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Connecting - July 31, 2015

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Connecting

July 31, 2015

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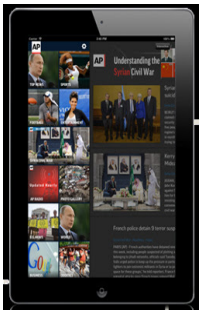

For the latest news and photos from the AP, click these:

Top AP news
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Colleagues,

Good Friday morning!

Today's Connecting brings you news of a reunion of AP Middle East journalists, National Press Club recognition for AP staffers, stories about Dolly Parton and George Wallace, and much more...

Including, a wonder CJR piece "Stop the Press!" that concludes: "The ping of an incoming news alert just doesn't carry the same weight as the thunder of the 'press'."

Amen to that! Keep the memories flowing....

Enjoy!

Paul

A reunion of former AP Middle East journalists

From the reunion of former AP Middle East journalists, from left: Cass Ludington, Brenda Smiley, Richard Pyle, Madeleine Bassim, Nick Ludington, Lola Koundakjian, GG LaBelle and Eileen Powell.

Richard Pyle (Email) - For the second time this summer, a group of former AP journalists and friends gathered to reminisce about their experiences living in and reporting on events in the endlessly turbulent Middle East.

The hosts for the latest event, on Saturday, July 18, were Nick and Cass Ludington at their home overlooking the Hudson River in Sneden's Landing, a bucolic enclave named for a late 18th century river ferry operator in the rural village of Palisades, N.Y., 12 miles north of the George Washington Bridge.

Guests for a Beirut-style lunch of hummus and chickens salad included Lola Koundakjian, daughter of the late AP photographer Harry ``the Horse'' Koundakjian, who effectively pioneered photojournalism in the Middle East. A toast was raised to Harry, who died in New York in 2014. Others present were Madeleine Bassim, ex-wife of former AP reporter and ME chief of services Terry Anderson, who spent nearly six years as a hostage of Arab extremists in Lebanon; the AP husband and wife team of Gerald ``GG'' LaBelle and Eileen Powell, who first went to Beirut in 1982 and later served three years as reporters and editors in New Delhi, five in Jerusalem and six in Cairo before returning to the US in 2000, GG as NYC bureau news editor; and Eileen to AP business news, and Richard Pyle and wife Brenda Smiley.

Richard was first deployed from Washington to cover the Lebanon civil war in 1976 and in 1987 was named Roving ME Correspondent in Cairo but soon shifted to Bahrain to cover the Iraq-Iran ``tanker war'' in the Persian Gulf, Israel's invasion of Lebanon and later the first Gulf war, aka Desert Storm, in 1991. Brenda did radio reporting from Bahrain for Monitor and NBC, and freelanced for AP and Gulf-based magazines.

Nick Ludington wore many hats in an AP career spanning 26 years, from correspondent in Turkey and roving the Balkans 1966-72 to UN correspondent in the early 1990s. He had two tours as Chief of Middle East Services and in 1973-78 he also ran AP's coverage of the Lebanon civil war, from battle-beleaguered Beirut and later from Cyprus.

Faced with finding new quarters after the Beirut bureau was destroyed in the ``battle of the hotels'' in the city center, Nick moved his troops into the small Kings Hotel, in peaceful times a favorite of Swedish tourists. From there AP operated largely independent of the international media corps overrunning the more famous Commodore hotel.

At the Kings the only non-AP guest was PLO chairman Yasser Arafat's finance manager. One AP room was reserved for our supply of bottled water, and the empties were kept and refilled whenever the hotel's own sporadic water service came on. In this spartan situation a six-bottle shower was the ultimate luxury. As the Kings hotel had no way to transmit copy, AP stories were punched into tape and walked down the hill to another hotel that did, and was sent to AP London.

AP staffers recognized by National Press Club for work on Nazis, Social Security

Associated Press staffers celebrate a prize-winning evening at the National Press Club's Awards banquet Wednesday. From left are Richard Lardner, AP-Washington, Will Lester, AP-Washington and chair of the Press Club's Awards Committee, Trish Wilson, AP-Washington and editor of the project, and Randy Herschaft of AP-New York.

By WILL LESTER

A team of Associated Press reporters and their editor were at the National Press Club's awards banquet Wednesday night to be honored for their work on Nazis who were allowed to get Social Security payments as part of a government deal to get them to leave this country voluntarily.

The reporters, AP Berlin correspondent David Rising, Randy Herschaft of AP-New York and Richard Lardner and editor, Trish Wilson, both of AP-Washington put together an investigative package that tracked down Nazis getting the federal pension payments. Lardner, Herschaft and Wilson were on hand for the awards' ceremony.

