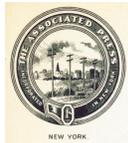

From: Paul Stevens [stevenspl@live.com]
Sent: Saturday, February 07, 2015 10:28 AM
To: stevenspl@live.com
Subject: Connecting - February 7, 2015

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Connecting

February 7, 2015

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'Is the story worth the risk?'

Good Saturday morning!

The question is one some readers have asked in their journalism careers: is getting the close, first-hand information or photo in the middle of war, or venturing out in remote territories controlled by terrorists or warlords, worth getting seriously injured or killed? It was a dilemma discussed earlier this week at the Newseum by a panel that included Associated Press Executive Editor **Kathleen Carroll**. A summary of her comments and a link to a video replay of the discussion leads off today's Connecting.

Brian Williams's exaggerated claims of having been in a helicopter brought down by enemy fire in Iraq in 2003 offended many Connecting readers, especially those who served in the military, and they weighed in on the embattled NBC News anchor. The nearly universal conclusion is that NBC has little choice but to part ways with him. Your comments are below.

Finally, a big thank you to everyone who this week shared photos and remembrances of the service gifts they received during their AP careers, as well as pins, pens, hats picked up along the way. They made for interesting reading and stirred many memories. **Paul Stevens** is tanned and rested from a week in the Florida sun and will return to the editor's

chair Monday. Send contributions to him at stevenspl@live.com.

Have a great weekend.

- Mark Mittelstadt

AP News

Kathleen Carroll: new set of safety guidelines coming for freelancers, organizations that hire them

From [The Definitive Source](#)

By Erin Madigan White

In a time of increasing threats to journalists worldwide, Associated Press Executive Editor **Kathleen Carroll** said that news organizations need to carefully weigh the risks of reporting against journalists' passion for telling untold stories.

During a wide-ranging discussion Wednesday at the Newseum in Washington, about the dangers of reporting in conflict zones, risks to freelance journalists and responsibilities for news organizations and governments, Carroll said: "I think the real question for all of us, as news consumers and as news employers, is: 'Is the story worth the risk?' And that's a question we often ask ourselves both in the field and back at the home office. And the answer is sometimes, 'no.'"



Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, Kathleen Carroll, executive editor for the Associated Press, Douglas Frantz, U.S. assistant secretary of state for public affairs and moderator Judy Woodruff. (AP Photo/Molly Riley)

The panel, moderated by **Judy Woodruff**, co-anchor and managing editor of PBS "NewsHour," also included **Douglas Frantz**, U.S. secretary of state for public affairs, and **Joel Simon**, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists. The panel followed a separate conversation with **Diane Foley**, mother of freelance journalist **James Foley**, who was beheaded by Islamic State militants in 2014, and **Debra Tice**, mother of missing freelance journalist **Austin Tice**.

A new set of safety guidelines for freelancers and news organizations that hire freelancers will be unveiled at Columbia University next week, Carroll said, adding that a number of organizations have been involved in their development, including CPJ, AP, Reuters, AFP and others.

In closing, Carroll called on news consumers to care: "This is work that people are doing at great risk to educate you, so give a damn. Read the paper, read on your tablet, engage in the news, be a citizen of the world. Make some effort to understand what it is that these people are taking great risks to bring you."



The News We Could Lose: New Threats to Journalism and Press Freedom (Part 2)

Political writer Tom Raum announces his retirement

Tom Raum took to Facebook Friday to announce that he is retiring after more than 40 years with The Associated Press. April 17 will be his last day.



