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**Sent:** Friday, August 01, 2014 8:50 AM  
**To:** stevenspl@live.com  
**Subject:** Connecting - August 1, 2014

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# Connecting

August 1, 2014

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Colleagues,

Good morning!

We welcome the first day of August with a remarkable blog by AP veteran [Richard Pyle](#) on his memories of stories past that were evoked by the downing in Ukraine of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17.

Ironically, today's Connecting concludes with AP Beat of the Week honors for a story by Sydney Chief of Bureau **Kristen Gelineau** who profiled the victims of the July 17 tragedy in an extraordinarily well-played piece.

Enjoy reading about both.

Paul

## Flight 17 evokes rush of memories

By Richard Pyle

As the ever more appalling details of the Malaysia Flight 17 shutdown in Ukraine

unfolded in the news, I had an impulsive thought: I should be covering this story.

Having hung up my AP sneakers in 2009 after 49 years of chasing the news, that obviously wasn't going to happen.

Yet the tragedy in Ukraine couldn't help but evoke a rush of memories of previous aviation calamities, both purposeful and accidental, plus other in-some-way-related events. It left only one retiree's recourse: Dig out an old AP reporter's notebook with some blank pages left, and make a list.



Never before had I thought of these various happenings as a chain of history, but soon I had ten time capsules - some fairly fresh, others only hazily recalled. Though uniquely personal, the list isn't necessarily complete. Ex-colleagues reading this blog might recall other incidents that I've forgotten. (As a further qualifier, I admit to having consulted internet sources on dates and other hard facts.)

So where should such a list begin? Where else but Vietnam - even though the incident in question had nothing to do with the war we were covering at the time.

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**15 June 1972:** Speedy Gaspard, a U.S. Army intel officer, dashes into the AP Saigon bureau with a question: Do you guys know about the jet crash near Cheo Reo? We don't, but his timely tip enables us to quickly confirm and report that a Cathay Pacific jetliner en route from Singapore to Hong Kong has exploded at 29,000 feet over South Vietnam's Central Highlands, killing all 81 passengers and crew. The first question: whether Hanoi's forces had shot it down with anti-aircraft weaponry not previously known to exist in that area. U.S. officials consider that unlikely, but the final truth proves even less believable. During a stop in Bangkok, a uniformed Thai airport cop had boarded the plane and stashed a suitcase bomb under seats occupied by his fiancée and daughter who, it turned out, he wanted to kill for insurance money. Acquitted of murder in a shocking verdict, the cop sues for millions in damages but dies of cancer in 1985, before he can collect.

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**1 Sept 1983:** Korean Air Lines 007, a Boeing 747 jumbo jet en route from Anchorage to Seoul, wanders off course into Soviet airspace and is shot down by a Russian fighter near Sakhalin Island in the Sea of Japan, killing all 269 passengers and crew. . The story breaks in several places, from Moscow and Washington to Seoul and Tokyo, and quickly balloons into a major Cold War crisis, replete with wild speculation about alleged U.S. espionage, Russian disinformation about its actions, and dangerous confrontations involving U.S., Soviet and other search vessels that goes on for weeks. As AP's Asia News Editor in Tokyo, my task is managing coverage by ace reporter Jim Abrams and other staffers. Japanese monitors were among those tracking the aerial activity and from those sources we get a jump on transcripts of Soviet military radio traffic,

including a pilot's report to his command center: "target is destroyed."

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**12 Aug 1985:** Japan Air Lines 123, a 747 jumbo jet on a domestic flight, suffers a massive in-flight emergency when the rear pressure shield in the main cabin blows out, destroying most of the plane's hydraulics and ripping away its vertical stabilizer. Rudderless, without power and unable to steer the huge jet to a safe landing, the desperate pilots wander in circles for an hour before crashing into a mountain, killing all but four of the 524 people aboard - still a record for a single-plane accident. As often happens in Japanese companies, JAL's chief executive resigns to take responsibility, but another official, who supervised the shoddy repairs from a previous mishap, commits suicide. As always, AP Tokyo is on top of the story.