The team used Freedom of Information requests, scoured public records and sheer determination to put together a story that got widespread play.

Two months after the AP published the investigation, Congress unanimously passed the No Social Security for Nazis Act. Obama signed it into law Dec. 18.

Their work got honorable mention in the competition for the Edwin M. Hood Award for Diplomatic Correspondence. They were edged out for the top honor by The New Republic's stories on efforts to reach a Mideast peace settlement. The award is named after Edwin Hood, a former AP correspondent and founding member of the National Press

Club.

The awards dinner Wednesday celebrated the work of many newspapers and news organizations and also highlighted the continuing fight to win the freedom of reporters jailed simply for doing their jobs.

Jason Rezaian, a Washington Post reporter jailed in Iran since March 2014; Austin Tice, a freelance reporter for multiple news organizations missing in Syria since 2012, and Khadija Ismayilova, who has reported for Radio Free Liberty/Radio Free Europe and other news organizations, has been jailed since December 2014 in Azerbaijan. They were all winners of the John Aubuchon Press Freedom Awards.

Over the past several months, the Club has held news conferences, issued statements, conducted satellite interviews from its broadcast center and met with State Department officials and diplomats, said Club President John Hughes, a former AP Washington staffer.

"While these efforts have not yet proven successful, we are not giving up," Hughes, now an editor at Bloomberg News, told a dinner audience of more than 200. "Press freedom is central to all that we do at the National Press Club. We have family, colleagues and friends of these reporters here tonight. I want them to know, I want all of you to know, we will not stop fighting for these three honorees until they are free to do their jobs."

Connecting mailbox

In praise of Aye Aye Win

John Daniszewski - AP vice president, International News, on the retirement of Aye Aye Win:

During a 25-year career, Aye Aye Win has been the very embodiment of journalistic courage, keeping the flame of honest reporting alive during the worst period of military dictatorship in Myanmar.

In very trying circumstances, she was calm, considerate, professional and respectful, but unerring and unflappable in her pursuit of the truth. Like her father before her, she has been a credit to the cause of international journalism.

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'A story I will tell until I die'

Randall Dickerson - I retired from the AP at the end of August, 2013. About two weeks before that, the entertainment desk called the bureau, asking if one of us could interview

singer/songwriter/actor/businesswoman Dolly Parton about a major expansion at the Dollywood theme park in the Smoky Mountains foothills.

I got the assignment, a bit miffed that it had to be done by phone, rather than me taking the day to drive over to the mountains and talk with her in person.

The PR guy for the park knew I was about to retire and he passed that along to Dolly, who tucked it away for later. I spend a half-hour talking with the park president on facts and figures and with Dolly, who supplied the zinger quotes. At the end of the conversation, Dolly said, "Well, Randall, I hear you're retiring on us. Is that right?"

I told her she was correct and added that she would probably me my last substantial interview.

She giggled and shot right back with, "Well Darlin', if I couldn't be your first, I'm proud to be your last."

I told her I was going to tell that story until I died.

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Terry Anderson response to Buzzfeed on partisanship

Poynter Story: BuzzFeed's ethics guide an 'incoherent mess'? Somebody at BuzzFeed tweeted pro-gun control sentiments after the Louisiana shooting. The ethics guide bans political partisanship in public forums, such as Twitter and Facebook. One naysayer now argues that that's naïve since "every journalist who isn't lying to you or himself knows that every story beyond a recitation of empirical facts (e.g., the day's sports scores) is saturated with political partisanship, very much including high-status reporting on important issues." There's a point to make about social and cultural assumptions found in newsrooms, and what constitute politically correct opinions, but it's quite a modest one. (The Week)

Terry Anderson responds:

"Every journalist who isn't lying to you or himself knows that every story beyond a recitation of empirical facts (e.g., the day's sports scores) is saturated with political partisanship." This is sheer bullshit of the first order. I was a practicing AP correspondent in Asia, Africa and the Middle East for many years. I defy you to discern in my stories any hint of my (strong) personal political beliefs. There are thousands of professional journalists out there who can and do successfully separate their politics from their reporting. See the previous piece. The modern penchant for claiming "everyone's biased" is fatuous. Of course everyone has beliefs and opinions. The point is the word "professional." Yes, there are bad journalists, and fake journalists (see Fox "News", which I condemn not for their claimed conservatism but for their deceit). I wish these proponents of allegedly new ideas would stop insulting the good ones, let alone the many great ones,

who risk and sometimes lose their lives in the practice of their profession.