Tom Raum

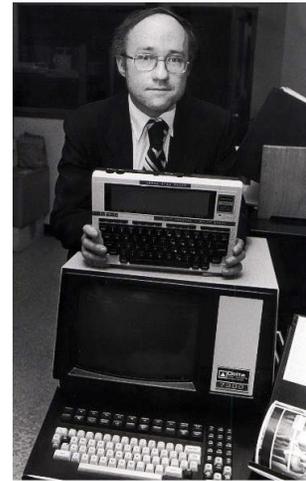
"Soon-to-be-former bosses asked me what I plan to do next," he wrote. "Hope to do a lot more photography (my first job with the Tampa Times was as a reporter/police photographer). Also considering heavy construction, snake charmer, ice cream vendor, professional wrestler, fortune-teller or bomb de-fuser (to make amends for the pipe bombs I made as a teenager).

"Or maybe I'll go back to graduate school and complete my training as a nuclear physicist. Can't just sit around the house and watch Blu-ray DVDs and Big-Bang Theory."

He did disclose he and his wife, "fellow AP pal Nora," are starting a joint blog to "take a bemused look at happenings in our nation's capital and the world in general. We're going to call it 'Vacilando.' That's from John Steinbeck and it generally is Spanish for having a destination but not caring too much about how or when you reach it. It was also the name of our second sailboat. Unfortunately, that Vacilando got destroyed in Hurricane Isabel. Hope our soon-to-be blog will have fairer winds."

Farewell to Radio Shack -- and the Trash 80

Tim Bovee shared on Facebook an AP publicity photo from the mid-1980s of him holding what was the first computer for many AP journalists, a TRS-80 Model 100. It was created by Radio Shack, which has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. "They were cool machines," Tim wrote. "I first learned how to program on one, a skill that's still useful for me." Said friend and AP colleague **Brian Buck**, "As a child of the 80's and a computer nut from the first time I laid my hands on one, Radio Shack was Shangri-La. I wanted a computer more than anything else -- TRS-80, Apple II(e, plus, whatever), Timex-Sinclair, Coleco Adam, Commodore, TI-99/4A -- didn't really matter that much." **David Briscoe** recalled having to use rubber muffs with wires to connect the TRS-80 100 to telephone handsets that didn't allow the user to unscrew the earpiece and attach little clips when transmitting stories via telephone to AP computers. "Now that was high tech," he said.



Tim Bovee with Radio Shack TRS-80 100

In the photo, sharp-eyed observers will note Tim is holding the affectionately-dubbed Trash 80 on top of a Delta 7300 terminal, which also at the time was viewed as "high tech." With eight screens, more memory and an amber monochrome display, the 7300 was a step forward from the 4000 series with its single-screen, approximately 550-word limit display. The 7300 replaced the 4000 terminal in most AP offices. By setting the portable on the 7300 housing, however, Tim risked wiping out a 1,000-word unsaved story by, oh, a visiting national writer; the Delta was prone to being zapped by static electricity.

AP using Twitter to promote members' stories



Social Media Editor **Eric Carvin** explains: "Over the past few years, we've built up a significant social media following - especially on Twitter, where the flagship @AP account is approaching 5 million followers - and we're constantly looking for ways to leverage our online presence to benefit members and customers more directly. This one was a no-brainer: We look for strong member and customer enterprise content, in

all formats, and choose some to highlight from @AP. This can give the member a big boost in engagement and clicks, and @AP followers are served a strong piece of content that they might not otherwise know about. It's win-win."

Joseph Coleman, former AP writer and now media professor at Indiana University, publishes book on aging workforce

Behind his desk, Joseph Coleman scrolls through a series of photos on his laptop. They were taken in Japan in 2012 and show an elderly woman maneuvering herself through her backyard and into another building. The photos focus on her sifting through a bucket of leaves. It was this woman, Tsuneko Hariki, [who helped inspire the creation of Coleman's](#) recently released book, "Unfinished Work: The Struggle to Build an Aging American Workforce."



Joseph Coleman

Connecting readers weigh in ...

... on Brian Williams

Brian Bland ([E-mail](#)) - As a Vietnam veteran (1967-68, pre-AP), as a journalist and as a human being, I'm aware that two people, or five people, going through an ordeal together may have differing memories of the event decades later. However, barring PTSD or being knocked unconscious at the time of the episode, no one who has ever been under small arms fire or a rocket or mortar attack in a helicopter or on the ground is likely to forget it.

