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Connecting

October 15, 2014

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Kathy Gannon vows return to Afghanistan



Colleagues,

AP senior correspondent **Kathy Gannon** was critically injured and her friend and colleague Anja Niedringhaus killed in April while reporting on preparations for elections in Afghanistan.

In her first interview since then, which moved early morning for publication and broadcast today, Kathy discusses the circumstances of their ambush, and the importance of international reporting in today's political environment.

Click [here](#) for a YouTube video interview with Kathy.

If you would like to drop her a note, please send me your email and I will forward it along to her. Kathy is a Connecting colleague.

Here is the story:

By DAVID CRARY
The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) - Over and over, Kathy Gannon has re-lived the decisions that led to the death of her close friend Anja Niedringhaus and her own severe injuries, as they went about their jobs chronicling the story of Afghanistan.

Gannon, a veteran Associated Press correspondent, and Niedringhaus, an award-winning AP photographer, had worked together on countless stories and negotiated many dangers for five years. But they were always "very smart with how we went about doing the stories, because we wanted to keep doing the stories," Gannon recalled. *(Photo below taken in 2012 shows Kathy, left, and Anja.)*

Then, on April 4, they were sprayed with gunfire by an Afghan police commander as they prepared to cover the presidential election the next day.

Were she to go back in time, would she do anything differently? The answer, firmly, is "No."

"We weren't careless or cavalier about the security arrangements ...," Gannon said at AP headquarters in New York last week, in her first interview since the attack. "We really made sure that we had a safe place to stay, we knew who we were traveling with, we knew the area in which we were going. Honestly, I've thought it through so many times - I know neither Anja or I would have done anything differently."



The stakes in the election were high for Afghanistan, a country already wracked by 13 years of war that was facing both the prospect of Western forces leaving and a renewed Taliban insurgency.

The two women had driven from Kabul, the capital, to the eastern city of Khost, then connected with a convoy under the protection of Afghan security forces that was transporting ballots to an outlying area. Their goal was to get a first-hand sense of how ordinary Afghans would respond to this window of democracy in a province considered a Taliban stronghold.

As they sat in their vehicle in a well-guarded compound amid scores of police and security officers, one of the men supposedly assuring their safety walked up, yelled "Allahu Akbar," and fired on them with his AK-47. Then, he dropped his emptied weapon and surrendered.

Niedringhaus, 48, died instantly of her wounds. Gannon, 61, was hit with six bullets that ripped through her left arm, right hand and left shoulder, shattering her shoulder blade.,

"I looked down and my left hand was separated from my wrist," Gannon said. "I remember saying, 'Oh my God, this time we're finished.' ... One minute we were sitting in the car laughing, and the next, our shoulders were pressed hard against each other as if one was trying to hold the other up. The shooting ended. I looked toward Anja. I didn't know."

As the AP driver sped their bullet-riddled car over bumpy roads to the nearest hospital, a municipal facility 45 minutes away, the AP translator told Gannon, "Kathy, don't leave us." She was sure she was dying.

"That time was very much about really making peace," Gannon recalled. "I was so trying to just breathe and just go peacefully."

At the hospital, Gannon was placed on a gurney, in excruciating pain. Yet there were reassurances.

"At one point the doctor said to me, 'Your life is as important to me as it is to you. We really are working trying to save it.'"

In the operating room, she was sedated. When she woke up, she'd already been airlifted from a U.S. base near Khost back to Kabul. It was only there, still only half-conscious, that she realized her friend was dead.

Within days, Gannon flew by an air ambulance jet to a hospital in Germany, and, later, to the United States, to continue her treatment at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City.

The months of physical recovery and therapy have been grueling. Gannon raves

about the care she has received, in particular the reconstruction work overseen by Dr. Duretti Fufa at the New York hospital that involved rebuilding her left arm with bone, fat and muscle from her left leg.

"It's so minute. You have to attach the nerves, you have to attach the arteries, the vessels," Gannon said. "I had a gaping six-inch (15-centimeter) hole right through where several bullets had just smashed through the arm. There was nothing there. She has completely rebuilt it."

"She has continued at every stage to do wonderfully," Fufa said. The hand and reconstructive specialist praised the surgeons abroad for stabilizing the complex injuries enough to allow Gannon's arms to be salvaged, and Gannon for doing all the hard work of a patient that followed. "She is an incredibly motivated person. I could not ask for a more motivated and pleasant patient to work with."

