DRAWING FROM AN EDITOR'S LIFE

Solitude on Perdido Key
Illustration, Gulf Islands: The Sands of All Time, 1994
Books by Jesse Earle Bowden


When You Reach September: An Editor’s West Florida Essays and Other Episodic Echoes, 1990.


Pensacola: Florida’s First Place City (Photographs by Gordon Norman Simons and Sandra L. Johnson), 1989.


DRAWING FROM AN EDITOR'S LIFE

MORE THAN FORTY YEARS OF EDITORIAL CARTOONS, CARICATURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS, PENSACOLA NEWS JOURNAL, 1950s-1990s

Text and Art
JESSE EARLE BOWDEN

A JEB BOOK
1996
For the Bowdens: Mary Louise Clark Bowden, a good loving wife of forty five years who has been with me when the lines were drawn; Steven Earle Bowden, our first son fertile with good ideas, including inspiration for the book, Gulf Islands: The Sands of All Time; and Randall Clark Bowden, our second son who gave us the gift of granddaughter Jessica.
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Majesty at Gulf Islands
Cover illustration, Emerald Coast Review, 1991

Cover illustration
Iron Horse in the Pinelands, 1982
'Thy Will Be Done'

Bicentennial Cartoon
July 4, 1976
Rejoicing in a Limited Palette

I never set out to be a newspaperman. These daily first drafts of history crafted on a newsroom deadline would be where I launched my star-studded destiny.

In a barefooted boyhood, squeezing my toes in the soft sand of pig trails threading through the small farm crossroads of Altha, hidden in pined, river-veined West Florida, my eyes and my aspirations were lifted toward the classic literary and art world.

Once there, fame would flower and endure. Grand, sweeping epics, they would be: books and graphic artistry. At fourteen, I dreamed I was a major league southpaw of baseball strikeout fame as I fantasized through Willard Mullin’s classic cartoons in The Sporting News. Already I could hear applause.

Then I was novelists Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway, pecking out best sellers on Daddy’s old upright Underwood typewriter. And when the Saturday Evening Post arrived, I was illustrator Norman Rockwell, executing sweeping Americana paintings that stared at hungry magazine readers from every newsstand in America.

Sometimes I was Willard Mullin drawing sports cartoons; sometimes my comics-page hero, Milton Caniff, the Rembrandt of the Comics, inking adventure for “Terry and the Pirates” and “Steve Canyon,” or Al Capp with “Lil Abner,” or another master I admired, soldier-cartoonist Bill Mauldin with “Willie and Joe” slogging through the infantry mud of World War II.

Yes, I wanted to draw like adventure strip artist Alex Raymond and write foxhole columns on a portable Underwood like the reed-thin, bald-pated little Ernie Pyle, the GIs’ beloved journalist who died of a Japanese sniper’s bullet on an obscure Pacific island in World War II.

Yes, a boy dreaming of the big leagues of bookmaking. Indeed, a small-town boy scratching out stories and drawings in Big Chief notebooks when he should have been figuring his arithmetic or executing English-class essays on eternal spring and the fate of humankind or bagging groceries in Jesse Walden Bowden’s grocery store.

Then, I inhaled the sweet smell of ink cranking the mimeograph machine in the school principal’s office after drawing the cartoons and writing the stories for the AlHi Gab, the Altha High School newspaper that Clyde Bailey and I invented, published and sold to students and faculty.

By seventeen, I smelled real printer’s ink as the starry-eyed editor of the weekly Altha Times, feeding an ancient flatbed press after helping an alcoholic printer-publisher handset the type. The addiction was inescapable.

I was drawn to the vineyards of newspapering, fascinated by words and images emerging from the ink smell, paper clutter and typewriter tapping in old country print shops and hearing the sweet thumping roar of presses. There was the joy of my stories and columns and cartoons in print. Still, my dreams harnessed the arts: I would write and illustrate my own books.

But wait—

Daily deadlines became a part of me.

I was destined to spend more than forty-three years as a newspaper editor/cartoonist for the Pensacola News Journal. Florida’s westernmost city—where I honed the love of history and worked to preserve a strong heritage—was only one hundred and fifty Panhandle miles west of Altha.

Besides my News Journal editorial work, I’ve written and illustrated eight books and edited and illustrated others, including the Emerald Coast Review, the anthology of the West Florida Literary Federation.