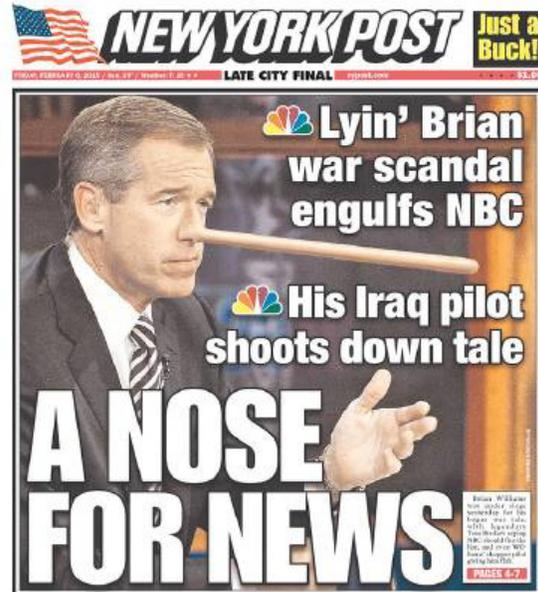
Conversely, I can think of no reason why someone would "remember" having an RPG hit their helicopter if it didn't happen. Ergo, since Williams admits he was never on a chopper that suffered such a fate, I can think of no rational explanation of why he would ever accidentally say that he had been.

What his motive was, I cannot guess. But anyone who has served as a soldier or had the privilege of being a working journalist, or both, knows that someone who expects to be trusted while in those roles, and who then invents such stories about themselves, should be shunned.

Mike Tharp ([E-mail](#)) - I was a soldier in Vietnam 1969-70. E-5. Honorable discharge. Bronze Star.

I covered the Persian Gulf War (as a magazine pool reporter), civil wars in Somalia, Bosnia and Albania/Kosovo for U.S. News & World Report and was deployed to Iraq for six-week stints in 2008-09 for McClatchy. The first time I was embedded with the 10th Mountain Division at Kirkuk, the second time with the 1st Infantry Division in Baghdad.

Brian Williams lied and should be fired.



New York Post front page on Friday. The Williams story was front page news for many newspapers.

He's in the same dishonorable company as **Janet Cooke, Jack Kelley, Jason Blair, Stephen Glass, Geraldo Rivera** ... sadly, the list goes on. Any of us print reporters would be gone the day of the disclosure/confession. The war correspondents (including photographers, who are first in the journalistic order of battle) I admire and respect most are those who do the job, bear witness, file without an agenda and keep themselves the hell out of the story. I've been lucky to befriend several.

Williams' shoddy attempt to cloak himself in warrior garb mocks the many who have put their lives -- not just careers -- on the line for their audience. His petty fraud further discourages the few media/news companies willing to send staffers to war zones. That means even more freelancers--who often should not be in the deep end of the pool--will wind up in tight spots and scrapes for which they are usually ill-prepared. Brave but inexperienced. Committed but underfunded. Who suffers? Far too often the journalists themselves--but all of us who don't know what's unfolding in Syria, Yemen, Egypt and elsewhere.

Except for the courageous local journalists in those countries who don't have the choice of leaving.

Several web sites have been created to discredit losers who claim military service, rank and medals they invented. If it hadn't been for some of the troops on the scene in March 2003, and a gutsy Stars & Stripes reporter, Williams would have continued to embroider his lie -- as he did to an extraordinary extent on the David Letterman show in 2013.

My longtime friend and colleague **Ron Yates**, a fellow Jayhawker, old Asia hand and former dean emeritus of the University of Illinois College of Media, blogged about this:

"I am reminded of what English playwright **Tom Stoppard** had to say about journalists like Williams:

'He's someone who flies around from hotel to hotel and thinks that the most interesting thing about any story is the fact that he has arrived to cover it.'"

