

## Connecting --- August 31, 2015

1 message

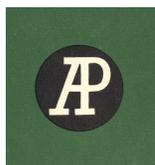
Paul Stevens <stevenspl@live.com>

Mon, Aug 31, 2015 at 9:01 AM

Reply-To: stevenspl@live.com

To: pjshane@gmail.com

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# Connecting

August 31, 2015

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## Ah, the old AP News Test

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS NEWS TEST

To the applicant:

The purpose of this test is to demonstrate your news skills.

There is no "model story" against which you will be measured. Just write clearly, accurately and interestingly.

Work with what is given to you in the notes for stories. Don't worry about other information you might seek if you were really gathering the story yourself.

In all news work with The Associated Press, speed of composition and editing is important. Some weight is given to the time it takes you to complete the test, but accuracy is a more important factor.

Good luck!

The welcome to nervous applicants taking an old AP News Test. Click on the image for the full test document.

PART I

Here are two examples of the notes from which you might have to write a story. The first is a breaking story about a fire. The second is a feature about two boys. Please use the appropriate dateline and (AP) logotype.

- - -

A. Read the following notes and write a spot news story of 250 to 350 words.

- - -

A school in Mount Vernon, N. Y., is on fire. The fire at the Pennington School on Central Parkway broke out at 11:45 a.m., about an hour ago, and is still burning. Police at the scene said the blaze started just as the elementary school students were preparing to go home for lunch. They said they did not know how many children or adults were in the building when the fire started. Engines from three companies raced to the blazing fire and Fire Capt. David Smythe said there were some injuries. He said he did not know how serious they were. The school is in a residential area and heavy smoke covers the neighborhood. Smythe said the flames were spotted in the basement, near the furnace, by the janitor. A fire alarm was sounded and children and teachers filed out. The principal of the school, Edward Jones, said he did not know how many children or teachers were in school today. The enrollment of the school is 325. There are 42 teachers and other school personnel attached to the building. The janitor of the school is William Strango. Parents from the neighborhood rushed to the school, which has two stories and is made of brick. They stood around looking for their children and waiting for information. The weather was clear, but very cold with temperatures below freezing. Smythe said he did

First page of the old seven-page AP News test. Click on the image for the full test.

Colleagues,

Good Monday morning, and here's to a great week ahead.

Remember the old AP News Test? Got a hankering to try it out again, this time on a computer instead of a typewriter? Well, you've come to the right spot.

Our Connecting colleague **Larry Blasko (Email)** found a copy of the test when cleaning out a desk he had for 45 years.

The first two pages are presented above. Click [here](#) to view or download a .PDF of the complete test.

Connecting colleague **Margy McCay (Email)** said this is the version of the test that was in use when she got to Personnel (later Human Resources) in 1983. Her best guess is that given some of the stories, it was introduced in the mid-1970s.

The writing test was revised (and this version discontinued) during her tenure in HR.

Tests from applicants outside New York were graded/evaluated by the local bureau chief and/or the hiring chief if the applicant was placed on the hiring circular (remember the circular?). In New York the application process was handled largely in HR, where the late Carolyn Wellward Tuolla interviewed applicants and managed the circular. The news tests were evaluated by the New York City COB (the late Sam Boyle during much of Margy's HR time) or if he wasn't available one of the HR execs, most of whom at that time were journalists.

Margy noted that in addition to the writing test, news applicants during her era took a vocabulary test and a general intelligence test (the AP used a common one, Wonderlic), the latter dropped in the early '80s as these tests fell out of favor when employment laws changed and the tests as used became legally problematic.

Connecting would welcome hearing from anyone who knows when the writing test was dropped, and what tests are given in today's AP.

And please promise to share with Connecting any memories you have of taking, or grading, the test.

Paul

## You do a blog or host a web site?

Dear Connecting colleague:

Do you produce a blog? Or have your own web site?

Let your Connecting colleagues know about it by sending me information that I can share with them.

Send me a paragraph describing what you produce and the link. I'll compile and move later this week.

Paul - [stevenspl@live.com](mailto:stevenspl@live.com)

# Connecting mailbox

## *John Brewer - 'One of the best'*

**John Kuglin** - News that John Brewer is retiring from the Peninsula Daily News brought back a lot of memories, because he was COB in Seattle when I was the Spokane correspondent.

