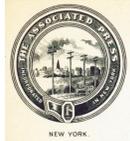

From: stevenspl@live.com on behalf of Paul Stevens [stevenspl@live.com]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2014 9:51 AM
To: stevenspl@live.com
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Connecting

March 10, 2014



By **Mark Mittelstadt**
For AP Connecting

It will be 10 years in August since The Associated Press moved from its namesake building at Rockefeller Center to the west side of New York City. But for many of the people who worked there and thousands of others who visited during its 66 years, "50 Rock" remains a special place.



Kristin Gazlay, an AP vice president and managing editor on leave, walked by the former headquarters the other day. "OK, AP peeps, I was so close that I just had to go," she wrote on her Facebook page. "Ah, memories ..." A photo she posted (above) of the door with the 22- by 17-foot freedom of the press sculpture by Isamu Noguchi overhead generated more than 100 "likes" and a long string of comments and remembrances.

Dolores Barclay, AP's former arts editor and East Coast entertainment editor, said she loved working at The Associated Press building, erected in 1938 as philanthropist John D. Rockefeller built a "city within a city" during the Great Depression's worst years. "That entire area was great. I enjoyed walking to work, through the park, down Fifth Avenue," she said. **Madge Stager** commented: "Every time I go by there I see movies of my life, the good scenes mostly!"

For those who worked at 50 Rock, the address had panache. Those two simple words had a nice ring to them. You were proud to tell friends and family where you worked. My first assignment at headquarters put me in one of the three smaller offices between the executive editor's corner office and the managing editor's office on the

fourth floor. I will admit that it was fun to be able to tell people your office was at the base of the second American flag pole visible on the left-hand side of NBC's "Today Show" broadcasts a block away on the Plaza.

The neighborhood was a 24-hour hub of activity: tourists, restaurants, celebrities visiting NBC or appearing in Radio City Music Hall behind the AP building, the "Today Show" crowds and Friday morning music concerts, over-sized sculptures, an occasional Louis Vuitton Classic Car Show of very expensive antique cars, food and street fairs.

And, of course, the camels.

The camels are part of the live nativity in Radio City's annual Christmas Spectacular. They and other livestock that are part of the show are kept in trailers and pens on the West 51st Street side of the AP building. Handlers regularly walk the camels, stopping to let curious onlookers pet them and to take photos.



The Rockefeller Center Christmas tree is an annual ritual to be endured by anyone working in the area.



Starting in late November, when the tree arrives on a large flatbed truck and crews work nearly round-the-clock on scaffolding to fill in branches and add thousands of lights, until early January when the tree comes down, the already busy Plaza becomes packed with tens of thousands of visitors. Before photo-bombing became part of the vernacular, it was not unusual to ruin tourist photos by accidentally walking in front of the hundreds of cameras and cell phones taking photos of the large tree, visitors and colorful Rockefeller holiday decorations.

The lighting of the tree itself is a special event. (Left photo, author **Mark Mittelstadt** and son **Brent** at lighting in 2011.) Early in the afternoon, the main entrances to the center's buildings are blocked or severely limited. The Plaza and surrounding sidewalks and streets quickly fill with tens of thousands of people gathering for the NBC TV Christmas show and then the tree illumination. Those who had worked at 50 Rock for any amount of time knew enough to leave work by 3 p.m. that day, if possible. Or, if not, how to wend one's way through the underground hallways and tunnels to eventually get to open streets blocks away.

Other employees stayed and watched the spectacle, either from the executive editor's office directly overlooking the tree and the Plaza on the fourth floor, or from any of the executive offices on the seventh or eighth floors. While the company generally never had a "holiday party" at headquarters, if you knew which door to open adult beverages and hors d'oeuvres could usually be found.



U.S. bureau chiefs with then-CEO Lou Boccardi outside 50 Rock in 1997

"I have overflowing memories from that wonderful building and our ramshackle offices," **Kristin** said. "The camels being walked in front of the building during the Radio City holiday show. Marie, the AP cafeteria sandwich lady, who wielded her knife with menacing ease and had a, uh, somewhat hostile attitude. The crazy crowds when they'd light the Rockefeller Christmas tree. The way you'd have to stuff newspapers in the cracks of the windows to keep the winter air out. Going for lunch in the concourse under the building, spoiled for choice. And the endless refrains of 'Danny Boy' during all the firefighter funerals at St. Pats across the street after 9/11."

The 50 Rock entrance is flanked by large round windows. An iconic photo taken in 1940 shows businessmen gathered in front of one which contained a teletype machine pecking out the latest news. In later years the windows had large gold AP logos on a black background and that became part of any AP group photo or visiting employee's



photo remembrance of the place.

Those windows now both have the name of the current tenant, Bank of America. Kristin's photo shows a man in a gray suit walking into the building, which did not sit well with several former AP folks. "That's so wrong," wrote **Doug Mellgran**. "Yeah get that banker out of there," said **Joseph Coleman**. "Marcus Eliason should be smoking in that spot."