Tom Jory ([E-mail](#)) - Before I turned to election-night business in the mid-80s, I covered TV from New York, and that meant mostly news about television news. In the course of that assignment, I interviewed anchors and reporters, as well as producers and news executives. One word that seemed to come up almost invariably was credibility, and we know today that **Walter Cronkite, John Chancellor** and their colleagues and competitors lived by that. They all knew once it was lost, it was gone.

All of us know The News Business (not coincidentally the title of a still valid assessment by Chancellor and our own **Walter Mears**) has changed in style and approach, not always for the better, but credibility still trumps all.

I was at an Islanders hockey game the other night as they introduced at various times two or three wounded vets, which they do now at most sporting events.

These guys seemed grateful and even humbled at the warm standing ovation, clearly

heartfelt as it should be. The problem with **Brian Williams** self-aggrandizing tale and his shallow apology is none of these veterans I saw had to "conflate" anything to get where they are today. They'll live with their real wounds the rest of their lives, and not on \$10 million a year.

Jim Williams - Sorry, but NBC has to part ways with **Brian Williams**. Every day that passes causes lasting damage to the NBC News brand.

David Egner ([E-mail](#)) - Since he's shown such a great talent for fiction, **Brian Williams** ought to leave journalism to pursue his true calling as a novelist or screenwriter. He should also donate the millions of dollars he made from NBC last year to a charity benefiting real heroes -- members of the U.S. military wounded in defense of our country.

Jennifer Barbour ([E-mail](#)) - My father was an AP journalist, and truth-telling was a cornerstone of my childhood experience.

Liars lie, bullies can't be friends, and other maxims were and should still be, meaningful.

Stephen Glass lacks the character to be a lawyer and is denied the Bar.

Brian Williams may be in the entertainment industry, but if he covers "NEWS" he is bound to impartiality and fact. Perhaps Williams needs to have a new show and it can be called the "WOULD YOU BELIEVE?" And then shame on anyone who does.

John D. Hopkins ([E-mail](#)) - The whole news profession is being damaged by the Williams affair. Though we can be glad that he owned up to his exaggeration, the longer we dwell on his dishonesty in what we publish the lower we all fall in the estimation of the general public. It is perhaps necessary to take note of his confession, yet another and more destructive thing to retell the story repeatedly in general publication. The only further headline I want to see in this is a resignation.

George Krimsky ([E-mail](#)) - I don't know **Brian Williams**, but he comes across on the screen as a controlled professional with just the right balance between gravitas and compassion.

But, in my experience, you don't get key facts wrong about one's personal involvement in a crisis situation, especially when they tend to reflect heroically on the storyteller. He could have said he was in a chopper convoy that got hit with small-arms fire and an RPG. But, no, it had to be him in the chopper that got hit by the big one.

Perhaps the system is somewhat to blame. In my experience, TV stars would enter war zones in their well-tailored combat gear with an entourage and an attitude encouraged, if not promoted, by the front office. NY wanted their talent to be gutsier and more enterprising than Brand X's. So, these guys would parachute in, strut their stuff in front of the cameras, and leave their on-ground fixers and shooters to pick up the pieces later.

My print colleagues could give you an earful ...

Eric Newhouse ([E-mail](#)) - It's hard to believe that a trained journalist like **Brian Williams** could "mis-remember" being on a chopper downed by enemy rockets when he was, in fact, on a different flight an hour later. Yet I have to tell you that my maternal grandmother, a gifted writer and storyteller, shared the same trait. She could hear a gripping story and, within a few months, be telling it with verve in the first person, adding some fresh details calculated to edify and horrify the innocent listener. Of course, she also had a saying that seems appropriate: "Never let the truth stand in the way of a good yarn."

Whether Williams actually saw bodies floating through the (mostly dry) French Quarter is not for me to say. But I'd be interested in hearing from friends and colleagues **Charlotte Porter** and **Kent Prince**, who were running the AP bureau in New Orleans at that time.