I had the privilege of working for some great COBs in addition to John Brewer -- John Armstrong and Kent Sturgis, both in Seattle; Mike Short and Joe McGowan when I was the Cheyenne correspondent; and Hugh van Swearingen in Helena when I was news editor. John Brewer was one of the best.

John paid close attention to the AP report from Washington state. In fact, it appeared that he examined the report every morning under a microscope. If you wrote a good story, the next time you saw John he'd give you a big bear hug - it didn't matter if you were a man or woman -- and say "Man, that was a great story." If the Seattle Times or PI printed a story with my byline, John would send me a clip, along with a nice note.

When I'd pitch a story to John, he'd never say it would take too much time and cost too much money. "Just go do it," he'd say.

If John always had his nose in the report, he never neglected "membership duties," aka sales. At one point, every daily newspaper in Washington state was AP, except for the extremely frugal little Hagadone paper, the Columbia Basin Herald at Moses Lake, surrounded by alkali flats. John campaigned long and hard to get the publisher, Lyle Hicks, to sign a contract. He fished with the publisher. Golfed with him. Dined with him. Drank with him. I believe John spent so much time in Moses Lake that he became almost a member of the publisher's family. Hicks eventually caved.

COBs who attended one of the NY meetings after John had moved to the Membership Department, may remember his famous statement: "You can really get to know a publisher if you are both naked in a hot tub."

I caused John a lot of trouble when there was a plot to kidnap Bill Cowles III and his family. Cowles and his family owned The Spokesman-Review and Spokane Daily Chronicle. Cowles was on the AP board.

One night, a would-be kidnapper, a ransom note in his pocket, kicked in the front door of Cowles' mansion. Cowles and his family weren't home. The police were. They had been waiting inside after receiving a tip.

I filed a story about the kidnapping plot against a "wealthy" publisher. Cowles resented being called wealthy and phoned AP in NY. NY tracked down John Brewer, who had

escaped the bureau to attend some sort of retreat. John called me. "Man, don't write another story that says Cowles is wealthy," John said. I asked if it would be okay to just say that the Cowles family owned two large newspapers, millions of dollars worth of Spokane real estate, a newsprint plant, thousands of acres of timberland in northern Idaho, a newsprint trucking company and a large TV station. "I suppose, man," John replied, "but do you have to do this?" "I guess not," I replied.

I'm encouraged that one of John's retirement projects is fly fishing for steelhead. When I was in Spokane for five years, I hooked only two steelhead fly fishing on the Clearwater River. Both broke my leaders, including one that appeared only slightly shorter than a canoe paddle. I hope John has better luck.

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## ***On Julia Horowitz' honor in 'Best of States'***

**John Lumpkin** - It was great to see "Best of the States" that named Sacramento intern Julia Horowitz in Paul's recent email because of a connection in my retirement with my alma mater, the University of Virginia. George Rodrigue, editor of The Plain Dealer in Cleveland, and I are chair and vice chair of a committee that is working with the University's independent student media, The Cavalier Daily, on a sustainable business model for the future.

The "CD," as it is called, is facing challenges no different from commercial legacy media and independent student media. UVA has no journalism school, but it has a distinguished list of alumni in journalism, including Katie Couric and the current chief revenue officer of The New York Times Company (in addition to my friend George). That said, the staff of the CD depends on mentoring and next week is no exception. Tom Kent, AP standards editor, will Skype with CD editors on journalism ethics.

Here's what I wrote to our alumni committees about Julia, which is being posted on the website of the Cavalier Daily Alumni and elsewhere:

*Julia Horowitz, The Cavalier Daily's editor-in-chief, has been recognized nationally by her intern host, Associated Press, in its "Best of the States" internal award for work she did while working this summer in the AP Sacramento bureau. Below is an excerpt from a daily blog for AP retirees (of which I'm one) and others in AP's wider community of journalism partners and educators that details her investigative coverage.*

*Julia was one of an handful of interns chosen in an international competition for paid summer work in AP bureaus. As FAC Chair George Rodrigue and CDAA President Matt Cameron know, she spent the remainder of her waking hours this summer collaborating with her MB on the changes she enumerated in her excellent welcome letter to subscribers of the CD's daily e-feed, including the development of a new mobile app and plans for increasing journalism enterprise.*

*Her work with the AP in Sacramento sets a great example. Congratulations to her!*

*(An aside: "BNS" refers to a regular inside shift at the bureau, working on scheduled news feeds. So, she was multi-tasking until the end. The "Best of States" award focuses on enterprise in AP's regional bureaus, instead of Washington or international postings.)*

*Sincerely,*

*John Lumpkin, FAC co-chair*

## ***Using names of killers - member editors should do their jobs***

**Joseph Benham** - There's a simple and logical answer to whether AP stories on events such as the murders of a Virginia TV news crew should identify the killer(s):

AP should provide the names, and editors should decide whether to use them.

