

Longtime El Paso newsman Bruce Earl Bissonette dies at 85

By Nicole Gomez

El Paso Times

EL PASO — Former local news reporter, radio personality, columnist and aviator Bruce Earl Bissonette has died at the age of 85.

Bissonette died Wednesday of congestive heart failure at Eden Assisted Living in El Paso, said his son, Earl Bissonette, 54.

Throughout the 1950s, Bissonette was a news reporter and camera operator for KROD-TV and KTSM-TV. He was the news director at Channel 9-KTSM from 1978

until the early 1980s.

Bissonette was a police, fire, military and aviation reporter for the El Paso Times throughout the 1960s and wrote an award-winning aviation column titled "Prop Pitch" until 1974. He received multiple awards for his reporting from the El Paso Firefighter's Association, the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas House of Representatives, in particular for a series of articles he wrote on freeway driving hazards called "Avoid Being a Statistic." Bissonette also had several articles pub-

lished in the Congressional Record.

He was the editor of Western Recreation News, a local outdoor sports and recreation newspaper, from 1976 until 1978. In the early 1980s, he was a co-host of a morning radio show on station KEZB-FM (B-94), and was known to listeners as "Uncle Bruce."

Bissonette also started Skyway Products, a small custom-manufacturing company that produced aviation supplies in the 1970s, and dabbled in acting and photography. In 1972, he played a

small role in the Steve McQueen film "The Getaway," which was partly filmed in El Paso.

Bissonette founded the El Paso Aviation Hall of Fame Inc. and the Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 555 in the early 1980s. He wrote two books about aviation, "The Wichita 4: Cessna, Moellendick, Beech & Stearman" and "Travel Air: A Photo History," both published by the Aviation Heritage Library Series.

Bruce Bissonette Drive, a street off of Redd Road near Helen of Troy Drive, is

named after him. Several streets in the area are named after local aviators.

Bruce Bissonette was born on Dec. 13, 1923, in Sandusky, Mich. He moved to Biggs Air Force Base in El Paso with the Air Force reserves in 1950 after serving in the Pacific during World War II.

Bissonette is survived by his wife, Emma Bissonette, 84; daughter Marianne Bissonette, 56; son Earl Bissonette and five grandchildren.

EL PASO TIMES
12-15-2009