Steve Graham ([E-mail](#)) - I think **Brian Williams** is a strong contender for the **Jayson Blair** award for creative journalism. Perhaps theridicule will be more damaging than the serious criticism.

Sam Montello ([E-mail](#)) - He was in a following 'copter, and probably had to leave the scene. Don't be too hard on the guy. He was trying to convey the danger and the scene. I don't feel the truth was violated.

Mike Holmes ([E-mail](#)) - This doesn't require overthinking. If **Brian Williams** can't tell the difference between getting shot down and covering someone who's actually been shot down, then he's got no business calling himself a reporter.

Jim Limbach ([E-mail](#)) - It isn't just Williams whose credibility is shot. His crew knew and said nothing. That destroys NBC News' credibility completely. But then, anyone who has watched the Today show, which is produced by NBC News, knows credibility disappeared long ago.

Mike Waller ([E-mail](#)) - NBC has no choice -- **Brian Williams** must be fired. Trust is all an anchor has and his constant repeating of a lie is a mortal sin in the news business. If NBC fails to dismiss Williams, it will lose even more credibility and, eventually, viewers.

Connecting reader **Gary Graham**, editor of The Spokesman-Review in Spokane, blogged:

[Journalism takes another hit](#)

Greater minds than mine will be dissecting for quite some time the mess created by NBC Nightly News anchor **Brian Williams** when he confessed he had lied about his experience in the Iraqi war zone in 2003. After spending more than 40 years in newsrooms, I am seldom surprised anymore by the lies people tell. However, I am distressed by the damage to my profession's credibility and reputation that results when another journalist intentionally mixes fact and fiction.

Earlier today in my Twitter feed, I urged my colleagues not to take competitive joy in seeing a highly paid and popular television anchor wind up in such a self-inflicted fall from grace.

... service mementos

Dave Tomlin ([E-mail](#)) - At the 25-Year Club dinner where I was on the short list of 35-year award recipients, the gift for our group was a signed and matted print of **Nick Ut's** Pulitzer-winning photo of crying Vietnamese children fleeing a napalm attack. I thought it was an amazing memento and still do.

Nick was there that night, and I got him to stand next to me along with **Hal Buell** so another dinner guest could take a quick Polaroid. The very next day I took my prize to a frame shop for mounting, and then I taped my souvenir snapshot to the back.

Hanging it on a wall took some thought. The content is so emotionally charged and tragic that I couldn't bring myself to display it in the living room. But I was so pleased and proud to own it that I never considered just putting it in storage.

It hangs above my nightstand in New Mexico, where we go in the summers and I see it daily before and after sleep. It doesn't trouble me at all, since I know the sequel -- that the screaming naked girl survived, that Nick scooped her up and got her medical help right after making the picture, and that they have enjoyed a warm friendship for years.

George Bria ([E-mail](#)) - My most memorable gift was from the staff of the Foreign Desk when I retired in 1981. It was the simplest of SLR cameras, but it rang a bell. I took photography lessons and realized I was the greenest of cameramen. But I persevered, did dark room work, loved to see the image appear in the tray. Some years later (by this time we were digital) I had the ineffable (the right word) pleasure of selling a couple of my pictures to the AP to illustrate the gardening column I was doing in retirement.



The Brian Williams fabrications

[NBC launches internal probe of Williams's claims](#)

NBC News has assigned the head of its own investigative unit to look into statements that anchor **Brian Williams** made about his reporting in Iraq a dozen years ago, an episode that's ballooned into a full-blown credibility crisis for the network. NBC News President **Deborah Turness** announced the probe in an internal memo on Friday. Williams has apologized for falsely saying on the air that he was in a helicopter hit by a rocket-propelled grenade while in Iraq in 2003, and Turness said Friday the anchor expressed his regrets to his colleagues for the impact the episode has had.

