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Connecting -- July 25, 2018

1 message

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Wed, Jul 25, 2018 at 8:58 AM

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Connecting

July 25, 2018

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning!

The shortest response - but one of the best - I have gotten yet for our Connecting series on first jobs before journalism came from colleague **Ruth Gersh** ([Email](#)), who shared:

Worked my way through college as a belly dancer at Jimmy Tayoun's Middle East Restaurant in South Philly.

Top that!

Today's issue features first responses of your experiences in flying aboard Air Force One. Look forward to hearing more.

Paul

Your memories of flying aboard Air Force One



This photo from July 22, 2002, was my last trip on Air Force One, from Chicago to Joint Base Andrews. I'm in the lower left, carrying a briefcase. AP Photo by J. Scott Applewhite

David Morris ([Email](#)) - After I left the AP, I was fortunate to cover Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush for Bloomberg News. Every trip on Air Force One is special, but two were especially memorable.

One was a flight with President Bush into Sarasota, Fla., that I remember for what it became. The flight was on Sept. 10, 2001. There were no events that night and just one on the schedule for the next day, with the president planning to read to school children. The next morning, Sept. 11, everything changed. It was a reminder that when you cover the White House, the most mundane, routine trip can give way to earthshaking news.

The other flight that stands out underscores exactly how much everything changed after 9/11. Weeks later, the president flew to New York to throw out the first pitch at a World Series game. On the flight back to D.C. that night, we realized that Air Force One was flying without lights. That's when it hit me. We were essentially riding on a giant target. I knew, as always, that we were being escorted by fighter jets, but that night, without running lights, the mood in the back of the plane seemed unusually somber. That was one very long short flight.

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Joe McGowan (Email) - I never flew aboard Air Force One, but I flew a few times in the press charter (usually from Pan Am in those days). One trip was from the Kennedy compound in Palm Beach to San Jose, Costa Rica for a Central America presidents' meeting. The Palm Beach terminal was not air conditioned at that time (probably about 1961) and the hot shot press people were complaining. The press jetliner had not been refueled, but White House press secretary Pierre Salinger assured everyone no complaints would be made if the press were allowed to go aboard the air-conditioned charter jet. Everyone went aboard and refueling went without a hitch. Then some of the press hot shots complained they needed liquor. But liquor on board was in bond and not to be served until we were over international waters. Again, Salinger assured the crew no one would take any legal action if they served the press. We took off and Pan Am had staffed the plane with only the best cabin crew. Very shortly we were served what I thought was a wonderful meal. But a guy in front of me (his name was Cronkite) dumped his meal in the aisle and loudly complained "this food is not fit to eat". When we reached Costa Rica, he and a few other hot shots complained and the entire cabin crew were grounded. They had to catch space available flights home to Miami and go through an ordeal to see if they would keep their jobs. I found out about this after the summit meeting ended and contacted Pan Am's PR department and told them I wanted to testify against the hot shots' complaints. My statements were accepted and I soon found out all of the cabin crew were reinstated.

By the way, I don't know how it is these days and if there is a press charter. But in those days, Air Force One took off first and then the press charter. Then the press charter would go ahead of Air Force One and land first at the destination. Guess why? Morbidly, because the press would be on the ground when Air Force One took off and again when it landed, so there would be plenty of press people to witness any mishap and report it!!

A most unusual story - while vacationing with family in Mexico

Joseph Carter ([Email](#)) - During the early 1960s, while division overnight editor for UPI in Dallas, my wife and 3-year-old son and I made a motoring vacationing trip to Monterrey, Mexico--our first jaunt south of the border. While wife and I enjoyed dinner at our hotel, I struck up a conversation with the affable bartender named Jesus (Jesse in English that he spoke fluently) whose checkered career darts between Mexico and Houston highlighted by the fact that recently Jesus had been released from the Nuevo Leon State Prison.

"Did you meet an inmate named Dykes Askew Simmonds?" I inquired.

"Yes, he's in on a bum rap," Jesus replied. Then he asked a begging question to this story-hungry newsman: "Do you want to talk to him?"

Early the next day, our car loaded in the event of a fleeing trip back North, Jesus rode with us to the prison with assurance he and I would gain entry. Wife and son remained in the car with a private understanding that if I failed to reappear that she would flee northward and call the UPI bureau for help.

Jesus and I walked calmly through the prison gates. He chatted and, as we passed various guards at Jesus' suggestion, I pressed a five peso coin in the welcoming hands. Only "Buenos Dias" was all I needed to say or barely could choke out. Within minutes we faced a chicken wire fence and behind stood Dykes Askew Simmonds of Fort Worth, Texas. An inmate. No guards in sight. Jesus sat nearby.