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Out of pocket

By George Zucker

Few AP stories scored better than the 1972 shooting of George Wallace. But it began with UPI taking a huge advantage. Our only reporter was on the telephone at a nearby store and didn't see it. UPI did. Our staff photographer left minutes before the shooting and had to hear about it on his car radio. And the Baltimore bureau had just swapped its typewriters for CRTs, hobbling the staff with unfamiliar technology.

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It was May 16, 1972, the day before the Maryland primary. The nation's top pundits skipped the Maryland primary to be with Sen. Edmund Muskie in Michigan for that state's primary deemed more important. No Democrat ever won the party's nod without winning the Michigan primary. Few reporters showed up for the Wallace stop, including the Baltimore *Evening Sun* thinking it was too late for its final edition. Just after 4 p.m., the *Evening Sun* stopped its presses to banner AP's stunning story.

Wallace was a magnet for trouble. In his last two presidential bids, he had more Secret Service agents protecting him than any other candidate. Four years earlier in Los Angeles, I was among reporters covering the murder of Sen. Robert Kennedy when he was gunned down just after he won the California primary. Memories of that numbing tragedy were strong. Now as AP's Baltimore news chief, I had Wallace and the two Democratic frontrunners campaigning in Maryland -- Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota in Cumberland, Sen. Hubert Humphrey in Baltimore and Wallace at a small shopping center in Laurel, Md., just outside Washington, D.C.

My main worry that day in Maryland was being unable to double-staff each candidate, so important when Robert Kennedy was shot in LA while our lead reporter was on the telephone. Bob Thomas, the bureau backup, was next to Kennedy when he was shot and provided eye-witness details. Tom Stuckey, our Annapolis staffer, would be the lone AP reporter with Wallace. In the small crowd, grinning behind sunglasses, was a young Milwaukee man named Arthur Bremer.

Just before 4 p.m., a Baltimore staffer taking Stuckey's dictation yelled at me from the newsroom. "Hey -- Stuckey says Wallace has been shot!" I grabbed the telephone. Stuckey was calling from a shoe store. He had not seen Wallace shot. Someone ran up to

him and told him. I told Stuckey to put the store manager on the telephone, then confirm what happened.

The manager agreed to keep the line open and I called the General Desk to stand by for a bulletin. Stuckey was back on the phone in my right hand. "Wallace has been shot!" he said. "How do you know?" I asked. Stuckey answered, "I saw him on the ground! There's blood and they've called for an ambulance!" I dictated the bulletin to Nate Polowetzky in my left hand, mindful of UPI's head start. We had yet to master our new CRTs, so I dictated the rapidly unfolding story directly to New York.

News editor Dick Shafer hurried to the shopping center to help Stuckey, who was feeding me details while others in the bureau worked the phones and handed me notes. Lou Boccardi pieced it all together on the AAA, along with reports from Milwaukee and elsewhere on Bremer's background. The story quickly took shape on the AAA, but I feared UPI's eyeball account would surely win the play.

Wallace was shot at 4:02 p.m. Our bulletin cleared at 4:05 p.m. Incredibly, UPI's bulletin trailed ours by 5 minutes. Although UPI actually saw Wallace shot, their bulletin said only that "shots were fired at George Wallace." Ours said: "Wallace was felled by gunfire." But what really buried UPI was its lack of details after their vague bulletin. In the next 66 minutes, as we reported the nature of the governor's wounds, the tackling and disarming of Arthur Bremer, 21, quotes from eyewitnesses, and a vivid description of Cornelia Wallace cradling her unconscious husband in her arms, the UPI wire was strangely silent. After filing his bulletin, UPI's only reporter there ran to his car and drove off behind the departing ambulance. No one knew which D.C. hospital the ambulance was going to, so we asked the Washington bureau to staff the two likely choices.

AP photographer Bill Smith heard the AP bulletin on his car radio, did an abrupt U-turn across a highway's grassy median, and sped back to the shopping center, angry with himself for having missed the photo-op of a lifetime. Later, Smith met a freelance photographer who made dramatic images of the bloodied Wallace sprawled on his back. Hal Buell negotiated world rights for $10,000.

Despite our early problems, AP shut out UPI on the breaking cycle and won play in the high 90s over the next two cycles.

The UPI reporter who abandoned the news scene was Dean Reynolds, the young son of the late ABC-TV anchorman Frank Reynolds, then at the peak of his long career. Young Reynolds was hired the year before as a copyboy in UPI's Washington bureau and was newly transferred to Baltimore as a rookie reporter.

