

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Elizabeth Seurkamp
Current home town: Cincinnati, Ohio
Age: Not given

Story of a Great American

John Thomas Bolton, my brother, enlisted in the Marines when he was 13 years old. He went through training in the Marines and was leaving to go to Europe but his age was discovered and the Marines annulled his enlistment. He returned to Cincinnati and registered for the draft, then enlisted in the Navy using his draft card as proof of age.

Then in the next two-and a-half years John saw combat action in the Atlantic and South Pacific. He was in the landings in North Africa and saw combat action in the Marshall Islands and Saipan. In 1944, his age was discovered and John was discharged. He enlisted in the Navy a second time in 1945, at age 17 and was finally and permanently discharged in 1946.

John married and moved to Chicago and managed a bar in a country club, then moved to Florida and managed a bar in a country club in Boca Raton, Fla. He then moved to Madison, Wisconsin and bought and managed his own bar and restaurant. He passed away at the age of 52 and worked until the very end. He leaves his wife Jean and five sons and a daughter.

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17-Year-Old Cincinnati, Battle Veteran, Gets Official "Thank You" From Navy

Enlisted in Marines When Only 13 Years Old.

By MALVINA STEPHENSON
Times-Star Bureau

WASHINGTON, Sept. 29—Uncle Sam and the Navy Department finally may get around to saying an official "thank you" to a 17-year-old Cincinnati veteran of two years' service.

The "thank you," in this case, would mean an honorable discharge for young John T. Bolton, 1005 Marshall Avenue, Cincinnati, whose enlistment was annulled a year ago because he had fibbed about his age. An honorable discharge makes the veteran eligible for the standard benefits.

President Truman just this week signed a bill forgiving the under-age patriots, and Representative William E. Hess sent application blanks to Cincinnati for Bolton.

The blanks were directed to Herbert E. Michaels of the Robert E. Bentley Post of the American Legion. Michaels and Elder F. Hunsicker, president Cincinnati Council of the Navy League of the United States, have taken a personal interest in Bolton's case.

Johnny Bolton first got into the service when he was only 13 years old. He enlisted in the Marines in December, 1941, but got bumped two months later when his age was discovered. The Navy apparently didn't hear about this, and accepted him the next July.

Johnny went through plenty of combat after that. He was in the landings in North Africa, then the engagements in the Marshalls and Saipan. In 1944 the Navy caught up with Johnny's age, and he



JOHN T. BOLTON

found his enlistment annulled. As far as the records were concerned, he just never had been a member of the U. S. Navy despite his brilliant combat record.

Cincinnati veterans' organizations felt it unfair. They appealed to authorities. The Army, it seems, overlooked such technicalities and rewarded deserving veterans who had upped their age. Congress, however, had to pass a law to make it "legal" for the Navy. And, now, it looks as if Johnny, now serving in the Merchant Marine, at long last, would get his just reward.

Benny, who also was discharged because of his age, said he got his pay.

But the veterans didn't have time to worry about that Thursday. They were six hours late for a date with their buddies.

So off they went.

"But he just isn't my little brother any more," said his sister. They are the children of Mrs. Josephine Bolton, of 1005 Marshall Avenue.

Johnny saw a lot of action in those two years, and was torpedoed in the Atlantic, but it was the Japanese who "changed him," Juanita said. It's not just that he's 16 now, and has seen a lot of strange places.

It's the memory of the wounded men he's carried back from tiny Pacific isles, the Japs he's fought with himself as a member of an amphibious corps.

He told of a Marine he had come to know pretty well on board ship before they made a landing at one of the many invasions he's been on.

The next time Johnny saw his Marine pal, he was one

of the casualties evacuated to their ship.

"He told me how he got it," Johnny said. "He was trying to help a wounded Jap, and this is how that Jap thanked him. . . he tried to blow them both up with a hand grenade."

Johnny knew the Marine didn't have long to live, for the Jap who had killed himself had done a good job with the grenade.

"Whenever he's talking to me, it seems like he remembers something like that," Juanita said. "He's so nervous, and wants to get back and fight again."

Johnny Bolton, of 1005 Marshall Avenue, is back in the Navy with the blessings of President Truman. He was "separated" from the Navy at 16 after three years in the Pacific when the Navy found out he was under age. Navy Leaguers and Legionnaires brought his case to attention of the President.