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**From:** Paul Stevens [stevenspl@live.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 03, 2015 9:35 AM  
**To:** stevenspl@live.com  
**Subject:** Connecting - March 3, 2015

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# Connecting

March 3, 2015

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Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning!

The death Sunday of our Connecting colleague **John Shurr**, longtime South Carolina AP chief of bureau, brought out some wonderful remembrances for today's newsletter.

Many of us are still struck by the sudden loss of John and **Kent Flanagan**, longtime Tennessee chief of bureau, who died four days earlier. Please keep them in your prayers, and as I learn of where you might send condolences or the creation of a memorial, I will let you know.

Thanks for contributing your thoughts on a variety of topics. It's what makes Connecting unique. Keep them coming.

Paul

## Remembering John Shurr, 1947-2015

Here is John's AP wire obituary, followed by your thoughts on our colleague:

**BC-US--Obit-Shurr,2nd Ld-Writethru/303**  
**Eds: Updates with comment from colleague**  
**Longtime South Carolina journalist John Shurr dies**

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) - John Shurr, a longtime journalist and open government advocate who was The Associated Press' bureau chief in South Carolina for 20 years, has died. He was 67.

Shurr died at his home Sunday morning, said Bill Rogers, executive director of the South Carolina Press Association, and a longtime friend.

Shurr played the key role in bringing cameras and microphones inside South Carolina courts. "We wouldn't have cameras in the courtroom without John Shurr, I don't believe," Rogers said.

Shurr was a longtime chairman of the South Carolina Press Association's Freedom of Information Committee.

In 1988, the state Supreme Court unanimously voted to refuse to allow cameras or tape recorders in courtrooms. But Shurr continued to set up meetings between judges, lawyers and journalists so they could talk about open government.

At the time, South Carolina was one of a handful of states that didn't allow journalists' to have electronic equipment in courtrooms.

In 1992, largely due to Shurr's efforts, South Carolina courts began a six-month experiment allowing cameras in the courts. Today, having cameras in the courtrooms is commonplace.

Jim Clarke, AP bureau chief for Colorado, Montana, Utah and Wyoming, worked for Shurr in Columbia in the 1990s.

"John was exactly what you want a bureau chief to be, passionate about freedom of information, passionate about quality journalism and passionate about the AP and its members," Clarke said.

Shurr was the creator and author of "A Public Officials Guide to the S.C. Freedom of Information." Tens of thousands of copies of the book have been distributed statewide to public officials and journalists.



He was part of the Cherokee tribe from his native Oklahoma. He enjoyed sailing and tennis.

Shurr retired from the AP in 2007. Funeral plans were not complete Monday morning.

### ***Remembering John...***

**Hank Ackerman** ([Email](#)) - Very saddened to hear of the death of both Kent and John. As one of the sources in John's obit mentioned, AP was a different bigger organization that went after hard-to-document stories. John was a tiger, so was Kent in that journalistic endeavor, and you rightly pointed this out in your intros. Thanks again for being such a constant presence in bringing back memories but also affording several generations (or more) of AP people to have an avenue to sharing their thoughts, their frustrations, their lives for there's no other forum of "formers" I know of that is so complete and so meaningful to its "members."

You made us members, and the archive of your missives is already a massive one that paints out the canvass that so richly was worked on by so few for the so many. John was quite an institution in South Carolina, and the story about his work for press freedoms brought back many memories of South Carolina, my grandmother's native state and Mell's mother's family's state. He was everywhere at once. One of my childhood friends when we were growing up in North Carolina was Benjy Shillinglaw, who died several years ago. I found out only before his death that he played tennis with John weekly for many years. South Carolina has special interest for me, as well, as my father's last job in journalism before he died in 1958 was with The State in Columbia. It was one of the last statewide distribution newspapers in the U.S (until discontinued by Knight-Ridder in the 90s), and you know how important those papers were to the mindset and development of a state. My father was a general reporter, but specialized in religion in a state where religion was news. He covered some great sermons!

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**Lindel Hutson** ([Email](#)) - I got to know John in the early `70s when he was on the desk in Oklahoma City and I was doing the same in Little Rock. On those nights when tornadoes danced in the skies, we often compared notes since the ones that start in Oklahoma often land in Arkansas.

