

Interview with John Bolton
Interviewer: Andrew Bolton
n.d.

Q: What is your full name? Why did your parents select this name for you? Did you have a nickname?

A: John Russell Bolton. My mom picked it for me. My middle name is Russell after my dad's name. My friends used to call me Johnny.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: Shoals Indiana November 9th, 2009.

Q: How did your family come to live there?

A: They were raised in Shoals. There were too poor to move anywhere else.

Q: Were there other family members in the area? Who?

A: My aunts and uncles lived in the area. My uncles George and Elmer and my aunt, but she passed before I knew her.

Q: What was the house like?

A: I was born in an apartment. Then we moved to a place that my grandma rented out. It used coal for heat and kerosene lanterns for light. We moved to Washington, Indiana when I was 5. There was more work available there. We didn't have indoor plumbing or telephones at that time.

Q: Were there any special items in the house that you remember?

A: We had a big porch at the house we rented out from my grandma.

Q: What is your earliest childhood memory?

A: Going barefoot in the spring out on the oil gravel roads and I would go back home and track it all over the floor. The oil was used on the roads to keep the dust down.

Q: Describe the personalities of your family members.

A: My mom, Dorothy Allegeree, was withdrawn. She wasn't out-going. My grandma, Grace was like my mom. She had a negative attitude about life, but she could cook. Very clean. She kept the house spic and span. She was a hard worker. I can't say that about my mom. My half-brother, Melvin, was an alcoholic. That's all I can tell you. He died last year. He had a very serious drinking problem. My dad, Russell Lenoard, I never knew. My aunt was really like my mom. She would never mention my dad. I do know he was prosperous. His family was farmers. My mom got pregnant with me and his parents didn't want him to take care of a child at such a young age. His parents moved him out of the area to Dubois County. I've never spoken to him before. I never questioned it because it was never discussed. I lived a very Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Fin type of childhood. I learned how to survive on my own at a very young age. My half-sister, Brenda, was like a daughter to me. She was about 20 years younger than me. She was just a year older than Debbie, my daughter, was born. Debbie was born in 1955. My grandpa, Alan, is unknown to me. My grandma separated from him. My mom, Dorothy, married Ray Bolton when I was 10 years old. He adopted me, but up to that point I went by John Allegeree. Ray was an alcoholic, which is probably why Melvin was too. Ray passed away from Tuberculosis and heart failure. That was when I

got Tuberculosis. I was about 12 years old. I was sick over 1 year. Then I was put in a sanitarium, Silver crest in New Albany. That was the only place I could go because I was so young. The Vincennes hospital couldn't take patients that young. They took me out of school and isolated me. My aunt, Mary Poen, took me in. She was from French Lick. She owned a restaurant there. She took me to Silver Crest. I took treatments for 9 months. The medicine they used on me was streptomycin. They couldn't supply it right away because it was still in the experimental stage. They gave me over 625 shots in a 4 and half month period. The shots were administered every 4 hours. The costs for the treatment were one thousand dollars cash. I had to stay in my room at Silver crest at all times until I improved. They finally let me out to watch television in the TV room. My mother never came to visit. My aunt brought me furnished clothes and food from time to time. The hospital was state owned.

Q: What was your favorite toy and why?

A: Toy soldiers. I used candy boxes from the store next door to build houses with them. I played usual kid's games like cards and checkers.

Q: What was your favorite thing to do for fun?

A: Playing with toy soldiers because I got to use my imagination and pretend. Kids don't do that today. I also like sled riding on wooden sleds. They didn't hold up long though. I was a typical boy. I liked swimming in the swimming pool. I used to skinny dip in the blue hole. Trains came across the blue hole, so we'd have to watch for them while we were skinny dipping. We used to walk to railroads as far as they'd go. We'd stop by the watermelon fields and pick a ripe one to eat. I picked black berries too. We always had fresh fruit; we had a small garden. Sometimes me and friends would go out in the corn fields before the harvest and play hide-n-seek in the teepee shaped patches of corn.

Q: Did you have family chores? What were they? Which was your least favorite?

