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Connecting - February 08, 2018

1 message

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Thu, Feb 8, 2018 at 8:02 AM

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Connecting

February 08, 2018

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Colleagues,

Good Thursday morning!

Today's issue leads with the blockbuster sale of a paper many Connecting readers dealt with during their time with The Associated Press. As AP's story noted, the \$500 million purchase of the Los Angeles Times ends "the paper's quarrelsome relationship with its Chicago-based corporate overseers," tension that over the years led to the departure of several top editors, including **John Carroll** and **Dean Baquet**.

The buyer is a biotech billionaire, representing the latest case of a wealthy, civic-minded individual purchasing a nationally prominent newspaper from a big corporation. What does

it all mean? **Ken Doctor** seeks to answer some of the early questions in a sidebar.

As has been painfully evident in many newsrooms, the news consuming experience is changing rapidly. Editor & Publisher suggests newspapers could get a foot in the door through voice-controlled speakers which have become popular in many homes. "Voice-enabled devices represent a transformational shift in how consumers get information and how publishers distribute news," said **Francesco Marconi**, strategy manager and AI co-lead at AP. "The internet used to be in a 'point-and-click' phase where desktop websites flourished, but now it's in a 'touch' phase as mobile devices and apps have increased digital access to content and services. Voice commands are now ushering us in a third phase through the 'internet of things' and all types of connected devices and experiences." Marconi is quoted widely throughout the story.

Meanwhile, thank you for the pet stories and photos you've submitted. Great ones are in the pen. But we welcome more. During a high-level meeting yesterday, Connecting's editorial leadership decided to let them out one-by-one in the days ahead. So keep them coming!

Send stories and other ideas to markmitt71@yahoo.com.

Paul Stevens returns to the editor's chair Monday.

Have a great day!

- *Mark Mittelstadt*



Los Angeles Times

Billionaire reaches deal to buy L.A. Times and San Diego Union-Tribune

(AP)

A biotech billionaire struck a \$500 million deal Wednesday to buy the Los Angeles Times, ending the paper's quarrelsome relationship with its Chicago-based corporate overseers and bringing it under local ownership for the first time in 18 years.

The agreement between Los Angeles medical entrepreneur Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong and Tronc Inc. represents the latest instance of a rich, civic-minded individual purchasing a newspaper from a big corporation.

Soon-Shiong, 65, amassed his fortune in part by developing a cancer drug in 1991. He was already a major shareholder in Tronc, one of the richest men in Los Angeles and the nation's wealthiest doctor by Forbes' estimate, with a net worth put at \$7.8 billion. The deal includes the purchase of The San Diego Union-Tribune and some other publications and the assumption of \$90 million in pension liabilities.

Soon-Shiong takes over at a time of turmoil at the paper. The Times just replaced its top editor, the third such switch in six months, and publisher Ross Levinsohn had been on unpaid leave after it was learned he was a defendant in two sexual harassment lawsuits elsewhere. Tronc said Wednesday he was cleared of any wrongdoing. Also, journalists voted last month to unionize for the first time in the paper's 136-year history.

Read more [here](#).

Newsonomics: Inside Tronc's sale of the L.A. Times (and all the new questions to come)

(Nieman Lab)

Patrick Soon-Shiong has finally won his hometown prize. After a number of years of trying to buy his local paper, Los Angeles' richest billionaire has seized an unpredictable opportunity. In a move that's shocking but not really surprising, 65-year-old Soon-Shiong will pay a chunk of his estimated \$7 billion-plus fortune to finally split with his erstwhile partner in Troncdom, chairman Michael Ferro. As I've reported over the last couple of years, his efforts to gain control of the Times, both public and behind the scenes, waxed and waned, but they never disappeared.

Read more [here](#).

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Newspapers are given a new voice through virtual assistants

(E&P)

Amazon and Google reported record sales for their respective virtual assistant smart speaker system this past holiday season. Each cut prices to increase market share according to consumer research firm Strategy Analytics, but the move appears to have paid off.

Amazon, which has roughly 70 percent of the smart home speaker market, saw sales of its Amazon Echo more than quintuple over the past year.

As a result more people than ever will be asking these devices about the weather, health tips and of course, the news. These devices could provide traditional purveyors of news with a new way to reach an audience, especially as the market for these smart speakers is only set to grow.

"There are probably more than 50 million of these smart speakers in people's homes following holiday 2017," said Greg Sterling, vice president of strategy and insight at the Local Search Association. "These won't replace text/print but will be a powerful complement to those more traditional distribution platforms."