I attributed the miscue to inexperience, but was wrong. Weeks later, Dorman Cordell, then COB at Denver, asked me to test Rob Dalton, the UPI bureau manager in Baltimore, who had applied for an AP job. I had Dalton come into the Baltimore bureau for testing and we talked about Wallace, who was recuperating in a Maryland hospital. Why did his reporter put UPI out of pocket by leaving the scene?

"I told Dean to follow the ambulance," Dalton admitted. "If Wallace died on the way to the hospital, we would have been the first to know."

EPILOGUE -- The problems we faced launching this story seem oddly quaint in this day of cell phones and ubiquitous social media. Rob Dalton did two stints with AP, serving as news editor, RME and COB, and later was an executive for Reuters in San Francisco. Dean Reynolds is a longtime ABC-TV reporter. I was promoted to Nashville and awaited the next round of Pulitzer Prizes, quietly hoping our Wallace coverage might give us a shot at Deadline Reporting. I learned later it was not submitted.

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A briefing in Rangoon by Aye Aye Win

Eileen Lockwood - The photo at right was taken in Rangoon (Langon) in March when I traveled to Burma with some members of the Inland Press Association. It was organized by Ray Carlsen (second from left), former director of the association and shows, from left: Betsy Brown of Kenosha, WI; Ray Carlsen, AP's Aye Aye Win and Eileen Lockwood.

Aye Aye retires today after a 25-year career. See Thursday's Connecting.

Along with 14 other passengers from England and Australia, we steamed up the Irrawaddy River from Rangoon (Langon) to Mandalay, stopping, of course to visit the many sites along the way, including HUNDREDS of pagodas both along the shore and in various towns. Always the newspaper guy, Ray managed to set up interviews for us both at the American embassy and with **Aye Aye Win**, who came to our hotel for breakfast, told us about her life and answered questions.

The Burmese are amazing people! The seem to be happy, even though a union boss would cringe at their working places, and they mostly lack the niceties that we spoiled Americans expect as part of everyday life. The Burmese always greeted us with smiles, loved it when we said, "Mengalob" (hello) and happily posed for pictures. In spite of their seeming poverty, they are very smart people, too. In one village, the 87-year-old chief and father of many children, proudly displayed photos of eight of his daughters in college graduation gowns.

Connecting profile - Alan Flippen

Alan Flippen (Email) - I worked at AP from 1986-1996, as a newsman in Louisville, Indianapolis and Providence; correspondent in Buffalo; and General Desk editor and supervisor in New York. (In the latter role, I once wangled a reporting trip that passed through Kansas City while I believe you were COB there, but I don't think we met. I did spend some time with Fran Richardson.)

Joined The New York Times in 1996 as a copy editor; spent some time on the business side there in strategic planning and labor relations, then moved back to the newsroom where I held several management roles including, for the last three years, Associate Managing Editor. Among the things I did in that role was plan the integration of the print and digital newsrooms at the NYT, lead the integration of the International Herald Tribune's editing desks with the main NYT newsroom, and other organizational restructuring initiatives. I crossed paths with many AP alumni while there, including Rick Gladstone, Beth Flynn and Jerry Gray.

Last year, I decided to take a buyout on offer, and am now Director of Publications and Communications at Mount Sinai Health System, essentially running the internal newsroom for one of New York's main health care providers and the city's largest private employer. My colleague in the next office, who manages media relations here, is Greg Williams, formerly of AP Albany. We are truly everywhere.

AP Investigation:
Olympic teams to swim, boat in Rio's filth

By BRAD BROOKS and JENNY BARCHFIELD

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) - Athletes in next year's Summer Olympics here will be swimming and boating in waters so contaminated with human feces that they risk becoming violently ill and unable to compete in the games, an Associated Press investigation has found.

An AP analysis of water quality revealed dangerously high levels of viruses and bacteria from human sewage in Olympic and Paralympic venues - results that alarmed international experts and dismayed competitors training in Rio, some of whom have already fallen ill with fevers, vomiting and diarrhea.

It is the first independent comprehensive testing for both viruses and bacteria at the Olympic sites.

Brazilian officials have assured that the water will be safe for the Olympic athletes and the medical director of the International Olympic Committee said all was on track for providing safe competing venues. But neither the government nor the IOC tests for viruses, relying on bacteria testing only.

Extreme water pollution is common in Brazil, where the majority of sewage is not treated. Raw waste runs through open-air ditches to streams and rivers that feed the Olympic water sites.

Click **here** to read more.

Judge chides State official over AP records request

response

WASHINGTON (AP) - A judge on Wednesday chided a State Department official for the department's slowness in responding to Associated Press requests for documents from Hillary Rodham Clinton's tenure as secretary of state.

