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# Connecting

July 17, 2023

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Days after my dad's death in 2013, The Messenger left the light on in his office on Central Avenue in memory of his seven decades of service to the newspaper. This was taken by dad's grandson Matt Stevens, my nephew.

Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this July 17, 2023,

You won't find this item in the 10 Years Ago section of today's AP Today in History, but it's a most significant date for members of my family:

On this date in 2013, Walter B. Stevens – a newspaperman for seven decades, a World War II veteran with 33 months of combat service in Europe and a father to three as well as a grandfather and great grandfather – [died in Fort Dodge, Iowa](#), at the age of 96.

Like many of my Connecting colleagues and friends who have lost their parents (mom died two years before dad), I miss them greatly but I'm grateful they were my parents. And memories of dad always surface whenever I hear Dan Fogelberg's song "Leader of the Band" and the words, "My life has been a poor attempt to imitate the man, I'm just a living legacy to the leader of the band."

You may not know this but were it not for dad, perhaps you might not be reading this newsletter!

Dad was 72 when he retired and continued writing his weekly Spotlight column, which profiled people and places in the Fort Dodge area, for the next 17 years until he was a year short of 90. So when I told him I had decided to accept the AP buyout of 2009 and retire at 62, he frowned and said, "Paul, you're a slacker!" I think he was kidding but ...



Maybe that was an inspiration to "unslack" the year he died and begin this Connecting newsletter. And maybe that was why I accepted the offer in 2016 to continue his Spotlight column that is published monthly in The Messenger, where dad spent the majority of his newspaper career and where I got my first byline at age 15.

Speaking of the Spotlight, click [here](#) for my July column on the YWCA in Fort Dodge that tells how it has been a haven for women, working out of the same building for more than a century and continues to benefit the community.

Enough of me, let's hear from you this week – here's to a great week ahead, one where you'll be safe, stay healthy and live each day to your fullest.

Paul

## '20 Days in Mariupol' Review: Inside Ukraine's Living Hell

*A documentary by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Mstyslav Chernov captures the atrocities and other harrowing incidents visited upon the port city in the early days of Russia's invasion*



Photographer Evgeniy Maloletka in Mariupol PHOTO: MSTYSLAV CHERNOV/AP

By Kyle Smith  
Wall Street Journal

Grueling but vital, the documentary “20 Days in Mariupol” takes us inside the atrocities visited on the strategically important Ukrainian port city in the early days of the Russian attack in 2022. Narrated and directed by a Ukrainian Associated Press journalist, Mstyslav Chernov, who with three other team members won the Pulitzer Prize for their efforts, the fly-on-the-wall film makes for a dizzying reminder of the brutality and banality of war.

Mr. Chernov’s stunned, quiet, almost whispery narration makes him a successor to Dante’s Virgil as he steers us through this infernal tableau produced by Frontline PBS and the AP, which is being released in theaters ahead of a fall debut on TV. Aided greatly by an eerie, tonal score by Jordan Dykstra, Mr. Chernov provides a devastatingly matter-of-fact running commentary. “Someone once told me wars don’t start with explosions,” he relates on the first day. “They start with silence.” It’s as if the city is holding its breath awaiting Vladimir Putin’s “special military operation.”

Early on, Mr. Chernov blithely informs a woman worried about the coming onslaught that the Russians won’t attack noncombatants. The wrongness of that prediction informs nearly every subsequent scene as Russian shells, some fired from a distance and others from the tanks that creep into the city as we watch, indiscriminately destroy apartment buildings and even hospitals. The woman reappears later in the film, her house in ruins. A man notes that Russia aims to seize his homeland and dryly adds, “I’d rather it not.” In a hospital we see a four-year-old child lying dead on a gurney. A 16-year-old boy whose legs were blown off while he was playing soccer succumbs to his injuries. His wailing father drapes himself over the corpse. This is war in close-up, with its ultimate effects given their due prominence.