A: I can't think of what they'd be. Sure, I cut the grass. We didn't have a dog. One time I brought a stray cat home and I was wild. It took down the drapes off the window. Mom blistered my butt for that. It was definitely not a house cat, more like an alley cat. I lived with my aunt for a short period of time, and then I went to live with my mom. I had to travel to New Albany by myself to get air treatments for my tuberculosis. Ray, my stepdad, was a railroad worker so we had a free pass on the trains. I got up at 3:30 a.m. and walked to the railroad station, 1 mile away to catch a train to North Vernon and from there I'd switch trains to go to New Albany. Once I got off the train, I'd catch a cab to the hospital. Once my treatment was done, I'd catch a cab back home, if I had money. Otherwise, I'd hitch hike. Farmers would take me as far as they were going and from there I'd start "thumbin" again. For my air treatment. They'd use Novocain to numb my stomach to get into the cavity. One time I had taken the treatment and caught the bus afterwards. I got on the bus and all the seats were full, so I stood up until someone got off. I was there "dope as hell" from the treatment and standing up! This guy and this little girl were near me on the bus. I told the bus driver to stop when I got to the train stations and I started walking to the door. I accidentally stepped on the little girl's foot and the guy, most likely her father, yelled at me. I couldn't have been happier to get off that bus. (Laughs) The nurse at school, Wilma Watt, took me out of school once I got sick. When I finally came back to school, I had missed one whole year. I did poorly in school because I had gotten behind during my year in the sanitarium. My mom didn't help me with my

schoolwork. I caught up on my own. Dorothy got pregnant with Melvin during that time and didn't help me anymore. In high school, I took Latin and wanted to be a doctor. I didn't do well in the grades. Geometry was a mess junior year. I just turned 17 when the Korean War broke out in 1950. Me and my friends would meet up at the local radio station and read the time ticker of the president's speech and get ball game scores. After that, we registered for the draft. I wanted to go into the service, but not by getting drafted. I wanted to serve my country. In 1951 at 18 years old I joined the Navy. I passed my physical in Indianapolis and the Navy took me. A buddy of mine was going to join with me but he could pass his physical, he was blind in one eye. In January of 1951 I took the train to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. There I had 9 weeks of training. I was supposed to get 2 weeks of leave but because the war was severe it was cancelled. From there I was put on a troop train set to San Diego California. There I notified my mom that I'd not be home because I was being shipped to Korea. I was assigned to ship LSD 18 USS Colonial.

Q: What school activities and sports did you participate in?

A: Football until my junior year when I quit for the Navy.

Q: Do you remember any fads from your youth? Popular hair styles? Clothes?

A: I wore black and red checkered corduroy pants. I was just a plain kid.

Q: Who were your childhood heroes?

A: My football coaches because they worked with me. Some of the teachers were very thoughtful too.

Q: What were your favorite songs and music?

A: Country and western music was my preference. I listened to any of it.

Q: Did you have any pets?

A: I messed around with strays. (Laughs) Mom wouldn't let me have any.

Q: What was your religion growing up?

A: Protestant. I was baptized when I was 9.

Q: Where you ever mentioned in the newspaper?

A: When I joined the service, I was. At that time the draft board requested me to come report when I was already in Korea! They called my mom and she told them if they wanted me, they'd have to go to Korea and catch me. (Laughs)

Q: Who were your friends growing up?

A: Paul Bowman, he lost his eye. Herb Morris was a friend of mine too. He was my age. We played around together a lot. Herb lost his thumb. We had a Tarzan rope swing from a tree branch into a straw pile. He accidentally let the rope wrap around his thumb one time and when he landed it was just hanging on by a thread. The doctor took it off completely.

Q: What world events had the most impact on you while you were growing up? Did any of them personally affect your family?

A: The Korean War had an impact on me. It changed my life. I served 4 years in the Navy from January 3, 1951 to November 23rd, 1954. My ship was assigned to clean mines out of the Won San harbor in North Korea. Our job was to clean mines so destroyers could get in. Mines were on a cable strung together. You could barely see them. We used paraveins, cable floats, to cut the mine cables so the mines would surface. We cut 102 mines and blew them up. We often suspected they replaced the mines. The port we used was a Yokosuka, Japan. We would spend time there getting supplies. We would spend a couple of weeks there, and then 3 months back out at sea. I met my wife, Rose, when I was back at home on leave. She was working for Aunt Mary in her restaurant.