The AP sued in March after the department failed to satisfy repeated document requests filed under the Freedom of Information Act, including one made five years ago.

In a court hearing arising from the lawsuit, U.S. District Judge Richard Leon appeared incredulous at times about the amount of time it was taking and suggested the government should be able to move much faster in turning over thousands of pages of documents.

Under questioning, John Hackett, the head of the State Department's FOIA operations, said the department was working to satisfy the document demands while processing thousands of others requests and coping with limited staff resources. But Leon on several occasions appeared unsatisfied with the responses.

He said one of the categories of records being sought - 68 pages of documents related to a former top Clinton aide - could be processed within a matter of days "by the least ambitious bureaucrat." And he suggested that the State Department should be quicker in processing AP requests for Clinton's schedules and calendars.

"It's just schedules and calendars," Leon said. "It's not detailed memos or position papers or policy papers or anything like that."

A State Department lawyer said the agency was prepared

Click **here** to read more.

How 7 news organizations (including AP) are using Slack to work better and differently

Here's how Fusion, Vox, Quartz, Slate, the AP, The Times of London, and Thought Catalog are using Slack for workflow - and which features they wish the platform would add.

Slack is a strange beast. Simultaneously a virtual meeting room and water cooler, it somehow encourages members of a distributed work force to socialize and get to know each other while also getting work done. It's almost like a private social media network that also takes the place of email and instant messaging - what Facebook might have hoped its Messenger would do, Slack has accomplished, at least for a certain set of workers.

And while development/product and editorial teams have traditionally been siloed, Slack

is finally breaking down the boundaries between people who need to be working together closely but, in formal meetings, might feel as if they speak different languages.

"It ends up becoming the fount of office culture," Alexis Madrigal, the editor-in-chief of Fusion, told me. "It is to the enterprise what Vine is to youth culture more broadly. In most media companies, the tech people are very separate from the editorial people. The nature of the work is different, the pacing is different. So it's nice to have a selected digital gathering spot for everyone, that's not just about work. Slack is never all just about work - all Slack places that I've ever seen or heard of are filled with jokes and culture beyond the work, and I think that's the genius of the platform. Product people love Beyoncé too!"

Click **here** to read more.

For July 30:

They did something nobody else has been able to do: An Associated Press reporting team, in the latest chapter of a yearlong investigation of forced labor and abuses in the seafood industry, tracked down the location of fishing boats, loaded with men, that had escaped from a slave island in Indonesia and vanished.

Using on-the-ground reporting, financial-record checks and cutting-edge sleuthing via satellite, AP's Margie Mason, Robin McDowell and Martha Mendoza ultimately zeroed in on the elusive vessels in a remote part of the sea and obtained sharp images from far overhead of the captive laborers at work. The images and story earn the Beat of the Week. http://news.yahoo.com/ap-tracks-missing-slave-fishing-boats-papua-guinea-051810975.html

Back in March, the team had broken news of the slave island, where they found (and photographed) some captives held in cages; they linked this modern-day slavery in the seafood industry to some of the biggest U.S. grocery stores and pet food companies. After their reporting freed some of the men, a follow-up story powerfully related one man's return after two decades to his hometown and family.

Days after the March story exposing the Indonesian slave island, Benjina, the reporters were invited to join a government delegation investigating the claims of human trafficking and abuse. Myanmar correspondent McDowell, who had been on the island months earlier, quickly realized something was wrong.

Only 50 fishing trawlers registered with the company, Pusaka Benjina Resources, were at

the port. There should have been 90. She called Mason, Asia medical writer, saying only a few hundred men poured from the hills and surrounding forests at news of a rescue. Both knew there should have been up to 1,000.

That sparked the four-month quest to find the missing men.

The first clue came when investigators said some Papua New Guinea flags were found in the holds of several docked ships. Later, newly freed slaves said that's where they believed their friends were headed. A company insider next confirmed Silver Sea Fishery Co., was still picking up fish from the old Benjina trawlers in a narrow, dangerous strait known as the dogleg.

Mendoza, a California-based national writer, started working her sources at several independent satellite companies.

Mason, meanwhile, combed through financial records obtained by Indonesia's Fisheries Ministry that showed which Pusaka Benjina boats were missing, complete with their Indonesian and Thai names. She compared that with fishing license documents for Papua New Guinea.

Back in Myanmar, the AP team made contact with a group of former slaves that had recently been rescued from Benjina. Recruited by the same broker, they were now back in their slum on the outskirts of the country's biggest city, Yangon. They said several men were still missing and promised to contact the AP if they got any calls. Eventually, the returnees got something better: Firsthand accounts. In June, four men managed to find their way back home from the dogleg. They estimated hundreds of men were still out there.