Read more [here](#). Shared by George Arfield.

## Connecting mailbox

### *Not disclosed?*

[Jeffrey Ulbrich](#) - Doesn't it seem odd that a story AP is writing about itself and a deal with another company (OpenAI-AP) contains the sentence - "Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.")?

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### *Full Stop. Period.*

[Jim Reindl](#) - The New York Times has never met a period it liked. This 70-word breath stealer from Friday is evidence. I think I used to write college basketball leads that weighed in lighter.

"In a cinematic season dominated by series, superheroes and pre-existing I.P. all aimed at the widest-possible market, whether there is still a theatergoing audience sizable enough to sustain the work of a highly individualistic, highly ambitious director like Nolan — whose latest is a three-hour epic focusing on, among other weighty themes, the moral dilemmas faced by the title character, called "the father of the atomic bomb" — remains an open question."

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### *AP Sighting*

[Dick Lipsey](#) - Here is an AP mention from a book titled "Death in the City of Light: The Serial Killer of Nazi-Occupied Paris," by David King, published in 2011.

The book is the true story of a serial killer, Dr. Marcel Petiot, who was charged with 27 murders and was suspected of killing perhaps as many as 150 people.

When it was revealed in March 1944 that the remains of perhaps dozens of bodies had been found in Petiot's home in Paris, "Albert Camus was holding rehearsals for his first play, *The Misunderstanding*. ... The piece was in fact inspired nine years before when Camus read a short item in the Associated Press about a young man who returned home to Yugoslavia only to be killed by his mother.

"Camus added the element of the disguised return and the twist that the family had, in his absence, transformed the hotel into a profitable slaughterhouse." Many of Petiot's victims were people trying to escape the Nazi occupation and whom Petiot had assured that he had an escape route to Argentina.

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## *When a grope isn't a grope*

Chuck Mcfadden - A court in Italy has ruled that a grope that lasts less than 10 seconds isn't a grope.

How long do you suppose it will be before the first newspaper cartoons appear showing a guy groping with one hand while checking his stopwatch with the other?

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## *Rockaway River overflows*



Guy Palmiotto - After several days of intense rainstorms, the Rockaway River, which courses through much of Northern Morris County, NJ, was beginning to overflow its banks and some minor flooding had been experienced in my town, Rockaway Township as well as other towns such as neighboring Dover, NJ. The attached photo shows the river overflowing its banks after flowing over the falls in Rockaway Borough, NJ, Sunday morning, July 16, 2023. I used a slow shutter speed to try and emphasize the speed at which the water was flowing.

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## *Milky Way*



[Nick Ut](#) - Just shot Milky Way last night at Trona Pinnacles, Calif.

***BEST OF THE WEEK — FIRST WINNER***

**Follow-up reporting after Texas mass shooting reveals long-standing complaints about police response**



When a Texas sheriff's story about a mass shooting didn't add up, Dallas-based reporter Jake Bleiberg dug in.

During the four-day search for a man accused of fatally shooting five of his neighbors in April, San Jacinto County Sheriff Greg Capers told a crush of reporters that his deputies got to the scene in 11 minutes, but the suspect had vanished. Bleiberg was among the Texas reporters covering the shooting who heard again and again from area residents that deputies rarely responded to calls faster than 30 minutes. As he worked the phone to get a fuller picture, Bleiberg connected with a source who provided him with a remarkable document. It was the report of a police consultant who county officials hired to examine the sheriff's office. Bleiberg quickly authenticated the document and headed down to the rural corner of East Texas to continue reporting along with video journalist Lekan Oyekanmi and freelance photographer Michael Wyke.

They conducted more than 20 interviews with current and former deputies, county officials and residents. Bleiberg successfully pressed for the release of public records related to the shooting that county officials had previously held back and obtained revealing court documents and evidence gathered in a whistleblower lawsuit against the sheriff. The reporting revealed that the latest inaccuracies were part of years' worth of accusations against the sheriff, including neglecting basic police work, evidence of the improper seizure of tens of thousands of dollars of property, ignoring previous concerns over the alleged shooter, and his deputies failing to follow up on reports of 4,000 crimes — including sexual and child abuse.