Q: How were holidays celebrated in your family? Did your family have special traditions?

A: We always celebrated Christmas and all the holidays together.

Interview 2

Q: How is the world today different from when you were a child?

A: Small... (Chuckles). Smaller because communications are instant. Not only can you hear it but you can see it. Seems like the world's moving faster now than it did when I was a child.

Q: Who was the oldest relative you remember as a child and what do you remember about them?

A: Well it would be my grandmother. I remember most about her was she wasn't educated. She was very dedicated worker and family person. That relates to that particular time in her life when I was there. Life was calmer. Life's pace was a slower pace. It took longer to do the necessary things that it does today, because the means of living required more hardship and the luxury of modern equipment wasn't available. They had to do it by hand. My grandmother on the farm, she had to milk cows and help with chores and it required a lot of her time.

Q: What do you know about your family surname?

A: Very little. They were farmers.

Q: Is there a naming tradition in your family, such as always naming the first-born son after his paternal grandfather?

A: No.

Q: What stories have come to you about your parents?

A: Well on the bad side. Notice I didn't say "dad side". Alan Allegree, my grandpa, was said to have been involved with the hanging of the Archer boys.

Q: Who were they?

A: They were bad people.

Q: The archer boys?

A: Yes

Q: So, he was a Good Samaritan then?

A: I think it was an illegal hanging! (chuckles)

Q: Are there stories about famous or infamous relatives of yours?

A: Just Alan. (Chuckles again)

Q: Have any recipes been passed down to you from family members?

A: No

Q: Your aunt Mary never gave you any of her recipes from days she owned her own restaurant?

A: She was a good cook. She could cook anything. Even Rose will tell you the same.

Q: Are there any physical characteristics that run in the family?

A: They all live to be old. Grandma, she's 94 going on 100. Francis, she was close to 90. Sam lived to be up in his 90's. Longevity in all of them. Uncle George and Elmer both lived up to the late 80's and early 90's.

Q: Why do you think they lived that long.

A: I couldn't tell you. I guess longevity just runs in the family. That's on mom's side anyways, I couldn't tell you about dad's side.

Q: What is the full name of your spouse? Siblings? Parents?

A: Bernice Powell and Harvey Powell were her parents. Anne was her sister, her only sister.

Q: Are her parents alive still?

A: No, they've both passed. Deceased.

Q: How old is Rose?

A: 71.

Q: How old was Rose's parents when they passed?

A: Bernice was 71 and Harvey passed away at 83.

Q: How and when did you meet your spouse?

A: She was a waitress at my aunt's restaurant. That's where I first meet my beloved wife.

Q: Did you work there too?

A: No, I was on leave from the Navy to visit my aunt. She was just a sweet little girl working in the restaurant.

Interview with John Bolton
Interviewer: Andrew Bolton
n.d.

Q: What year was that?

A: 1952

Q: What was it like when you proposed? Where did it happen? And how did you feel?

A: I can't remember the exact date I asked her to marry me. It was in 1954. I asked at her home, I think.

Q: So how old were you when you asked her?

A: 22.

Q: How old was she?

A: 17. I started going with her when she was 16.

Q: When and where did you get married?

A: United Brethren Church Parsonage in Washington, IN. God that's been so long ago.

Q: What memory stands out most from your wedding day?

A: I was nervous as hell. (Chuckles). You want to know who stood up with us?

Q: Who?

A: Carl and Fern Vincent. They were my cousins.

Q: How would you describe your spouse?

A: She was gentle, sweet thing. With a hell of a temper. (Chuckles) Oh I am just kidding. She had a hell of a personality. She was something that stood out.

Q: What do you believe is the key to a successful marriage?

A: To be able to work through things together. It's not easy. Enjoying the good times and making the best of the bad times.

Q: How did you find out you were going to be a parent for the first time?

A: She was pregnant! (Chuckles) Morning sickness was the first clue.

