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## Connecting - December 09, 2015

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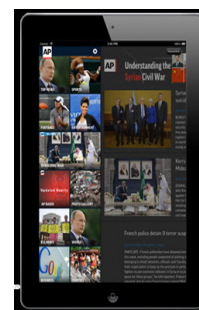
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# Connecting

December 09, 2015

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning!

Two reminders to begin this edition of Connecting:

**Jim Lagier Memorial** - A memorial for our Connecting colleague Jim Lagier is scheduled for 4 p.m. on Thursday at the Rossmoor Community - Fireside Room of the Gateway Center, 1001 Golden Rain Road, Walnut Creek, CA 94595.



**AP Stylebook discount** - As a Connecting member, you can receive a 20 percent discount on purchase of a hard-copy issue or electronic edition of the 2015 AP Stylebook. The offer is good through December 15.

**Click here**, and when you choose a product, the discounted rate should appear. If you have any problems or questions with this, drop me a note.

Paul

## The AP Considers Ethics of Robot Journalism with Automated Insights



**By Meagan Doll  
Mediashift.org**

Algorithm journalism is now available for everyone.

A beta version of Wordsmith, a program that creates journalism from data, was made available by Automated Insights on its website in October, the company announced.

But one of the world's largest news organizations already uses the software to automatically generate some stories - and its standards editor said the ethics of the software has to be carefully considered.

"We want to make sure that we're doing everything the way we should," Associated Press standards editor Tom Kent said. "We take our ethics very seriously."

During the past year, the AP multiplied its publication of earnings reports tenfold. The number of earning reports on a quarterly from the AP increased from 300 stories to nearly

3,000.

The mass quantity of stories that the software can produce has led to the moniker "robot journalism," but Kent said questions have turned from the capacity of robot journalism to the ethics of this new production tool.

[Click here](#) to read more. Shared by Mark Mittelstadt.

## Memories of Sam Blackman

A remarkable story in Tuesday's Connecting of a daughter and her dad - Ann Blackman writing about her father, legendary AP general news editor Sam Blackman - brought these responses:

**Lou Boccardi** - When I was hired in July, 1967, AP gave me the title "executive assistant to the general news editor". That would be Sam Blackman. Nobody, including me, knew what the hell it meant--there had never been one and there would never be another. As time went on, I understood that it was Wes Gallagher's way of saying to me, "If you can't get your footing here with Sam Blackman's help, I've made a big mistake in hiring you."

Sam was a wonderful mentor, always patient but focused: The news was everything, and we better get it fast and right. When you brought something to Sam, you got an answer. And it stuck; you could take it to one of those banks in which, Ann said, he kept opening accounts. Sam was straightforward, honest and caring. We missed him.

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**Carl Leubsdorf** - As one of the many AP alumni who benefited from knowing Sam Blackman, I was delighted to read Ann's affectionate account of her father.

As a young AP reporter in the New Orleans bureau, I was heavily enmeshed in coverage of James Meredith's entry into the University of Mississippi as its first Negro student when Sam arrived to take charge of the coverage. I must have impressed him, because after several days he wanted to know of my interest in

going to the General Desk. I told him my principal goal was to cover politics in the Washington Bureau but, the way he described it, I'd be almost helping him run the AP. It seemed like a good transition spot en route to Washington.

Unfortunately, the reality was somewhat different. I arrived to be told I'd be filing the New York and New Jersey state wires, though I was soon promoted to filing the East and old South (G) wires. But in those days General Desk editors did neither writing nor any real editing; the main job was to decide in which order stories would go out on those wires. Though I did get a chance one day, as the lunch relief person (No. 3 from the bottom of the pecking order) to file the A-Wire, this didn't seem like I what I wanted. Pretty soon, I got an offer from Ben Bassett to move to the Foreign Desk as an editor. But this didn't seem right either, so I went to Sam and explained that, while I'd rather be doing rewrite on the Foreign Desk than filing the wire on the General Desk, I really wanted to go to Washington. He recalled that I had a one-year lease on my house in Mount Vernon, but I told him that, if I could go to Washington, I'd worry later about the lease. Two weeks later, I was in Washington to be interviewed by COB William Beale and, a month later, I was transferred there. I always credited Sam and Ken Davis, my COB in New Orleans, for the fact that I was able to get to Washington that quickly and start what has been a very satisfying career.

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**Marty Thompson** - Thanks to Ann Blackman for her warm piece about her dad, Sam Blackman. It is full of details that bring him to life and speak of another generation. It made my day.