This sketchbook is a gathering of memories, politics, public issues, editorial campaigns and the interesting people, politicians and personalities I’ve drawn and caricatured since September 30, 1953, the day I began my News Journal adventure.
Word editorialists comment with the turn of inked phrases: strong verbs pushing concrete nouns into sentences and finally a work of commentary.

Cartoonists satirize the world they see with ink lines and symbolic images. Sometimes, when necessary, broadaxing hypocrisy and pomposity.

Since 1965, when I succeeded Marion T. Gaines as editorial page editor of The Pensacola Journal and Sunday News Journal, I've tried to combine the two art forms in my work on opinion pages. As cartoonist, I've tried to follow a grand tradition of the masters, inspired by English artist William Hogarth, and Americanized by first, printer-revolutionist Benjamin Franklin, and then Thomas Nast, the father of American editorial cartooning in the nineteenth century.

We cartoonists pepper sketchy, or unfinished images with wit, parody, satire and imaginative absurdities aimed at the political process or other calamities of human endeavor.

If we prose editorialists are persuasive, our readers react; action can result.

If we cartoonists are lucky, readers either laugh, cry, applaud or remain boringly silent. With a powerful message, however, readers may be moved to action.

After all, unlike editorials—requiring the task of reading—we have only seconds to visually convey an opinion-page idea.

Yet behind the scenes, creating analogous images at the drawing board, we turn our own fun and mischief into ink-lined characters peopling the rugged terrain of politics, public affairs and social trends.

We like to think we hit human greed, political mismanagement and public lethargy in the marketplace of ideas and statecraft. We seek to shape public opinion, galvanize public action; sometimes we try to expose politicians too big for their britches.

Said Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Bill Mauldin: "If it's big, hit it. You can't go far wrong." 71

As political commentators, we are illustrators—exaggerating faces in caricature, casting politicians and policymakers in strange, humorous and fantasy environments. The landscape of the editorial cartoon can be fantasy, farce, burlesque or stark sinister symbolism instantly recognized as heroes and villains and virtuous crusaders clashing with villainous corruption.

Yet the cartoon is mostly a morning chuckle; in time, if the issue is recycled enough with a powerful message, the cartoon can unleash a public outcry or arouse anger and protest.

The editorial cartoon can be a strong point drawn from complex information in a few simple lines, deeply biting, chillingly candid, somehow without being personally offensive—an artistic function making the reader suddenly see familiar facts with a new eye.

The cartoon can be the cocktail or salad before the main meal—words we editors write.

As editor-cartoonist, I create images of a smaller world—mostly centered on Pensacola and the Gulf Coast region of Florida I know: West Florida, the rooftops of the peninsula known as the Panhandle; sometimes—for those who see the state as Orlando, magic kingdoms, Palm Beach, Miami and Tampa—"Forgotten Florida."

And I've observed the region—Florida's westernmost city and Escambia County—as an editor and cartoonist for the News Journal since the 1950s: on sports pages as sports editor until 1958; news pages and the editorial section “Focus” that I developed for Sunday editions while serving as news editor of The Pensacola News until I became the editorial page editor in 1965; and since 1966 as editoralist, senior editor and chairman of the editorial board.

This collection is drawn from thousands published on News Journal pages—most illustrative of the people, events and public issues of the region. Moreover, I coupled them with millions of words as editoralist, columnist and writer of feature and interpretative stories.

These images, drawn for the topical moment, portray nearly four decades. In the early years they were drawn larger for the engraver's camera and reduced and etched on zinc printing plates; by the 1970s, when the old metallic process vanished, they were drawn smaller and filmed for page paste-up; in the 1990s they are drawn even smaller and electronically scanned into the computer for full-page pagination.