For an hour or longer, Simmons and I talked. While my wife fretted, I scribbled notes and Simmons related his incredible story. The notes are long lost. Many details I remember vividly these 56 or so years later. Inside prison is memorable.

On a vagabond trip, Simmons related his tale, he had hitchhiked into Mexico where, near Monterrey, he was arrested while roadside hoping to hitch a new ride. The officers' interrogation was physical. Brutal he said. He claimed that that a pistol was pressed behind his ear and the trigger snapped loudly. The gun was unloaded. The sound was terrifying. He denied the killings to me and to the cops.

Simmons step-by-step pieced together events: Three children of a prominent Monterrey dentist had been murdered somewhere along the single-lane highway

that stretched southward from Laredo, Texas to Monterrey and beyond. Highway 57 as I recall. A killer was at large.

The oldest daughter had survived but with critical wounds and hospitalized. Simmons said officers had cuffed him and delivered him disheveled to a hospital where the wounded lady who died shortly thereafter muttered an affirmation that he was the killer, adding as I recall he relayed, "God help me if I'm wrong."

Askew later said that without a trial, he was brought before a judge, pronounced guilty and sentenced to die before a firing squad in the city plaza. As we talked, he said he had no notion when the execution was planned. He was worried and at age 32, also my age at the time, I saw that his hair had turned grey.

Then, on the lighter side if you can imagine, Simmons vividly related his version of life in a Mexican prison where cohabitation was permitted. If you were single, mates were for hire, he said. I told notes on the food he was given, other matters and I noted that he wore casual civilian clothing.

Back in Dallas, I wrote a carefully attributed story that I submitted for approval to the division editor. Never mind that I had not checked with Mexican authorities but included an interview with Simmons print shop employed father in Fort Worth. We decided official denials could come in follow-up reports.

UPI dispatched the yarn that got considerable play in many media. Months later, I departed UPI for newspaper reporting jobs beyond Texas. I recall that I read AP dispatches reporting that a helicopter had swooped down at the prison, Simmons jumped aboard and fled to Fort Worth where, even later, I recall reading that he was found dead and bullet riddled.

As an itinerant reporter, over the years I kept few files or copies of stories including none about Simmons. Into retirement, I wrote non-fiction books, some about events I had covered and that nagged my memory. The haunting time I spent in prison with Dykes Askew Simmons remained prime. A few years back, I attempted to find the story file in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram's morgue that had been transferred to the local university campus but had no luck. Without a publisher's backing, the research was beyond my budget.

As today's wracking yarns about discord at the U.S.-Mexico border abound, the saga of Dykes Askew Simmons evokes a different era of border mishaps but interesting history. It is a path to understanding. If someone would update the yarn, I would be a very interested reader.

Connecting series:

My first jobs before journalism



A circa 1963-1965 "Career Day" pic at the local TV station. Yours truly, at least the version my wife would soon marry, is third from right.

Jim Spehar ([Email](#)) - Unlike other Connecting colleagues with only a couple of pre-journalism jobs, my list is lengthy.

First paid job was tending the expansive lawn and gardens of our aging but very particular next door neighbor while a pre-teen for the princely sum of \$50/month. From that, I developed a taste for blueberries and such a hatred of trimming rose bushes that one of the first orders of business when we bought our current home was to dispatch about a dozen of them planted by the previous owner.

Along with my siblings and cousins, we constituted the seasonal labor force at the farm/ranch my uncle and grandfather operated west of Grand Junction. That ended for me one 100+ degree summer afternoon as my uncle criticized the way I was shoveling the load level enough for another row as we harvested oats. His 15-year-

old nephew handed him the gloves, walked out of the field, and found other employment.

It was an air-conditioned job at the local Safeway, bagging groceries and stocking shelves until promoted to the produce department, where my fondness for raspberries probably cost the store more than my hourly wage. My Safeway career, which had then evolved into night time floor maintenance, ended late one Friday with a "last date" decision to follow my future wife to Arizona State University after a year of less than stellar academics (C or better in 13 of 45 quarter hours) at the local junior college. Love trumped my previously stated opinion that I shouldn't consider any college greedy enough to accept me. My mother, a single mom of six anxious for her eldest to straighten up or at least leave town, actually wrote a bad check for out-of-state tuition, hustling down to a local bank on Monday for a loan to cover it.

Breaks included a couple of summers as a laborer for the local county road department and a third summer working for a road construction company doing jobs that hopefully wouldn't clear an OSHA review today.