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**3 July 1988:** The Iraq-Iran war is in its eighth year, having become a Persian Gulf "tanker war" with a beefed-up U.S. Navy contingent escorting Kuwaiti ships "reflagged" with the Stars and Stripes, and fending off attacks by Iranian gunboats against other shipping allied with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. As AP's Bahrain-based Roving Correspondent for the Middle East, I am a regular member of rotating news pools, made up mostly of visiting journalists. It is the closest thing to having a war to myself - and in late May I was in a pool that rode into the Gulf aboard the newly arrived USS Vincennes, one of the USN's new billion-dollar Aegis-type cruisers equipped with a computer-linked radar/weapons system - by far the most powerful warship ever seen in the oil-rich Gulf. On this quiet Sunday morning, however, I am at home when AP colleague Nabila Megalli, a veteran Middle East reporter also based in Bahrain, calls with urgent information: her trusted Gulf "shipping sources" are reporting a plane crash in the southern Gulf, and we need the Navy's reaction. Even as I make that call, Iran's official IRNA news agency announces that the daily Iran Air flight 655 to Dubai has vanished over the southern Gulf and there are reports of "bodies in the water." A Navy spokesman first insists that the USS Vincennes shot down an Iranian F-14 (a leftover from the Shah's air force) on a course "threatening" the ship, but that story soon changes. The Navy admits that, for all its state-of-the-art technology, the cruiser had misidentified the target and fired two missiles that destroyed the Iran A300 Airbus, killing all 290 people aboard. As our fast-developing story goes global, Iran issues a string of angry statements including one chilling vow of revenge against the Great Satan: "There will be blood on the sky."

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**21 Dec 1988:** Brenda and I take a home leave break and stop for several days in Rome, then in London to visit with great AP writer and cherished friend Hugh Mulligan and wife Brigid. On 20 Dec we catch a Pan Am flight to JFK, and next day I report to AP at 50 Rock to, as Hugh Mulligan says, "visit all the stations of the cross." First stop for visiting foreign correspondents is the cable desk (bow to George Bria) and we arrive to find the staff, AP president Lou Boccardi and other executives in crisis mode, clustered around

a TV screen and teleprinters pumping out copy from London about the midair explosion and crash of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. I remember suggesting that this could be Iran's promised ``blood on the sky" revenge for the shootdown of Iran Air 655. In years since, blame was put on others, especially Syria and Libya, one of whose citizens admitted it and went to prison while Gadhafy's government paid \$2.7 billion to families of Pan Am 103's 270 victims, including 11 residents of Lockerbie. Subsequent investigations have focused at last on Iran which despite all the contrary claims, I've always believed was responsible - a view I know is shared by some senior military officials.

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**26 Feb 1993:** On Friday morning, Brenda and I are home in Brooklyn, across the East River from Manhattan. We hear a strange ``crump" noise and soon the phone rings. It's NBC radio asking Brenda, who earlier filed numerous radio reports from Cairo and Bahrain, to get quickly to the World Trade Center, where a bomb has exploded, killing six people and injuring hundreds. It's my day off but we both head to the scene, where a mass evacuation of the twin towers is in progress. Inside the Marriott hotel located between the towers we find a gaping hole in the lobby floor, and a senior NYPD bomb squad officer tells us it was a bomb hidden in a rental truck in the underground garage. Quick detective work identifies the culprits, a cabal of Arab terrorists who are arrested, tried and convicted.

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**17 July 1996:** Dinner on our roof deck on a sultry evening is interrupted about dusk by a call from AP. Another Boeing 747 jumbo jet, TWA flight 800 with 230 aboard, has exploded off the south shore of Long Island just minutes after leaving JFK for Paris. Two other AP staffers and I race to JFK where we find relatives already gathering, while some witnesses claim to have seen the track of a ``missile" rising toward the plane, and others will insist that a U.S. Navy warship operating in the area fired one. These allegations help generate great confusion for FBI and NTSB investigators who also pursue other theories of a spark triggering volatile fumes in the jet's nearly empty center fuel tank, a finding that ultimately prevails. While AP colleague Pat Milton sticks like airplane glue to the FBI's chief investigator, I'm dealing with conspiracy theorists including ex-JFK press secretary and ABC newsman Pierre Salinger, who stubbornly insists against all evidence that the Navy shot it down, and a self-appointed expert who obtains a scrap of seat fabric with a substance he alleges is missile fuel but proves in FBI tests to be real airplane glue, used to hold cushions in place. Most interesting is 10 days camping out on Long Island, covering the retrieval of submerged aircraft wreckage to be reassembled at a former Grumman airplane factory on Long Island. The TWA disaster pretty much sealed the demise of that airline, its former Saarinen-designed winged-bird terminal at JFK is now a little-used relic of aviation history.