The cartoons depict community issues and arguments that seem never to end, bridging a continuity of Pensacola history and social and political change. Often the issues are historically redundant in their graphic plea for public action. I've envisioned for community, regional and state improvement. And, compiling the drawings for this book of my life's work, the images represent endless arguments, peaks and valleys, trial and
error, victories and defeats. Many cartoons are moods of reverence for history and patriotism and their place and attitude in historic Pensacola, a U.S. Navy town known as the “Cradle of Naval Aviation” and “Annapolis of the Air” since 1914—the seaport sharing with St. Augustine the origins of Spanish Florida in the sixteenth century. Most days—especially Sunday—the cartoon fortifies the lead editorial focusing on local or regional issues, either written by me or the many other editorialists who helped shape News Journal opinion from the 1960s to the 1990s. In 1966, my first year as editor-in-chief, Charles Daw, managing editor of the Pensacola News, assisted me in writing editorials until he left the News Journal for other challenges, including a long career as editorial writer for the Jacksonville Journal.

Then I chose City Hall reporter Paul Jasper as editorial page editor of both morning and evening newspapers. Jasper was a writer impatient with pretense, little interested in ceremony or social gatherings; a student of governmental policy and city and county politics. His words were on News, Journal and News Journal opinion pages for twenty-three years until his fatal heart attack while on the job in October 1989.

Through the years Jasper was assisted by editorial associates Tom Bell, Prevost (Doc) Coulter, Mike Henderson, Jim Norman, Carlton Proctor and Jackie Brooks. By 1990, five years after we combined the evening News and the morning Journal into the morning News Journal, a new era began with Kentuckian Joedy Isert as the opinion page editor and Pensacola native Carl Wernicke as the assistant opinion page editor.

As chief editorialist of a John H. Perry newspaper from 1965 until 1969, I was responsible for developing the opinion policy with the assistance of Jasper and other editorial writers under the direction of Publisher Braden Ball.

The policy continued after 1969 — the year Gannett Co. Inc. purchased the Pensacola newspapers—under publishers James H. Jesse, Clifford Barnhart, Paul Flynn and Kenneth Andrews.

Yet by the 1970s we had developed an editorial board of editors and managers with me as chairman.

By 1990, under Publisher Denise Bannister, the board was formalized to bring more voices—including community members—into discussions for the shaping of editorial policy.

Yet our philosophy through the years has remained the same: the closer to home, the greater the impact of editorials and cartoons. And the greater the News Journal responsibility to speak forcefully and honestly and with thought-provoking candor and commitment to public good. We believe opinion can be effective when focused on our own region; we try to avoid Afghanistanism—a newspaper cliche for the editorialist’s safety of offering editorial advice for decision-makers far from one’s own realistic influence. Other editorialists may aim their arsenal at thought leaders and well-read individuals more intrigued by academic debate than issues affecting Main Street, the neighborhoods, suburbs and the West Florida heartland.

Unlike cartoonists with national distribution—caricaturing instantly recognizable figures—I focus mainly on the homefront. The key players are lesser known and require more exact likenesses and labeling; city and county government, state politics, regional issues and controversies.

I’ve strived to avoid an ideological straitjacket in the shaping of editorial policy. My own views reflect the belief in individual freedoms espoused by Thomas Jefferson; through the years the News Journal has voiced a moderate-to-conservative and liberal-on-human rights theme while exalting progressive ideas for the growth of the region and more efficient local and state government. Indeed, striving for improving the quality of life for Pensacolians and West Floridians.

Nationally syndicated cartoonists we have published—among them Herblock, Mauldin, Ranan Lurie, Jeff MacNelly, Jim Borgman and Gary Brookins—bring readers their personal views on national and international topics. But as Mauldin once said, local cartoonists are more effective in causing action—an idea I’ve used for Sunday pages and on other days when the News Journal addresses major issues affecting readers of our circulation region.

Editorial cartoons are mostly big-city phenomenons. Small or medium-sized dailies too long thought they couldn’t afford their own political cartoonists. In my case—employed by a newspaper of more than 65,000 daily and 80,000 Sunday circulation and relying solely on
syndicated cartoons—producing artwork was from
the beginning secondary to editing and writing
responsibilities. Yet with dual duties, cartooning is
a pleasant challenge I crowd into a busy week as
an editor and writer and a community activist.
Drawing is rewarding therapy, partially satisfying
my youthful yearning to be a writer-illustrator.

Moreover, through the years I’ve championed
American liberty and patriotism with traditional
symbolism; crusaded for preservation and
promotion of Pensacola’s four-centuries-old
historical heritage, and campaigned vigorously for
protecting the natural environment, quality
redevelopment of Pensacola’s bayfront and the
continuing economic renaissance of the historic
core of the city.

