

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## *ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE*



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### Abstract: **Richard Bolden**

Richard Bolden's oral history is a first-hand description of two major social changes: First, the movement of people from rural to urban communities – families left the farms and took jobs in towns and cities, changing to a completely different way of life. Younger generations do not realize how primitive the amenities were for rural homesteads – no electricity or running water, and no indoor plumbing. Life on the farm was hard, back-breaking work from sun up to sun down planting, picking and chopping cotton, planting and harvesting crops, feeding animals, cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing. Fun time was hunting and fishing and attending church activities.

Second, Mr. Bolden's life has spanned the extraordinary period when segregation was replaced by an integrated society. It seems remarkable now that during Richard's entire education, he never once attended classes with white students or had a white teacher. Richard's parents were not legally permitted to vote for most of their lives. Up until the 1960's people had to pay a "poll tax" in order to register to vote which was intended to keep poor people from voting. Richard also witnessed the election of a black US president – a proud moment in time. Laws and social customs have changed. This interview serves to illustrate how so much can change in the course of just one person's lifetime.

36 Pages

⇓ *Scroll down for Key Words from the Interview.* ⇓

## Interview Summary

### People (in order mentioned in interview)

Daniel Nathan Bolden – brother  
 Dean Bolden – father  
 Esther Bolden – sister in law  
 Glory Jean Bolden – sister  
 Jesse Bolden – paternal grandfather  
 Jessie Mae Bolden – sister  
 Joe Dean Bolden – brother  
 Lillie Herring Bolden – mother  
 Mildred Bolden – spouse  
 Richard Bolden, Jr – son  
 Sharon Bolden – daughter  
 Sherman Bolden – brother  
 Thurman Bolden – brother  
 Ira Foster – teacher  
 Curtis Herring – uncle  
 Nathan Herring – maternal grandfather  
 Jenny Miller – paternal great grandmother  
 Roxie Miller – paternal grandmother

Ms Mitchell – English teacher  
 Rose Pickens – friend  
 Alvin Ohl – business partner  
 Dr Schumann – local physician  
 Laura Scott – maternal grandmother  
 Charles Snell – Ag teacher  
 Charles Taylor – history teacher  
 Dr Stanley Thompson – local physician  
 Aaron Weaver – math teacher

### Places / Businesses

A&R Salvage  
 Otto Grocery Store  
 Prairie View A&M University  
 Post Office Pharmacy Drug Store  
 Powell Point High School  
 Sam Houston State University  
 Henry Sklar Grocery Store  
 Richmond State School  
 WKM Foundry

### Events

Richard and his brother Thurman share stories about growing up on the farm in East Bernard. It was a hard life with few conveniences.

Prior to the mid-1960s, segregation was harsh and cruel to blacks and Hispanics regarding education, employment, housing and shopping.

When farm chores were finished for the day, Richard enjoyed hunting and fishing to help put food on the table.

Married for 51 years, 27 years managing a salvage business, raising 2 children and enjoying 6 grandchildren, Richard feels blessed.

Richard's journey from his birth in 1939 to 2017 provides detailed descriptions of the cycles of life on the farm and in the city during good times and bad.