But time was running out. A satellite beacon showed a refrigerated cargo ship owned by Silver Sea _ the same company that had shuttled seafood between the Indonesian slave island and Thailand _ was heading to the area. And with a Papua New Guinea fishing moratorium about to go into effect, it would likely be the last pickup before the trawlers again fled.

Mendoza took the coordinates _ together with new and historical data provided by SkyTruth, a West Virginia remote sensing and digital mapping firm _ to DigitalGlobe, a Colorado-based commercial vendor of space imagery. But she said catching the abuse from space would be almost impossible, "like finding a moving needle in a haystack."

The images that came back, however, were remarkable. Two trawlers loading the Silver Sea reefer with slave-caught fish. It was the first time DigitalGlobe used such technology to expose human trafficking in real time.

In response to the story, Papua New Guinea has been conducting searches for the trawlers and the Silver Sea 2 by air and sea. Authorities already have seized a reefer linked to Benjina and identified eight victims of trafficking.

"These men have been forced to catch fish, under the most awful circumstances, that we

in the United States eat," Assistant International Editor Mary Rajkumar said.

Noting AP's earlier story linking the trafficking ring's catch to US supermarkets, she added, "These are some of the same men, who have just been moved elsewhere to do the same thing all over again."

The reporters, she said, have been "absolutely relentless, pushing the story (and themselves) in every possible way."

The biggest impact of the series so far has been that more than 800 people have been rescued and repatriated, many of whom said they were abused or witnessed others being beaten, or in some cases even killed. In addition, one company, Thai Union, fired a supplier. Three major business organizations representing the retail and food industries in the U.S. sent letters to the Thai ambassador demanding answers to questions raised in the AP story. Congress is considering toughened anti-trafficking legislation.

One Yahoo News reader commented that the story showed what journalism "should be doing. Investigate and reveal stories with meaning. Thanks Associated Press."

For their perseverance and dedication to this important story, Mason, McDowell and Mendoza win this week's $500 prize.

For July 23:

Just a fragment of wrong information punched into a computer: That's what Jeffrey Collins' story revealed. Yet the minuscule mistake had enormous consequences, hampering an FBI background check and allowing Dylann Roof to buy a gun he should never have had, a weapon police say he used to carry out the Charleston church massacre.

Even while scrambling with the rest of the South Carolina staff to cover the Confederate flag story that dominated news following the shooting, Collins tracked down the crucial clerical error, producing an invaluable cautionary tale and earning the Beat of the Week.

The FBI allows a gun sale if it can't give a definitive answer within three days about whether someone is legally eligible to buy the weapon, which is what happened in Roof's case. The FBI examiner knew he had an arrest record _ a drug charge that would have nixed the sale of the .45-caliber handgun _ but couldn't find verifying documents. FBI Director James Comey, speaking on the day the flag came down, accepted responsibility for the failure of the background check.

But how did this happen?

"The FBI announcement on that Friday left unanswered the question of where did the system break down," AP's Carolinas news editor Tim Rogers explained. "It wasn't enough for us to leave it at that."

Collins went to work to ferret out the source of the bad information. At first, he was

confused when records on file in the state police database for Roof's earlier arrest had all details accurate, including the arresting agency _ the city of Columbia police department. (Shortly after Roof's arrest, colleague Meg Kinnard had requested these records and they then showed a different arresting agency.) Collins called a state police source on background to see if he could shed any light. It would turn out that mistakes entered initially had since been corrected.

"When he told me that the data collected in the state police database was originally entered at the jail, I knew I had found the genesis of the errors," Collins said. "I just had to prove it and get the sheriff who runs the jail on the record about it."

The confusion stemmed partly from overlapping local jurisdictions. Roof was arrested at a shopping Mall on a drug charge by Columbia police. The capital city lies mostly in another county and only slightly in Lexington County, where Roof was booked and whose sheriff's department was wrongly listed as the arresting agency. When the FBI examiner doing the April gun background check called Lexington deputies, they pointed out the arrest was by Columbia police. Consulting a spreadsheet of law enforcement agencies in Lexington County, which did not include Columbia, she called the separate police department in West Columbia and found nothing. The three-day window for background checking closed before the disqualifying information could be located.