Whether it’s “dirt road politics,” better
highways, saving historical landmarks, revitalizing
downtown Pensacola or quality education, the
cartoon images convey my conviction about the city
and region where I’ve been privileged to live and
work and draw pictures since arriving as a twenty-
five-year-old sports writer.

I was an eager, energetic former U.S. Air Force
second lieutenant when I drew my first News
Journal sports cartoon. On the dining table of
my mother-in-law’s Panama City home I used a
crow quill pen, No. 3 Windsor and Newton brush
and a lithographic crayon to draw the helmeted
head of fullback Ed Sears, Pensacola’s leading
schoolboy football hero, on coquille board and
wreathed the portrait with smaller cartoonish
characters in the grand style of Willard Mullin.
The cartoon was published October 4, 1953.

The Sunday cartoon became a regular sports
page feature in the 1950s; I often drew sports
personalities to illustrate a Sunday column or
personality feature.

Sports cartoons as drawn by masters Mullin,
Lou Darvas, Murray Olderman and Karl
Hubenthal—shaded with a crayon, sometimes Ben
day—were still fashionable during my
sportswriting days. The hand-drawn sports
illustration has vanished, and today’s slick,
almost-perfect computer-crafted graphics—like
many other newspaper cartoon features and
illustrations—lack the spark, spontaneity and
versatility of the sure hand of superior craftsmen
like Mullin, Darvas and Olderman and Hubenthal.

Across the years, I developed a fondness for
Pensacola, Florida, American and Southern
history—especially the Civil War. After age fifty, I
began writing and illustrating books about the city
and West Florida. More, I explored new
techniques in cartooning. The ink lines,
carcaturizing and cartoon style evolved.

But not my unorthodox pattern of creating
cartoons—mostly during quiet, less-pressured
off-duty hours at home. Often I work at a small
dining table in our den, a late-night habit causing
mini-grief with the joy. My wife Mary Louise still
complains of India ink blackening carpets or
souring supper.

My art training was limited; cartooning has
been self-taught. As a teenager, I completed two
Washington School of Art correspondence lessons,
drew horses, cowboys, soldiers and guns in my
school notebooks and dreamed of enrolling in the
Chicago Academy of Fine Arts.

I admired the every-wrinkle-must-show
chiaroscuro style of Milton Caniff, and the superb
pen-and-ink craftsmanship of Al Capp’s “Lil
Abner,” Alex Raymond’s “Flash Gordon” and “Rip
Kirby,” Burne Hogarth’s “Tarzan,” Hal Foster’s
“Prince Valiant” and Walt Kelly’s “Pogo.” And the
editorial cartoons of Herblock, Daniel R.
Fitzpatrick, David Low and Vaughn Shoemaker
and classic paintings of Norman Rockwell.

I was inspired by Mauldin, who won his first
Pulitzer Prize in 1945 for his foxhole humor of two
infantry GIs in classic cartoons that helped define
World War II for the homefront Americans. The
left-handed New Mexican cartoonist replaced the
retiring Fitzpatrick on the St. Louis Post Dispatch
and won his second Pulitzer Prize in 1962. Later
syndicated as the Chicago Sun Times cartoonist,
Mauldin wrote and illustrated fifteen books before
his retirement in 1992, including classics Up
Front, Back Home, Bill Mauldin’s Army and The
Brass Ring.2

Yet, torn by ambitions of becoming either an
illustrator or cartoonist, and equally dreaming of a
writing career, I studied journalism at Florida
State University. Struggling through courses in art
composition, lettering and beginning oil painting, I
became disenchanted with abstract and
impressionistic art then in vogue in the FSU fine
arts department. I preferred realistic illustration.
But, already drawn to newspapering, I earned a
journalism degree and minored in political science.

As sports editor and then associate editor of
the FSU Florida Flambeau, I drew cartoons for
the student newspaper and supplied freelance
sports feature stories and cartoons for regional
weeklies and the daily Panama City News Herald.
Writer
Thomas
Clayton
Wolfe:
Master of
Description

Author
William
Faulkner:
The Master

Novelist
Ernest
Hemingway:
Master of
Dialogue
I developed a short-lived Flambeau adventure strip, "Rod Carson," a pipe-smoking, trenchcoat-clad international television journalist modeled closely on Caniff's "Steve Canyon." Yet dreams of syndication ended when I learned the rigors and discipline of creating continuity in a highly competitive field.