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*Photos by Richard's wife, Brenda Smiley Pyle, from their 5th floor roof deck on morning of 9/11. First shot shows the two towers still standing and on fire, with dark smoke plume blowing in their direction. Second frame was made as the south tower collapsed (the closest to them, and the first to fall although second one hit). This view is looking*

*northwest, distance from camera to the WTC is about two miles, close enough that with binoculars they could see tourists on the south tower's observation deck (and presumably they could see us looking at them). The buildings nearest in pix are in Brooklyn, and behind them across the East River, taller buildings of lower Manhattan/Wall Street financial district.*

**11 Sept 2001:** On one of the most glorious early autumn mornings anyone ever saw, I return from walking my faithful German shepherd Rommel to hear Brenda calling me: "Hurry up, a plane has hit the World Trade Center!" Racing up five floors to the roof deck, I see the Statue of Liberty, cargo cranes and the clustered skyscrapers of lower Manhattan across the East River, but the familiar vista is shockingly marred by a column of black smoke, roiling from the upper floors of the 110-story WTC's north tower and drifting directly toward our Brooklyn neighborhood. Calling the AP NYC bureau, I learn that the story is already on the wire and I tell photo editor Barbara Woike that freelance photographer Mark Phillips, a neighbor, is shooting photos from his rooftop. "Tell Mark we want his pictures," she says. I holler the message across to Mark, who waves, then disappears downstairs to file. (His images are the first not-from-TV to move on the wire.) Moments later, the second plane comes up the harbor and slams into the south tower in a gigantic rumbling fireball that defines how the world has suddenly changed forever. Ordered to get to police headquarters in Manhattan if possible, I catch a subway train whose other passengers are mostly oblivious to what has happened and don't understand when it goes out of service at the last stop in Brooklyn. With two companions, a demolition worker named Mike and Ann, a young woman who works for Newsweek, we start across the Brooklyn Bridge's pedestrian walkway against a tide of stunned, ash-coated people coming the other way. One stops me to ask, "Is this the way to Brooklyn? Is there a place there I can sit down?" In a brief interview he tells of seeing, from a window in the south tower, "the wing of a plane" as it hit the far side of the north tower, and then the chaos of trying to walk down 70 stories as dozens of firefighters passed on the way up, unknowingly to their doom when the south tower collapses. Smoke is so thick on the bridge that that we don't realize that already has happened. As we reach the highest point on the bridge, the north tower suddenly falls directly in front of us, straight down, sounding, as AP photographer Dick Drew later said, "like a rockslide," mixed with breaking glass. As its 35-story roof antenna disappears in the smoke, Ann panics, saying she can't go on. I tell her she must, as she might be the only Newsweek employee alive over there. Unpersuaded, she heads back to Brooklyn. Mike and I press on. "Are you sure we can get off this bridge?" he asks. I'm not sure, but I say "yes, I have a press card and with that gear you can pretend to be a photographer." As it turns out, there is nobody to stop us, in fact nobody at all. Streets around City Hall are empty except for half a foot or more of gray powder blankets everything. Only when we cross Broadway, heading toward what, unknown to us, is already being called Ground Zero and looking for a working pay phone, do we see another person. Seemingly from nowhere comes a young well-dressed man trundling a cart filled with plastic bottles of Poland Spring water. "Would you fellows like some water?" he asks, handing us each a bottle. We say thanks and before we can ask or say more, he disappears as smoothly as he arrived. It is so surreal a moment that in later months I begin to wonder if I imagined it. But that is true of almost everything that happened on that clear blue September day, of which this account is only a part.