This story was an AP Exclusive, and news organizations throughout Texas credited that reporting. It was featured prominently on the homepages and front pages of Texas' largest newspapers, The Dallas Morning News and the Houston Chronicle. Houston TV station KHOU also used Oyekanmi's NR edit to shape its own package. A strong social promotion plan that included an AP push alert helped the story receive a top

engagement score of 100, and it received more than 100,000 page views on AP News platforms, a solid number on a weekday, and particularly strong on a weekend.

Read more [here](#).

## ***BEST OF THE WEEK — SECOND WINNER***

# **Deep reporting reveals a divided and polarized America**



Colorado and Idaho are fast-growing Rocky Mountain states that have been transformed by an influx of new, like-minded residents. But they increasingly occupy two separate worlds, as both represent different poles of state-level political homogenization.

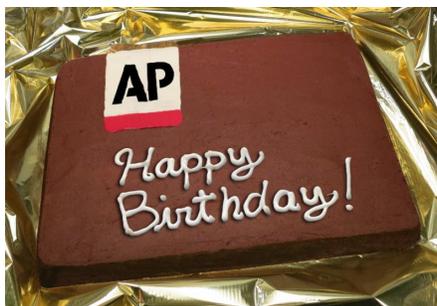
Denver-based Democracy team reporter Nick Riccardi spent weeks working with real estate agents to find people who had recently moved to Idaho because it was politically conservative and to Colorado because it represented the opposite. He figured these states would be ideal settings to tell the story of a country where political polarization has only deepened in recent years, with Americans sorting themselves in Democratic- or Republican-controlled states.

Riccardi traveled to Idaho for interviews and found other subjects near his base in Denver. He found that abortion, LGBTQ+ issues and even how a state had responded to the Covid-19 pandemic are all major drivers in how people are deciding where to live. As a result, states are leaning even further to the left or right, and the divide just keeps growing wider.

Riccardi's enterprise feature was the AP's top-performing story the day it was published. It had 200,000 page views and was the top story for engagement, with a perfect 100 score. And it also was by far the most viewed story across the AP's social media platforms, with nearly 20,000 views.

Read more [here](#).

## Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Carolyn Lessard](#)

## Stories of interest

### *Editorial cartoonists' firings point to steady decline of opinion pages in newspapers* (AP)

BY DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — Even during a year of sobering economic news for media companies, the layoffs of three Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonists on a single day hit like a gut punch.

The firings of the cartoonists employed by the McClatchy newspaper chain last week were a stark reminder of how an influential art form is dying, part of a general trend away from opinion content in the struggling print industry.

Losing their jobs were Jack Ohman of California's Sacramento Bee, also president of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists; Joel Pett of the Lexington Herald-Leader in Kentucky and Kevin Siers of the Charlotte Observer in North Carolina. Ohman and Siers were full-time staffers, while Pett worked on a free-lance contract. The firings on Tuesday were first reported by The Daily Cartoonist blog.

"I had no warning at all," Ohman told The Associated Press. "I was stupefied."

McClatchy, which owns 30 U.S. newspapers, said it would no longer publish editorial cartoons. "We made this decision based on changing reader habits and our relentless

focus on providing the communities we serve with local news and information they can't get elsewhere," the chain said in a statement.

Read more [here](#).

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## ***Experienced, retired journalists are powering the industry forward*** (Editor and Publisher)

**Bob Sillick | for Editor & Publisher**

Experience, skills and a track record for excellence are essential characteristics of successful people in any profession, including journalism. Today, journalism is experiencing a historical transition from printed newspapers to digital platforms as well as a generational transition.