Part time jobs during college were the only preparation for my journalism career. I was a disc jockey at a suburban Phoenix radio station and a part time reporter for a top-rated rock radio station. One highlight was being dispatched to cover a Saturday night party in southwest Phoenix where some fool attempted to match Paul Newman's "Cool Hand Luke" performance and eat 50 boiled eggs, the ultimate outcome predictably unsuitable for television coverage. The low point might have been my first attempt at working for the AP when then-COB Tom Aden offered that I might have had a better shot at a Phoenix bureau summer relief spot if I hadn't completed the writing test in broadcast style. He hired a friend and classmate, the late Bob Zimmer, who went on to a stellar AP career.

Post graduation, there were stints in radio news, first at KOY and then as News Director at all-news KPHO in Phoenix. KOY was where my longtime acquaintance with Jim Hood began as we first traded Tucson and Phoenix news stories and later worked together at KPHO, a precursor to our time together at the AP. After moving back to Colorado, the first of two rounds of AP service began, interrupted by some time in Denver television news and an attempt to be a rock concert promoter that was later spotlighted in ads Hood created about AP Broadcast Executives. Strangely, his stint as a water bed entrepreneur was never featured.

Post-AP, it's been radio station ownership, politics, issue consulting and, for the last 15 years, writing weekly opinion columns for the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel and another local paper

.

When (if) I grow up, I want to be...

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Paul Stevens (Email) -- I was reminded of my first jobs before (fulltime) journalism, but like many of you, they related to the craft that would become my life's career.

This came to mind this past weekend when Linda and I journeyed to Iowa City for the 150th reunion celebration of The Daily Iowan, the student newspaper at the University of Iowa where I was a reporter and assistant sports editor in my Hawkeye years of the late 1960s. The photo at right shows me with Brad Kiesey, who went on after j-school graduation to get a law degree and work for a half century as an attorney in southeast Iowa.

Brad and I were hired by Al Grady, legendary sports editor of the Iowa City Press-Citizen, to cover high school sports and each of us was assigned a school, Brad's being University High and mine Regina High. We covered home football and basketball games, and went on the road with the teams in football.



Beyond my Press-Citizen work, I was a stringer for the AP's Des Moines bureau, covering football and basketball, and for my hometown newspaper, The Messenger of Fort Dodge. The paychecks from each of the three gigs were not large but cumulatively invaluable, keeping me in gas money for my Honda 90cc trail bike and for groceries and the like. (Riding a small motorcycle in Iowa winters is the subject for another day...)

Those jobs also didn't hurt my resume when my Air Force and grad school years ended and I got into the job market.

Stories of interest

Who suffers when local news disappears (CJR)

By **KYLE POPE**

AMERICA'S LOCAL NEWS has reached its death spiral phase.

Look no further than today's grim announcement from the New York Daily News, a once proud fighter in the city's news wars. On Monday, the tabloid's owner, Tronc, announced the latest in a slog of job cuts, this one totaling 50 percent of the staff and prompting the departure of Jim Rich, who had been the paper's editor.

Once the cuts are complete, the math will look bleak: With an editorial staff of about 44 people remaining, and a New York City population of 8.6 million people, there'll be one Daily News staffer for every 195,000 residents—a ratio much worse than most small-town papers. There can be no doubt what that will mean for the Daily News's journalism.

And that is the dirty secret amid all of the hand-wringing about what's happening to local news in America: As we dither and debate the future, the quality of the thing that we so badly want to save is getting worse and worse. At some point not terribly far in the future, even those of us who believe powerfully in the need for a vibrant local news landscape are going to be hard pressed to make a case that many of these outlets should be saved.

Read more [here](#).

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Daily News cuts drive fears New York City's becoming 'local news desert' (Politico)

By **MICHAEL CALDERONE**

Zach Haberman, who was laid off Monday morning from the New York Daily News, acknowledged shortly after leaving the newsroom that the situation "sucks." But the real story, he stressed, is "not about any individual."

"This is about this city. This is about this institution," Haberman, who was the Daily News' breaking news editor, told POLITICO. "And this is about the people who live here, and they lose from this."

The decimation of the Daily News follows a familiar storyline in a struggling industry, as a national newspaper chain - in this case, Chicago-based Tronc - announces a "restructuring" (aka layoffs) of a paper that's already been downsized in recent years. Tronc, which just bought the Daily News in September, laid off staffers at its Chicago Tribune in March and recently sold the Los Angeles Times, which was spared the axe as a result.

But Tronc's decision to cut the Daily News newsroom in half, reportedly leaving as few as 40 people behind, also comes amid growing concerns that New York City, with a population of 8.5 million people, is already underserved when it comes to covering courts, cops and local communities.

