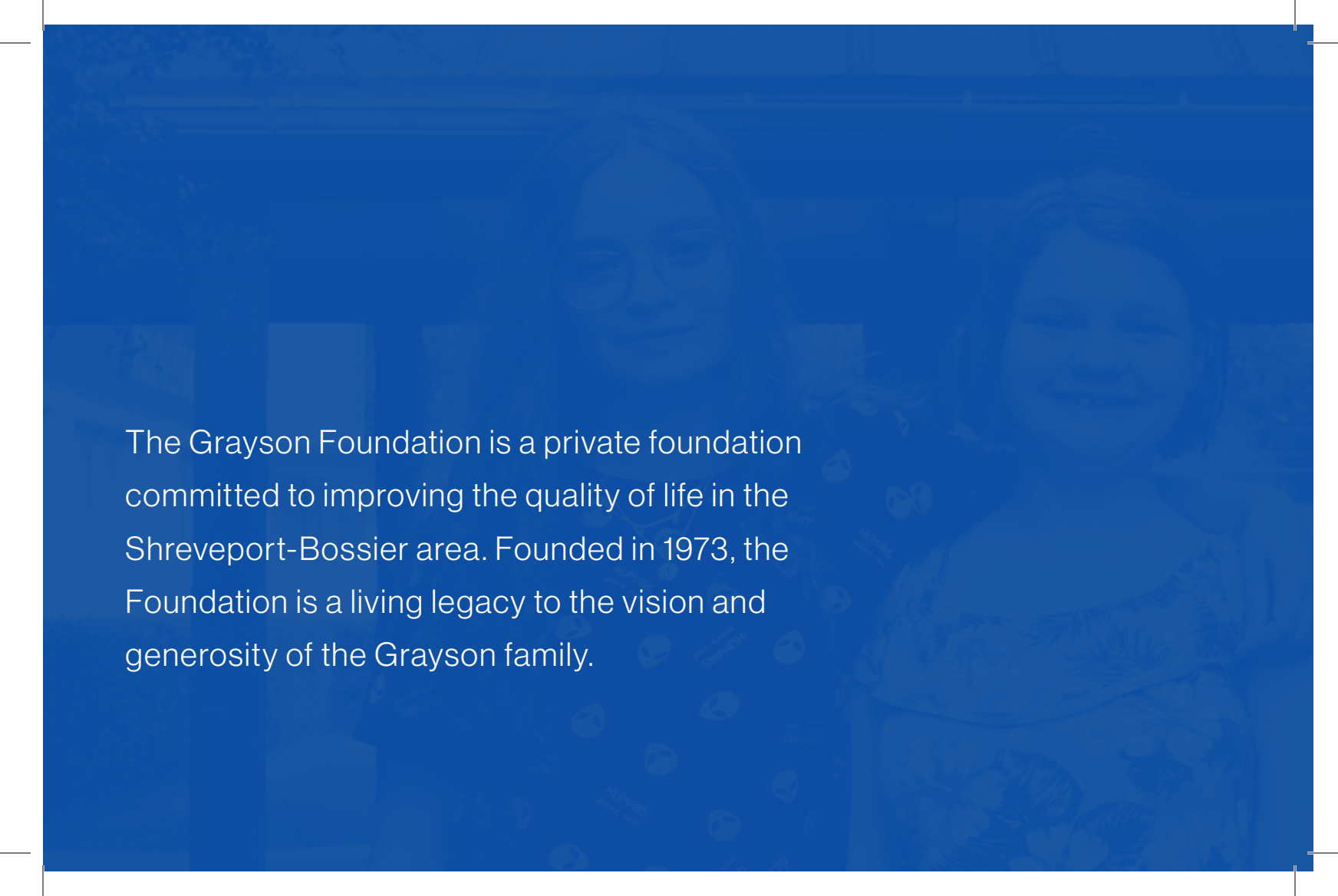


THE  
Grayson  
FOUNDATION

The Community Foundation of North Louisiana  
manages the Grayson Foundation's grantmaking process.

Visit [cfnla.org/grants/grayson](https://cfnla.org/grants/grayson) for more details and applications.

*Communities In Schools and LightHouse photos courtesy of the  
Volunteers of America of North Louisiana.*



The Grayson Foundation is a private foundation committed to improving the quality of life in the Shreveport-Bossier area. Founded in 1973, the Foundation is a living legacy to the vision and generosity of the Grayson family.

# About Sam Grayson

Samuel Boatner Grayson, known as Sam, was born in Shreveport on October 17, 1925, the son of Charles Boatner Grayson and Velma Davis Grayson. After graduating from C.E. Byrd High School, Sam enrolled in Centenary College, but his education was interrupted by World War II, along with so many other men of his generation.