Newspapers of all sizes have contracted, and thousands of journalism jobs have disappeared. Nonetheless, there are also more fresh, young faces in newsrooms while many veteran journalists are accepting buyouts or retiring. An even newer trend is more of them still want to contribute to the profession in some capacity.

Many Americans 65 and older continue to work, a situation exacerbated by the pandemic. Some need the income; others are adding to their retirement assets as high earners, and many are healthier than their parents.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Len Iwanski.

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## ***Billionaire Patrick Soon-Shiong Holds Talks to Sell LA Times to Entertainment Trade Mogul Jay Penske*** (The Intersect)

**JOE BEL BRUNO**

Los Angeles Times owner Patrick Soon-Shiong and entertainment trade publishing magnate Jay Penske are discussing a deal to transfer ownership of the West's largest newspaper, according to two people directly briefed on the talks.

The people, who are inside both publishers' inner circles and asked not to be identified for fear of retribution, said the owners have held talks about a deal where The Times is folded into Penske's PMC Media empire that includes Rolling Stone, The Hollywood Reporter, Billboard, and Variety. It would allow Soon-Shiong, who last week unloaded ownership of The San Diego Union-Tribune to vulture-capital firm Alden Capital, a way out of a legacy news organization bleeding cash.

Any deal, which is not guaranteed as these are described as early talks, would transform Penske into an L.A. publishing mogul not seen since the Chandler family had a stranglehold on Southern California media via The Times. He would be a local owner who controls every major publication in Los Angeles, except for Alden's smaller news outlets like the L.A. Daily News and Orange County Register.

"This would roll up L.A. media," said one high-level person linked to Penske, with direct knowledge of the now weeks-old discussion. "This is how we make our mark."

A text to several Times management went ghosted, including Soon-Shiong, who days ago told The Intersect he "loves The Times." Penske did not return an email, and his spokesperson declined to comment on Sunday.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Doug Pizac.

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## ***'Legal Lullabies' Puts You To Sleep By Reading Social Media Terms of Use*** (PetaPixel)

**JEREMY GRAY**

As seen on Vice, the Lazy Data Research (TLDR) Institute decided that if people were not going to read the mind-numbing terms of service for popular social media platforms Instagram and TikTok, perhaps people could get use out of them as a replacement for counting sheep when trying to fall asleep.

The "Legal Lullabies," hosted on the hilariously named website zzzuckerberg.com, are read by a voice actor with a smooth, soothing voice.

The Instagram version is 51 minutes long and the TikTok terms of use come in at around 38 minutes. While the average user can certainly read faster than the voice actor speaks the legalese, it is no surprise that practically nobody reads the terms of service for their favorite social media apps. They are dense, boring, and lengthy documents.

In the case of Instagram, its terms of use are relevant to photographers — assuming that the terms are legally enforceable. Some interesting bits of information are littered throughout the nearly hour-long "legal lullaby."

Read more [here](#). Shared by Doug Pizac.

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## ***Academic journals that give journalists free access*** (Editor and Publisher)

**Denise-Marie Ordway | The Journalist's Resource**

When we surveyed our audience in 2021 to ask why journalists don't use academic research more often, 60% of journalists who responded cited academic journal paywalls as a barrier.

Some journalists might not realize that several of the world's largest journal publishers will give them free, online access to thousands of journals and other research-related resources. They simply have to ask, or complete a short form to register for a special account.

Other publishers and research groups, including the National Academy of Sciences and National Bureau of Economic Research, also provide complimentary access.

To help journalists find them quickly, we've listed a number of these organizations below, along with information on how to set up free accounts. We'll add to this list as we learn of other publications that let news media professionals bypass their paywalls.

If you're interested in reading articles in journals that charge journalists to read or download them, keep in mind there are other ways to get free copies, legally. We outline them in our tip sheet, "8 Ways Journalists Can Access Academic Research for Free."

To better understand the different types of academic research, check out our tip sheet, "White Papers, Working papers, Preprints, Journal Articles: What's the Difference?"