Read more [here](#).

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Morning Call publisher and editor-in-chief Robert York leaving for New York Daily News

By Andrew Wagaman and Jon Harris

Contract Reporters of The Morning Call

Robert York, publisher and editor-in-chief of The Morning Call, is departing the newspaper to lead the New York Daily News.

York, 55, confirmed Monday morning that effective July 30 he will become editor-in-chief of the Daily News, which like The Morning Call is owned by Tronc Inc.

Tronc, which acquired the Daily News in September, announced in a company memo Monday morning that it is eliminating half of the Daily News' newsroom staff. York will be tasked with helping to turn around a struggling property that lost about \$90 million from 2014 to 2016, according to SEC filings.

York, a Pittsburgh native, joined The Morning Call in July 2016 after a 20-year career with the San Diego Union-Tribune. During his two years with The Morning Call, York oversaw the newsroom's "very aggressive" pivot to a digitally focused news cycle and the ensuing growth of its digital audience. The newspaper also

launched a new arts section, revamped its business section and is about to launch a new digital opinion and dialogue section.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Paul Shane.

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VFW scolds members for heckling the press during Trump speech (Politico)



By REBECCA MORIN

The Veterans of Foreign Wars on Tuesday said the organization is "disappointed" with members who heckled the press during a speech by President Donald Trump at the 2018 VFW convention and were "happy" to have members of the media at the event.

"We were disappointed to hear some of our members boo the press," Randi Law, manager of communications and public affairs for VFW, said in a statement to POLITICO. "We rely on the media to help spread the VFW's message, and CNN, NBC, ABC, FOX, CBS, and others on site today, were our invited guests. We were happy to have them there."

Trump during his speech in Kansas City, Missouri, criticized the press, which led to boos and heckling of reporters covering the event.

Read more [here](#).

(@Philip Rucker of The Washington Post tweeted: Not all veterans of foreign wars hate the "fake news." One vet just came up to me after Trump's speech to shake my hand, thank me for my reporting and whispered, "I have one question: How do you put up with this bullsh-- every day?")

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Spotting CNN on a TV Aboard Air Force One, Trump Rages Against Reality (New York Times)

By Katie Rogers and Maggie Haberman

WASHINGTON - On the first couple's recent trip overseas, Melania Trump's television aboard Air Force One was tuned to CNN. President Trump was not pleased.

He raged at his staff for violating a rule that the White House entourage should begin each trip tuned to Fox - his preferred network over what he considers the "fake news" CNN - and caused "a bit of a stir" aboard Air Force One, according to an email obtained by The New York Times. The email, an internal exchange between officials in the White House Military Office and the White House Communications Agency last Thursday, also called for the ordering of two additional televisions to support Beam, a TiVo-like streaming device, to make sure the president and first lady could both watch TV in their separate hotel rooms when they travel.

At the end of the email chain, officials confirmed that tuning the TVs to Fox would be standard operating procedure going forward.

Read more [here](#).

The Final Word

Reunions panels take on politics, media, race - and more (Princeton Alumni Weekly)

By CARRIE COMPTON

Reuners whose interest in current events goes deeper than the offerings of cable television had a slew of panel discussions to choose from this year, as alumni and faculty experts presided over conversations about some of the country's biggest flashpoints: politics and news, personal data, race, and the #MeToo movement.



Nancy Cordes

At an annual Reunions panel of journalists, sponsored by PAW and the Ferris journalism program of the Council of the Humanities, moderator Nancy Cordes '99, chief congressional correspondent for CBS News, kicked off the session on this note: "Everyone on this panel, I think it's safe to say, has had an official or campaign aide or member of Congress accuse them of peddling fake news." Her remarks were met with somber nods by the panelists.

The journalists focused on some of the questions they encounter daily as they cover a president and Congress willing to abandon traditions of governing. Should they use the word "lie" in covering statements by President Donald Trump that are known to be untrue?

Most said they should not.

"We don't know whether Trump is lying, ignorant, simply mistaken, or just playing games," said Washington Post editor and Trump biographer Marc Fisher '80. "I think to pretend that we know his psychological motivations misleads the reader."

Read more [here](#). Shared by Chris Connell, Dan Day.

Today in History - July 25, 2018



By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, July 25, the 206th day of 2018. There are 159 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 25, 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein (hoo-SAYN') signed a declaration at the White House ending their countries' 46-year-old formal state of war.

On this date:

In 1866, Ulysses S. Grant was named General of the Army of the United States, the first officer to hold the rank.

In 1917, Nikon Corp. had its beginnings with the merger of three optical manufacturers in Japan.