When I moved to Oklahoma City in 1989, it was John who found a Realtor for me.

He had a terrific sense of humor. When things were down you could always count on John to brighten up your day.

His dad was a dentist in Muskogee and his mother was a respected Cherokee artist. He embraced his Cherokee heritage and was active on the Cherokee Nation's publication board.

He was a champion of diversity in the AP and kept close contact with Native American journalism students. Over the years, he sent me several terrific interns.

John was a strong promoter of freedom of information. The AP coordinated South Carolina's first statewide FOI audit in the '90s.

Like Kent Flanagan, John was a good guy and a good bureau chief.

He will be missed.

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**Peggy Walsh** ([Email](#)) - So many things ran through my memory when I heard of John's death. We became instant friends when I was in Atlanta and he became COB in South Carolina and kept up after I left for LA and San Francisco.

He was one of the COBs that championed and celebrated those of us women who were, as one less enlightened COB put it, "invading" the ranks.

One of my most vivid and favorite memories of John was in 1989 when we talked as he went through Hurricane Hugo, a category 4 when it devastated many parts of South Carolina. I was the COB in San Francisco and we lamented that bureaus at risk for natural disasters couldn't get NY to approve purchases of equipment (those old "cell phones," generators, etc.) that we'd need.

A month later when the 1989 earthquake hit San Francisco during the World Series John was one of the first people to call, giving much needed advice on getting all the equipment and help I could. As he put it, "Go for it. You'll never have another chance."

I bought several thousand dollars of equipment at the now-defunct Radio Shack down the street from the bureau. I told COC Jim Van Sickle to buy a generator. John and I agreed that NY would have a fit when they saw how much I'd spent but John told me not to worry about it. He'd learned from the hurricane.

I can't blame John for this but I took it a step further and when our visiting staffers from NY left their cell phones were conveniently out in the field. John and I had a good laugh about that.

I'll miss him but I, like all of those who knew him, have the memories. The Atlanta hub that included all of the South lost two of its spokes this week with John and Kent's deaths. Journalism is better for both of them. The AP lost two of its best.

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**Doug Fisher** ([Email](#)) - I had the opportunity to work with three great AP bureau chiefs who had my back in my 18 years with the wire service, the last being John Shurr, with whom I spent nine years in Columbia.

So I was saddened to hear of John's passing tonight.

It, unfortunately, was not a surprise; those of us who knew John knew he was in declining health, quite possibly from the Agent Orange he was exposed to during the Vietnam War.

John and I dealt with the craziness of Susan Smith, the madness of the James Jordan death investigation, women at The Citadel, numerous hurricanes, video poker, lowering the Confederate flag, the Republican wave that took over state government ...

Fun times, those.

And through it all, I knew I could always go to John for advice and support. It helped that we both had been in charge, at separate times, of the AP's Rhode Island office. In recent years, he and I would often exchange emails chortling at the continued parade of buffoonery by R.I. politicians and lamenting the slow, painful decline of the Providence Journal, at one time one of America's best local papers -- but sometimes overlooked as it was in the umbra of the major-major metros of the East Coast.

He's best known in South Carolina for his efforts on behalf of freedom of information, an indefatigable defender of the right of the public to know what its government is doing. And I would hope that in his honor, the Legislature this year would finally pass many of the needed changes to South Carolina's FOI law that include a quicker review process, more reasonable costs and a clear and certain window in which time records must be produced. (And, of course, there is the need to overturn the state Supreme Court's troubling decisions on meeting agendas and autopsy reports.)

And as a result of his dedication, in the late 1990s the AP coordinated the first statewide FOI audit in South Carolina that found, as we put it at the time, agencies would get no better than a D if graded on the public schools' grading scale. We found all sorts of obfuscation and harassment, including police demanding IDs from and running the license plates of those requesting records. Sadly, things have only gotten worse.

That was John's public face.



But in the bureau, he was about as good a CoB (AP lingo for chief of bureau) that you could get. He was no more than 15 feet away in his glass-walled office, complete with the picture of his sailboat, his pride and joy, tossed onshore by Hurricane Hugo. (John got a replacement -- "another hole in the water into which you throw money" -- and he tried several times to get me to crew with him. But I always managed to avoid that -- his reputation as Captain Bligh was not entirely undeserved {grin}.)