In February of 1944, Sam enlisted in the United States Navy and served two years of active duty in the Pacific. He held a reserve commission in the Navy for ten years following his discharge in March of 1946. Sam officially entered the Grayson family business, Chain Battery & Automotive Supply, Inc., that same year, precipitated by the death of his father, Charles B. Grayson.

Sam attended Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, before returning home to finish his education by earning a degree in social science from Centenary in 1949. Sam later wrote that he considered his years at Centenary "the most formative years in my life" and credited Dean R.E. Smith and several faculty members with helping shape him as an individual. He remained active as an alumnus of his college fraternity, Kappa Alpha, and served as a member of the College's Board of Trustees. Sam also funded scholarships for Centenary students and established the Velma Davis Grayson Eminent Scholars Endowed Chair of Chemistry at the College, in honor of his mother.

Sam took a hands-on approach to learning the automotive supply business even while juggling his college courses, spending time with employees in many departments and studying the details of Chain Battery & Automotive's organization and distribution processes. He was named vice president and general manager of Chain Battery & Automotive in 1949, and along with his mother, company president Velma Grayson, he built an enormously successful and ever-expanding enterprise serving parts of Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. In January 1950, the Graysons created a subsidiary company in central Louisiana, Chain Battery of Alexandria, and in March 1954 opened an impressive new plant in Shreveport on Spring Street between Caddo and Fannin. The official publication of the Louisiana Motor Transportation Association, the LMTA News, described Chain Battery & Automotive's new home as "one of the most modern structures of its kind in the South," especially highlighting the drive-in parts department which was considered very innovative at the time.

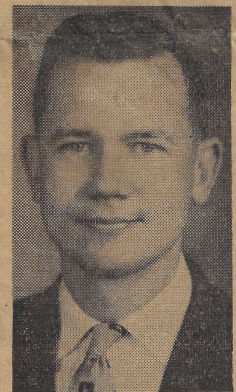
## Sam Grayson Vice President, General Manager of Company

If any one man can be said to be the prime driving force behind Chain Battery's superb service system and its sprawling distribution set-up, that man is Sam B. Grayson, the company's vice president and general manager.

The only son of the late Charles B. Grayson, principal owner of the firm at the time of his death in 1946, Sam Grayson directs the organization with the finesse and efficiency that belies his young years.

Since boyhood, it had been his ambition to join forces with his father in Chain Battery and his application to the study of the firm's myriad problems and its vast service organization paid off for Sam Grayson on Jan. 1, 1949, when he was appointed by the board of directors as general manager.

Grayson was born in Shreveport and attended grade school here



Sam Grayson.

See SAM GRAYSON, Page 6-B.



Sam's deep knowledge, innovative approach, and management skill earned him the respect of his peers in the automotive supply business, as is evidenced by several positive profiles in the trade press of the 1950s and 1960s, and by his appointment to serve in leadership positions in several regional and national organizations. He was vice president of the Automotive Wholesalers Association of Louisiana in 1956, director of the national Automotive Electric Association in 1957-1958, and served for two years in the late 1950s as the Southern service division representative to the Electric Auto Lite Company Manufacturers of Chrysler Automotive Ignition.

Sam also set an early pattern of civic involvement in the Shreveport community that would extend throughout his life. In January 1956 he was announced as one of the youngest directors of the city's newest bank – Louisiana Bank and Trust Company – in an advertisement in The Shreveport Times touting the bank's "new dynamic spirit." Sam also served as a director of Homer National Bank in Homer, Louisiana, from 1958 through 1964. One of Sam's most enduring and important avenues of involvement was at his church, Noel Memorial Methodist Church, where he served 20 years as a member of the Board of Stewards and was chairman of the church's Finance Committee for five consecutive years. In 1966, Sam joined the Board of Trustees of his alma mater, Centenary College, and served until 1968.