"LOL, it's true -- how un-AP is the guy walking in there?," **Beth Harpaz** said. "In the NYC bureau there was like a one-size-fits all jacket in the closet that someone had left years before in case anybody ever felt the need to dress up. (D)on't think I ever saw any of my male coworkers in a suit with a matching blazer and pants."

The AP shields at the front of the building disappeared shortly after the company moved two miles to the south and west to its current location at 450 W. 33rd Street. The Associated Press Managing Editors, among other individuals and groups, was interested in getting and preserving them. I was told by the former head of AP's administrative services that the Rockefeller Center owners viewed the signs as their property and that AP had little interest in pursuing them. After the fourth floor had been emptied and the News Department had completed its part of the move, my last visit to the building was to pry off the wall next to the receptionist's desk a plaque that had been given to the company two decades earlier to honor AP journalists killed while working on behalf of the membership. The plaque is now with AP's corporate archivist, **Valerie Komor**.

The Rockefeller Center building had shown its wear and age towards the end of AP's occupation of the space. Preservation codes as well as big, thick floors and walls made it difficult to adjust the space to the changing space and technology needs of a modern news and information company. Not everyone shed a tear leaving the building itself. But, many regret not being able to pack up and move the Noguchi sculpture, which had been commissioned for the first tenant of The Associated Press building and seemed so much a part of its history. "Saddest thing now is the BOA logo where AP used to be," **Beth Harpaz** said. "Also amazing about the sculpture: although our work has changed SO much in the 65 years since he designed that, the essential things he shows there -- observing, writing, typing, talking on a phone, taking a picture -- are still essentially how we gather news."

(Connecting colleagues: Got a memory or a favorite photo on 50 Rock? Send it along to Connecting to share with your colleagues.)

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Connecting mailbox:

Bill Kole, Boston chief of bureau - I'm so tickled



that a photo I took of Cape Cod Bay near my home has made it into a juried exhibition. "The Fine Art of Photography" runs from March 30 - May 5 at the Plymouth Center for the Arts in Plymouth, Mass. I've never been in a show before. One for the "old dogs/new tricks" file.

Richard Pyle: Most former and present-day including AP staffers probably don't know that Jim Impoco, the Newsweek editor now at the center of the ``shitstorm" over having identified - or maybe not - the creator of Bitcoin, was a member of the AP Tokyo bureau staff in the 1980s. I was then (1979-87) AP's Japan-based Asia News Editor. We hired locally a number of really crackerjack young reporters, Americans and others, in what was then an unaccredited J-school as well as AP's Asia headquarters and arguably most important foreign bureau. Jim is well-remembered from that time, and went on to a career in journalism elsewhere.



Valerie Komor: Enjoyed lunch Sunday in Greenwich Village, New York, with recent 98th birthday celebrator **George Bria** and his wife **Arlette Brauer Bria**. She reports that George especially likes the Spaghetti alla Carbonara as it contains nice crispy pieces of Italian bacon.

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Welcome to Connecting - Carter, Dell'Orto, Kaczor, Portner, Waller



Dudley, our welcome dog, wags a his tail for the newest members of Connecting:

Chelsea Carter - News Desk Editor/Reporter at CNN Digital in Atlanta. Former AP reporter in Baghdad, military affairs writer, asap projects reporter and national writer.

Giovanna Dell'Orto - assistant professor at University of Minnesota School of Journalism and Mass Communication and author of books on foreign correspondence. Former AP reporter and editor in Minneapolis, Rome, Phoenix and Atlanta.

Bill Kaczor - retired, longtime AP Pensacola correspondent.

Alan Portner- columnist for Public Policy Examiner. Former CEO of The Assignment Desk, Washington, COO of Newsco, COO of Honolulu Star-Bulletin.

Mike Waller - retired publisher of the Baltimore Sun, and earlier editor and publisher of the Hartford Courant and editor of The Kansas City Star.

Happy birthday wishes from Connecting



to

Michael Giarrusso

Myron Belkind

Tena Haraldson

Stories of interest...

At Gridiron dinner, Kerry takes shots at Cruz, Crist, and himself

-0-

Julian Assange at SXSW: 'national security reporters are a new kind of refugee'

-0-

At 50, landmark libel case relevant in digital age

-0-

How a marijuana ad went up in smoke

-0-

Half of Broadcast TV Viewers Are 54 and Older-Yikes

-0-

Barely Keeping Up in TV's New Golden Age

-0-

Newspaper Consortium Seeks to Sell Cars.com for \$3 Billion

-0-

Two new books debunk the myths behind the Kitty Genovese case - and raise disturbing questions about the power of media narratives (Bill Beecham)

-0-

The new dream job

-0-

Tina Brown: I'm so glad I'm not Newsweek's editor now (Bob Daugherty)

-0-

After 5-Decade Career, NPR's Carl Kasell Will Retire

-0-

Libel suit against New York Post over Boston Marathon front page allowed by judge (Latrice Davis)

Paul Stevens

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