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**12 Nov 2001:** Two months and a day after 9/11, American Airlines Flight 587 leaves JFK bound for the Dominican Republic but on takeoff it encounters "wake turbulence" from a Japan Air Lines jetliner that departed ahead of it, and crashes in the heavily populated Queens neighborhood of Belle Harbor in the nearby Rockaways, killing all 260 passengers and crew and five people on the ground. It makes this list only because we saw the smoke from Brooklyn.

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**15 Jan 2009:** US Airways Flight 1549 lifts off from New York's LaGuardia airport and turns south on a heading toward its first stop in Charlotte NC but before even out of sight of the airport it runs into a flock of geese and the "bird strike," in airline parlance, disables both engines. Fortunately for the 154 other passengers and crew aboard the A320 Airbus, the pilot's seat is occupied by one of the coolest customers in aviation annals. With no way to return to LGA or get to another airport, Capt. Chesley Sullenberger deftly sets it down in the Hudson River. All in a day's work for a man whose hobbies include piloting gliders. The landing off Manhattan's 50th Street is witnessed by at least one person at AP's 33rd St offices facing the river. It's not me but I am the first AP staffer out the door and when I reach the river bank two blocks away, the jetliner is floating past, its wings crowded with standees like an open-air subway car. As I walk it all the way to 34th Street and beyond, harbor ferries are taking off the survivors, unhurt and most of them apparently no more than moderately damp. The "miracle on the Hudson," as it becomes known, is the last big story I covered for AP and, given the overall theme of this article, I can hardly think of a better way to wrap it up.

## News about the AP

### White House accidentally emails torture report document to AP

By HADAS GOLD of Politico.com: Email misfires are usually just embarrassing, and in very rare instances they also deliver a scoop directly into a reporter's inbox. Late Wednesday, The Associated Press reported that someone at the White House accidentally emailed them a State Department document detailing talking points on a classified and harshly critical CIA interrogation report:

"This report tells a story of which no American is proud," says the four-page White House document, which contains the State Department's preliminary proposed talking points in response to the classified Senate report, a summary of which is expected to be released in the coming weeks.

"But it is also part of another story of which we can be proud," adds the document,

which was circulating this week among White House officials and which the White House accidentally emailed to an Associated Press reporter. "America's democratic system worked just as it was designed to work in bringing an end to actions inconsistent with our democratic values."

The document also lists a series of possible questions reporters and others might ask about the current administration's response to the Senate report.

The report by the Senate concludes that interrogation techniques used on detainees after 9/11 were more brutal than originally understood and that then-Secretary of State Colin Powell and some ambassadors in whose countries the detention facilities were held were not initially briefed on the program.

Here is a report filed by the AP:

### **CIA spied on Senate, internal review finds**

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The CIA's insistence that it did not spy on its Senate overseers collapsed Thursday with the release of a stark report by the agency's internal watchdog documenting improper computer surveillance and obstructionist behavior by CIA officers.

Five agency employees - two lawyers and three computer specialists- improperly accessed Senate intelligence committee computers earlier this year in a dispute over interrogation documents, according to a summary of a CIA inspector general report describing the results of an internal investigation. Then, despite CIA Director John Brennan ordering a halt to that operation, the CIA's office of security began an unauthorized investigation that led it to review the emails of Senate staffers and search them for key words.

Click [here](#) to read more.

### **Poynter: AP is reviewing its procedures after third revised tweet in a week**

What's going on with the AP Twitter account lately? After this masterpiece Wednesday:

The Associated Press ✓ @AP

Follow School in Gaza hit, 15 dead; kids go missing, no reports made; Ticket me Elmo in #AP10Things: <http://apne.ws/1o2i0le>

Click [here](#) to read more.

## **Connecting mailbox**

**A memory of Charles Tasnadi**



[Bob Daugherty](#) - The late (AP photographer) Charles Tasnadi made so many trips to Cuba that he knew the taxi drivers, waiters and even Fidel Castro. More importantly, he made it a point to get acquainted with the hotel phone operators. Back in the day, phone lines to the U.S. from Cuba were hard to come by. Charlie got around this by plying the ladies on the hotel switchboard with perfumes, candies and other commodities.

It was rather ironic that Tasnadi left his native Hungary during the Cold War on his belly through barbed wire and mine fields to Austria. He made his way to Venezuela where he worked as a news photographer. On a trip to New York at the invitation of Life magazine he visited AP headquarters where he was hired before he cut a deal with Life. Charlie was assigned to the Washington bureau. He made an emotional return trip to Hungary on Air Force One with President Ford.

