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Connecting - January 15, 2019

1 message

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Connecting

January 15, 2019

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Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning!

We bring you sad news - shared by several of you - on the death early Monday of former AP foreign correspondent **Ed Blanche**.

Wrote our colleague **Denis Gray** from Thailand: "Ed Blanche, stalwart of AP in Beirut and the rest of the Middle East, died early today (January 14) in Beirut, his wife Mona at his side. He had been very ill for some time. Those of us who worked for so many years alongside them say RIP Ed, and send condolences to Mona and their family."

An obituary is being prepared that will move today and we will share it with you in Wednesday's edition. If you would like to share your own favorite memory of working with Ed, please send it along today.

Did you cover the Islamic revolution?

Trenton Daniel, AP digital products producer in New York, is working on a five-part video series that will mark the 40th anniversary of the Islamic revolution with interviews with former AP reporters who covered the event.

"So far, we've talked to Tom Kent, Bob Reid and Nick Tatro, and we're keen on including interviews with photographers who were in Iran at that time," he said. "Anyone - from reporter to photographer or video journalist - is welcome to contribute."

Trenton asks the help of Connecting colleagues in locating these photographers who he believes covered the revolution: Bernard Frye, Michel Lipchitz, Thierry Campion, Ari Saricoslas, Aristotle Saris and Raoul Fornezza. If you know how to get in touch with them, please drop a note to Trenton at - tdaniel@ap.org

What scares you? That's a question posed to you in Monday's Connecting, a spin-off of a new podcast produced by WNYC Studios in New York - called, "10 Things That Scare Me." We got the first two responses and lead with them today. Look forward to your own responses.

Have a great day!

Paul

What scares you?

Norman Abelson ([Email](#)) - What scares me?

The speed of change and the lack of reflection, with a general attitude that if it can be done, just do it, with no thought of consequences (See drones, AI, driver-less vehicles. Tweeting, etc.).

The loss of privacy. The fact that almost anyone can discover just about anything about me.

How easy it is to tell a Big Lie, and how quickly and by how many the lie can be read, believed and repeated endlessly.

The dangerously diminishing number of news persons everywhere to shout out the lies, and keep us honestly informed.

The ever-shortening period of time left in which to recognize and work to change our suicidal direction.

And, unless there is positive change, the awful times to come in which my grandchildren will have to live out their lives.

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Joe McKnight ([Email](#)) - I think I spent the first few years with AP scared that I would be fired, Today, 27 years into retirement, I think I mostly fear letters from New York AP, fearing it will give notice of a pension cut or increase in insurance costs. So far, I've been lucky. Most of the mail has been neutral. I hope it stays that way for another 15 years. I will be 108 by then and not likely to be scared of much.

Connecting mailbox

Brewer on panel about new book on history seen by local print, broadcast journalists



John Brewer is fourth from left.

John Brewer ([Email](#)) participated in a panel last week about "Strait Press," a new book about the colorful history of Washington state's North Olympic Peninsula (including Olympic National Park) as seen through the eyes of local print and broadcast journalists from the late 19th century through today.

Brewer was editor/publisher of the area's major newspaper, Peninsula Daily News, for almost 18 years after his careers at AP (Seattle and Los Angeles COB and NY Membership executive) and The New York Times.

More about the new book (available on Amazon) and the panel discussion by clicking [here](#).

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Murray Fromson would be proud

Dodi Fromson ([Email](#)) - The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press was one of Murray's proudest achievements. Next year it'll be 50 years since those hairy days, when Murray (Fromson) saw the urgent need for such an organization and set about to start it. It has assisted so many at no cost to the journalist. At the USC

memorial we even heard that one of his former Fellows (from his amazing Center for International Journalism) had to turn to RCFP for help. We hadn't known. He'd have been so proud.

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Recalling sweaty details of first job in journalism

Jim Bagby ([Email](#)) - The recent discussion on dictation, following the Oklahoma-Alabama Orange Bowl rematch, produced some sweaty recollections from the early days of my first real job in journalism. That was the fall of 1962 and I was third on a three-member sports staff for the Norman (OK) Transcript.

My primary job was covering Norman High, where I'd graduated a year earlier. The Tigers played their home football games at the University of Oklahoma stadium, so on Friday nights I gloried in the same Owen Field press box seats that Lew Ferguson and Co. would occupy on Saturday. In fact, I'd get a glimpse of Lew and the Big Guys during the Big Eight games, from my back-row seat (if one was available) while I waited to chase quotes from the visitor locker room. All as a part-timer carrying a full load at OU. My grades and sleep suffered considerably, but that's another story.

