

UNCOMMON HERO

THE JOHN SEAGRAVES STORY

DAVID SEAGRAVES



Oxnard

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DEDICATION

To Dad,
who found his passion
and shared it with the world.

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And thank you to my supporters who have purchased and/or promoted this book. May you, the reader, enjoy the many lessons the book reveals while following my father's inspiring journey. I am honored by your interest.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ix
CHAPTER 1: Dirt Poor.....	1
CHAPTER 2: Early Burden.....	11
CHAPTER 3: Fork in the Road.....	25
CHAPTER 4: The Promise	39
CHAPTER 5: Enterprising Youth	53
CHAPTER 6: Graham Jackson	67
CHAPTER 7: Naval Boot Camp.....	75
CHAPTER 8: St. Simons Island.....	91
CHAPTER 9: On the Move	101
CHAPTER 10: The South Pacific	117
CHAPTER 11: The Showboat	129
CHAPTER 12: Life Onboard.....	147
CHAPTER 13: Taste of War.....	163
CHAPTER 14: Shore Leave	175
CHAPTER 15: Gunner Shot.....	195
CHAPTER 16: Tipping Point	205
CHAPTER 17: Defining Moment	217
CHAPTER 18: Price of Freedom.....	229
CHAPTER 19: Bittersweet Homecoming.....	243
CHAPTER 20: New Family Influences	255
CHAPTER 21: Building an Empire.....	271

CHAPTER 22: The New South	283
CHAPTER 23: Tested.....	293
CHAPTER 24: World Traveler	303
CHAPTER 25: Reunion.....	313
Epilogue	321
Afterword.....	325
About the Author	329
Bibliography.....	331
Endnotes.....	337

FOREWORD

How can poverty make a man rich? The simple answer lies in an equation I once heard in a personal development workshop: $E + R = O$. Experience plus Response equals Outcome. Experience is what happens in any person's life, for better or worse. Many times we have no control over that. It is absolutely true that we put ourselves in a position to succeed. But no matter what we have done to help or hurt our chances of success, things will happen. What we *can* control is our response to that experience. How we respond is the difference between receiving a short list of ideal outcomes and a plethora of imperfect ones.

Experience is created by history, the status quo, and the perceived entitlements of the day. That which prevailed during the 1930s (Senior generation) would not resemble the 1950s (Baby Boomer generation), or the 1970s (Gen X), or 1990s (Gen Y). The truth is that every generation has its challenges with layers of complexity. Each age group wrestled with grueling choices based on the cards they were dealt. For this reason we should not trivialize what others before us have gone through, what we will most certainly endure during our time, and what our children will face as a result of us, both good and bad.

People raised during the Great Depression traversed a difficult landscape of historical significance as perhaps the worst time in American history to grow up. Subsequent generations habitually write off reflections and methods of the past as old fashioned or as unimportant events that have little impact on their daily lives today. Herein lies the

first big mistake of every culture - not solely because history has a tendency to repeat itself, but more because we completely ignore what lifetimes that came before us can teach us to improve our lives today.

We covet our opinions, short cuts, and inventions. We want to believe that we are in control and we don't need people telling us how to live, what to do, what to say. As we grew up, we showed tendencies toward rebellion and that we had a better way. Every generation saw new breakthroughs in technology and efficiencies that made their elders outmoded and outdated. Thus, it is natural to assume that we know better than those who came before us as if we were actually smarter - the second big mistake.

We can stop making the same big mistakes with every new generation if we recognize that change is the only constant, and challenge is never far behind, no matter what our lot in life. In fact, no matter where we come from, no matter what our circumstances might be, no matter what we own, no matter what anyone says about us, it is not permanent. We hold on to elements of life like a closet full of clothing we no longer wear. The day we decide to clean out the closet, we have an idea, a vision for what might replace the discarded garments. Even if we don't have it yet, we make room for it. We can reconstruct our lives this way as well.

My father was unlucky enough to be born a few years before the Great Depression, but he never let it affect him. He came into a world already impoverished, so he had nothing more to lose. Some say it is harder to start with nothing, while others argue that to lose everything and rebuild it is much harder. To a young man who had very little from the beginning, he did not know any differently

and only sought to succeed, with absolutely no idea what that might look like, what it would take, and, with everyone in the same soup, no one to ask.

Without much education, he learned to adapt, to shed one skin to acquire another. If nothing else, he recognized where he was and he lived his life in search of the next opportunity, however it presented itself. The U.S. Navy opened a door to a vast new world, and he recognized that fact right away. His military experiences do not make this book a military book. Other books have been written with far greater detail than this. What's important is how he responded at every turn.

Tom Brokaw once referred to the World War II generation as "The Greatest Generation" because of the circumstances they had to overcome to redefine themselves collectively as a world leader. Cultural problems hardly made the United States an expert in domestic or foreign relations. However, my father typified his generation because he refused to give up. His entire generation loved work because that insured that they and their families would not go without shelter, clothing, food, the first most basic necessities of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. And his generation earned their way through life. Work - hard work - became the Senior generation's formula for success.

Again, more recent generations believed they had found a better idea. Work was passé. Leisure and conspicuous consumption defined them. Such decisions have shown a consistent path toward indulgence, addiction, and self-destruction. While every living human being has the right to choose their lot in life, they also should know they have a choice, like every generation did

before them, exactly how they respond to their origins, their current state of affairs, and their future.

I'm going to make a bold statement about the cycle of generations. I believe that drinking the "Greed is good" Kool-aid proclaimed by Michael Douglas' character Gordon Gecko in the movie *Wall Street* during the 1980s has finally run its course. The dot-com bust told us that technology can bringing wealth and luxury fast, but in order to be sustainable, adaptability, new ideas, and leadership are the keys to the modern-day kingdom. The founding fathers of contemporary commerce work harder than ever to stay on top of their industries, leading to the reality that hard work has become the new fashion.

I wrote this book because my father had a fascinating story to tell. As I delved deeper into his past, I identified patterns in my father's 85 year history. Six drafts of inquiries showed me an important fact about him. Poverty taught him key survival skills and how to perform under pressure, testing his character and determination, regardless of his lack of education or a silver spoon in his mouth. Sure, people can argue the definition of "what is rich," but that is irrelevant. The man has earned respect by climbing out of dirt poor conditions, with no hope except the love of his mother and siblings, found a connection between passion and commerce, and used his tireless work ethic like a fountain of youth to get what he wanted from life.

He has since owned many homes and businesses, he has traveled the world multiple times, and in his mid-80s continues to live a happy, vibrant life with my mother... *after* triple bypass heart surgery. To meet him casually, he might be wearing his Navy cap with great pride. That alone

speaks to a time forgotten, when men like him were not allowed to do many things. My father had to fight history – American history, African-American history, and Navy history – to make history during the war. Defining moments in a man's life can crystallize his place in the hearts and minds of others. He never let anything stop him. He never let anyone steal his dreams. He never quit on himself.

John Seagraves receives appreciation as a hero to each generation that meets him. Not just for his deeds, but for how he lives. Love a craft, master that profession, and make thousands of believers, as he did. I contend that if you do this simple thing, you will change everything.

For more information on exactly how John Seagraves succeeded in his life, download our eBook at www.lessonsfromahero.com. For additional photos, to investigate military history further, to review a deleted chapter, or to examine additional records, go to

the book's website, www.uncommonherobook.com, and click on the "Archives" link.