Tasnadi was one helluva photographer, but he was an even greater gentleman.

### **Star-struck by Jules Loh**

[Ted Anthony](#) - When I was a college stringer at Penn State for the AP's then-State College correspondent, David S. Martin, one night Jules Loh met us for dinner in Williamsport, PA, where he was covering the Little League World Series.

This was late summer in 1989, and I was 21 and star struck. Jules Loh! THE Jules Loh! We talked for hours, and when we emerged from the restaurant it was raining. Jules held up his AP umbrella to keep us dry as we walked to our cars. As we were parting, I asked him where I might buy an AP umbrella like that.

"Come here," he said, and beckoned me to his trunk. He popped it open, and there sat about 20 identical AP umbrellas, brand new. "Take whichever one you want," he said.

I have it to this day.

### **When Jules Loh came to Mexico - Missouri**

[Max Thomson](#) - As many cities and states competed to land the Saturn car production plant in 1984, Jules Loh came to Mexico, Mo. to profile one town's quest for the industrial development prize.

For Mexico (population 11,806), the bid was a publicity stunt. The visit by Loh to the mid-Missouri town for one of his "Elsewhere in America" stories seemed to validate the effort. I never asked, but I think Mexico Ledger Publisher Bob White's long-time membership on the Associated Press board had something to do with Loh's selection of Mexico for his story.

Bob was out of town on the day of Loh's arrival, but left instructions to be a good host and "pick up the tab."

Jules conducted dozens of interviews in a single day. All but one of those interviews took place in the local bar/restaurant. After his lone city hall interview with the city manager, Jules returned to The Ledger building at 10 a.m. and informed me it was time for lunch. I said it was a little early. He said his body was on Eastern Time.

Jules made a few calls to his other scheduled interviewees, suggesting a new location for their meetings and then off to "Just A Little East" we went. Per Bob's instructions, as we ordered "lunch," I told the waiter to keep a tab.

Not a practiced drinker of any repute, I lasted until just before noon and returned to the office. I dispatched a string of staffers to the bar as the afternoon went along. None could keep up with Jules. All returned to the office slightly worse for wear.

I checked back at the bar late in the afternoon. The place was in a good-natured uproar as Jules interviewed and entertained. Thirty years later, the mention of Loh's name brings smiles to the faces of many who shared the afternoon/evening with him.

His interview notes filled four or five reporter's notebooks. When I asked, he told me "you have to sift a lot of sand to find the nuggets."

I picked up the bill from the delighted bar owner the next day. I can't remember the amount, but Jules obviously bought drinks for the entire town.

When Bob White returned to the office a few days later, I sheepishly handed him the bill.

He looked at it and flashed a knowing smile. "I see Jules made some friends while he was here."

Yes. Yes he did.

*(Max was editor of The Mexico Ledger at the time of this remembrance.)*

### **Oskar Garcia named AP's East sports editor**

Oskar Garcia, a news editor for The Associated Press who oversees news coverage of Hawaii, has been appointed assistant sports editor for the east region for the news agency.

Garcia, currently based in Honolulu, will be based in Philadelphia and will report to Global Sports Editor Michael Giarrusso, who announced the promotion on Thursday.

He will work with a dozen sports journalists in the northeast and others around the globe to lead spot and enterprise



sports coverage in 10 U.S. states.

"Garcia is a terrific journalist and editor, and he'll bring creativity and energy to our team," Giarrusso said. "He's got great ideas, and he understands that great sports coverage goes beyond what happens on the field."

Since 2012, Garcia has been the AP's news leader in Hawaii, supervising a team of reporters as well as freelancers in a region that includes Guam, American Samoa and Saipan. He directed multiformat teams on breaking stories including the 2012 election, the death of longtime U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye and the state's legalization of gay marriage. He also led the state's sports coverage, reporting on two NFL Pro Bowls, college football and college basketball. In February, Garcia was part of the AP team that covered the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

From 2008 to mid-2012, Garcia was a news reporter in Las Vegas covering various subjects including the casino industry, the World Series of Poker and tourism.