But John always gave you enough room to do your job.

Oh, there was no mistake he was paying attention, as evidenced by those occasional "got a minute" calls from the inner sanctum. But you could always count on the fact that when you needed the resources, John would blow out the budget and ask permission (or forgiveness) from AP's headquarters later.

Then there were the years when the AP bureau was like Switzerland, caught in the middle of the Columbia-Spartanburg-Greenville-Charleston newspaper war. There were some strong personalities involved, and afterward he and I would often joke about the S.C. Press Association meeting where the editors started challenging each other -- one had a tight grip on a chair he looked as if he were about to throw -- and John and I just knew, in horror, we were going to have to break up a fight. John, in his way, was able to calm everyone down.

And when the folks in New York thought they knew their jobs better than you, John never hesitated to remind them that -- under the old AP -- a CoB ultimately held the stronger hand and to back down.

That went so far as the AP's managing editor. A former ME who shall remain unidentified here (but every ex-APer knows) used to write a weekly review, a sort of after-action report, called "Dialogue." It was pretty much a one-way conversation, however. It praised "good" work and took bureaus to task when the ME or the general desk felt they had fallen short (often, as my fellow news editors observed, without asking for explanations).

After one winter ice storm, we got blasted. Long story short, our "story" was on the coast, where we knew high winds were blowing salt spray inland, shorting out numerous electrical transformers and leaving thousands dark. We had ice and some snow in the Upstate, but not as many people were affected - the storm that was panicking New York, which was expecting a direct hit, gave us only a glance. We were shorthanded, and I decided it would be foolhardy to call someone in on overtime and make them drive into those conditions. So we concentrated efforts on the coast and used the phones to gather some great material from the Upstate, so good that New York used two of the quotes in its national story. But we got nailed for not enough effort.

I wrote a lengthy challenge. But John summed it up with a short, pointed note to the ME: "Please cancel my subscription to Diatribe."

That was the kind of person, boss and colleague John was. He will be sorely missed. Karen's and my thoughts and condolences go out to his wife, Debbie. And I'm proud to have worked with a journalist's journalist.

**Here is an oral history** with him from the S.C. Press Association. At 29:50 begins a pretty funny tale from the AP meeting, which was held as part of the SCPA convention:

<https://vimeo.com/86958995>

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**Joe McGowan** ([Email](#)) - Sure sorry about John Shurr's passing. He was great. He was on the AP circular when I needed to hire a newsman in Indianapolis. From the first week, there was no doubt he would pass probation. He was very proud to be full-blooded Cherokee. I believe his father was a doctor on the reservation and his mother a nurse. After I left Indianapolis to go to Boston as chief of bureau, I had an opening for correspondent in Rhode Island and got permission from NY to appoint John. Later he went to Chicago as ACOB. He was a first class person and newsman.

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**Steve Herman** ([Email](#)) - Such sad news about John, not the kind of news any of us likes to hear. I remember him from his stint as a young AP newsman in Indianapolis in the early-to-mid-'70s. Before he left Indy, I bought his golf clubs and bag - which I still have, although I quit playing the game long ago - and whenever I saw those clubs over the years, I thought of John.

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**John Kuglin** ([Email](#)) - John was someone I always looked up to. He gave me good advice as a new bureau chief when I desperately needed it. For another 30 years he was a good friend. I can't believe he is gone.

What this incredible bureau chief did is his legacy. He led his members in supporting freedom of information and was a tireless advocate for recruiting Native Americans to work for the AP. We talked a lot about how to increase the embarrassing small number of Natives employed by AP, including in Montana, and he encouraged me to step up recruitment.

John and I collaborated to convince the AP to include Native Americans as a legitimate minority group tabulated in exit polls.

Thanks to John, when the Unabomber was arrested in Montana in 1996, AP's first and best photos were taken by two extremely talented Native American photographers stringing for AP, Terri Longfox and John Youngbear who later interned at AP photos in New York. I hired one of John's Native American temps, Dan Lewerenz, as AP correspondent in Cheyenne, Wyo., and I know John was responsible for many other Native American hires throughout the AP.