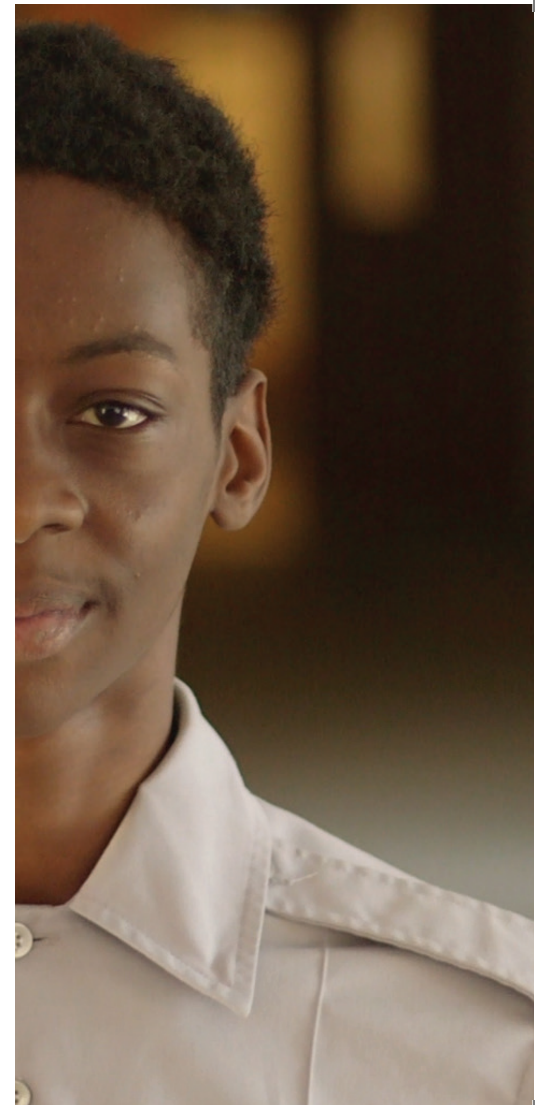
A business resumé for Sam Grayson from 1969 or 1970 illustrates that the Grayson family's business interests continued to grow and diversify through the 1960s and early 1970s as the auto parts side of the business began to transition, not just in North Louisiana but worldwide. Chain Battery was a repair station that also sold auto parts, and it was this side of the business that was eventually sold to a large national company in 1973. The Grayson family retained control of the "small engine" operations after the sale and continued to operate in East Texas, Dallas, New Orleans, and Shreveport. The family became a central distributor for Briggs & Stratton, the world's largest small-engine producer, and also represented several other national product lines such as Kohler and Tecumseh.

In addition to leading Chain Battery companies in Shreveport, Monroe, Alexandria, and Bossier City and Magneto Sales & Service, Inc. in Longview and Kilgore, Texas, the c. 1970 resume lists Sam as president of the Grayson Investment Company (a real estate company), president of the Grayson Company of Louisiana in Shreveport and the Grayson Company of Texas in Dallas, a partner in the G&Q Realty Company, and a partner in the operation of Grayson Sunflower Farm & Pecan Growers. There was, therefore, plenty to keep him busy when the auto parts portfolio of Chain Battery & Automotive Supply was sold in 1973.

## About the Foundation

A significant portion of the proceeds from the 1973 Chain Battery & Automotive sale was utilized to create the Grayson Foundation, which was officially incorporated as a non-profit corporation on August 15, 1973.

The original five trustees of the foundation were Sam Grayson; his mother, Velma; Paul M. Brown; S.B. Heard; and C.E. Vestal, and its stated purpose was to, "receive and administer funds for scientific, educational and charitable purposes." In the early years, Sam personally directed the Foundation's charitable giving and the recipients reflected some of his longtime civic interests, including Centenary College and Noel Methodist Church. But the philanthropic priorities of the Grayson Foundation have always been wide and responsive as opposed to narrowly imagined, and with every passing year the Foundation has increased its impact by supporting a diverse roster of organizations and causes.





Grayson Foundation resources have helped Shreveport-Bossier City citizens tackle some of the persistent challenges and historical inequities present in our educational, social, and economic systems; have given local organizations the resources necessary to assist individuals struggling with homelessness, hunger, addiction, and mental and physical disabilities; and have supported many of the common experiences that make our community a more beautiful, creative, and joyful place – the performing arts, the Red River Revel, and the Sci-Port Discovery Center. The Foundation has also taken a particular interest in early childhood and K-12 education, supporting initiatives such as StepForward and the Volunteers of America of North Louisiana's LightHouse and Communities In Schools programs.



# Making a Difference

Sam Grayson's death in 2004 brought his entire estate into the Grayson Foundation, instantly transforming it into one of the largest private foundations in Northwest Louisiana.

Since that time, a small but dedicated Board of Trustees has steered the Foundation, creating a unique partnership with the Community Foundation of North Louisiana to manage its grant process. This partnership allows the Grayson Foundation to operate with minimal administrative overhead and to devote as many resources as possible to supporting and improving the Shreveport-Bossier City area.

Today, the Grayson Foundation endures as a dynamic living legacy for the Grayson family in the place they called home.



\$30-\$40 million

in total assets, one of the largest private foundations  
in Northwest Louisiana

\$21 million

awarded since 1973

\$1-\$1.5 million

awarded per year since 2004

THE  
Grayson  
FOUNDATION