Garcia, 32 and a San Francisco native, joined the AP as an intern in 2006 in the Los Angeles bureau and later worked as a general assignment reporter in Omaha, Nebraska.

He holds a master's degree in journalism from the University of California, Berkeley and an undergraduate degree in communications from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

## Stories of interest

### [NABJ, NAHJ Approve Joint Convention](#)

The associations representing journalists from the nation's two largest groups of color - blacks and Hispanics - have signed a memorandum of understanding to hold a joint convention in 2016, **Bob Butler**, president of the National Association of Black Journalists, and **Hugo Balta**, president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, announced on Thursday.

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### [Who Pays Photographers?](#) (Bob Daugherty)

One example:

The Associated Press USA (Wire)  
\$250 - News conference (2014)

The AP's singular assignment standard rate (for non sports work) is \$250 an assignment. They usually are only an hour or two long and intense post production is not usually

required. They retain full copyright. They do not cover expenses or mileage but they hire people close to the assignments.

Turn-around time can occasionally be demanding but that is the usual for all wires.

Note from Editor - AP rates vary significantly in different parts of the world. See previous postings :

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### [LeBron-bashing ad from Miami radio station rejected](#)

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- A Miami radio program on Tuesday attempted to buy a full-page advertisement in The Plain Dealer to poke fun at LeBron James.

A mock-up of the advertisement posted on Twitter depicts two Miami Heat championship rings above the words "You're Welcome, LeBron." Below are the words "Sincerely, Miami Heat Fans."

Representatives of The Dan LeBatard Show called the Cleveland media outlet on Tuesday to purchase a full-page advertisement in this Sunday's edition of the newspaper, Northeast Ohio Media Group Vice President of Sales and Marketing Mike Maleski confirmed. NEOMG sales staff are responsible for ads in The Plain Dealer.

The show's request was "politely declined," Maleski said.

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### [Could the c-word soon be finding its way into news headlines?](#) (Scott Charton)

If orange is the new black, then the c-word may be becoming the new f-word? It certainly seems that way. With the f-word drifting to more common usage, we need another word for its shock value.

When I write c-word, I do not mean "cable." But it is on cable television where the c-word is creeping out of the shadows. Tony Soprano and his cronies used it. I hear it on episodes of the popular fantasy drama Game of Thrones, sometimes used to describe a body part, more often as a corrosive epithet against women and men.

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### [An Apology: On Images From Gaza](#)

I made a mistake earlier this week in a series of Twitter posts. It's not a mistake to which Atlantic editors were party in any way. But they have kindly allowed me space here to post a correction and apology in a less abbreviated form than Twitter allows.

The mistake involves a series of photos from Khan Younis hospital in Gaza. AP, Reuters,

and The New York Times posted images of two blood-covered men. The men were identified as brothers who had just seen their father killed in an Israeli strike. In three tweets, I expressed disbelief in the authenticity of the images. Michael Shaw at the Bag News blog painstakingly argues that I was wrong to do so.

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### Movie Film, at Death's Door, Gets a Reprieve (Doug Pizac)

Faced with the possible extinction of the material that made Hollywood famous, a coalition of studios is close to a deal to keep Eastman Kodak Co. in the business of producing movie film. The negotiations-secret until now-are expected to result in an arrangement where studios promise to buy a set quantity of film for the next several years, even though most movies and television shows these days are shot on digital video.

## AP Beat of the Week

When Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 went down, major news organizations across the world rushed out profiles of the victims. Amid all of these who-were-they stories, how did **Kristen Gelineau's** narrative strike so deep, touching so many hearts, prompting so many reader tears and accolades? A typical tweet urged, "EVERYONE needs to read this!" But why, exactly?

The answer may serve as guidance for any number of future AP narrative-behind-the-news pieces and explains why Gelineau's story is the Beat of the Week.

Some 298 people perished when Flight 17, en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, was shot down as it passed through the airspace of strife-torn Ukraine.

Gelineau, AP's Sydney-based bureau chief for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, quickly went to work on "The Final Hours." Its title reflected an organizing principle from the start: This would be a story showing how selected passengers happened to be on the doomed flight, how they'd spent the time before it took off. It would be a narrative, offering a glimpse of real lives, of scenes and characters, not just locations, names and occupations.