Read more [here](#). Shared by Len Iwanski.

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## ***New to the trade, Jeremy Gulban has more former Gannett papers than anyone; he says success is up to communities*** (Rural Blog)

By Al Cross

Director and Professor, Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues,  
University of Kentucky

The owner of dozens of "ghost newspapers" bought from Gannett Co. says he is trying to revive them by returning editorial decision-making to local people while still taking advantage of the economies of scale that have led to consolidation of newspaper ownership. But he says his new chain's fate is not in its own hands.

"The success or failure of these rural newspapers is on the local people," CherryRoad Media CEO Jeremy Gulban said Friday at the National Summit on Journalism in Rural America, sponsored by the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, publisher of The Rural Blog. His remark fit the Summit's research question: "How do rural communities sustain local journalism that supports democracy?"

One example of a community sustaining rural journalism was the first paper the Gulban started, the Rainy Lake Gazette in International Falls, where the paper had closed, and he reached out to the local Chamber of Commerce because he had recently bought his first paper in Grand Marais, also in northern Minnesota. "They got a whole bunch of different stakeholders in town, and we all met, and it was really kind of an amazing meeting for me, because I had never seen that kind of enthusiasm, that kind of spirit, to solve a problem," Gulban said. Three weeks later, they had a paper. "People really embraced it," he said. "We quickly got to more subscribers than you know the old paper had."

Read more [here](#).

## Today in History - July 17, 2023



By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, July 17, the 198th day of 2023. There are 167 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On July 17, 1821, Spain ceded Florida to the United States.

### On this date:

In 1862, during the Civil War, Congress approved the Second Confiscation Act, which declared that all slaves taking refuge behind Union lines were to be set free.

In 1918, Russia's Czar Nicholas II and his family were executed by the Bolsheviks.

In 1936, the Spanish Civil War began as right-wing army generals launched a coup attempt against the Second Spanish Republic.

In 1944, during World War II, 320 men, two-thirds of them African-Americans, were killed when a pair of ammunition ships exploded at the Port Chicago Naval Magazine in California.

In 1945, following Nazi Germany's surrender, President Harry S. Truman, Soviet leader Josef Stalin and British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill began meeting at Potsdam in the final Allied summit of World War II.

In 1955, Disneyland had its opening day in Anaheim, California.

In 1975, an Apollo spaceship docked with a Soyuz spacecraft in orbit in the first superpower link-up of its kind.

In 1981, 114 people were killed when a pair of suspended walkways above the lobby of the Kansas City Hyatt Regency Hotel collapsed during a tea dance.

In 1996, TWA Flight 800, a Europe-bound Boeing 747, exploded and crashed off Long Island, New York, shortly after departing John F. Kennedy International Airport, killing all 230 people on board.

In 2009, former CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite died in New York at 92.

In 2014, all 298 passengers and crew aboard Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 were killed when the Boeing 777 was shot down over rebel-held eastern Ukraine; both Ukraine's government and pro-Russian separatists denied responsibility.

In 2020, civil rights icon John Lewis, whose bloody beating by Alabama state troopers in 1965 helped galvanize opposition to racial segregation, and who went on to a long and celebrated career in Congress, died at age 80.

Ten years ago: In a heated House Judiciary Committee hearing on domestic spying, members of Congress said they'd never intended to allow the National Security Agency to build a database of every phone call in America, while top Obama administration officials countered that the once-secret program was legal and necessary to keep America safe. At least 58 people were killed and dozens more were missing amid flooding in China's Sichuan province. Same-sex marriage became legal in England and Wales when a bill received royal assent.

Five years ago: Amid criticism from within his own party, President Donald Trump said he had simply misspoken when he said during his summit with Vladimir Putin that he saw no reason to believe Russia had interfered in the 2016 U.S. election. Former President Barack Obama, speaking in South Africa, denounced Trump's policies without mentioning his name; Obama took aim at the "politics of fear, resentment, retrenchment," and decried leaders who are caught lying and "just double down and lie some more." Alex Bregman and George Springer hit back-to-back homers in the 10th inning, and the American League beat the National League 8-6 in an All-Star Game that included a record 10 home runs.

