

Father and son graduate from college together

By Sally Rummel
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Bolling, Bolling, Bolling.

That's how at least one of the Bolling family members dreams about their future in the practice of law, following his graduation from Michigan State University College of Law, side-by-side with his dad, **Jack Bolling**, of Ravinewood Court, now an attorney in Highland.

Bryan Bolling, the 29-year-old son of Jack and Elaine Bolling of Commerce Township and a 1994 graduate of Huron Valley Schools, beat his dad by graduating just seconds before him during graduation ceremonies in May 2004 at the Wharton Center. (But that's only because Bryan's name comes out first when names are read alphabetically!)



In caps & gowns, **Jack & Bryan Bolling**, pictured in the center share family time with **Alisa Bolling & her husband Brandon**, Jack's wife, **Elaine** and **Kristy Bolling** at right.

Both father and son knew that they had accomplished something special when they followed totally different life plans and still graduated from law school at the same time.

"I was so taken in by the whole experience that I only noticed that a mention was made of two graduates being a father and a son," remembers Jack. "But my wife told me later that the whole audience at Wharton Center stood up yelling and clapping when our names were announced."

Bryan remembers that day very well, too, because he now shares a bond with his father that can never be broken. "Most fathers and sons talk about things, but we actually experienced something so special together at exactly the same time that we can share memories and events of the day and know exactly what we're talking about," he says.

Not only did the Bolling duo share graduation memories, they also sat side by side again when they took the Michigan State Bar Exam a year ago in July. While they shared the same time and same space, each Bolling was still very much "alone" when taking the demanding two-day bar exam.

"We're a pretty competitive bunch," admits the younger Bolling. "I wanted my dad to pass as much as I wanted to, but I wanted to beat him by just a little." The pressure was on both Jack and Bryan, because just five years prior, Jack's oldest son Brandon, 32, also graduated from law school and passed the bar the very first time.

Both Jack and Bryan did pass the bar exam the first time through, but they didn't stop there. They also joined Brandon in a slightly elite group of law school graduates who "multi-state out" of the bar exam. "If you pass the 200 multiple choice portion of the exam," says Jack, "then the State Bar doesn't count the essay portion of your test, as long as you put forth what they call a 'good faith effort.'"

About one-fourth of law school graduates "multi-state out" when they take the exam, according to Bryan, and all three Bolling attorneys are proud to be a member of this group. While Jack and Bryan ended their law school journey at the exact same time and place, their paths to get there were as divergent as their ages.

Jack made a decision to go back to school following a lifetime of pursuing two successful careers. While he and Elaine were raising their family, which also includes a daughter, Kristy, 26, an MSU hospitality graduate, Jack was making his living with the Southfield Police Department - first as a police officer, then as a detective.

When he decided that his life wasn't "bullet-proof," he made a complete career change into sales and marketing, beginning a career that spanned 20 years as a vice president and general manager for Belleville-based Advo, Inc., a giant in the print/delivery industry. That's when he decided to complete his college education, which had been left behind after only one year at MSU. Because of the demands of his weekday sales and marketing career, Jack opted to attend William Tyndale College at night to earn his bachelor's degree in business administration degree, which he received in 1997 at the age of 49.

"I liked the fact that the people who were teaching were actually professionals in their own fields, rather than trained academic professors," says Jack. He was able to earn about 20 credits in "life experience," testing out of several prerequisites that speeded up the educational process. But he didn't stop there. He found he liked being back in school, and he started law school in May 1999 in the Weekend Program at the Thomas Cooley School of Law, the only American Bar Association-accredited weekend program in the U.S. While most people looked at the demands of his weekday career and his weekend schooling as a huge challenge, he saw his educational experience as a great stress reliever.

Jack gives all the credit of the success of his first two careers and the chance to pursue a third career to his wife of 35 years, Elaine. "She is the greatest person in the world," he says. "She has always supported me in whatever I've done and we've been extremely compatible all these years."

While he earned half of law school credits at Cooley, his heart was still at MSU, so he was accepted into its School of Law and stayed there until graduating last year.

Bryan's path as a full-time student at MSU put him on a more regular program of daytime classes, until he reached the later years of the program which also included night-time study. But he's a little sad that he never shared a single class with his dad, although he did see him a lot around campus.



Jack Bolling & son Bryan share a light moment following their joint graduation from MSU's School of Law.

All three Bollings are proud to be making their living as attorneys. Jack Bolling recently opened his law practice in Highland, sharing an office with Michael Wilcox at 2850 S. Milford Road. He currently concentrates his practice in general family matters, wills and estates, dispute mediation and minor criminal offenses, but he doesn't hide his long-term ambition of perhaps being a district judge in the future.

Bryan Bolling is an associate attorney with Cantarella & Associates in Pontiac, working primarily with personal injury cases, including automobile accidents and workers compensation, plus family law, criminal defense and bankruptcy. He's the Bolling that hopes to have three Bolling names listed on a company nameplate someday.

That may depend upon the future plans of his oldest brother, Brandon, an attorney with the U.S. Marine Corp., now stationed in Newport, RI, where he teaches at the Naval Justice School.

Three Bollings, three different paths, all ending up in the same career.