Amazon Echo

While this presents an opportunity for media companies, publishers may need to adapt their content for the new medium. This isn't the first time that content has had to adjust for a new digital medium.

"Voice enabled devices represent a transformational shift in how consumers get information and how publishers distribute news," said **Francesco Marconi**, strategy manager and AI co-lead at the Associated Press. "The internet used to be in a 'point-and-click' phase where desktop websites flourished, but now it's in a 'touch' phase as mobile devices and apps have increased digital access to content and services. Voice commands are now ushering us in a third phase through the 'internet of things' and all types of connected devices and experiences."

Read more [here](#).

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Volunteers wearing handbook, Korean traditional dress, greet athletes entering the Olympic Village prior to the 2018 Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File)

Anthony: Against tense global backdrop, let the Games begin

(AP)

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) - On the one hand: The world gathers for a scripted, globalized spectacle of competition and unity. North Korean athletes and performers stream into the rival South for a display of cooperation that maybe, just maybe, could ease anxiety about possible nuclear war. The North's head of state announces plans to visit the South for the first time. The U.S. vice president is stopping by, too.

On the other: Angry South Koreans bump up against riot police to protest the arrivals. The North's government immediately calls the demonstration a "spasm of psychopaths." The president of the United States insists that America must become "great again" - and goads the North Korean leader on Twitter.

And outward from there it ripples, across a planet riven by uncertainty and anger.

That the world is a contradictory and quarrelsome place is hardly breaking news. But on the week that the 2018 Winter Olympics begin, tucked away in chilly mountains that loom over one of the planet's most contentious patches of earth, it somehow seems more so at this moment.

When the torch is lit during the opening ceremonies in Pyeongchang's Olympic stadium on Friday night, it will become one of many flames being fanned around the world. Few others are anywhere near as uplifting.

Read more [here](#).

Connecting mailbox

Los Angeles Times sale

John Brewer ([Email](#)) _ Let's hope the new owner turns out to be another Jeff Bezos when it comes to valuing a newspaper.

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Better than a cold, wet nose

Cecilia White ([Email](#)) _ Connecting is going to the dogs! ... and I love it. **David Breslauer's** photo of his beloved "Babs" was adorable. And **Angie Lamoli Silvestry's** story of her adoption of one of Hurricane Maria's four-legged victims, "Lolo," and plea for help with others, was heartwarming. Thanks to them both for their contributions to Wednesday's Connecting.

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That man next to Skip Leabo in 1950s photo

*NOTE: Friday's Connecting included a photo and note from **Peter Leabo** showing his father, **C.J. "Skip" Leabo**, working at the San Francisco AP bureau in the mid-1950s. Peter wasn't sure who was looking over his father's shoulder but said he received a "wonderful response" from **Sal Veder**, which Sal allowed Connecting to use. In sharing it, Peter took exception to part of it: "...I disagree completely with his self assessment at the end of the third graf ... I should be so lucky to have that kind of memory at 61!" Veder's recollection:*

This picture brought back some fond memories! Although I didn't know your father, I heard many good things about him! The gentleman at right in the picture is **Morrie Landsberg**, legendary supervising political correspondent at AP in Sacramento in the late '50s and early '60s. He supervised (as I recall) a staff of five reports and a city editor. (Incidentally, of Morrie's two sons, one became an editor at the Los Angeles Times and the other a prominent California judge!)



Morrie hired me as AP's first full-time Sacramento photo staffer in 1960. When the late **Tom diLustro** went from San Francisco to the New York photo desk, I went to the night photo desk in San Francisco, which was on the second floor of the San Francisco Chronicle at 5th and Mission.

In those years, San Francisco was the major West Coast bureau for both news and photos. We handled not only the national wirephoto traffic at 100 rpm, but also the Pacific-Orient photo traffic at 60 rpm via radio transmission. The staff included three photo editors, three photographers, at least four darkroom technicians, and four wirephoto operators! At 91 my memory is mushy.

Then came the major bureau and hub operations move to Los Angeles! The San Francisco staff was slashed! I went back on the street. And AP moved from the Chronicle to the Fox Plaza building.

But, back to the photo: It appears to be taken at the AP Sacramento office, which was on the second floor of the capitol just off the rotunda on the north side. It contained a vault (the darkroom)! Other news groups (e.g., the Sacramento Bee) connected and were across the hall from the assembly chamber. UPI was around a corner, also off the rotunda.