Said Gannon: "As horrible as everything was, there were so many times you think, 'My God, I'm so fortunate.' Every nerve, even the smallest nerve in my left hand, was intact. How is that possible?"

Her recovery remains a work in progress; the fingers of her left hand are still immobile. As soon as she can, she wants to visit Niedringhaus' grave near her birthplace in Germany to say a last goodbye. And she is determined, after further surgery and therapy, to return to Afghanistan - and to report again from there for the AP.

"Neither Anja or I would ever accept to be forced out by some crazy gunman," Gannon said. (Their attacker has since been convicted of treason and sentenced to death by an Afghan court.)

Both her tight-knit family in Canada and her husband and stepdaughter in Pakistan worry, but know her well enough to understand she will go back.

Gannon has established a strong bond with Afghanistan over three decades of covering it. As she put it, "There's history still to be told there."

"Afghanistan is a tremendous story of people who have really been caught in such successive traumas that they always seem to come out on the losing end," she said. "Afghans, through 35 years, have come through one war after another always believing that it's going to get better. ... I have a tremendous affinity for that struggle that they have constantly, constantly endured and never succumbed to hopelessness."

Moreover, Gannon says Niedringhaus would want her to go back.

Niedringhaus loved shooting all sorts of subjects, including sports, but she spent much of her working life in trouble spots - Iraq, the Gaza Strip, Israel, Kuwait, Turkey - and was one of 11 AP photographers who won the Pulitzer Prize in 2005 for

coverage of the Iraq War.

She and Gannon started working together in 2009 in Kabul, when Niedringhaus had just finished an assignment embedded with a military unit. The photographer was mildly irked when Gannon voiced some skepticism about such reporting arrangements.

But "That evening we were talking about stories," Gannon recalled. "We just hit it off ... it was as if we had known each other for ever."

The partnership flourished as the two journalists found much in common in their approaches to their jobs. They did not do their work from a distance. Instead, they got away from officialdom and spent time in villages, sleeping on the floors of mud houses.

"I loved the way Anja got so excited about the stories," said Gannon. "She loved getting up close with the people."

Gannon recounts all the firsts they accomplished together. They were the first international journalists to embed with both the Pakistani and the Afghan armies. They traveled from Quetta in Pakistan to Kandahar aboard an oil tanker carrying fuel to U.S.-led coalition forces. They got details of the massacre of 16 Afghans by a U.S. soldier from survivors, and visited poppy fields deep in Taliban country.

Now, Gannon insists she will do it again - without Niedringhaus, but in her memory and with her spirit.

"If it was reversed, Anja would be out there telling those stories too - she'd be telling them in the most amazing pictures," she said.

"I want to go and try and tell them. It might be physically half a team, but emotionally and every other way, when I go back, it's a two-person team. We're together on this."

(Shared by Karen Testa, Scott Charton, Paul Colford)

The perils of covering the Prez

By [Mark Mittelstadt](#)

It's not all business suits and formal wear covering the most powerful man in the world. There are hazards, too, as Associated Press White House reporter **Darlene Superville** shared with Facebook friends this week.

"Ah! The glamorous life of a White House reporter, covering up w(ith) newspaper to protect clothes from oil drips inside helicopter accompanying (President) Obama in California," she wrote under a photo of her strapped into a seat on a helicopter accompanying Marine One as the president headed to one of four fundraisers in three days in the Golden State last week. "I would have been smacking my head if I didn't need my hands to keep the newspaper from blowing away."



She said she took no notes during the ride. "Just about everyone suffered oil drips on clothes, bags, etc., including the press wrangler," she said.

Apparently oily rides on the government's press chopper are nothing new. Sandra Sobieraj Westfall said she had "a ruined skirt or two in my day. Can't believe the drips haven't gotten better since then."

Darlene said the newspaper was the first one she managed to grab, USA Today. Friends found humor in yet another use for an old news platform. "There is a purpose for the 'dead tree' medium," wrote Rick Vernaci. "You can't sop up an oil spill with a Web site." Added Patricia Zengerle "Doing your bit to promote newspaper consumption! Can't do that with an iPad."

In response to one question, Darlene said she didn't need to use the newsprint in case of air sickness. "I love riding in the helos," she said.

Connecting mailbox

'You will see a new me'

[Jim Lagier](#), our Connecting colleague who is bravely battling cancer: "Because my red blood cells were low, the doctor scheduled me for a blood transfusion on Saturday. I was given two units - drip, drip, drip - over 4 1/2 hours. I asked the nurse if the blood donors were intelligent, witty and kind. Yes, she assured me. So you will see a new me."