I found sports and editorial cartooning more realistic for pursuing my dream of becoming a writer-illustrator. In 1950 I wrote a sports column and drew sports cartoons regularly for the News Herald before entering the U.S. Air Force during the Korean conflict.

An Air Force journalist at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, I helped launch the base newspaper, The Planesman; as the first editor I drew portraiture cartoons of base personalities as a regular feature. Later in Officers Candidate School at Lackland AFB Base at San Antonio, I was inspired by the work of talented cartoonist Dick Locher, an upper classman whose striking cartoons illustrated Shavetail, the 1951 OCS yearbook. A syndicated editorial cartoonist with the Chicago Tribune, Locher continues the tradition of "Dick Tracy" creator Chester Gould as illustrator of the detective continuity strip.

When the Korean conflict ended, I joined the News Journal as a $65-a-week sports writer and cartoonist. For cartoons, Editor Marion T. Gaines paid $10 extra that he drew by petty cash voucher. But the pay was secondary; my foot and drawing board were in the door; my sports cartoons on daily newspaper pages represented compensation not measurable by paycheck.

Across the years I've used pebble board and duo-tone Craftint before returning to the loose, sketchy lines and crosshatching of early pen-and-ink illustration.

I strive for textures with lines and stippling on bristol board, using a variety of instruments—watercolor brushes, crow quill and Speedball pens, inexpensive cartridge fountain pens filled with India ink and ballpoint pens and markers with waterproof ink. I begin with a graphite pencil sketch, then apply the ink; indeed, pencil lines strengthened by photocopying will reproduce with the boldness of ink.

I never thought much about style, although in the early years I drew large, necessitating heavily inked lines for reduction for sharper hot-metal reproduction. Heavier lines remain; I break all rules and recycle recognizable symbols—Thomas Nast's Uncle Sam and Republican elephant and the Democratic donkey in historical-scene analogy.

I'm more comfortable with the more symbolic elements from an earlier age when cartoons dominated pages with powerful messages rather than elevating biting, gag-panel humor above the editorial statement.

The illustrative impact and clarity of the viewpoint of local cartoons can be more effective for local topics than clever gags poking fun at national news makers.

Among many successful News Journal editorial and cartoon campaigns was establishment of Gulf Islands National Seashore, which I first suggested in columns, editorials and cartoons in 1965. More than fifty cartoons advocating the national park helped illustrate a six-year editorial campaign that pitched pro-beach development advocates against a rising grassroots environmental movement. In January 1971, President Richard Nixon signed the congressional act establishing the seacoast recreational and historical park stretching from Santa Rosa Island and Pensacola harbor west to the Mississippi barrier islands. By the 1980s and nineties the park became one of the nation's most visited national seashores.

In the 1970s and 1980s I turned more to caricature for humorous portraiture of local and state newsmakers.

Many of these cartoons now hang in homes and offices of Pensacola residents on walls of businesses.

Bill (McGuire) Martin, founder of the popular McGuire's Irish Pub, chose to decorate the walls of the Irish Politician's Club with my cartoons of Pensacola and West Florida and state politicians and personalities—many who became fun-loving members who continue the American tradition of gathering to talk politics and hear visiting politicians.

Many of these cartoons and illustrations have been published in books, including six historical books I have written on Pensacola and the West Florida region and The Write Way: An Editor's Guide for Students of Writing, a textbook I wrote and illustrated for journalistic writing courses I teach as a faculty associate at the University of West Florida.

Together these drawings are an editor's thematic sketchbook in the fight for good government, preservation of heritage and belief in...
the quality of life in a Florida region known as Florida's Last Frontier.

The word cartoon comes to us from the Italian and French words for "card" and "paper." Originally, a "cartoon" was a preliminary, full-sized sketch for a work of art, but done on paper. This sketch was then transferred to the wall, ceiling, or large canvas where the final work of art was completed.

With the coming of the printing press, "cartoon" took on another meaning. It was a sketch which could be mass produced and transmitted widely.