John liked to have fun. We had a lot of that when we convinced Executive Editor Bill Ahearn to go fishing with us in an incredible trout stream in the middle of absolutely nowhere in central Montana.

We all caught fish, and Bill remarked, favorably, we thought, that the weeds two feet above our heads, that we were trying to tunnel through to find the stream, reminded him of Vietnam.

John was modest and never talked a lot about himself, but after he retired we had endless discussions about new hunting dogs and shotguns. Before reading yesterday's Connections, I didn't realize that John had served his country with such distinction in Vietnam.

John and I used to argue over which one of us had the best staff in the AP, a great argument to have.

Back to fun. Before a COB meeting in New York the 1980s, John came up with the idea of making custom T-shirts. Under the front pocket the shirts had a mushroom with AP's corporately correct logo and the word "Irregulars."



On the back was a sketch of a beagle and the words "SASSY." Why a beagle? Sassy was my beagle. During a recent presidential election, AP's election system seemed to be failing during rehearsals. Some of the COBs joked that maybe AP could market a new product called BeagleSpeed, using packs of beagles if AP's computers failed on election night to carry election dispatches to the members.

The word "Irregulars," didn't mean that COBs lacked fiber in their diet.

I won't explain what Irregulars, really meant, other than to say that Irregular chiefs like John spent a lot of time on better ways to serve the members, minding the wire, improving the report and motivating our staffs.

After a long day of meetings, most of the COBs were wearing John's mushroom/beagle T-shirts and waiting in the lobby of our Manhattan hotel for a bus to take us to a ball game. Just then Lou walked by.

John and I had a discussion, which went on for 30 years, about opening a small beer and bait stand in the swamps of the Carolinas. I'm sorry we never did this.

This is too long, but John would enjoy it.

We also mourn the loss of Kent Flanagan. Kent, too, was tireless in defending the public's right to know, when he worked for AP and after he retired. We both belonged to the National Freedom of Information Coalition, and I remember when at one memorable meeting in Nashville, Kent introduced me to Terry Anderson.

## Connecting mailbox

## ***Happy birthday, from George to George***

From George Krinsky to George Bria, who turned 99 on Monday:

Dear George ,

First of all, Happy Birthday. Please notice that I did not congratulate you on reaching 99. Your New York City audience three years ago was not applauding for you. They were applauding for hope.

I admire your humility tremendously.

Woody Allen said 80% of success is "just showing up." I never agreed with that, and in your case, it is clearly not true. You made history. Not as a participant but as the guy recording immediate events for your audience and for posterity and then going on to be the editor who made sure others got things right.

Oh, yes, George, I remember you well. You never accepted anything on face value. You were a real editor.

Did I hear correctly? You are the ONLY AP WORD GUY reporting from WWI who is still alive? Reporters and historians are headed for your doorstep. So, brace yourself.

Of course, I remember you as an actual human being on the Foreign Desk, some 50 feet from World Services on the fourth floor. Your job was editing and filing for the U.S. audience. My job was editing and filing for the Overseas audience. We had our differences.

But you were always honest. Sometimes uncomfortably so. "I don't care what (fill in the blanks for the country) want to know about. We're going with this lede."

Now, allow me to offer you congratulations for this milestone!

George Krinsky (AP 1969-85)

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**Al Habhab** ([Email](#)) - I enjoyed very much the article by George Bria. To witness first hand those events and to be able to relate them in such a concise and meaningful manner is truly historical. To be there.....to see.....to hear...to be near the GREATS of that time is a well-deserved honor. And he is only 99 years old. *(Al, a retired judge and decorated WWII veteran, is 89.)*

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***That Teletype sound***

**Art Loomis** ([Email](#)) - Every time I see your note on Connecting's front page (Click here for sound) I get a big grin on my face. The first M-15 I worked on was in Teletype School in Camp Gordon, GA in 1955. When I got out of TTY & Electronics training, the Army gave me three days to get to San Francisco. There several of us boarded troop planes that made several stops headed for Formosa, now Taiwan. Upon arrival I was assigned to a rebuild shop where we had teletype and 2 way radio equipment running 24 hours a day. I listened to printers of some fashion from 1955 to 2000 when I retired from the AP and you want me to (click here for sound?) Now that is funny.