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'Hello! Bring coffee!'

[Sue Price Johnson](#) - Dave Tomlin is correct: Steve Graham and I had a lot of fun in

those early days sending messages between Caroline Mouse and Portland. I would occasionally send messages "from" Caroline to our techs on a printer attached to the mouse. "Hello! Bring coffee!"

But we also learned how to send relevant stories to any state print or broadcast wires directly rather than slowing the process by sending only to a message wire. The specific codes to do this were not readily available for some reason, so Steve and I went on treasure hunts to discover them and share them with other state bureaus.

As an aside, I was always thrilled by new technology. The Mouse was a PDP8E computer system manufactured by Digital, where one of my brothers worked at the time. I called him to tell him about our great new system only to be told: "We discontinued that model years ago!" (Ours came used from an accounting firm, I recall.)

More computer memories

[Carol Riha](#) - Continuing our collective recall, does anyone remember the opening dialogue supervisors had with their regional super computers when filing in the early '80s? I remember the computer saying hello and asking what you wanted to do. It offered a snarky reply if you hit the wrong key. Sassy was in Seattle, Debbie in Dallas ... Our techs obviously had their own brand of humor!

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[George Bria](#) - In the glow of bureau code nostalgia, have we overlooked the two letters that that could evoke instant joy, or fear or hatred in the recipient, namely: NY? Like (purely fictional) "Opposition has mafia king slain in Sicily shootout. Ours, pls NY

Connecting sky shots - San Francisco



[Pete Leabo](#) - The Blue Angels make one final low pass along the San Francisco waterfront, passing in front of the landmark Transamerica building and Coit Tower, marking the end of their performance at Fleet Week 2014. In the photo below, the Blue Angels perform a "Delta Breakout" maneuver over Alcatraz near the end of their performance over San Francisco Bay.



Stories of interest

[Rieder: What's next for Politico under Glasser?](#)

There's no question Politico has been one of the big success stories of the digital journalism era.

Launched seven years ago, the politics-crazed website quickly made the transition from start-up to Washington institution. With its rapid-fire metabolism, determination to drive the D.C. conversation and no-story-too-small blanket coverage, Politico has long been must reading for anyone who wants to or has to keep up with events consequential and trivial inside the Beltway.



It covers Washington with an army of nearly 200 journalists, offers a pricey collection of specialized single-topic reports under the umbrella of Politico Pro and is partnering with German publisher Axel Springer to launch a European edition.

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[Deaths of Hruby, wife and daughter stun Duncan and Marlow; Hruby son jailed on 'unrelated charge,' police say](#) (Lindel Hutson)

Police are treating the deaths of Marlow Review publisher John Hruby, his wife, Katherine, and their 17-year-old daughter "like a homicide" and authorities held the slain couple's son in jail overnight on a charge unrelated to the deaths, authorities said on Monday.

The bodies of John Hruby, 50, his wife "Tinker," 48, and their daughter, Katherine, 17, were discovered about 9 a.m. Monday by the family's housekeeper.

The couple's son, Alan, a freshman at the University of Oklahoma, was held overnight at the Stephens County Jail on an "unrelated charge" related to stolen checks, said Duncan Detective Danny Foraker.

No arrests have been made and police would not characterize the nature of three family member's deaths.

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[NBC correspondent admits violation of quarantine](#)

NEW YORK (AP) - NBC News medical correspondent Nancy Snyderman has admitted that some members of her crew violated a voluntary quarantine to protect against Ebola, a misstep that caused New Jersey health officials to make that quarantine mandatory.

NBC said Tuesday that Snyderman and her crew are taking their temperatures regularly and remain healthy. The team was reporting in Liberia alongside cameraman Ashoka Mukpo, who tested positive for the deadly disease and is now being treated in Nebraska.

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[Never Before Seen Photos Of The Titanic Before It Sank](#)



On May 31st, 1911, the Titanic launched, from Belfast, Northern Ireland, for the first time after its construction in the Harland & Wolff shipyard. Now, according to the BBC, never-before-seen images from this fateful launch will move from private collection to public eye as 116 photos belonging to late Harland & Wolff director John W. Kempster are revealed at Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. 13 of these photos picture the Titanic's departure from Belfast.

The photos enter the public after collector Steve Raffield bought them and shared them with the museum, saying: "I hope as many people as possible will see and enjoy the photos - they really are remarkable!"