One year ago: A report said nearly 400 law enforcement officials rushed to a mass shooting that left 21 people dead at a Texas elementary school, but "egregiously poor decision-making" resulted in a chaotic scene that lasted more than an hour before the gunman was finally confronted and killed. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy fired the head of the country's security service and its prosecutor general, citing hundreds of criminal proceedings into treason and collaboration by people within their departments. Australian Cameron Smith became the unlikely winner of golf's

British Open, using stellar putting to come from behind and overcome Rory McIlroy to win his first major.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Donald Sutherland is 88. Sportscaster Verne Lundquist is 83. Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, is 76. Rock musician Terry "Geezer" Butler is 74. Actor Lucie Arnaz is 72. Actor David Hasselhoff is 71. Rock musician Fran Smith Jr. (The Hooters) is 71. Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel is 69. Television producer Mark Burnett is 63. Actor Nancy Giles is 63. Singer Regina Belle is 60. Country singer Craig Morgan is 59. Rock musician Lou Barlow is 57. Contemporary Christian singer Susan Ashton is 56. Actor Andre Royo is 55. Actor Bitty Schram is 55. Actor Jason Clarke is 54. Movie director F. Gary Gray is 54. Country singer Luke Bryan is 47. Actor Eric Winter is 47. Actor Mike Vogel is 44. Actor Tom Cullen is 38. Actor Brando Eaton is 37. R&B singer Jeremih (jehr-uh-MY') is 36. Actor Summer Bishil is 35. Actor Billie Lourd is 31. Actor Leo Howard is 26.

## Got a story or photos to share?

Connecting is a daily newsletter published Monday through Friday that reaches more than 1,800 retired and former Associated Press employees, present-day employees, and news industry and journalism school colleagues. It began in 2013. Past issues can be found by clicking Connecting Archive in the masthead. Its author, Paul Stevens, retired from the AP in 2009 after a 36-year career as a newsman in Albany and St. Louis, correspondent in Wichita, chief of bureau in Albuquerque, Indianapolis and Kansas City, and Midwest vice president based in Kansas City.

Got a story to share? A favorite memory of your AP days? Don't keep them to yourself. Share with your colleagues by sending to Ye Olde Connecting Editor. And don't forget to include photos!

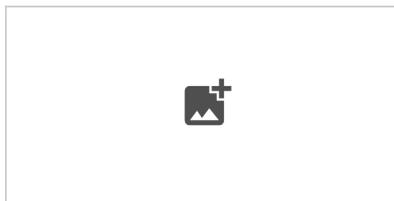
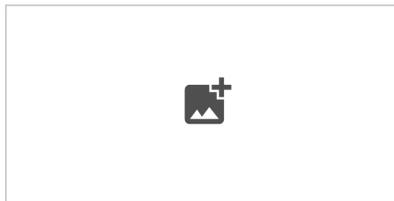
Here are some suggestions:

- **Connecting "selfies"** - a word and photo self-profile of you and your career, and what you are doing today. Both for new members and those who have been with us a while.
- **Second chapters** - You finished a great career. Now tell us about your second (and third and fourth?) chapters of life.
- **Spousal support** - How your spouse helped in supporting your work during your AP career.
- **My most unusual story** - tell us about an unusual, off the wall story that you covered.



- **"A silly mistake that you make"**- a chance to 'fess up with a memorable mistake in your journalistic career.
- **Multigenerational AP families** - profiles of families whose service spanned two or more generations.
- **Volunteering** - benefit your colleagues by sharing volunteer stories - with ideas on such work they can do themselves.
- **First job** - How did you get your first job in journalism?
- **Most unusual** place a story assignment took you.

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