators. A man of vision, surely, but a man with the ability to inspire others to join doubtful journeys too crucial to leave unexplored. Jack Grayson’s life is a gift and gives us all good reason to dream, to gather courage and be grateful for our freedom to act. This account of his life makes that gift available to anyone who needs inspiration to embark on a journey against the odds. A delightfully inspiring life...of challenge against great odds and of vision, risk, determination and reward.”

– **PAUL E. BORAWSKI**  
*CEO (Retired)*  
*American Society for Quality*

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“John DeMers and Paige Dawson’s biography of C. Jackson Grayson is a fascinating read. The authors render a very honest, objective story of the first nine decades of Jack Grayson’s amazing life. It is a wonderful portrayal inclusive of Jack’s feelings, beliefs, behavior and rationale for his actions relative to the particular time period. The details of his diverse life coupled with the obvious strength of his character will capture and hold the interest of any reader. Despite the incredible variety of Jack’s experiences, a unifying theme pervades the book. Jack Grayson is a pioneer driven by dreams which he couples with determination, persistence, ingenuity and action. This book delivers his visions and the steps he has taken to make them reality. The wisdom imparted from this biography will empower anyone’s life. As Jack says, ‘enough of the past; your journey begins now.’”

– **BRADLEY F. BALE, M.D.**  
*Medical Director, Heart Health Program*  
*Grace Clinic*

“For more than three decades now I’ve been privileged to join the adventure and witness the energy and spirit that is Jack Grayson, both professionally and personally. At 90, Jack is still out to change the world and having a blast doing it, as for him there is no distinction between work and play—it’s all play. Before I met him, I had only read about people like Jack. Mischievous and fearless—even skydiving at age 90 his blood pressure didn’t rise—smart, tireless and driven, Jack is a force of nature (a natural phenomenon if you will) out to transform the way we work and learn. And, as you’ll see, he has done and continues to break new ground for individuals, business, government, education and nonprofit entities. He never gives up, never accepts the word ‘no’ and never thinks ‘inside the box.’ While it’s hard to believe that one man could achieve so much and make such an impact on how we think, manage and invent the future, Jack (aka Mr. Charisma) will inspire you to do the same. While this book focuses chiefly on his zest for business aspects, he exhibits equal energy in pursuits for family, travel, health and laughter. Life with Jack has been a heck of a ride—sweet and exciting always, scary sometimes, boring never.”

– **CARLA O’DELL**  
*CEO, APQC*  
*and Wife of Jack Grayson*