His initials - SGB. Now that the message wires are history, do AP people still go by initials? Jim Lagier was always JCL (his middle name was Clayton). Kathleen Carroll is or was KXC. No middle name, as I recall. I was MCT (Christian is the middle name).

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**Warren Lerude** - *Of Sam Blackman, AP Torch-passing and Swordfish:*

I had gotten to know Sam Blackman as a former AP staffer-turned Reno newspaper editor in the 1960s when he was running API seminars at Columbia and I served as one of his discussion leaders, on writing. So at his last APME convention at Hartford in 1969 as he was about to retire, he asked me to join several AP executives celebrating at dinner one evening. Turns out the torch was passing from Sam's tenure as general news editor to Jack Cappon and Lou

Boccardi was becoming managing editor in direct charge of the news report. As the waiter took dinner orders, Sam said with certainty: "Swordfish!" I had never had swordfish and paused. But I quickly figured that Sam always knew what he was doing. "Swordfish", I said. As did all who knew Sam, I learned a lot from him, including having swordfish for dinner. I continue through the years to order it with as much authority as I can muster and think of Sam whenever I do.

## Connecting mailbox



**John Willis** - Group session with the shrink...well thought out, I think.

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**Who are these people? Chuck McFadden** - It's a sign of advancing age, I suppose, but I wonder if other Connecting readers noticed the same phenomenon? As I read through the Birthdays listing (in Today in History), I recognize the first five, six or seven names of the older celebrities, but as I get down to the 30-and-20-year-olds, the names start becoming unfamiliar. By the time I get to the bottom of the list, they are all unknowns (to me.) Ah, well. I guess our children/grandchildren would recognize them. Sic transit gloria, and all that.

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## ***Volunteering - 'Talk about a holiday gift'***

**Andy Lippman** - I had an amazing surprise in citizenship class today.

I had done some research for one of the students and when she came in, I said I had some good news for her. She told me she had some good news for me first, but that I should go first.



So, I did. I told her because she was over 55 and was in the US for 20 years, she didn't have to take the English part of the exam and could take the civics and history part in Spanish.

She says thank you, and then hands me a piece of paper. It says she had passed her test.

She is standing there holding back tears.

We grabbed each other and danced around the room.

She told me that she hadn't told anyone - even her family-for fear she would fail.

"You were in my head while I was taking the test," she said.

I even got invited to the swearing in.

Talk about a holiday gift.

*The class is sponsored by Puente Learning Center, in Boyle Heights, a district of Los Angeles. It has more than 2,000 students from pre-school to seniors. Andy, a retired AP journalist and chief of bureau, has been involved with it since 1989. He has been teaching citizenship for four years and had all 20 of his students who took*

*the test pass.*

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## ***A box holding what old news hounds dream about***

**Joe McKnight** - The box from Helena, MT held what old news hounds dream about. Five inches deep, about the size of a once-folded old newspaper, its outside printed for a commercial citrus distributor.

Inside was a treasure. It was stuffed with old newspapers -- a few really old -- and newspaper clippings that reflected a variety of interests dating from the days of the Great Depression, and earlier.

Tom Maddox grew up on the west side of Columbus, OH, and had journalism in his blood. He worked in Columbus for the defunct Ohio State Journal, the Columbus Dispatch, and the old Columbus Citizen before graduating from The Ohio State University. He married his high school sweetheart who became his cheerleader for more than 70 years. She had been a cheerleader at Columbus' West High School where they met in the 1930s. Tom worked some years for The Associated Press in several states before ending up at Helena, MT in the 1950s.

He ran the Helena AP bureau for ten years until AP President Wes Gallagher wanted him to move to New York. Tom didn't want to go; the bug of the Big Sky country had bitten him. So Tom became executive director for several Montana organizations -- Montana Realtors, Independent Insurance Agents, Montana Association of Tobacco and Candy Distributors, and like groups.

But he maintained his life-long interest in collecting newspapers, news clippings and books -- mostly about news people -- among other things. And he kept a sentimental attachment to Columbus.

Tom died Aug 23, 2012, one day after his 95th birthday, leaving his widow, nee Marilyn Malick, to clean out his home office. In several letters she referred to The Mess on Tom's Desk.



She rewarded this writer with a few of Tom's books, and the box of newspapers and news clippings.

There is an eight-page issue of The Columbus (OH) Weekly Press of Aug. 16, 1890. It advertised a subscription price of 50 cents a year. The lead story was about a Republican district meeting to nominate Sen. Thomas B. Wilson for reelection.

