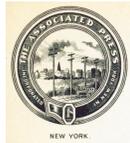


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**From:** markmittelstadt@yahoo.com on behalf of Mark Mittelstadt [markmittelstadt@yahoo.com]  
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# Connecting

March 19, 2014



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Colleagues,

Monday's earthquake in Los Angeles unearthed old habits and old memories for former Associated Press journalists. **Brian Bland**, who retired as AP Radio Correspondent in 2007, wrote that "(t)he moment our house stopped shaking on Monday, I called the Broadcast News Center in Washington. Former colleague **Matt Small** answered and I gave him the first word about the quake. In another minute, Matt was recording my reaction and what little information I had. One of those brief quotes was in the AP's quick story that went out to newspapers and Web sites.

"I didn't think any more about it until another AP alum, **Roger Gillott**, e-mailed me later to say he'd seen the story on NYT.com. In fact, the early story was used across the country until superseded by the more thorough update from the L.A. bureau. The kicker is that the early AP story also appeared on the Web site of our local paper, the Santa Monica Daily Press, whose own offices were shaken by the quake. The SMDP print edition (today) also went with the AP in the form of the superseding AP story (by L.A.'s **Chris Weber**). And, oh yeah, my quote recorded by **Matt Small** is in that version, too.

"Seven years after retiring, it's gratifying to be reminded anew that the talent, speed and cohesion of the AP staff is still the greatest."

Meanwhile, **Andy Lippmann** got former overnight supervisor **Cathy Strong** to share her recollection of when the 6.7 magnitude Northridge quake hit Los Angeles in 1994, ultimately killing 72 (including heart attack victims) and injuring more than 9,000 people: "The Northridge quake happened on Jan. 17. I thought it was at 3:30 a.m. (Pacific Time) ... The only two



*Collapsed highway overpass in Northridge quake*

reporters in the bureau were me (overnight editor) and **Ernie Sander**. Ernie was working broadcast. We got out the state print urgent series fast, but had trouble getting the attention of NY and getting national help despite lots of resending and urgent phone calls. Then we quickly lost electricity and we were dead in the water until **John Antczak** made his way to the office (the next to show up) and showed me the dedicated phone line (and the one dedicated computer) that never went down even when we lost electricity and there was damage. (That led to changes in how overnight supervisors were trained, and I made sure my successor **Nico Price** knew everything needed for an emergency - with your endorsement to go ahead with those changes.) John was the first to arrive in the bureau after the quake and he is the one who sent me out into the field immediately. I had a jug of water in my car and luckily a full tank of gas. I finally left the field at 10 p.m. that night. I was hungry. It was an unbelievable day. I still remember just about everything that happened that day. I was definitely going on pure adrenaline."

Andy described Cathy as "one of the first heroes of this story." Now retired, she is married to **Tom Strong** of the Washington, D.C., staff. They live in Chevy Chase, Md., and have two daughters.

### **More embarrassing moments at work**

#### **Charles Bennett**

I had just transferred from the D.C. bureau to Springfield, IL., which is an agriculture area. The area was in a long dry spell and the corn was suffering from heat stress. Knowing nothing about heat stress or any thing about agriculture I set out to illustrate the problem in my adopted state.

I had been invited to a party earlier by this young couple who lived in a house surrounded by cornfields. The young lady was absolutely stunning so I went there to have her pose with this heat stressed corn.

A good frame and I was on front of the New York Times.

Later in the day I got a call from **Hal Buell**. I was expecting some praise for my exceptional presentation; instead he advised me that the next time I take Farmer Jones' daughter into the fields for a picture, HAVE HER TAKE OFF HER GODDAM DIAMOND EARRINGS.

This call was followed by a call from the ag writer wanting to know

the location of the picture. He wanted to interview the farmer because his corn looked exceptionally healthy.

### **Kevin Noblet**

While a staffer in New Orleans in the early 80's, I often worked Sundays. During football season I'd take dictation on Saints games from sports writer **Austin Wilson**. Sunday was, of course, preceded by Saturday night, which in the Big Easy was usually long and liquid for AP's younger staff like me, and it wasn't uncommon to be out in the French Quarter til dawn. So I wasn't always at my sharpest those Sundays.