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***'Forgive us our press passes'***



**Jeannine Yeomans** ([Email](#)) - I saved my old press passes and turned them into a humble-brag mobile, a work of "art" I have titled "Forgive Us Our Press Passes."

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### ***Remembering Kirsten Lindquist***

**Bill McCloskey** ([Email](#)) - Kirsten Lindquist joined APR in Washington in 1976, two years after the network started. She covered the White House during the Ford administration and did stints covering Congress and on various general assignment jaunts to sports events and plane crashes. She moved on to the RKO Radio Network -- which paid better -- and then CNN, before answering an ad in Broadcasting Magazine for "a Nordic looking blonde" for a TV anchor job in Minnesota. Imagine placing that ad today.

Comments among her APR colleagues responding to an email distribution about her death have focused on her friendly personality and skills as a journalist. Click [here](#) for her obituary.

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### ***Connecting sky shot - Long Beach Island, New Jersey***



**Brian Horton** ([Email](#)) - Living on an island, with a view over the bay to the west, you can't help but get caught up in the sunsets. Every night is different. During the summer, when we are there most of the time, several of us from the block gather at the bay end with beverages and take in the sunsets. During the winter months, when many people are away, it is more of a lonely pursuit for my wife and I. This time of the year, the sunsets more to the southwest and the view isn't as good from our street so my wife and I get in the car and seek out spots. I've got a whole collection of sunset photos made from the

island and this one, made Saturday night, has to be among my favorites. We've had quite a bit of wind this winter and, before the bay froze over, the waves made for a lot of spray so almost everything along the bay front has a coating of ice. The ice in this photo was on a bench at the end of a street, for instance. We love watching the sunsets, even when they aren't very spectacular, but the really good ones are special.

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### ***An ID on the Dallas AP staff photo***



**Jim Mangan** ([Email](#)) - I can add one name to the early 1960's portrait of the Dallas AP staff submitted by Ed Staats today in Connecting. The man in the back row to the right of Ron Thompson is Dick McMurray. the longtime desk filer self-described as "the wire clark (using the British pronunciation). Married to a wealthy older woman he called "sister", McMurray had no career ambition whatsoever. He used to celebrate his birthdays by inviting staffers he liked to his country home and giving everyone a present. He retained a manservant who addressed him as "Mr. Supreme." McMurray's IQ must have been off the charts.

## **Connecting boo-boos - mistakes we make**

**Mike Tharp** ([Email](#)) - In 2003-04 I was freelancing for People Magazine in Southern California. Smartly, they kept me away from celebrities and had me cover sports and crime. The two themes met that season when Lakers All Star Kobe Bryant was charged with sexual assault in Vail, Colo. The magazine assigned a reporter to the legal stuff and another to follow the glitz and glamour stuff. I went to Lakers' games and practices, trying to come up with any info for that week's story. I did and do hate the Lakers--but that season one of my favorite players, Karl Malone, came over from the Utah Jazz to try to win a ring with L.A.

At our first meeting at a party thrown by Shaquille O'Neal, I told him how much I respected his game and how big a fan I was. Probably mentioned that I'd played for an NAIA champion in college in Kansas. Malone got hurt in December and didn't play again till March. The whole team was forbidden by management to talk about Kobe's case. But I had learned a few bits along the way from The Mailman (Malone's nickname, because he delivered).

After his first game back, he sat in front of his locker, jersey off, both feet in buckets of ice. His body looked like an inverted ebony pyramid--6'9, 260, 4 percent body fat. A local TV crew was interviewing him. When they finished I walked up and asked him how it felt out on the court. Good, he said, felt good.

Then I asked, "Do you want me to show you how to not fall forward when you shoot free throws?"

He did a double-take. This was the man who then, and now, holds the record for most foul shots attempted in NBA history. For a second I was afraid he was going to stand up. Instead, he pointed at my handy-dandy Reporter's Notebook.

"You do your thing with that," he said, pointing at my notebook, "and I'll do my thing out there," pointing at Staples Center court. "Okay?"

Okay.

A week or so later Bill Walton came into the locker room. He'd been the color analyst for the broadcast. I'd met him a year or so earlier when I did a profile for People of his son Luke, then at the University of Arizona. "Karl Malone!" Walton boomed. "Bill Walton!" Malone boomed back and stood up. Walton said, "Do you know Mike Tharp from People Magazine?"