"We were looking for quality, not quantity," said Mary Rajkumar, assistant international editor, referring to notes she and Gelineau sent to international regional editors and then individual reporters, requesting help.

One note said: "The quality of the tick-tock and whether we can pull it off will depend hugely on the contributions we get, especially on the details. We're looking for the little things \_ what they did that day, what their usual routine was, what they ate, their last



conversation, the last person they saw, what they were like, etc."

Gelineau requested further specifics, down to the time stamp on a last communication.

"Everyone really went the extra mile to get these details: putting in extra calls and having to ask grieving loved ones to look at emails from their dead relatives," Gelineau said.

Supplementing her reporting were Nick Perry in Wellington, New Zealand; Jim Gomez in Pagbilao, Philippines; Firdia Lisnawati in Bali, Indonesia; Mike Corder in The Hague, Netherlands, and Eileen Ng in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, who jumped in to help while on maternity leave. Lisnawati, Gomez and Gary Chuah shot photos, which ran along with images contributed by families. Video was by Jakarta's Fadlan Syam <https://vimeo.com/101285975> and Berlin's DorotheeThiesing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3vCp6rMJKU>

So it was that readers learned of Rob Ayley, a New Zealander who'd coped with Asperger's syndrome from youth but who'd become a father and husband and successful dog breeder who was returning from a business trip touring European kennels; and of Willem Grootscholten, who happily boarded the flight to begin a new life after meeting Christine, a single mother in Bali whose children had come to call him "Daddy"; and of Irene Gunawan, the 53-year-old sparkplug of her Philippine family, who was headed for a reunion in a suburban Manila neighborhood called "Heaven."

And there were others.

Gelineau pursued a profile that became the backbone of the story, that of Miguel Panduwinata, an 11-year-old who was traveling with his older brother to visit their grandmother \_ and who had been raising ominous questions in the days before the flight.

"What would happen to my body if I was buried?" the normally cheerful boy asked his worried mother. "Would I not feel anything because our souls go back to God?"

Working from names on a flight manifest, Gelineau tracked down an uncle of the boy by phone as he arrived in Amsterdam. She interviewed him about his nephew ("He told me about Miguel's eerie premonition and the hairs on my arms stood up"). Then, over a couple of days, she gently persuaded him to put her in touch with his sister, the boy's mother, for a 40-minute phone interview finally arranged at 2:30 a.m. Gelineau's time.

"She kept saying, 'I should have listened to him.' I knew immediately that was the end of my story," Gelineau said. "And I knew Miguel was going to be the beginning."

Gelineau's story was supplemented by an abridged version \_ but not simply a truncating of the original. "There was no way to abridge six examples into 700 words and have any characters really come across," Rajkumar said. "So we offered our single

best anecdote instead as a shorter option, calling it The Boy Who Knew. That story was shared on Facebook more than 7,300 times from MSN alone."

As for the full story, response was extraordinary. It topped AP Mobile with about 30,000 page views. Wide newspaper use included rare bylined play in The Sydney Morning Herald. It was cited by The Daily Beast as one of the top longform reads of the week. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/kiss-prayer-last-hours-mh17s-victims>

Thousands of readers commented, many saying they were in tears as they wrote.

"The glimpses into the lives of these people, esp. Miguel, their loved ones, favorite foods, sports, made it all too real, almost as if I knew them," said one.

Another offered thanks "for dedicating the time and space to this heart breaking, and yet heart warming glimpse into the photo albums of these precious lives." This reader hoped that each family personally affected "has the chance to treasure this story."

Many did, as notes from some victims' loved ones made clear.

Rob Ayley's mother wrote that she'd include the story in a "memory box" she was putting together for her son. The girlfriend of another victim wrote, "Thank you so so much from the deep deep deepest bottom of our hearts." And the uncle of Miguel said talking about the boy and his brother for the story had been therapeutic for the family, a source of strength.

For combining exemplary craft and compassion to achieve a distinctive kind of world beat, Gelineau wins this week's \$500 prize.

## **Mike Oreskes**

(Shared by Valerie Komor)

Paul Stevens  
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