Armed with records that AP had unearthed and with a series of questions, Collins approached the sheriff but was put off at first by a spokesman. "I decided to let him know what I knew and tell him I was reporting on it by the end of the day, whether the sheriff acknowledged the error or not," he said, adding he emailed a copy of the document with bad information, and a corrected version. "I told the spokesman I could give him time to respond, if we were offered an exclusive statement." The spokesman agreed, and this allowed AP to have a full story out before the sheriff's confirming statement was made public.

Collins' story began: "A jail clerk made a mistake when entering information about a drug arrest for church shooting suspect Dylann Roof, the first in a series of missteps that allowed Roof to purchase a gun he shouldn't have been able to buy two months before the attack, authorities said."
http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20150713/PC16/150719751

The story played widely across the U.S. and abroad, including on the front page of The Charleston Post and Courier, which has exhaustively covered the local church shooting. It has led to both state and federal lawmakers calling for a change in laws that allow people to purchase a gun if the FBI is not able to finish their background check in three days. Both the FBI and local authorities announced they'd tighten procedures that the clerical mix-up brought to light.

For tough, focused reporting that resulted in an illuminating exclusive on a major story, Collins wins this week's $500 prize.

(Shared by Valerie Komor)

Welcome to Connecting

Karen Schwartz (Email)

Stories of interest

Stop the 'presses'? (Columbia Journalism Review)

The New York Times pressroom, 1942 (Marjory Collins, Library of Congress)

By MERRILL PERLMAN

IN THE WONDERFULLY NOIR movie Deadline USA, Humphrey Bogart plays a newspaperman who battles corruption in New York City as he fights to keep his beloved newspaper from dying. In one of the final scenes, as the racketeer on the phone threatens Bogart's character to prevent him from printing a story, he is disturbed by noises coming from Bogart's end. "What's that racket?" the gangster demands. "That's the press, baby, the press!" Bogart replies. "And there's nothing you can do about it. Nothing."

The double entendre is perfect: The noisy "press" is literally starting to run, and the racketeer had no recourse against the "press" as the body of journalism.

But how apt is the term "the press" today?

Click **here** to read more. Shared by Len Iwanski.

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UNH bias guide: The term 'American' can be offensive (Concord Monitor)

A "bias-free language guide" written by University of New Hampshire faculty has come under criticism from the school's president and state officials.

The guide, published in 2013, was meant to educate students and faculty about using "inclusive language" that does not stereotype individuals "or demean people based on personal characteristics" including gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or economic background, according to its page on the UNH website.

First posted by the conservative website Campus Reform on Tuesday, the guide quickly circulated on several national websites, garnering criticism for several of its recommendations.

The recommendations include replacing the phrase "senior citizen" or "elders" with "people of advanced age," replacing the phrases "obese" and "overweight" with "people of size," replacing the phrase "rich" with "person of material wealth," replacing the phrase "Caucasian" with "white" or "European-American" and replacing the phrase "homosexual" with "gay," "lesbian" or "same-gender loving."

Click **here** to read more. Shared by Adolphe Bernotas.

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There's a Facebook group to help journalists figure out their plan B (Poynter)

Last May, Russ Kendall learned that another friend and journalist had been laid off. Linda Epstein, McClatchy-Tribune Wire's senior photo editor for 15 years, would lose her job in July when the company shuttered its wire service. By July 21, Kendall launched a closed Facebook group. Here's what he wrote on the page's first post:

What's Your Plan B? was created to be a forum for journalists who have been laid off and those who haven't been laid off yet, to share ideas, business plans, anything that might give hope and help to those who need it.

Two days later, Jim Romenesko reported that the group already had 400 members.

Now, more than 2,670 people are part of What's Your Plan B? (including me. Kendall reached out last month after I wrote "Advice for journalists who've lost their jobs from journalists who've lost their jobs.") People share job openings on the page. They share news of impending layoffs. And many of them share how they've moved on from journalism.

It's like a wake, a jobs board and a support group all in one place. And Kendall started it because he was sick off all the layoffs and wanted people to know that, like him, they could find life after journalism.

Click **here** to read more.

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Today in History - July 31, 2015

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, July 31, the 212th day of 2015. There are 153 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 31, 1715, a fleet of Spanish ships carrying gold, silver and jewelry sank during a hurricane off the east Florida coast, scattering most of their treasure along the ocean floor. Of some 2,500 crew members, more than 1,000 died.

On this date:

In 1777, the Marquis de Lafayette, a 19-year-old French nobleman, was made a major-general in the American Continental Army.

In 1875, the 17th president of the United States, Andrew Johnson, died in Carter County, Tennessee, at age 66.

In 1919, Germany's Weimar (VY'-mahr) Constitution was adopted by the republic's National Assembly.