Today, of course, the word cartoon usually connotes humor, almost synonymous with words "comics" and "funnies." The editorial cartoon has a marvelous factor of continuity with abstracted and emphasized likenesses becoming more real than photographs. Yet cartoons can be deeply biting and chillingly candid without being personally offensive.

The messages of editorial (sometimes called political) cartoons are meant to sway public opinion. Rather than restating the news in graphic form, a cartoon should depict a political, social, or an economic problem and, by implication, offer some solution. The power lies in its analogy. Rather than depicting the issue or problem in literal terms, the artist likens it to something else, reducing complex issues to simple if not simplistic terms, and invites readers to stretch their imagination.

The typical editorial cartoon attacks bumbling if not devious public officials. Or it deflates a stuffed shirt. Caricature is the technique—the art of making people look like them with humorous distortion. Once a high and dastardly art, caricature emphasizes telltale features through exaggeration that is often eminently unfair, but necessary to make a character instantly recognizable.

Originally developed for magazines (Thomas Nast, for instance, drew for Harper's Weekly), editorial cartoons became more closely tied to newspapers after the development of metallic engraving in the 1890s. The woodcut process was too prolonged for cartoons. Besides, newspapers were divided into columns, and printers didn't like to break the vertical lines (called rules) and run material across columns.

A staff of engravers copied the drawings on boxwood blocks, several engravers often working on the same picture. The wood blocks were bolted together to form the completed picture, taking as many as forty blocks for a double-page spread. From sketch pad to printed page often took more than four weeks.

Yet the woodcut in the 1860s demonstrated the power of graphic content. Called "special artists" who went onto battlefields, Alfred Waud, Theodore R. Davis and Edwin Forbes brought the Civil War to life for readers in the elaborate woodcuts in Harper's Weekly and Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper.

Early twentieth century newspapers such as the Chicago Tribune, Milwaukee Journal and Nashville Banner—even the Orlando Sentinel and Tampa Tribune—ran cartoons regularly on their front pages.

Early newspaper publishers—typically William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Patterson and Colonel Robert McCormick—hired cartoonists to voice their strong political opinions. The Chicago Tribune, for example, started running its editorial cartoons on the front page in 1903. In the 1940s, Colonel McCormick published full-color cartoons to increase Tribune readership. The Orlando Sentinel ran page-one cartoons in color in the 1940s.

Similarly political magazines such as Masses and the Liberator took committed stands sharply illustrated by cartoon satire.

Traditionally the editorial cartoonist usually reflected the point of view of the editor and the publisher, or of an editorial board. Editors usually have final approval on cartoonists' work before publication, but many who attain national syndication—such as independents Bill Mauldin and Pat Oliphant—are published for their own visual commentary. Indeed newspaper editorial pages in the last forty years have become a palette of many hues and a blend of opposing views to sustain readership.

The English artist William Hogarth (1697-1764) is usually considered the first cartoonist in Western history. Hogarth went beyond individual caricatures, which the Italians had introduced, and drew general scenes of humor and biting satire. The classic Hogarth was, in a sense, the first political cartoon, and his narrative cartoon stories presaged the modern comic strip.

Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) and his contemporary, James Gillray (1757-1815), followed in Hogarth's footsteps and created an ever-widening audience for the cartoon. Soon the
cartoon, as a form of social protest and political persuasion, spread throughout Europe and eventually around the world.

In Spain, Goya (1746-1828) established himself as a painter of great power. But he also drew cartoons which put him at odds with the monarch, Fernando VII. After repeated difficulties, Goya moved to France, where he died in exile.

In France, Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) raised cartooning to a fine art—and it landed him in prison. His caricatures of King Louis-Phillippe as a bloated monster were not appreciated by the monarch. After one prison sentence, Daumier ran into trouble again for his cartoon attacks on the French legislature.

When a stiff news censorship law was passed in 1835, Daumier turned to the general satire of social mores rather than continue his pointed political caricatures. He returned to his attack again, however, during the reign of Napoleon III. Today, Daumier is recognized as "the patron saint" of political cartooning. But he died in obscurity; his enormous contribution to cartooning was only recognized in retrospect.

To a large extent, the style and power of the political cartoon were set by Goya and Daumier. Their influence, both in subject and treatment, can be traced right down to the giants of the field such as Daniel Fitzpatrick, Herblock, Mauldin and Oliphant.