The Mailman didn't even glance my way. "We've met," he said.

So that's how I lost a source.

Thing is, I could have helped him not fall forward on his free throws.

But that's a story for another day.

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**Doug Pizac** ([Email](#)) - In the late '70s I was "paying my dues" at a medium-sized daily in Kentucky before coming back to AP full-time. Each year the town held a huge summer festival involving fair-like events, hydro-plane races and so on. In prep for the shindig the paper did a special section. One of the stories that I illustrated was the type of foods that would be served and I was sent to a local slaughterhouse to make pictures of sheep being turned into mutton, chops, etc.

One of my images was of a pen full of sheep being herded onto a ramp for processing and that is what I wrote as my caption. A copy editor however decided to have fun with the photo and changed my caption to the animals being sent to death at a German township -- equating it to the Nazi holocaust -- as a joke for the special sections editor who didn't catch the parallel. The Nazi caption made it into the paper.

When the edition came out I was mortified and the managing editor was livid. Ironically, only one person called the paper to complain -- the owner of the slaughterhouse who said their business wasn't in any German township; it was part of the town itself. He never got the alternative meaning, nor did the publisher or others in the town as far as I knew.

The few of us at the paper who understood the insinuation kept quiet and it passed. However, the copy editor who made the joke attempt got a good talking to.

## **Profiling new Connecting members: Lynne Harris, AP New York**

**Lynne Harris** ([Email](#)) -

At AP:  
Support Services Manager -- Started working at AP in Sept. 1987 on a two-week temp assignment in Administrative Services. They had this new membership database that needed lots of inputting.....and input I did.....for the next 16 years until July 2004. Over the ensuing years I incorporated the bureau mailing lists into the membership database so we had one database for all mailings.



One of my proudest creations was the AP Phone Directory which got updated every 6 months and was always anticipated by AP staffers around the world with the question....what color will the cover be? The Retiree Directory was another very popular directory which unfortunately bit the dust several years ago.

I was also the corporate travel manager and worked directly with our travel agency, American Express. The most fun I had in travel management was doing the Olympics travel arrangements from 1992 (Barcelona) to 2004 (Athens).

And...I assisted Lilo Jedelhauser on the Annual Membership Meetings as well as helping to organize other corporate events.

Currently:  
Project Coordinator (consultant) - Facilities, Design & Construction Department of New York Presbyterian Hospital, Columbia campus

And:

Terhune Orchards at the Union Square Greenmarket-New York (selling fruit, pies, breads, cider) every Saturday afternoon year round.....if you're near Union Square after 1pm, come by and say hello.

## Connecting's 80s club

I think it was my comment, the 80s is the new 60s, that brought out these first responses to the Connecting 80s Club:

**George Hanna** ([Email](#)) - Somehow, Connecting changed my birthday from Feb. 18 to Feb. 28. My birthdate is 02/18/1930 which means my most recent was my 85th. There are a good many of us 80ish folks around who still like to hear the rat-a-tat sound of the AP printers to start the day and I can tell you one thing: 85 is the new 84. (Ye Olde Connecting Editor regrets making George 10 days younger, but just sayin', there are a lot of folks out there who would like him to make them younger...)

**Phil Dopoulos** ([Email](#)) - I turned 83 on Feb. 24 and still going strong. As you noted, it's the new 60. What is 90 described as and even 100?

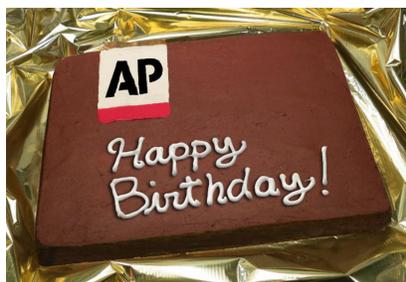
**Arlon Southall** ([Email](#)) - Please enroll me in the 80s club. (83)

**Lew Ferguson** ([Email](#)) - To add to your new 80s Club, I was 81 on Jan. 9.

**Charlie Monzella** ([Email](#)) - I'd be honored to be inducted into your 80s Club. I was born August 27, 1931, and was 83 last August. Yes, I consider it quite unique that I've reached this age. Longevity is in my family, however. My mother lived to be 101.