One day I took Austin's game story over the phone and filed it directly to the s-wire. A short time later, the NY desk called down and asked, in that way they had: did someone really kick a 234-yard field goal? It was of course a typo by me, and I couldn't remember which was right -- ie, was it really 23 or 34? Austin had left the Superdome and there were no cell phones in those days. I couldn't get through to the Saints flacks, either. I think I finally got someone at the Times-Picayune to tell me. Maybe it was only 10 minutes before I filed a correction but it felt like forever -- and, of course, it killed us in the play. AP had beaten UPI consistently all season on Saints games, and I knew Austin was proud of that. The play count that day wound up something like UPI 14, AP 2.

So that was my embarrassment. And here's the thing: The late, great Austin only mentioned it once, saying something gentle like, "Kevin, we all make mistakes. But try not to make that one again." He was such a class act.

### **Doug Pizac**

Here's another embarrassing moment that is a classic for me and the photographer which I use in my teachings. It's not about me or another AP staffer, but about a former newspaper photographer who is a very good friend of mine. I'll leave her name out, but she is **Gail Fisher** who went on to be a picture editor at National Geographic and is now a Chair at Brooks Institute.

Some 35+ years ago when I started out at AP, a photographer at the LA Times began her long and distinguished career at the LA Times. One of her first assignments was to go to Santa Anita race park and make pictures of the handicappers for a horse racing story the sports section was doing. She went, she shot, and she came back with some really nice art. However, being a rookie and never having been to a horse track before she came back with pictures of handicappers - - people in wheelchairs, using crutches, etc. The photo editor educated her on the basic points of racing and sent her back to re-shoot.

### **Connecting Mailbag**

I was catching up on Connecting and read **Doug Pizac's** embarrassing moment during the 1989 earthquake when I was bureau chief in San Francisco. I was never aware of this! It made me laugh. I knew Doug from working as ACOB in LA and Sal, of

course. I never heard a word from **Hal Buell** or anyone else in New York. I guess they figured I was too busy to yell at!...My most embarrassing moment is one that really isn't mine but will ring a bell with lots of female colleagues who started at the AP when I did and were the "first" women at something. I was the first female news editor in Atlanta. One day a particularly difficult editor who frequently called to complain about anything and everything, got me on the phone. I tried to calm him down and answer his question. He barked, "Honey, I want to speak to the MAN in charge." I said, "(Name not included, although I think he has passed away), I AM the man in charge." -- *Peggy Walsh*

### **A correction**

A quote in Tuesday's Connecting referred to **Valerie Komor** as AP's "erstwhile archivist." Erstwhile, of course, means former. At last report Valerie continues to serve, quite capably, in fact, as AP's archivist. Hat tip to **Neal Ulevich** and **Claude Erbsen** for outpointing.

### **Welcome to new Connecting member**

Dudley welcomes [Jack Simms](#), who held several AP assignments, including in Atlanta and Tampa and as chief of bureau in Louisville and Boston, then assistant sports editor in New York. He left to revive the journalism program at his native Auburn University, where he retired a few years ago.



### **Stories of interest**

AP pushes for independent coverage of Obama, fewer White House handouts (shared by Paul Colford)

AP White House staff: press losing presidential access as Obama officials close doors (shared by Bob Daugherty)

Despite directive, more than half of federal agencies fail to update FOIA regulations, guidelines

Newspaper publishers optimistic about future but increasingly see end to print within 10 years

Strange bedfellows: climate change deniers, newspapers partner in FOIA fight

Seattle TV station staff covers chopper crash that took their own

The jumbo coverage of Malaysia flight MH370



*Charles Dharapak, chief White House photographer for the AP, projects one of his photographs of President Barack Obama while speaking to editors and publishers at the Newspaper Association of America's mediaXchange 2014 convention in Denver. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)*

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