In colonial America, many anti-British cartoons were drawn by artists who—perhaps wisely—remained anonymous. But Benjamin Franklin’s "Join or Die" cartoon in 1754 is often reproduced as the first American political cartoon.

Thomas Nast (1840-1902) hacked away at Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall, setting a standard of bludgeoning political enemies.

"Stop them damn pictures," demanded William Marcy Tweed to his henchmen. "I don’t care so much what the papers write about me. My constituents can’t read. But, damn it, they can see pictures." Similarly, Homer Davenport (1867-1912) slashed away at President William McKinley and the political machine of Mark Hanna.

During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln called Nast "our best recruiting sergeant." Nast introduced many images still used today, including the modern Santa Claus and the Republican elephant. To a large extent, Nast showed the power and defined the potential of the American political cartoonist.

Nast’s most famous work appeared in Harper’s Weekly; late in life he published Nast’s Weekly. But with the emergence of giant metropolitan dailies, political cartooning split into two traditions: the editorial-page of daily newspapers and, eventually, the multi-paper syndicate; and political journals and magazines.

Stars among the newspaper cartoonists included John McCutcheon, Rollin Kirby, Jay (Ding) Darling, Nelson Harding, Daniel R. Fitzpatrick and Edmund Duffy.

Cartoonists who worked for political magazines reached smaller audiences, but they introduced issues and art styles which influenced succeeding cartoonists. Prominent in this tradition were Art Young, Boardman Robinson, John Sloan and Robert Minor. Minor and Robinson especially pioneered the use of crayon and massive solid figures, a style reminiscent of Daumier and Goya, and an approach followed by later masters such as Fitzpatrick, Herblock and Mauldin.

The post-World War II period was dominated by Herblock of the Washington Post, Bill Mauldin of the St. Louis Post Dispatch and later the Chicago Sun-Times, and Paul Conrad of the Los Angeles Times.

In the 1970s, a new generation of political cartoonists emerged, led by Pat Oliphant, an Australian, first with the Denver Post and then the Washington Star, and later syndicated worldwide.

Close in popularity was Jeff MacNelly, first of the Richmond, Va., News Leader; then the Chicago Tribune. MacNelly is considered conservative, a rarity among cartoonists. Others of the new generation include Jim Morin, Mike Peters, Tony Auth, Don Wright, Doug Marlette, Paul Szep, Dick Locher and Jack Ohman.

The trend toward rapier wit rather than broadaxe attack is underscored by Garry Trudeau’s Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning in 1975 for his comic strip “Doonesbury.” The trend was verified by the selection of Jules Feiffer’s offbeat satire for the 1986 Pulitzer and of Berke Breathed’s strip, “Bloom County,” for the 1987 Pulitzer.

In the 1990s Bruce Tinsley created “Mallard Fillmore,” a horizontal satirical strip that offers a conservative counterbalance to the more liberal “Doonesbury.”
Similarly, MacNelly moves easily from the editorial page to the comics page with his syndicated strip “Shoe,” Marlette created the southern-fried satirical strip “Kudzu” and Peters originated “Mother Goose & Grimm.”

There were fewer ideological cartoonists in the last years of the twentieth century, and almost none specifically Democratic or Republican. Yet, emphasizing humor rather than stark symbolism, the new generation’s light touch reflects the changing role of the daily newspaper in American life. By comparison, the heavier touch of practitioners in the 1930s, forties and fifties had less impact.

As the press barons passed from the scene, newspaper editorial pages were less the voice of a strong publisher and more the collective views of editorial boards. At the same time, the trend toward mergers created more and more one-newspaper towns, and more multi-newspaper companies like Gannett and Knight-Ridder. The city with one Republican and one Democratic paper, or one liberal and one conservative paper, became increasingly rare.

Yet I’m pleased cartoonists have moved away from the more vertical, crayon-solid figure and somber comment. Influenced by modern illustrators such as Ronald Searle, one of the best British satirists, they tend toward sketchy, fine-line caricature, approaching their targets with rapier wit rather than hammering symbolism.

Newspaper cartoons evolved by feeding the greater demand for humor and graphic illustration that crystallizes the complex events of the day. Still the editorial cartoon may inform, and may persuade, but above all, it must attract readers to the editorial page.8

Let’s face it. Faces fascinate cartoonists. Often it’s the big-head, small-body—life bigger than life, parts stretched and contorted for humorous image—that sparks the humorous exaggeration we call caricature.