I can't imagine any managing editor or news director having criticized the AP for providing the names of Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby after the 1963 shootings in Dallas; of the Manson Family members who tried to kill Gerald Ford -- or of Ronald Reagan's would-be assassin.

An editor who feels that printing or broadcasting such names is wrong need only to highlight the name and hit the DELETE button.

The AP shouldn't be asked to do the job of member editors.

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## ***A 28-year-old writing memo that is still relevant***

**Mike Feinsilber** - Here's a memo about writing that I wrote back in 1987-it is still plenty relevant. My wife says I edit the papers at breakfast, and I guess I do. Some of the points I made 28 years ago still need making:

What accuracy is to reporting-essential-clarity is to writing: essential. Nobody says that it's easy to be clear. But you're a reporter. You can call up anyone. What an awesome gift, unavailable to the multitudes. Find the expert who will make it understandable.

And the next day, read your competition. Sometimes there's a lesson in how the other guy wrote it.

Context is crucial. You cover the subject. You know it cold. The reader has a life to lead and isn't intimately familiar with the subject. Fact is, the reader forgets the difference between

debt and deficit or what happened at Dien Bien Phu. Unless you put your subject in context-and do it immediately in the story, not at the end-your reader will shrug and move on and your story will be just one more mystery in the news. Mysteries in the news are what make nonreaders.

Shun clichés. If you are in a rush, clichés are useful, often economical, sometimes unavoidable. But they're clichés nonetheless. They're shopworn. They don't cause thought to occur. They're vague and imprecise, tired writing by tired writers. So here's my proposal: never use a cliché without being aware that you're doing it. Limit yourself to one a week. And if one sneaked into your copy unaware, sneak it out.

Shun journalese, too. And shun those words that only journalism uses-they're clichés too. Triggering. Focused. Prompting. Declared. Sparked. Marred. Urged anew. Made headlines. Nabbed. Probe the verb and probe the noun. Nouns used as verbs-authored, penned, hosted. Adjectives used as nouns-notables, greats, classic. Ironic. Icon and iconic, overused, have lost distinctiveness. What we call historic or dramatic often ain't. And if it is dramatic, we don't have to tell: the reader knows. Those words usually exaggerate and when we exaggerate we undermine our credibility.

Tell things chronologically. When you write that something happened after something else happened earlier, that's a signal to take the sentence apart and tell what happened first and what happened next. That's how we think. When you write about something that happened in the past-and you should, for context's sake-put the time element at the start of the sentence. Otherwise readers will assume that what they're reading about happened yesterday.

Rewrite. Only journalists think their first attempt is perfect.

Quote. No-unquote. If you've been within range of a Feinsilber tirade, it was probably about quotes. I don't hate quotes. I just hate unclear quotes, bureaucratic quotes, quotes that were manufactured by a flack to be irresistible to a reporter, wordy quotes, self-serving quotes, quotes that put inaccuracies into print, quotes that tell the reader what you've already told the reader, quotes so obscure that you have to write a following paragraph explaining what the gentlelady was trying to say, quotes that come off a piece of paper rather than out of a speaker's mouth and broken quotes. Especially broken quotes. Here's my rule of quoteworthiness: If the quote says it better than you can say it, use the quote. If you can say it better or tighter or clearer, you say it.

When I was a reporter, I used to fall silent in the midst of an interview. The guy at the other end is forced to keep talking. He'll make his point again, then again. Thinking he may be dealing with a simpleton, he'll make it simpler. And you wind up with a decent quote. The purpose of an interview isn't to impress your source with how much you know but to draw from him everything he knows.

With the exception of such rare moments as that one during WWII's Battle of the Bulge-when U.S. General Anthony McAuliffe replied to a German surrender ultimatum with one word, "Nuts!"-the one-word quote should be left behind in high school newspapers. The one-word quote drives readers "nuts."

