



## Home

# J. Earle Bowden

YEAR INDUCTED: 2016



For more than 60 years, Mr. Bowden was the cornerstone of journalism in Northwest Florida. Jesse Earle Bowden began working at the now-*Pensacola News Journal* in 1953 and worked until his death on Feb. 15, 2015.

His obituary highlighted his education and work in newspapers: “Mr. Bowden attended Florida State University, where he studied journalism and wrote for the *Florida Flambeau* newspaper, before joining the U.S. Air Force. “He was a military journalist stationed at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho during the Korean War, after which he moved to Pensacola to begin his journalism career at the *Pensacola News Journal* on September 30, 1953. Initially a sports writer until 1958, Bowden replaced Marion T. Gaines as editor of the *News Journal's* editorial page in 1965 and served as editor-in-chief and vice president of the paper from 1966 to 1997. “As editor

of the *News Journal*, Bowden began campaigning in 1965 to establish the Gulf Islands National Seashore, which was authorized on January 8, 1971, and signed into law by President Nixon. For his efforts, Bowden was named an Honorary Park Ranger by the Secretary of the Interior.

Even after his retirement, Mr. Bowden was a strong voice in the community with his weekly cartoons and column. Always looking to the future, he welcomed the digital age and joined Facebook to showcase his work. His thoughts and cartoons quickly attracted many “friends.”

While his writing and community leadership helped affect change in the community, his cartoons were equally forceful. They ranged from poking fun at politicians and their foibles, to biting satire about local and national events. Fortunately, those thousands of cartoons will inspire and educate future journalists and scholars. Staff at the University of West Florida's Pace Library are archiving and digitizing many of Mr. Bowden's cartoons. In 1983, he began teaching journalistic writing at the university, which awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in 1985. Outside the traditional newsroom, Mr. Bowden authored several books on Pensacola's history and was the foremost authority on the area's history that dates to 1539.

Mr. Bowden's community involvement was a natural extension of his passion for journalism and a newspaper's role in the community. He helped establish the Seville Square Historic District in 1963, and was a charter trustee of the Historic Pensacola Preservation Board when it was formed in 1967.

His other accomplishments include:

- Board of trustees at Pensacola Junior College, now Pensacola State College.
- Two-time president of the University of West Florida Foundation.
- Chairman of the city of Pensacola Architectural Review Board.
- President of the Pensacola Bay Area Coalition on Literacy.
- Pensacola Kiwanis Club Civic Award in 1981.
- Three statewide honors from Florida Architects for his work in historic preservation.
- Distinguished Citizen of the Year, Pensacola Junior College, 1966.
- Law Day Liberty Bell Award in 1975.
- PACE Pioneer Award, 1998, for his Pensacola leadership.
- In 1983, the Junior League of Pensacola established the J. Earle Bowden Junior Historian Award for student winners of the Florida History Fair in Escambia County.

Mr. Bowden's roles as a journalist, community leader, teacher, author and historian were as important to Northwest Florida as the sugar-white sand and emerald-green water.

---

#### **Facebook**

**(<http://www.facebook.com/FloridaPressAssociation>)**

**Twitter**

**m/FloridaPressAssociation**

**LinkedIn**

**([http://www.linkedin.com/company/florida-press-](http://www.linkedin.com/company/florida-press-association)**

**association)**

#### **Home**

**Contact Us**

**Privacy Policy**

#### **Tallahassee Office**

336 E. College Ave., Suite 201

Tallahassee, FL 32301

(321) 283-5255

#### **Lake Mary Office**

610 Crescent Executive Ct., Ste. 112

Lake Mary, FL 32746-2111

(321) 283-5255