A tattered issue of the (Columbus) Ohio State Journal for May 3, 1905 led with an Associated Press story from New York about the trial of Nan Patterson, charged in the death of "Caesar" Young.

The Helena (Mt.) Independent for Nov. 11, 1918 has the word "PEACE" in three-inch type at the top of page one, followed with a 1 1/2" headline, "GREAT WORLD CONFLICT ENDS." The armistice had ended World War I.

THE Montana Standard and The Butte Daily Post of Jan. 25, 1965 headlined "World Mourns Churchill's Death." It reported the passing of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

Helena's The Independent Record of Nov. 22, 1963 carried a double deck headline proclaiming  
"PRESIDENT KENNEDY IS SHOT,  
KILLED IN DALLAS, TEXAS."

The Columbus Citizen of Sept. 28, 1935 led with a story about President Roosevelt hailing his New Deal program as an agent of farm prosperity.

The Columbus Citizen of Oct. 1, 1935 led with a United Press story from Scotch Plains, N. J., headlined, "MOB THREATENS 'MARCH' UNLESS FARMER IS FREED."

The oldest newspaper in the box was four pages of The Columbus Gazette dated

November 16, 1860. Page one includes three columns of what would pass today as classified ads, two columns of what might be a romance and two columns of short stories, several of them jokes and apparent fiction.

There is a Feb. 1, 1873 issue of the "Weekly Ohio State Journal. A page one column is headlined "Choice Miscellany" while another column head reads "Effect of Bathing on the Weight of the Body." A column headed "Personals," includes:

"Senator Cameron will be 74 years old on the 8th of March," and "Connery, the managing editor of the New York Herald, began as a reporter."

A two-column story credited to "Correspondence New York Herald," reports on a snow storm in Iowa and Minnesota.

Maddox' attachment to Columbus, is seen in several issues of The Occident, from the early and mid 1930s, apparently a newspaper put together by students at West High School. Tom and Marilyn attended West High in that era.

There is one issue of the "Ohio State Lantern," of Sept 25, 1935. The Lantern is a daily publication by students at The Ohio State University and dates its origin to 1881.

Maddox also was loyal to Columbus' West Side. There is an issue of "West Side News," There also are several issues of the Hilltop Record that focused on the Hilltop neighborhood on the near west side of Columbus.

We met Tom and Marilyn in the mid 1990s when they returned to Columbus on a visit. They had driven a small motor home across country on one of their adventures. In the early years of retirement, I edited a newsletter for AP retirees and the Corporate Communications office in New York had put him on its mailing list. That prompted him to call when he found a place to park his motor home.

A few years later we spent the night in the Maddox' A frame on a hill overlooking Helena and a fair chunk of the Montana countryside.

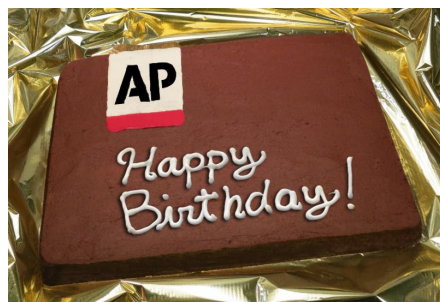
Since then Marilyn and Tom have entertained the McKnights of Columbus with letters detailing some of their adventures and mis-adventures.

Marilyn mailed a page from the Feb. 12, 2012 issue of the Helena Independent Record featuring their 70th anniversary. A few months later she mailed a story from the Boulder (MT.) Record reporting Tom's death on Aug. 23, 2012.

And Marilyn continues to close each letter with:

"Not written in AP Style."

## Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



To

Pat Kelley ([Email](#))

Howard Goldberg ([Email](#))

Doug Weaver ([Email](#))

## Welcome to Connecting



Kelvin Chan ([Email](#))

## Stories of interest

*Time Person of the Year: Angela Merkel*



By NANCY GIBBS, Managing Editor, Time Magazine

Europe's most powerful leader is a refugee from a time and place where her power would have been unimaginable. The German Democratic Republic, where Angela Merkel grew up, was neither democratic nor a republic; it was an Orwellian horror show, where the Iron Curtain found literal expression in the form of the Berlin Wall. The shy daughter of a Lutheran minister, Merkel slipped into politics as a divorced Protestant in a largely Catholic party, a woman in a frat house, an Ossi in the newly unified Germany of the 1990s where easterners were still aliens. No other major Western leader grew up in a stockade, which gave Merkel a rare perspective on the lure of freedom and the risks people will take to taste it.