***Are you in your 80s and want to be listed? How about in your 90s? Let me know.***

## Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



To

## Madge Stager [\(Email\)](#)

### Stories of interest

#### [The president and the press](#)

The day after the 2014 midterm elections was not a time of celebration for the losing Democrats, and the White House press corps was determined to get the party's most senior member on the record about what was surely a disappointing night for the president. Ten reporters were given the chance to ask questions during the 74-minute press conference, and seven of them asked the president some version of this question: Was it your own fault, and how will you change your behavior and agenda? To each question, President Obama was equally determined not to take the bait, frustrating a White House press corps unable to evoke a note of regret, anger, or introspection from a man who had just learned he would spend the final two years of his presidency tangling with a GOP-run Congress.

Julie Pace of The Associated Press tried first. "You said during this election that while your name wasn't on the ballot, your policies were. And despite the optimism that you're expressing here, last night was a devastating night for your party. Given that, do you feel any responsibility to recalibrate your agenda for the next two years? And what changes do you need to make in your White House and in your dealings with Republicans in order to address the concerns that voters expressed with your administration?"

The president repeated much of the upbeat tone of his opening statement. "The American people overwhelmingly believe that this town doesn't work well and that it is not attentive to their needs. And as president, they, rightly, hold me accountable to do more to make it work properly," Obama said. "I'm the guy who's elected by everybody, not just from a particular state or a particular district. And they want me to push hard to close some of these divisions, break through some of the gridlock, and get stuff done. So the most important things I can do is just get stuff done, and help Congress get some things done," he added, then went on for what would be a six-minute answer to Pace's question and follow-up.

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#### [Debate over beheading photo](#) (Shared by Bob Daugherty)

One of the biggest stories of 2015 will easily be ISIS and its rampage through Iraq and Syria and efforts to defeat the radical group. The group, an organization that wants its brutality broadcast to the world, its coverage and how it will be played on news pages will be a regular part of newsroom discussions throughout the year.

A picture on the front page Feb. 17 sparked one of those debates. The five-column photo, a still provided by Reuters from a video, showed a row of eight Egyptian Christian men. They were kneeling, seconds away from being beheaded by masked ISIS captors.

Reader Michael Bongorz from Fallbrook disliked the photo. "I feel to show hostages on their knees with their faces showing, and about to be beheaded, is insulting and degrading to them and their families," he wrote in a letter to the editor.

Lloyd L. Rochambeau from San Marcos felt differently. "We need exposure of evil and extremists," he wrote.

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[Gannett Says Carl Icahn Has Withdrawn Nominees to Its Board](#) (Shared by Sibby Christensen)

A little over a month ago, Carl C. Icahn seemed poised for a fight at the Gannett Company. Now, the veteran activist investor is backing down.

Gannett disclosed on Monday that Mr. Icahn had withdrawn his two nominees for its board, as well as his corporate governance proposals that would have made it easier to sell the media company.

The billionaire owns roughly 6.6 percent of Gannett's stock.

The announcement came as Gannett outlined the corporate governance for its newspaper publishing business, which will be spun off as an independent public company later this year. Many of the rules fit the general principles that Mr. Icahn had advocated: annual elections for directors, a limited life span for anti-takeover "poison pill" plans, special meetings that can be called with the support of 20 percent of the company's shares.

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[10 Newspapers That Do It Right 2015](#)

Newspapers come in all shapes and sizes, and so do ideas. As the E&P staff went through this year's nominations, we read about newspapers still pushing hard for print; newspapers unafraid to experiment; and most importantly, newspapers planning for and finding success in various ways.

Despite their shared struggles, these 10 newspapers have one other thing in common: their confidence. They're shining examples of papers that haven't given up, but are charging forward. When you look at this story's headline, I hope the word that stands out is "do." Those two letters mean these papers are in motion, they're active, and they're not taking a backseat.

As you read through this year's list of 10 Newspapers That Do It Right (and our honorable

mentions), get excited; get inspired; and get ready to see the positive changes taking place in our industry.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, March 3, the 62nd day of 2015. There are 303 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On March 3, 1945, the Allies fully secured the Philippine capital of Manila from Japanese forces during World War II.

