

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hon. Charles Bolden

PERSON

Bolden, Charles , 1946-

Alternative Names: Bolden, Charles , 1946-

Life Dates: August 19, 1946-

Place of Birth: Columbia, South Carolina

Residence: Houston, TX

Occupations: Aerospace Engineer; Military Officer

Biographical Note

Aerospace engineer and military officer Charles F. Bolden, Jr. was born on August 19, 1946 in Columbia, South Carolina. He graduated from C.A. Johnson High School in 1964. Both of his parents, Charles and Ethel Bolden, were teachers and stressed the importance of education. Bolden received his B.S. degree in electrical science from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1968, and earned his M.S. degree in systems management from the University of Southern California in 1977. Accepting a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps following graduation from the Naval Academy, he underwent flight training at Pensacola, Florida, Meridian Mississippi, and Kingsville, Texas.

Between June 1972 and June 1973, Bolden flew more than 100 combat missions into North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, in the A-6A Intruder while stationed in Nam Phong, Thailand. After returning to the United States, Bolden served in a variety of positions in the Marine Corps. He was then assigned to the Naval Test Pilot School at Patuxent River, Maryland, where he completed his training in 1979. While working at the Naval Air Test Center's Systems Engineering and Strike Aircraft Test Directorates, he tested

a variety of ground attack aircraft until his selection as an astronaut candidate in 1980.

Bolden's NASA astronautical career included technical assignments. He served as pilot on the Space Shuttle Columbia in 1986. In the wake of the Challenger disaster, he was assigned as the chief of the Safety Division. In 1990, he piloted the Space Shuttle Discovery to deploy the Hubble Space Telescope. Bolden served as the Mission Commander for Space Shuttle Atlantis in 1992 and the Space Shuttle Discovery in 1994. He logged more than 680 hours during these four flights.

Bolden left NASA and returned to the U.S. Marine Corps in 1997, and was assigned as the Deputy Commandment of Midshipmen at the Naval Academy. During Operation Desert Thunder-Kuwait in 1998, he was assigned as the Commanding General of the Marine Expeditionary Force. He was promoted to Major General in 1998. In 2003, Bolden retired from the Marine Corps and served as president of the American PureTex Water Corporation. In 2009, President Barack Obama appointed Bolden as the top NASA administrator, making him the second astronaut and the first African American to serve in this position.

Bolden's military decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross. NASA awarded him Exceptional Service Awards in 1988, 1989, and 1991. In May of 2006, he was inducted into the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame. Bolden and his wife, Alexis Walker, have two children: U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Anthony Bolden, and Michelle Bolden, M.D. Charles Bolden was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 28, 2012.

Related Entries

Sinkley, Ethel [GRANDCHILD OF]
Maternal Grandmother

Bolden, Mose [GRANDCHILD OF]
Paternal Grandfather

Bolden, Sr., Charles [CHILD OF]
Father

Martin Bolden, Ethel Evangeline Veronica [CHILD OF]
Mother

Naval Academy [STUDENT OF]
[from ? to 1968]

B.S. Electrical Science

University of Southern California [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to 1977]

M.S.

C. A. Johnson High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to 1964]

Diploma

Naval Air Test Center [STUDENTOF]
1979

United States Marine Corps [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1968 to 2002]

Major General

National Aeronautics and Space Administration [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to 1994]

Administrator

PureTex Water Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2003 to 2012]

President

TechTrans International Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2003 to 2012]

Vice President

American PureTex Water Corporation and PureTex Water Works
[MEMBEROF]

Board Member and Chief Operating Officer

Marathon Oil Corporation [MEMBEROF]
Director

TechTrans International Corporation [MEMBEROF]
Director

Family Literacy Foundation [MEMBEROF]
Board Member

Tailhook Educational Foundation [MEMBEROF]
Director