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[Des Moines Register prepares for a 'very stressful' newsroom restructuring - Editor Amalie Nash speaks on turnover, transformation, and a virtual reality adventure](#)

(Mark Mittelstadt)

Amalie Nash became editor of the Des Moines Register earlier this year, at a time of transition for Iowa's largest daily.

It's a time of transition at the Des Moines Register. Along with other Gannett newspapers, Iowa's largest daily has begun a process of newsroom reorganization that will bring some pain. New reporting jobs are being added even as other positions go away, but a number of longtime staffers will likely find themselves out of a job at the end of the process-and some have reportedly already bowed out.

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[Los Angeles Times sues O.C. Register alleging breach of contract](#)

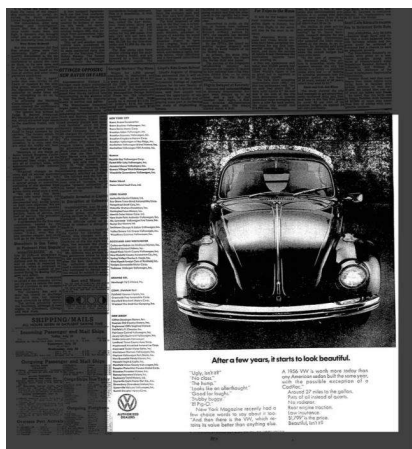
The Los Angeles Times filed a lawsuit on Tuesday against the Orange County Register, accusing the embattled newspaper of breach of contract and failure to

pay more than \$2 million in delivery fees.

The Times said the Register has consistently been late on payments for distributing its papers ever since falling behind in April 2013. The Times informed the Register last month that it was in default on the contract and had 30 days to pay.

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[New York Times Rolls Out Archive of Vintage Print Ads, Asks for Help ID-ing Them](#)



Vintage ads that appeared in The New York Times are getting their own digital archive that will live on the Times' website. Called Madison in reference to Madison Avenue, [the archive](#) initially includes every print ad from every edition of the Times in the 1960s.

"It invites people to view an important part of our cultural history," said Alexis Lloyd, creative director at The New York Times Research and Development Lab, which created Madison.

But the Times is inviting readers to do more than just view the ads. It's also asking readers to help shape the archive by sifting through the ads, identifying them and even transcribing their text.

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[Orange County Register names new publisher](#) (Doug Pizac)

Richard Mirman, a former executive at Harrah's Entertainment known in Las Vegas for his talents in casino marketing, has been named interim publisher and chief executive of the Orange County Register.

Mirman took over Monday from Aaron Kushner, who remains the principal owner and chief executive of the Register's parent company, Freedom Communications.

"My goal is to get the business on a trajectory of growth," said Mirman, 48, in an interview.

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[Jeff Zucker Has Endured Cancer, Hollywood, and Being TV's Wunderkind. So Why Not Take on CNN?](#) (Latrice Davis)

The headache started in the morning. It was a Thursday last June, and Jeff Zucker, president of CNN Worldwide, was working on the final preparations for New Day, the morning show he was set to debut four days later. From the moment Zucker took

over CNN in January 2013, he had been focused on getting the morning right. He was a morning-television savant, after all, having led the Today show on a storied run of ratings dominance. And CNN's early show, Starting Point With Soledad O'Brien, had become a symbol of the network's slide from cable-news pioneer to industry laggard. O'Brien drew just 260,000 viewers, compared with more than a million people who watched Fox & Friends and some 450,000 viewers of Morning Joe on MSNBC.

The Last Word

['Boston Layer-Lapse' Video Is World's First 'Layer-Lapse' According To Photographer Julian Tryba](#)

Imagine if the concept of time wasn't specific, but spontaneous - that you can visualize both day and night once you step out of your house after drinking your morning coffee. Photographer Julian Tryba's recent project "Boston Layer-Lapse," involves an ingenious composition technique where he layers different times of day for each frame in the video.

"Traditional time-lapses are constrained by the idea that there is a single universal clock. In the spirit of Einstein's relativity theory, layer-lapses assign distinct clocks to any number of objects or regions in a scene. Each of these clocks may start at any point in time, and tick at any rate. The result is a visual time dilation effect known as layer-lapse," Tryba wrote in the video's description.

Using five different cameras (Canon 6D, 7D, 16-35, 24-105, Tokina 11-16), he spent 100 hours shooting this two minute video, picking through 150,000 photos and another 350 hours for post production editing. From the Port of Boston to Wharf District Park, Tryba has captured 'Beantown' like you've never seen it before. This is the world's first layer-lapse. Beautiful ain't it?

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