[Report: Brokaw, NBC News president knew Williams story was false, told him to stop](#)

As a series of ex-soldiers come forward to criticize **Brian Williams** for his 'stolen valor' Iraq war story, it is being reported that top level executives at NBC News had known the tale was fake and had been begging the newscaster for years to stop repeating it. Williams is at a center of a media firestorm after he was found out for embellishing an old war story about being in a helicopter hit by a grenade during the Iraq war in 2003. The newscaster acted swiftly on Wednesday night to attempt to diffuse the situation by apologizing during his Nightly News show, but since then a series of ex-soldiers have come forward to criticize Williams 'half-hearted' apology.

Also:

[Brian Williams has not led. What's an anchor for?](#)

[National front pages pile on Brian Williams](#)

[The decline and fall of NBC News](#)

[Why did Brian Williams lie?](#)

Stories of Interest

[Terrorists' videos are brutal, gruesome. YouTube, other platforms, shouldn't remove them](#)

Almost every week, it seems, we have a new case in which social platforms and media outlets - which are increasingly becoming the same thing, in many ways - are faced with a difficult choice: Should they post that video of someone being beheaded, or some other horrible thing? Or should they save users and viewers from seeing it by never publishing it, or taking it down if it's posted? In the most recent case, YouTube chose to remove a video of a Jordanian pilot being set on fire by ISIS, while Fox News published it.

Related:

[ISIL video traffic draw for Fox News](#)

[Why internet headline writers hate themselves](#)

The best headline templates for maximizing readership can quickly become ubiquitous, over-familiar, and cloying to their own writers.

[Survey: Two of three reporters believe Feds spying on their e-mail, calls, online searches](#)

In a survey of investigative reporters that makes **Richard Nixon's** enemies list look like child's play, nearly seven in 10 said they believe that the Obama administration has spied on their phone calls, emails and online searches. According to a Pew Research Center survey of 454 media figures, 64 percent "believe that the U.S. government has probably collected data" from their calls and email and eight in 10 believe just being a journalist jumps the chance Uncle Sam is spying on them.

[The newsonomics of mixing old and new](#) (shared by Sibby Christensen)

Each morning, 135,000 people get Wall Street Journal editor **Gerry Baker's** The 10 Point, his one-year-old touts e-mail on the best of the Journal that day. Around the same hour, 600,000 people get The Daily Beast's Cheat Sheet, up from just 182,000 a year ago. About 110,000 get Quartz's The Brief and 83,000 get the millennials-centric Mic Check. Newsletters and briefings are flying across the globe, growing exponentially. They fill our e-mail inboxes and flash across our smartphones; even when the screen is locked, notifications push right through the blank screen into our enervated consciousness. Quite an invention, right? The funny thing about these newsletters is that they mimic a medium or three you may well have heard of - the daily newspaper, the top-of-the-hour radio news report, and the evening TV news.

[Harper Lee bombshell: How news of old new book unfolded](#)

When **Andrew Nurnberg**, a London-based literary agent, called a meeting with HarperCollins senior executive **Michael Morrison** last October, the publisher assumed they would have a routine chat about coming book projects. Instead, Mr. Nurnberg showed up on Oct. 27 at Mr. Morrison's 22nd-floor office in lower Manhattan with a bombshell: He was in possession of a photocopy of "Go Set a Watchman," an original typewritten manuscript by Harper Lee, author of "To Kill a Mockingbird."

[Net Neutrality: House to probe whether White House improperly influenced FCC on broadband rules](#)

A House oversight committee on Friday said it was launching an investigation into whether the White House improperly influenced the Federal Communications Commission on its new rules for how broadband providers treat traffic on their networks. Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R., Utah), chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, wrote to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler demanding all documents and communications between the FCC and the White House or other executive-branch agencies on the issue, along with all internal discussion at the FCC.

Related:

[Hidden inside net plan, content regulation, new taxes, fees](#)

Finally...