Her political style was not to have one; no flair, no flourishes, no charisma, just a survivor's sharp sense of power and a scientist's devotion to data. Even after Merkel became Germany's Chancellor in 2005, and then commanded the world's fourth largest economy, she remained resolutely dull-the better to be underestimated time and again. German pundits called her Merkelvillian when she outsmarted, isolated or just outlasted anyone who might mount a challenge to her. Ever cautious, she proudly practiced what Willy Brandt once called *Die Politik der kleinen Schritte* (the politics of baby steps), or as we call it in the U.S., leading from behind.

[Click here](#) to read more.

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***The best and worst journalism of 2015*** (Columbia Journalism Review)

**It's been a standout year** for journalism-and a disappointing one. CJR discussed the most important media stories and trends of 2015, good and bad, compiled below.

**The Best Journalism of 2015**

## Aylan Kurdi

Turkish photographer Nilufer Demir's September 2 images of drowned toddler Aylan Kurdi illustrated the toll of the Syrian refugee crisis in ways other coverage could not. The bleak photographs crisscrossed social media and impacted the international debate. Like the 1970 photo of a napalm-burned girl showing the collateral damage of America's war in Vietnam, and the 1993 image of a vulture stalking a starving Sudanese child capturing that country's famine and unrest, the pictures of Kurdi crystallized broader hardships. No other form can so poignantly illustrate human tragedy.

## Covering sports leagues as institutions

Sports journalists are often denounced as cheerleaders, and often rightly so. But the balance of coverage has shifted to the point that fans can no longer avoid viewing sports as social institutions and sports leagues as corporate empires. That's been helped along this year by ESPN and *Sports Illustrated's* reporting on NFL damage control, and Deadspin's exposes on how football star and alleged domestic abuser Greg Hardy weaseled out of punishment. Other stories have probed college athletic spending, former sports stars' struggle with mental illness, and drug abuse by youth athletes. While the closure of Grantland struck a blow to the idea of sports journalism as a form of cultural criticism, that ethos has indeed established a beachhead.

[Click here](#) to read more. Shared by Bob Daugherty.

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## ***Why The Country's Largest Minority-Journalism Group May Close*** (Huffington Post)

As it prepares to mark its 40th anniversary this week, the National Association of Black Journalists is in trouble.

After running a deficit of \$227,000 last year, the NABJ -- the country's oldest and largest

minority-journalism group -- told its members in November that it expects to end 2015 even deeper in the red.

With an estimated shortfall of \$380,000 in a budget of roughly \$2.5 million, NABJ has slashed operating expenses, eliminated three staff positions -- including that of Darryl Matthews, its executive director -- and sold off \$400,000 worth of its investments. In addition to adopting "zero-based budgeting," which requires managers to justify all of its expenses, it is considering closing its office in College Park, Maryland, and operating in a virtual capacity. It has hired a consultant to help it weather its funding crisis.

[Click here](#) to read more.

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***Rieder: Bold statements for gun control*** (USA Today)

**By REM RIEDER**

There are times when a problem is so intractable, when solutions seem so elusive, when even confronting the problem seems too much to ask, that you have to step out of the box. Business as usual is just not good enough.

You have to find bold, creative ways to underscore the significance of the problem, and the need to address it head-on regardless of the obstacles and the roadblocks.

Particularly when it's a matter of life and death. Lots of death.

That's what two news organizations did recently - and commendably - in connection with the nation's seemingly endless series of mass shootings.

[Click here](#) to read more.

## Today in History - December 9, 2015



## By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 9, the 343rd day of 2015. There are 22 days left in the year.

## Today's Highlights in History:

On Dec. 9, 1965, Nikolai V. Podgorny replaced Anastas I. Mikoyan as chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, a job he would hold for almost 12 years. "A Charlie Brown Christmas," the first animated TV special featuring characters from the "Peanuts" comic strip by Charles M. Schulz, was first broadcast on CBS. The James Bond film "Thunderball," starring Sean Connery, had its world premiere in Tokyo.

## On this date:

In 1608, English poet John Milton was born in London.

In 1854, Alfred, Lord Tennyson's famous poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade," was



published in England.

In 1911, an explosion inside the Cross Mountain coal mine near Briceville, Tennessee, killed 84 workers. (Five were rescued.)

In 1935, the Downtown Athletic Club of New York honored college football player Jay Berwanger of the University of Chicago with the DAC Trophy, which later became known as the Heisman Trophy.