Be chary of the broken quote. And here's my proposal: If you can remove the quote marks from a quote and nothing changes, remove the quote marks. Quotes should be in your story because they're distinctive-and because they show the emotions of the speaker-not because they merely confirm what you've reported. The reader will take your word for it.

Shop talk should stay in the shop. Businesses and agencies of government have their own jargon. And jargon is contagious. Reporters hear jargon every day and pretty soon they're talking that way. Worse, writing that way. Don't let it happen to you. When you're co-opted by sources, you're working for them, not for readers.

I could go on. But you've gotten the point: Write as though journalism's future depends on you.

It does.

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*Mike Feinsilber spent a quarter century with UPI in Pittsburgh, Columbus, Harrisburg, Newark, New York, Saigon and Washington and a quarter century with AP in Washington, with a spell as assistant bureau chief and a stint as writing coach. He was a deskman, reporter, and editor and he covered Congress and 18 political conventions.*

Click [here](#) for a link to this story.

## More memories from Katrina

*A memorable photo...*



In Saturday's issue of Connecting, the work of three AP photographers during Katrina was featured in an AP story. One of them, Bill Haber, said he was particularly proud of one photo he took of a woman walking through chest-deep water covered in a toxic sheen - an important point to make about the dangerously poor water quality. Connecting did not have access to the photo at that time, but thanks to Bill and to current AP New Orleans photographer Gerald Herbert, we found it - and present it to you today.

## ***Recording history...***



# The Times-Picayune

Ten years ago,

a storm named Katrina tore  
through our home. And then

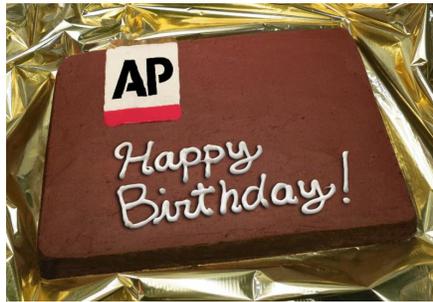
**THE LEVEES BROKE**

The New Orleans that emerged was  
forever marked — by flood, by death,  
by spray paint, by receding waters.

For all those who suffered,  
for all those who perished,  
for all those who lost, today ...

*We remember*

## Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



To

John Dowling ([Email](#))

## Welcome to Connecting



Jeff Atteberry ([Email](#))

John Lengel ([Email](#))

## Stories of interest

The modern news conference is a scripted farce: Why Jorge

# Ramos' badgering of Donald Trump was a necessary corrective

(Salon)

By ROBERT MANN  
Salon

When I heard that Donald Trump had booted Univision's Jorge Ramos from a press conference on Tuesday in Dubuque, Iowa, I couldn't wait to watch the indignant response of the other journalists in the room.



That's because I was ejected from a press conference many years ago in Louisiana, where I was political writer for the Shreveport Journal. A quirky, minor candidate for the U.S. Senate - Larry "Boogaloo" Cooper - took offense at my questions. He angrily ordered me to leave the room. I got up and left. When I reached the lobby, however, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the other journalists had followed me. In solidarity with a fellow reporter, they had all walked out on the petulant candidate. The press conference was over.

As I started the Trump video, I wondered, how would Ramos' colleagues in the press respond? Having once been on the other side of the podium as a press secretary for several prominent elected officials, I should not have been surprised by what I saw - but I was. As one of Trump's security guards hustled Ramos from the room, nary a reporter followed him in protest. In fact, no one immediately objected or questioned Trump about the incident.

After an awkward pause, the reporters went back to the business of politely raising their hands, waiting like trained seals for Trump to call upon them. They continued asking him questions, dutifully recording his answers and tweeting them to their readers. CNN continued to broadcast the event, no doubt gleeful about the drama and the extra viewers the incident would attract.

Click [here](#) to read more.

## The Final Word

*Big AI's is no more*



**Paul Stevens** - When he owned several AP-served dailies in northwest Kansas, newspaperman **Steve Haynes** was always a man on the move - going from paper to paper to check in with his staffs. So when, as Kansas City chief of bureau, I drove out to meet with Steve on periodic membership visits, we settled on a restaurant just off I-70 - Big Al's in Brewster, Kansas, as our rendezvous place. Good burgers, good conversation.

It appears from this photo sent to me by Steve recently that Big Al's misses my visits and our lunches.