In 1943, Benito Mussolini was dismissed as premier of Italy by King Victor Emmanuel III, and placed under arrest. (However, Mussolini was later rescued by the Nazis, and re-asserted his authority.)

In 1946, the United States detonated an atomic bomb near Bikini Atoll in the Pacific in the first underwater test of the device.

In 1952, Puerto Rico became a self-governing commonwealth of the United States.

In 1956, the Italian liner SS Andrea Doria collided with the Swedish passenger ship Stockholm off the New England coast late at night and began sinking; 51 people - 46 from the Andrea Doria, five from the Stockholm - were killed. (The Andrea Doria capsized and sank the following morning.)

In 1960, a Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina, that had been the scene of a sit-in protest against its whites-only lunch counter dropped its segregation policy.

In 1961, in a televised address on the Berlin Crisis, President John F. Kennedy announced a series of steps aimed at bolstering the military in the face of Soviet

demands that Western powers withdraw from the German city's western sector.

In 1972, the notorious Tuskegee syphilis experiment came to light as The Associated Press reported that for the previous four decades, the U.S. Public Health Service, in conjunction with the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, had been allowing poor, rural black male patients with syphilis to go without treatment, even allowing them to die, as a way of studying the disease.

In 1984, Soviet cosmonaut Svetlana Savitskaya (sah-VEETS'-kah-yah) became the first woman to walk in space as she carried out more than three hours of experiments outside the orbiting space station Salyut 7.

In 2000, a New York-bound Air France Concorde crashed outside Paris shortly after takeoff, killing all 109 people on board and four people on the ground; it was the first-ever crash of the supersonic jet.

In 2002, Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee) declared he was guilty of conspiracy in the September 11 attacks, then dramatically withdrew his plea at his arraignment in Alexandria, Va.

Ten years ago: An oxygen tank exploded aboard a Qantas Boeing 747-400, ripping a hole in the fuselage and forcing an emergency landing in the Philippines. President George W. Bush signed an executive order expanding sanctions against individuals and organizations in Zimbabwe associated with the regime of President Robert Mugabe. Computer science professor Randy Pausch (powsh), whose "last lecture" about facing terminal cancer became an Internet sensation and a best-selling book, died in Chesapeake, Va. at age 47. The Federal Communications Commission formally approved Sirius Satellite Radio Inc.'s \$3.3 billion buyout of rival XM Satellite Radio Holdings Inc. California became the first state to ban trans fats from restaurant food.

Five years ago: Pope Francis, dubbed the "slum pope" for his work with the poor, received a rapturous welcome from one of Rio de Janeiro's most violent shantytowns and demanded the world's wealthy end the injustices that had left the poor on the margins of society.

One year ago: A bitterly-divided Senate voted to move forward with Republican legislation to repeal and replace "Obamacare." Sen. John McCain, returning to the Capitol for the first time since he was diagnosed with brain cancer, cast a decisive "yes" vote. (Three days later, McCain joined with two other Republican senators and Democrats in defeating the repeal effort.) House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, who was critically wounded in a shooting at a baseball practice on June 14, was released from a Washington hospital.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Barbara Harris is 83. Folk-pop singer-musician Bruce Woodley (The Seekers) is 76. Rock musician Jim McCarty (The Yardbirds) is 75. Rock musician Verdine White (Earth, Wind & Fire) is 67. Singer-musician Jem Finer (The Pogues) is 63. Model-actress Iman is 63. Cartoonist Ray Billingsley ("Curtis") is 61. Rock musician Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth) is 60. Celebrity chef/TV personality Geoffrey Zakarian is 59. Actress-singer Bobbie Eakes is 57. Actress Katherine Kelly Lang is 57. Actress Illeana Douglas is 53. Country singer Marty Brown is 53. Actor Matt LeBlanc is 51. Actress Wendy Raquel Robinson is 51. Rock musician Paavo Lotjonen (PAH'-woh LAHT'-joh-nehn) (Apocalyptica) is 50. Actor D.B. Woodside is 49. Actress Miriam Shor is 47. Actor David Denman is 45. Actor Jay R. Ferguson is 44. Actor James Lafferty is 33. Actress Shantel VanSanten is 33. Actor Michael Welch is 31. Actress Linsey (cq) Godfrey is 30. Classical singer Faryl Smith is 23. Actress Meg Donnelly (TV: "American Housewife") is 17. Actor Pierce Gagnon is 13.

Thought for Today: "Advertising is a valuable economic factor because it is the cheapest way of selling goods, particularly if the goods are worthless." - Sinclair Lewis, American author (1885-1951).

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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