Editor marks 40 years at News Journal

FROM IRVING T. Wentworth Jr., Florida State University

For more than 40 years, J. Earle Bowden has been the lead sports reporter for the Pensacola News Journal, covering local, regional, and national sporting events. Bowden has written about a wide range of sports, including football, baseball, basketball, and track and field. His reporting has been recognized with numerous awards, including the Florida Sportswriter of the Year Award in 1992.

Bowden joined the News Journal in 1952 and has been a fixture in the local sports community ever since. He has covered everything from high school games to professional championships, and his reporting has been a valued resource for both fans and media.

Bowden is a native of Pensacola and a graduate of the University of Florida. He has been married for over 50 years and has two children. He has been active in the community and is a past president of the Florida Sports Writers Association. He is also a member of the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association.

Despite his many accomplishments, Bowden remains humble and dedicated to his craft. "I've always enjoyed the opportunity to cover sports," he said. "It's a great way to keep up with the community and its people."

Bowden's impact on the Pensacola sports scene is immeasurable. "Earle is one of the most respected sports reporters in the country," said Pensacola News Journal sports editor Tom Hatfield. "He's a true professional who always gives 110 percent."

Bowden's legacies are well known and appreciated. "Earle Bowden has been a cornerstone of our sports section for decades," said Pensacola News Journal publisher Bob Hatfield. "He's a treasure and we're honored to have him on our team."
Give seashore its founder's name

This afternoon, as a community honoree a man who as much anyone helped shape the Pensacola and Gulf Islands National Seashore community, we'd like to make a suggestion.

For his tireless efforts, for his selfless preservation work, for his commitment to the community, we would suggest that the island be named in honor of Earle Bowden.

We'll be officially re-named after Earle's approval of the seashore in 1971 and its opening in 1972. But through it all, Bowden, ever the purist journalist, demanded that both sides, those for and those against the seashore, be not only heard, but have their stories and arguments covered fairly in the newspaper as was Fairness as important as the finish.

There already is in Pensacola the Bowden Building, so named for Bowden's hard work to preserve the community's historic heritage.

Vanderbilt streets around Seville Square, or through Historic Pensacola Village and Bowden's personal imprint linger, largely because nearly every piece of downtown owes some of its salvation to Jesse Earle Bowden.

As Sandra L. Johnson, curator/director of the Historical Society Museum, who held the key to historic preservation in Pensacola for all those years, he was the guiding force.

Pensacola Bay owes much to Bowden. Watching it fulfill its role as a conduit of pollutants, Bowden took the battle to the primary polluters, local industry and even the city of Pensacola.

A simple glance out over the bay testifies to the success of that campaign.

Bam-Bam Nunez campaigned to build Adams Mason Park and bring baseball back to Pensacola. The effort was successful, though the baseball hasn't retained its fan base as it once had.

Still, through all his work on historic preservation, an environmental cause, on progress, on helping bring about better government in his day, he believed his best work was before him.

We will require congressional approval, but we believe that would be more формality be witnessed by the Ernest of U.S. Sen. Bob Graham and Congresswoman Connie Mack, U.S. Sen. Bob Dole, Sen. John Glenn, and others.

Let Asmar prove worth during 3-month tryout

We understand County Administrator Bob Koncar's commitment to quality leadership, but we agree with his commitment to hire new Assistant Administrator John F. Asmar's salary to $30,000 annually.

Asmar, though he has several years' experience with the city of Pensacola, is proven. He has been Commissioner W. A. "Buck" Lee's assistant, has been very successful in earning the $45,000, a $10,000 jump over his city salary. He will be a difficult act to follow.

But he will have the opportunity to prove himself as he helps Koncar right the county's budget and with everyday operations. Working with Koncar and the other assistant, former Sanitation Department Director Philip Richards, Asmar will be tried by fire.

He also will be able to compete for a full-time position as assistant county administrator in the part-time role that Koncar has been following for the short-term position.

It should give him a chance to smooth out the roller-coaster hills of the county's problems and with every other official to improve the county, then when he is worth the highest pay, he will be worth the highest pay.

For a raise over his former pay, he's getting the opportunity — and challenge — of a lifetime.

Earle Bowden: 40 years here at home

When I came here two years ago as the new publisher of the News Journal, I had to learn it. As a newcomer I knew little about Pensacola. But as publisher it is my job to know the people, the issues — the heart of my town. That's good business, and it's good newspapering. As the heart of the community is at the heart of its community, and until I understood this community I knew that neither this newspaper nor myself could be what we should be.

Fortunately, I discovered at the heart of the News Journal the best resource a publisher ever had — J. Earle Bowden. And I'm not the first to think so. One of my predecessors, Jim Jesse, says Earle was "a joy for a publisher. I felt I hit the ground running with him. I've published newspapers in some 14 cities and I never met an editor like Earle. His devotion to the community was unswerving."

I couldn't agree more. Earle is editor, vice president and chairman of the editorial board of the News Journal, but I'd like to add that my own personal title is "Earle's a real juj."


Looking forrress of 1985. Was Jeanette found a man with a phenomenal group of a newspaper's essential mission — to know who do what, where and why. Especially why, because that is what Earle made the News Journal an axillary part of Northwest Florida, what made his mind is to bring about the Gulf Islands National Seashore, to push for creation of our historic-districts, to help in its unfinished mission to bring better government to Escambia County on that day when a charter is finally adopted, as someday it will be.

Earle was one of the main drivers in making the charter. I see it as a treasure chest to an oration past. His philanthropic money in a rich storehouse reaching across 65 years of West Florida history.

Former PAN editor Paul Fyfe put it well: "He was sort of a renaissance man and soulmate to me as a publisher. He kept me from making many mistakes."

Pensacola is a big town compared to the tiny Alhambra of Earle's youth, but I don't think the distance between the people is that far. He's a true son of West Florida who bucked the words of his favorite author, Thomas Wolfe, who wrote that "You can go home again.

Earle's best Stills is at his own game. He might have moved to Pensacola, but he never left home. The Air Force took him briefly away from these pleasant woods and into cities, but when Earle joined the News Journal in 1981 I have the feeling he knew he was back home.

I have yet to meet anyone who better understands the spirit of West Florida — its people, its places and its politics. One can long from the Chipola River Valley to his youth, he never left the people he understands.

No, Pensacola isn't Alhambra, but the people have their roots in the same sandy soil. Jim Jesse and Earle was an unusual editor because once he was established here, "I don't think he ever wanted a job outside Pensacola."

I believe Earle is buckier than most, a born newspaperman whose good luck and good sense was to do what he was born for, where he was born. Newspapering fit the man, and he fits newspapering. Can anything be better than to make a place your home and then make your name in that place.

The News Journal was long established before Earle Bowden joined it, but in Earle's hands it became more than a newsprint and ink. It became a true hometown newspaper that lives and breathes the salt air of the Gulf Coast.

It goes without saying that the News Journal's crowning single accomplishment — and Earle Bowden's — was the campaign that led to the creation of the Gulf Islands National Seashore.

At the time Earle welcomed the opposition of many prominent and powerful people because he held a vision in his mind of what this community could be.

Today, we can't escape West Florida without Gulf Islands National Seashore, a priceless piece of substantial pride, comfort and just plain usefulness to every resident of West Florida. Because of it, as our immediate predecessor, Ken Andrews, said, "Earle's contributions to this community will long be remembered.

Time passes away, as we all will. But in his 40th year of service to this newspaper and this community, we celebrate the fact that Earle Bowden is, and will remain, at the heart of the News Journal and of this community.

His influence will be felt here long after these words — and we ourselves — have faded away.