John Murdoch Harbert III, was born in Greenville, Mississippi, in 1921. He studied civil engineering at Auburn University, where he earned a bachelor of science degree in 1946.

Harbert began his career as a small bridge contractor in Alabama. In 1949 he founded the Harbert Corporation and serves as its chief executive officer and chairman of the board. Over the past 40 years, Harbert and the Harbert Corporation have been recognized throughout the state of Alabama, the nation and the world as leaders in construction of fresh water and water treatment facilities, petroleum pipelines, transportation transloading facilities, roads, bridges, buildings and other major site developments.

One particular project for which he is recognized is the Red Mountain Expressway in Birmingham. Harbert received several awards for his work on this project, including, in 1967, being named Marketing Man of the Year in Alabama, and being cited by Engineering News Record as one of the 10 outstanding construction men of the year for his innovative public relations efforts during the construction of the Red Mountain Expressway. Due to his efforts, the expressway was completed in record time without a single dollar expended in claims.

The Harbert Corporation also became one of the country's leading coal producers, pioneering the "mountain-top removal method" and long-range reclamation plans that have since become standards in the industry. He is also responsible for Riverchase, a 3,000-acre planned community south of Birmingham.

Other major projects that helped establish the company's history include an airbase in the Negev Desert, a power plant in Georgia, a desalinization plant in Abu Dhabi, the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, and numerous small bridge crossings and intersection improvements. Harbert personally funds a composition lab at the University of Montevallo, which has become a model for writing laboratories on college campuses throughout the nation. Auburn University will soon take advantage of a new engineering building now under construction as a result of a $5 million gift from Harbert.

He has received many honors, including the Exemplary Dedication to Higher Education Award, 1981; Alabama Academy of Honor, 1980; Holly Mitchell Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects, 1979; Erskine Ramsay Award, 1976; Auburn University Outstanding Engineer Alumni Award, 1975; and First Silver Hard Hat Award by the Construction Writers Association, 1969. He is also a member of Tau Beta Pi and is associated with numerous business and service organizations.

Harbert describes the story of his success as "one of continuous beginnings, an ever-expanding middle, and so far, no end."

Harbert, a resident of the state for more than 40 years, and his wife, Marguerite, have three children: John M., IV; Raymond; and Margie.