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Stories of interest

FEC commissioner who blocked regulation of Internet steps down

(Washington Examiner)

Lee E. Goodman, who led a battle to stop Democrats from imposing political regulations on the Internet and news sites like the Drudge Report and other media, is stepping down from the Federal Election Commission. Goodman, an elections lawyer and adviser, plans to leave Feb. 16. He will join the political law group of Wiley Rein in Washington.

Read more [here](#).

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Hard right dominates use of fake US news, Oxford study finds

(Financial Times)

Ultra-rightwing conservatives shared more false stories on Facebook than all other political groups combined in the three months leading to President Donald Trump's State of the Union address last month, independent researchers have found.

Academics at the University of Oxford's Internet Institute analyzed the political affiliations and posting patterns of almost 48,000 public Facebook pages and 14,000 Twitter users to identify which groups posted the most misinformation from dubious websites.

The analysis, one of the most extensive studies to date of fake news on social media, is likely to increase the pressure on tech companies to tackle misinformation online, particularly because of its focus on the scope of false information.

Read more [here](#).

Click [here](#) for the Oxford study.

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Media unions praise bill to protect journalists from assault

Unions representing 30,000 reporters, photographers, and broadcast employees are praising a bill filed Monday that would make it a federal crime to assault a journalist. The Journalist Protection Act, introduced by Rep. Eric Swalwell of California, addresses a real need, said NewsGuild President Bernie Lunzer. "This is a dangerous time to be a journalist," Lunzer said. "At least 44 reporters were physically attacked in the U.S. last year and angry rhetoric that demonizes reporters persists. The threatening atmosphere is palpable."

Read more [here](#). Shared by Adolphe Bernotas

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A cloudy day for sunshine laws in Texas

(The Texas Tribune)

It might deflate your confidence in the state of Texas to find that the people protecting your access to government information have their thumbs on the scale. That they're playing favorites. That they put requests from their enemies on the slow track. Or that they advise

the agencies who come to them for advice to act that way. But that might be your takeaway from a remarkable 10-minute-21-second video of Marc Rylander, director of communications for Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, talking to a crowd at an open government seminar put on by the AG's office in San Marcos last month.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Sibby Christensen

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UK Prime Minister: Decline of local journalism threatens democracy, fuels rise in fake news
(The Guardian)

The decline of local journalism is a threat to democracy and is fueling the rise in fake news, Theresa May said while launching a review into whether state intervention was needed to preserve national and local newspapers. The investigation is set to examine the rise of low-quality "clickbait" news and whether more could be done by either the industry or government to undermine commercial incentives to produce such content.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Sibby Christensen

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The UX of why people hate their new job after three months
(Medium)

My first-day advice to new members of the team boils down to, "Don't worry, you are going to be totally miserable in about three months." We all know the excitement of that first day at work. There are new people to meet, new projects to learn and new roles and responsibilities to master. Part of the intoxication of those early weeks is they are often the only time in our adult lives we are allowed to ask stupid questions and not have to pretend to know everything. And despite that opportunity our learning plan is often simply, "Give me a few weeks to get up to speed and I will own the place." That approach boosts our short-term confidence but also sets unrealistic expectations for our ability to quickly understand and master the complexity of the organization and its needs.

Read more [here](#).

The Final Word

Connecting pets



Bill Schiffman ([Email](#)) _ Here is our 10-year-old beagle Shiner, named in honor of one of the finest beers brewed in Texas. His assistant and partner in crime is Dudley, a rescue cat we've had for 11 years.

Today in History - February 8, 2018



By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Feb. 8, the 39th day of 2018. There are 326 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Feb. 8, 1968, three college students were killed in a confrontation between demonstrators and highway patrolmen at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg in the wake of protests over a whites-only bowling alley. The science-fiction film "Planet of the Apes," starring Charlton Heston, had its world premiere in

New York (it went into general release the following April.)

On this date:

In 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in England after she was implicated in a plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

In 1693, a charter was granted for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in the Virginia Colony.

In 1862, the Civil War Battle of Roanoke Island, North Carolina, ended in victory for Union forces led by Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside.

In 1910, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated.

In 1922, President Warren G. Harding had a radio installed in the White House.

In 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, Malaga fell to Nationalist and Italian forces.

In 1942, during World War II, Japanese forces began invading Singapore, which fell a week later.