[The first question this teacher asks her kindergarteners every morning is heartbreaking](#)

A former journalist, now a freelance writer, puts into perspective the almost painful social role teachers now serve in many of the country's schools. A powerful read.

Today in History, February 7

Today is Saturday, Feb. 7, the 38th day of 2015. There are 327 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 7, 1965, during the Vietnam War, Viet Cong forces attacked Camp Holloway, a U.S. Army helicopter base near Pleiku, killing eight Americans and wounding more than 100 others; the United States retaliated with airstrikes against the North Vietnamese.

On this date:

In 1795, the 11th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, dealing with states' sovereign immunity, was ratified.

In 1857, a French court acquitted author Gustave Flaubert of obscenity for his serialized novel "Madame Bovary."

In 1914, Keystone Film Co. released the silent short comedy "Kid Auto Races at Venice," Charles Chaplin's second film, and the first in which he plays the Little Tramp.

In 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized a flag for the office of the vice president.

In 1940, Walt Disney's second animated feature, "Pinocchio," premiered in New York.

In 1948, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower resigned as Army chief of staff; he was succeeded by

Gen. Omar Bradley.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy imposed a full trade embargo on Cuba.

In 1964, The Beatles arrived at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport to begin their first American tour.

In 1974, the island nation of Grenada won independence from Britain.

In 1984, space shuttle Challenger astronauts Bruce McCandless II and Robert L. Stewart went on the first untethered space walk, which lasted nearly six hours.

In 1985, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena was kidnapped in Guadalajara, Mexico, by drug traffickers who tortured and murdered him. The high school comedy-drama "The Breakfast Club," a Universal Pictures release, premiered in Los Angeles.

In 1999, Jordan's King Hussein died of cancer at age 63; he was succeeded by his eldest son, Abdullah.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush proposed a \$2.57 trillion budget that would erase scores of programs but still worsen federal deficits by \$42 billion over the next five years. Defrocked priest Paul Shanley, the most notorious figure in the Boston Archdiocese sex scandal, was convicted of repeatedly raping and fondling a boy at his church during the 1980s. (Shanley was sentenced to 12 to 15 years in prison.) Ellen MacArthur, a 28-year-old Englishwoman, broke the then-record for solo around-the-world sailing, completing the 26,000-mile circumnavigation after 71 days, 14 hours, 18 minutes and 33 seconds at sea.

Five years ago: A nearly completed Kleen Energy Systems power plant in Middletown, Connecticut, exploded, killing six people and injuring 50. Pro-Russian opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich declared victory in Ukraine's presidential runoff, but his opponents rejected the claim, saying the vote was too close to call. (Yanukovich was inaugurated Feb. 25.) The New Orleans Saints rallied for a 31-17 Super Bowl victory over the Indianapolis Colts.

One year ago: The Sochi Olympics opened with a celebration of Russia's past greatness and hopes for future glory. President Barack Obama, during a visit to Michigan State University, signed an agriculture spending bill spreading benefits to farmers in every region of the country while trimming the food stamp program that had inspired a two-year battle over the legislation.

Today's Birthdays: Author Gay Talese is 83. Movie director Hector Babenco (Film: "Kiss of the Spider Woman") is 69. Actor Miguel Ferrer is 60. Reggae musician Brian Travers (UB40) is 56. Comedy writer Robert Smigel is 55. Actor James Spader is 55. Country singer Garth Brooks is 53. Actor-comedian Eddie Izzard is 53. Actor-comedian Chris Rock is 50. Actor Jason Gedrick is 48. Actress Essence Atkins is 43. Rock singer-musician Wes Borland is 40. Rock musician Tom Blankenship (My Morning Jacket) is 37. Actor Ashton Kutcher is 37. Actress Tina Majorino is 30. Actress Deborah Ann Woll (TV: "True Blood") is 30.

Thought for the Day: "No one is useless in this world... who lightens the burden of it for any one else." - From "Our Mutual Friend" by Charles Dickens (born this date in 1812, died in 1870)

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