In 1940, British troops opened their first major offensive in North Africa during World War II.

In 1958, the anti-communist John Birch Society was formed in Indianapolis.

In 1962, the Petrified Forest in Arizona was designated a national park.

In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed a \$2.3 billion seasonal loan-authorization that officials of New York City and State said would prevent a city default.

In 1984, the 5-day-old hijacking of a Kuwaiti jetliner that claimed the lives of two Americans ended as Iranian security men seized control of the plane, which was parked at Tehran airport.

In 1987, the first Palestinian intefadeh, or uprising, began as riots broke out in Gaza and spread to the West Bank, triggering a strong Israeli response.

In 1992, Britain's Prince Charles and Princess Diana announced their separation. (The couple's divorce became final Aug. 28, 1996.)

In 1995, Congressman Kweisi Mfume (kwah-EE'-see oom-FOO'-may) was chosen to become the new head of the NAACP.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush, addressing a political fundraiser in Minnesota, said the United States would wage an unrelenting battle in Iraq to protect Americans at

home. A congressional report said the federal government's medical response to Hurricane Katrina was bungled by a lack of supplies and poor communication.

Five years ago: In Britain's worst political violence in years, student protesters rained sticks and rocks on riot police, vandalized government buildings and attacked a car carrying Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla, after lawmakers approved a controversial hike in university tuition fees. Actor Wesley Snipes began serving a three-year sentence at a federal prison in Pennsylvania for failure to file income tax returns. Florida's Clemency Board pardoned Jim Morrison for indecent exposure and profanity charges stemming from a Doors concert in 1969. John du Pont, the chemical fortune heir who killed Olympic gold medal wrestler David Schultz in 1996, died in prison at age 72.

One year ago: U.S. Senate investigators concluded the United States had brutalized scores of terror suspects with interrogation tactics that turned secret CIA prisons into chambers of suffering and did nothing to make Americans safer after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. Britain's Prince William and his wife, Kate, paid a solemn, rain-drenched visit to the National Sept. 11 Memorial and Museum as they wrapped up their first visit to New York. Mary Ann Mobley Collins, 77, a former Miss America and actress, died in Beverly Hills, California.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Kirk Douglas is 99. Actor-writer Buck Henry is 85. Actress Dame Judi Dench is 81. Actor Beau Bridges is 74. Jazz singer-musician Dan Hicks is 74. Football Hall-of-Famer Dick Butkus is 73. Comedian-songwriter Neil Innes is 71. Actor Michael Nouri is 70. Former Sen. Thomas Daschle, D-S.D., is 68. World Golf Hall of Famer Tom Kite is 66. Singer Joan Armatrading is 65. Actor Michael Dorn is 63. Actor John Malkovich is 62. Country singer Sylvia is 59. Singer Donny Osmond is 58. Rock musician Nick Seymour (Crowded House) is 57. Comedian Mario Cantone is 56. Actor David Anthony Higgins is 54. Actor Joe Lando is 54. Actress Felicity Huffman is 53. Crown Princess Masako of Japan is 52. Country musician Jerry Hughes (Yankee Grey) is 50. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., is 49. Rock singer-musician Thomas Flowers (Oleander) is 48. Rock musician Brian Bell (Weezer) is 47. Rock singer-musician Jakob Dylan (Wallflowers) is 46. Country musician Brian Hayes (Cole Deggs and the Lonesome) is 46. Actress Allison Smith is 46. Songwriter and former "American Idol" judge Kara DioGuardi (dee-oh-GWAHR'-dee) is 45. Country singer David Kersh is 45. Actress Reiko (RAY'-koh) Aylesworth is 43. Rock musician Tre Cool (Green Day) is 43. Rapper Canibus is 41. Actor Kevin Daniels (TV: "Sirens") is 39. Actor/writer/director Mark Duplass is 39. Rock musician Eric Zamora (Save Ferris) is 39. Rock singer Imogen Heap is 38. Actor Jesse Metcalfe is 37. Actor Simon Helberg is 35. Actress Jolene Purdy is 32. Actor Joshua Sasse is 28. Olympic gold and silver medal gymnast McKayla Maroney is 20.

***Thought for Today: "The real question is not whether machines think but whether men***

*do. The mystery which surrounds a thinking machine already surrounds a thinking man."*  
- B.F. Skinner, American behaviorist (1904-1990).

## 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!

**Paul Stevens**  
**Editor**  
**Connecting newsletter**  
[stevenspl@live.com](mailto:stevenspl@live.com)

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