In 1952, Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed her accession to the British throne following the death of her father, King George VI.

In 1978, the deliberations of the Senate were broadcast on radio for the first time as members opened debate on the Panama Canal treaties.

In 1989, 144 people were killed when an American-chartered Boeing 707 filled with Italian tourists slammed into a fog-covered mountain in the Azores.

In 1992, the XVI Olympic Winter Games opened in Albertville, France.

In 1993, General Motors sued NBC, alleging that "Dateline NBC" had rigged two car-truck crashes to show that 1973-to-87 GM pickups were prone to fires in side impact crashes. (NBC settled the lawsuit the following day and apologized for its "unscientific demonstration.")

Ten years ago: Scotland Yard investigators concluded that Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto died on Dec. 27, 2007, as the result of a bomb blast, not a gunshot, a finding disputed by Bhutto supporters. A 23-year-old nursing student at Louisiana Technical College in Baton Rouge, shot and killed two other students and then herself. Novelist Phyllis A. Whitney died in Charlottesville, Virginia, at age 104.

Five years ago: A massive storm packing hurricane-force winds and blizzard conditions began sweeping through the Northeast, dumping nearly 2 feet of snow on New England and knocking out power to more than a half a million customers.

One year ago: The Senate confirmed Sen. Jeff Sessions to be attorney general, 52-47, despite fierce Democratic opposition to the Alabama Republican over his record on civil rights and immigration. Britain's House of Commons gave its final approval to a bill authorizing the government to start exit talks with the European Union, despite fears by opposition lawmakers that the U.K. was setting out on a rocky path

to Brexit with a sketchy roadmap.

Today's Birthdays: Composer-conductor John Williams is 86. Newscaster Ted Koppel is 78. Actor Nick Nolte is 77. Comedian Robert Klein is 76. Actor-rock musician Creed Bratton is 75. Singer Ron Tyson is 70. Actress Brooke Adams is 69. Actress Mary Steenburgen is 65. Author John Grisham is 63. Retired NBA All-Star and College Basketball Hall of Famer Marques Johnson is 62. Actor Henry Czerny is 59. The former president of the Philippines, Benigno Aquino III, is 58. Rock singer Vince Neil (Motley Crue) is 57. Rock singer-musician Sammy Llanas (YAH'-nus) (The BoDeans) is 57. Former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa P. Jackson is 56. Movie producer Toby Emmerich is 55. Actress Missy Yager is 50. Actress Mary McCormack is 49. Rock musician Keith Nelson is 49. Basketball Hall of Famer Alonzo Mourning is 48. Dance musician Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (Daft Punk) is 44. Actor Seth Green is 44. Actor Josh Morrow is 44. Rock musician Phoenix (Linkin Park) is 41. Actor William Jackson Harper is 38. Actor Jim Parrack is 37. Folk singer-musician Joey Ryan (Milk Carton Kids) is 36. Actress-comedian Cecily Strong is 34. Rock musician Jeremy Davis is 33. Hip-hop artist Anderson.Paak is 32. Rock musician Max Grahn (Carolina Liar) is 30. Actor Ryan Pinkston is 30. Professional surfer Bethany Hamilton is 28. Actress Karle Warren is 26.

Thought for Today: "Health is the thing that makes you feel that now is the best time of the year." - Franklin P. Adams, American journalist (1881-1960).

Got a story or photos 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!

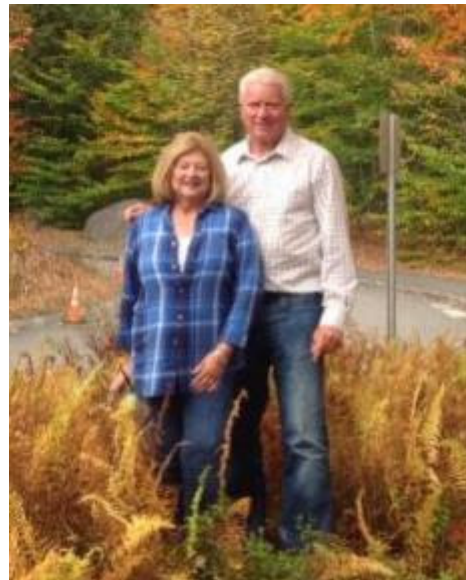
Here are some suggestions:

- **Second chapters** - You finished a great career. Now tell us about your second (and third and fourth?) chapters of life.

- **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.

- **"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.

- **Most unusual** place a story assignment took you.

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