In 1930, the radio character "The Shadow" made his debut as narrator of the "Detective Story Hour" on CBS Radio.

In 1933, the radio series "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy," made its debut on CBS radio station WBBM in Chicago.

In 1942, Oxfam International had its beginnings as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief was founded in England.

In 1954, Pakistan's K2 was conquered as two members of an Italian expedition, Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli, reached the summit.

In 1964, the American space probe Ranger 7 reached the moon, transmitting pictures back to Earth before impacting the lunar surface.

In 1972, Democratic vice-presidential candidate Thomas Eagleton withdrew from the ticket with George McGovern following disclosures that Eagleton had once undergone psychiatric treatment.

In 1973, Delta Air Lines Flight 723, a DC-9, crashed while trying to land at Boston's Logan International Airport, killing all 89 people on board.

In 1989, a pro-Iranian group in Lebanon released a grisly videotape showing the body of American hostage William R. Higgins, a Marine lieutenant-colonel, dangling from a rope.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Moscow.

Ten years ago: Police arrested seven people during a raid on an apartment in southern England, bringing to 21 the number in custody in the relentless hunt for accomplices in the failed July 21 transit bombings in London. Jeong Jang shot a 3-under 69 to win the Women's British Open by four strokes.

Five years ago: Chelsea Clinton married investment banker Marc Mezvinsky in the upstate New York village of Rhinebeck. Orchestra leader Mitch Miller died in New York at age 99. Tom Mankiewicz, 68, a screenwriter of James Bond films such as "Diamonds Are Forever" and "Live and Let Die," and the first two "Superman" movies, died in Los Angeles.

One year ago: The CIA's insistence that it did not spy on its Senate overseers collapsed with the release of a stark report by the agency's internal watchdog documenting improper computer surveillance and obstructionist behavior by CIA officers. The death toll from the worst recorded Ebola outbreak in history surpassed 700 in West Africa.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Don Murray is 86. Jazz composer-musician Kenny Burrell is 84. Actress France Nuyen is 76. Actress Susan Flannery is 76. Singer Lobo is 72. Actress Geraldine Chaplin is 71. Former movie studio executive Sherry Lansing is 71. Singer Gary Lewis is 70. Actor Lane Davies is 65. International Tennis Hall of Famer Evonne Goolagong Cawley is 64. Actor Barry Van Dyke is 64. Actor Alan Autry is 63. Jazz composer-musician Michael Wolff is 63. Actor James Read is 62. Actor Michael Biehn is 59. Former Massachusetts Gov. **Deval Patrick** is 59. Rock singer-musician Daniel Ash (Love and Rockets) is 58. Actor Dirk Blocker (TV: "Brooklyn Nine-Nine") is 58. Entrepreneur Mark Cuban is 57. Rock musician Bill Berry is 57. Actor Wally Kurth is 57. Actor **Wesley Snipes** is 53. Country singer Chad Brock is 52. Musician Fatboy Slim is 52. Rock musician Jim Corr is 51. Author J.K. Rowling (ROHL'-ing) is 50. Actor **Dean Cain** is 49. Actor Jim True-Frost is 49. Actor Ben Chaplin is 46. Actor Loren Dean is 46. Actress Eve Best is 44. Retired NFL quarterback Gus Frerotte is 44. Actress Annie Parisse (pah-REES') is 40. Actor Robert Telfer is 38. Country singer-musician Zac Brown is 37. Actor-producer-writer B.J. Novak is 36. Actor Eric Lively is 34. Country singer Blaire Stroud (3 of Hearts) is 32. Singer Shannon Curfman is 30. Actor Reese Hartwig is 17. Actor Rico Rodriguez is 17.

Thought for Today: "The trouble with the public is that there is too much of it." - Don Marquis, American journalist, poet and dramatist (1878-1937).

Got a story to share?

Got a story to share? A favorite memory of your AP days? Don't keep them to yourself. Share with your colleagues by sending to Ye Olde Connecting Editor. And don't forget to include photos!

Here are some suggestions:

- My most unusual story - tell us about an unusual, off the wall story that you covered.
- "My boo boos - A silly mistake that you make"- a chance to 'fess up with a memorable mistake in your journalistic career.
- Multigenerational AP families - profiles of families whose service spanned two or more generations.
- Volunteering - benefit your colleagues by sharing volunteer stories - with ideas on such work they can do themselves.
- First job - How did you get your first job in journalism?
- Connecting "selfies" - a word and photo self-profile of you and your career, and what you are doing today. Both for new members and those who have been with us a while.
- **Life after AP** for those of you who have moved on to another job or profession.
- **Most unusual** place a story assignment took you.

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