Q: Why did you choose your children's names?

A: Well I guess they were popular at the time we had them. Tim was named after Tim from the bible. Debbie wasn't really named after anyone. Debbie was a popular name at the time. Karen wasn't named until 4 or 5 days after she was born because we couldn't decide. (Chuckles)

Q: What was your proudest moment as a parent?

A: There was no particular time I don't think, I've always been proud of all the kids when they achieved something. Like Tim with sports, Debbie with madrigals, and Karen with pomp poms. Karen was a very smart girl. She graduated salutatorian from high school and top of her class at college.

Interview with John Bolton
Interviewer: Andrew Bolton
n.d.

Q: What did your family enjoy doing together?

A: As a family we took summer vacations to Florida and stone mountain Georgia. As a family we tried to have some good times together.

Q: What was your profession? And how did you choose it?

A: Manufacturing. It was something I excelled in. I started out a laborer at McCord's as assistant foreman, then foreman, superintendent, and then Kimball's hired me on as production manager and then I got promoted to manufacturing manager.

Q: How long did you work at those 2 companies?

A: I'd say 40 something years.

Q: At what age did you retire at?

A: I was just past 65 years old. They wanted me to stay instead of retiring. I was good at what I'd done. You'd have been proud of me.

Q: If you could have chosen any other profession, what would it have been? Why wasn't it your first choice?

A: Well I would have stayed in the service, but I was just drained from it. I didn't have the age stay like most guys because mine was all during the time of war. There are a very low percentage of people in the armed forces who experience war time. I spent 3 years and 6 months of my 4 years at sea duty during war time.

Q: Were you going to college?

A: I went to gunnery school. All times of gunnery and explosives; things like that.

Q: So, when you go out did you start going to a community college?

A: McCord's paid for me to go to Evansville University to attend management classes. I think I got about 9 or 10 certificates from that time. I never had a problem getting a job when I would show them. We were using computers back at McCord's in 1975. At that time, they would use computer cards and people would use them to monitor information and they would put out a spread sheet of all the material. It was a longer process, but at least you got a full vision of what was taking place. I really enjoyed that.

Q: So, you kind of got to see the whole introduction of the computer and how it relates to a manufacturing company.

A: I was one of the first to use it in 1991 when Kimball went full bore on it. I was one of the first to take classes on how to use them. That was when we started making keyboards for IBM. Not only did I know who to use a keyboard, but I knew how it was made. We had what they called a clean room where they were assembled where you had to wear booties and hair nets and jacket, because at that time a person's hair off their head could short out a computer. I was one of the first ones to help set up that program. We went down to Lexington Kentucky where IBM was. We got a contract with them to make

the keyboard. They sent me and Jim Stitsman down there to observe 2 lines that they've got set up down there that they want to move up to our plant. They told us not to be obvious that we were going to move this stuff, and just got to be as observant and see what's going on. So, we couldn't take a pencil or paper or anything. So, the way we'd done it is using the floor tiles to measure the equipment. And that's how we done without being obvious, they wondered why we were always looking down at the floor (chuckles). We built those keyboards from 1991 to 1998. Most companies only have contracts for 3 years, but we had it for over 7 years. We built a million keyboards a year.

Q: Were you primary production of keyboards in the US.

A: We were the only producers of keyboards.

Q: Of all the things you've learned from your parents, which do you feel is the most valuable?

A: Survival. (Laughs) The way I was raised, you could say, you learned how to take care of yourself under all conditions. That started at a young age for me.

Q: Which accomplishments were you most proud of?

A: I would say my work at Kimball is what I am most proud of. See at that time, it was a critical time for Kimball. The piano production was phasing out with the introduction of the television and computer. So, Kimball lost a lot business because pianos were their primary source of income. So, in 1990 we a contract division in electronics, which means that we would contract our services to other companies and compete with other companies for that service. In the first year of contract of sales, they were hoping for 1 million dollars' worth of business in order to survive, which we exceeded that into the hundreds of millions of dollars. That kept the company alive.

Q: What is the one thing you most want people to remember about you?

A: I was a good, honest, hardworking person and a good family man.