## Today in History - August 31, 2015

**By The Associated Press**

Today is Monday, August 31, the 243rd day of 2015. There are 122 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On August 31, 1965, the U.S. House of Representatives joined the Senate in voting to establish the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

### On this date:

In 1886, an earthquake with an estimated magnitude of 7.3 devastated Charleston, South Carolina, killing at least 60 people, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

In 1888, Mary Ann Nichols, believed to be the first victim of "Jack the Ripper," was found slain in London's East End.

In 1939, the first issue of Marvel Comics, featuring the Human Torch, was published by Timely Publications in New York.

In 1941, the radio program "The Great Gildersleeve," a spinoff from "Fibber McGee and Molly" starring Harold Peary, debuted on NBC.

In 1954, Hurricane Carol hit the northeastern Atlantic states; Connecticut, Rhode Island and part of Massachusetts bore the brunt of the storm, which resulted in some 70 deaths.

In 1962, the Caribbean nation of **Trinidad and Tobago** became independent of British colonial rule.

In 1972, at the Munich Summer Olympics, American swimmer Mark Spitz won his fourth and fifth gold medals in the 100-meter butterfly and 800-meter freestyle relay; Soviet gymnast Olga Korbut won gold medals in floor exercise and the balance beam.

In 1980, Poland's Solidarity labor movement was born with an agreement signed in Gdansk (guh-DANSK') that ended a 17-day-old strike.

In 1985, Richard Ramirez, later convicted of California's "Night Stalker" killings, was captured by residents of an East Los Angeles neighborhood.

In 1986, 82 people were killed when an Aeromexico jetliner and a small private plane collided over Cerritos, California. The Soviet passenger ship Admiral Nakhimov collided with a merchant vessel in the Black Sea, causing both to sink; up to 448 people reportedly died.

In 1989, Britain's Princess Anne and her husband, Capt. Mark Phillips, announced they were separating after 15 years of marriage.

In 1997, a car crash in Paris claimed the lives of Princess Diana, Dodi Fayed and their driver, Henri Paul.

Ten years ago: New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin said there was "a significant number of dead bodies in the water" following Hurricane Katrina; Nagin ordered virtually the entire police force to abandon search-and-rescue efforts and instead stop increasingly hostile thieves. President George W. Bush, who viewed the devastation from Air Force One, pledged to do "all in our power" to save lives and provide sustenance but cautioned that recovery of the Gulf Coast would take years. Some 1,000 people were killed when a religious procession across a Baghdad bridge was engulfed in panic over rumors of a suicide bomber.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama ended the U.S. combat mission in Iraq, declaring no victory after seven years of bloodshed and telling those divided over the war in his country and around the world: "It is time to turn the page."

One year ago: On the Sunday talk shows, leaders of the House and Senate intelligence committees prodded President Barack Obama to take decisive action against what they said were growing threats from Islamic State militants on U.S. soil.

Today's Birthdays: Japanese monster movie actor Katsumi Tezuka is 103. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Frank Robinson is 80. Actor Warren Berlinger is 78. Rock musician Jerry Allison (**Buddy Holly** and the Crickets) is 76. Actor Jack Thompson is 75. Violinist Itzhak Perlman is 70. Singer Van Morrison is 70. Rock musician Rudolf Schenker (The Scorpions) is 67. Actor **Richard Gere** is 66. Olympic gold medal track and field athlete Edwin Moses is 60. Rock singer Glenn Tilbrook (Squeeze) is 58. Rock musician Gina Schock (The Go-Go's) is 58. Singer Tony DeFranco (The DeFranco Family) is 56. Rhythm-and-blues musician Larry Waddell (Mint Condition) is 52. Actor Jaime P. Gomez is 50. Baseball pitcher Hideo Nomo is 47. Rock musician Jeff Russo (Tonic) is 46. Singer-composer Deborah Gibson is 45. Rock musician Greg Richling (Wallflowers) is 45. Actor Zack Ward is 45. Golfer Padraig Harrington is 44. Actor Chris Tucker is 43. Actress Sara Ramirez is 40. Rhythm-and-blues singer Tamara (Trina & Tamara) is 38.

***Thought for Today: "When you pray, rather let your heart be without words than your words without heart." - John Bunyan (1628-1688).***

## 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:

- **Spousal support** - How your spouse helped in supporting your work during your AP career.
- **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.

**Paul Stevens**  
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