### On this date:

In 1845, Florida became the 27th state.

In 1849, the U.S. Department of the Interior was established.

In 1913, more than 5,000 suffragists marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C., a day before the presidential inauguration of Woodrow Wilson.

In 1923, Time magazine, founded by Briton Hadden and Henry R. Luce, made its debut.

In 1931, "The Star-Spangled Banner" became the national anthem of the United States as President Herbert Hoover signed a congressional resolution.

In 1934, bank robber John Dillinger escaped from the Lake County Jail in Crown Point, Indiana, along with another prisoner, Herbert Youngblood.

In 1940, Artie Shaw and his orchestra recorded "Frenesi" for RCA Victor.

In 1959, the United States launched the Pioneer 4 spacecraft, which flew by the moon. Comedian Lou Costello died in East Los Angeles three days before his 53rd birthday.

In 1969, Apollo 9 blasted off from Cape Kennedy on a mission to test the lunar module.

In 1974, a Turkish Airlines DC-10 crashed shortly after takeoff from Orly Airport in Paris, killing all 346 people on board.

In 1985, coal miners in Britain voted to end a year-long strike that proved to be the longest and most violent walkout in British history. The comedy-drama series "Moonlighting," starring Cybill Shepherd and Bruce Willis, premiered on ABC-TV.

In 1991, motorist Rodney King was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers in a scene captured on amateur video. Twenty-five people were killed when a United Airlines Boeing 737-200 crashed while approaching the Colorado Springs airport.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush visited CIA headquarters, where he promised agency employees they would retain an "incredibly vital" role in safeguarding the nation's security despite the creation of a new post of national director of intelligence. Millionaire adventurer Steve Fossett became the first person to fly an airplane, the GlobalFlyer, around the world alone without stopping or refueling, touching down in central Kansas after a 67-hour, 23,000-mile journey.

Five years ago: Appearing before a White House audience of invited guests, many wearing white medical coats, President Barack Obama firmly rejected calls from Republicans to draft new health care legislation from scratch. Greece announced painful new austerity measures, cutting salaries for government workers and raising sales taxes as it tried to snuff out a financial crisis threatening Europe's economy. British politician Michael Foot died in north London at age 96.

One year ago: President Barack Obama pressed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a White House meeting to make the "tough decisions" needed to move forward on talks with the Palestinians. Oscar Pistorius pleaded not guilty to murdering his girlfriend on Valentine's Day 2013, marking the start of the Olympian's murder trial in South Africa. (Pistorius was later found guilty of culpable homicide in the death of Reeva Steenkamp; prosecutors are appealing the decision in favor of a murder conviction.) Three-time Grand Slam champion Lindsay Davenport was elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame; she was joined by five-time Paralympic medalist Chantal Vandierendonck, coach Nick Bollettieri, executive Jane Brown Grimes and broadcaster John Barrett.

Today's Birthdays: Socialite Lee Radziwill is 82. Movie producer-director George Miller is 70. Actress Hattie Winston is 70. Singer Jennifer Warnes is 68. Actor-director Tim Kazurinsky is 65. Singer-musician Robyn Hitchcock is 62. Actor Robert Gossett is 61. Rock musician John Lilley is 61. Actress Miranda Richardson is 57. Rock musician John Bigham is 56. Radio personality Ira Glass is 56. Actress Mary Page Keller is 54. Olympic track and field gold medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey is 53. Former NFL player and College Football Hall of Famer Herschel Walker is 53. Contemporary Christian musician Duncan Phillips

(Newsboys) is 51. Rapper-actor Tone Loc (lohk) is 49. Actress Julie Bowen is 45. Country singer Brett Warren (The Warren Brothers) is 44. Actor David Faustino is 41. Gospel singer Jason Crabb is 38. Singer Ronan Keating (Boyzone) is 38. Rapper Lil' Flip is 34. Actress Jessica Biel is 33. Rock musician Blower (AKA Joe Garvey) (Hinder) is 31. Pop singer Camila Cabello (Fifth Harmony) (TV: "The X Factor") is 18.

***Thought for Today: "America is a tune. It must be sung together." - Gerald Stanley Lee, American clergyman and author (1862-1944).***

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