And, if we cartoonists are lucky, there is enough of a likeness to spark a chuckle, or “Yep, that’s him.” Or her.

More, in this sense caricature should not be to provoke or make fun or demean the person. Cartoonists painting the global canvas embellish faces so that, in time, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton, Ross Perot and Saddam Hussein and other figures look like their own caricatures. But caricature is a tougher line to master when dealing with your Pensacola neighbors.

Their faces, while familiar, are not sudden, recognizable images. A truer likeness is needed, even though the big-head small-body personification is an effort to convey personality. Caricature has been romanticized as a powerful art form capable of affecting change, exposing corruption, and even toppling governments. Yet rarely does it produce such altruisic triumphs. The caricature does not have to be an offensive weapon, even though the likenesses should be rife with aesthetic appeal.

It can be pure entertainment for the cartoonist and for those whose faces emerge in humorous perception. And should be.

I’ve had fun drawing caricatures for Escambia County school classes, conducting cartooning workshops at the Pensacola Museum of Art and teaching caricaturing and cartooning at the downtown center of Pensacola Junior College.

My cartoons have been exhibited in two one-artist shows at the Pensacola Museum of Art, a Seville Square gallery and a retrospective show in the T.T. Wentworth Jr. Florida State Museum.

These cartoons and drawings—more than 1,250 from the thousands I’ve drawn for the News Journal —have been fun for this compulsive doodler. The faces on these pages are among hundreds that fill my sketchbooks and enliven my memories of the many nights I struggled to capture a facial likeness and generate ideas.

The left hand of an editor who draws his own cartoons is never still.

As far as I know, having researched the field and asked editors, working cartoonists and syndicate officials, I’m unique as a senior news executive drawing his own editorial-page cartoons.

Indeed, veteran syndicate cartoonist Jud Hurd, editor of Cartoonist Profiles, a national magazine published in Connecticut, asked me to write and illustrate an article about my dual profession.

Hurd said it was “an almost unheard-of situation when a newspaper editor also does his own cartoons.” The story, “An Editor as His Own Cartoonist,” illustrated with five of my cartoons, including caricatures of John Wayne and Ronald Reagan, was published in the September 1990 edition.
One *News Journal* wag, aware cartoonists usually work for editors and many still must clear artwork through an editor before publication, said, "He's the only cartoonist I know who approves his own work."

Maybe so.

I consider myself fortunate.

But as editor and cartoonist I’ve tried to illustrate policies developed by the editorial board rather than basing the cartoon solely on personal ideology.

Naturally, the cartoonist uses weapons—humor, satire, fantasy—not always suited to written arguments.

The publisher understands that when a cartoonist satirizes events and event makers, the graphic will often be more a needler than a cheerleader.

The effective cartoonist refines the material until only the ridiculous essence remains.

The publisher, as chief executive of the newspaper, and responsible for its content, has the final word.

None of the six publishers I’ve worked for has ever exercised veto power.

But I always heed common sense. I respect the freedom of expression granted an editor entrusted with overseeing the newspaper’s institutional voice. Even though there may be philosophical disagreement, there should be no surprises for the publisher on the editorial page.

Yet these cartoons are my creations. They spring from my own convictions as an editorialist and, fortunately, as the chairman of the editorial board.

Some editors who work without cartoonists say they’ve never found one who could draw what they desire for their editorial pages.

At least since I became the editorial page editor in 1965, and for more than thirty years I’ve been the senior editor, I’ve not faced that problem.

The editorial cartoons in this book are clustered as a chronology from 1953 to the mid-1990s. Many unpublished faces taken from my sketchbooks—some unrelated to the flow of the editorial cartoons—are sprinkled throughout the book for graphic variety.

They include a gallery of *News Journal* personalities and other Pensacolians, politicians and community leaders, beginning of page 283.

The page narrative preceding each decade of drawings focuses on the issues covered in the cartoons. I hope the summaries give meaning and context to many of the drawings. They chronicle the events and the decision-makers of my long, rewarding adventure.

2. “Mauldin is retiring from editorial cartooning,” *Editor & Publisher*, March 21, 1992, 52.