This is about the 1963 Orange Bowl, between the Sooners of Bud Wilkinson and Southeast Conference behemoth Alabama of Paul "Bear" Bryant. And it's about the Transcript sports editor who was with the team in Miami that post-Christmas week, more than equal to the challenge of covering the two legendary coaches and all the activities leading to the bowl game. That was the one featuring Joe Namath, 'Bama All-American linebacker Lee Roy Jordan and bad boy Sooner running back Joe Don Looney.

My job was to report to the Transcript newsroom each night to take a call from young, talented and eager sports editor Nick Seitz as he dictated a daily OU practice story, a feature story and his column for the following afternoon paper. I swear each ran at least 500 words. There was plenty of color for features and columns: Bud vs. the Bear, Jordan described by Bryant as "one of the finest football players the world has ever seen," well-known names in the area such as longtime University of Miami football coach Andy Gustafson, Big Eight vs. the SEC - something new every day all week.

I recorded it all on an ancient reel-to-reel tape recorder with, headphones firmly in place. Then usually by about 10 p.m. I set to work transcribing on my Remington

manual, depressing a foot pedal to stop the tape as needed. At least that was the idea.

There were two problems: Nick's dictation was roughly half again as fast as I could type. At least one of his stories he had already written during the day. And the foot pedal had a hitch, seldom stopping without obliterating several words. So I'd have to hit the manual rewind button, then play, then stop, then type, then play until the dictation got ahead of me again. I left several notes for dayside, along with my reams of completed copy, asking if some tech could take a look at the balky pedal. It apparently needed a cable replacement that would take - you guessed it - about a week to arrive.

So it was stomp, cuss, push manual stop, play, type, etc. the rest of the week. The up side was it was great copy, and I learned a lot about writing just in that one week, let alone in the next year or so before he moved up. Seitz had been sports editor of the Manhattan (KS) Mercury before joining the Transcript, and went from there to become editorial director of Golf Digest, then its editor at large and one of golf's best-known names. He is Tom Watson's longtime collaborator and has earned countless sports writing and achievement awards.

The last time I saw Nick, at Watson's famed charity classic in Kansas City, he still talked with great humor - and very fast.

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Sharing memories of when the Colts left Baltimore



Baltimore Colts' owner Robert Irsay engages in a shouting match with reporters during a news conference on January 20, 1984. Irsay denied making a deal to move the NFL franchise to Phoenix. The team moved to Indianapolis instead, a little more than two months later. Baltimore Mayor William Donald Schaefer is at the right. AP file photo.

Carol Bowers ([Email](#)) - Bill McCloskey touched base with me to let me know you were interested in hearing an AP staffer's memories of the Colts' departure from Baltimore, so I thought I would share mine.

I worked in the AP Baltimore bureau from June 1983 through June 1986. I was hired two weeks after graduating from the University of Maryland, College Park following a successful internship at the bureau. Gordon Beard was the veteran bureau sportswriter at the time, and as the "newbie" I often drew the 4 p.m.-midnight shift. (I learned to type very fast because "Gordo" would get impatient if I couldn't keep up with his game story dictation. This was before he got what we called the "bubble" machine and he could send his stuff electronically, when it worked. The "bubble" machine was later replaced by the TRS "Trash" 80.)

For months, while Robert Irsay was shopping the team, and denying he was doing so, I was on the late shift, filing stories about trips and rumors of the Colts' departure based on the early feeds from The Sun and contributions from the folks at WBAL and WCBM radio.

Gordo, of course, chased the story during the day, but was dispatched to what was then Friendship Airport (now BWI) Jan. 20, 1984, when Irsay returned late at night from a trip to Phoenix. I believe the photo above taken by AP fotog Bill Smith aka "Smitty" shows Irsay as he was shouting at Gordo and pointing saying, "You! I won't talk to you."

I was still living with my parents in March of 1984, saving up money to get my own apartment, and after all those nights of filing late night/early morning stories, Irsay moved the team ON MY NIGHT OFF! I remember sitting on the sofa with my parents watching the 11 o'clock nightly news and seeing the film of the moving vans at the Owings Mills training complex and all my TV reporter friends standing in the snow. The biggest story of the decade, and I, for once, wasn't working the late shift!

The next day all the reporters in the bureau helped Gordo work the story, and I ended up calling Gino Marchetti and Artie Donovan for comment. They were very nice, and just as shocked as everyone else. I later wrote a story about the economic impact of the team's move, and then covered the federal trial when Baltimore sued, unsuccessfully, to keep the Colts' name.

On a personal note, my relationship with football got very complicated with the Colts' move.

I grew up in Towson, a Baltimore suburb, and I had followed the Colts since I was a child. My grandmother was a big fan and would listen to games on the radio or watch them on black-and-white TV. It was a big event when Dad would go to a Colts game, and we'd pack up sandwiches and a thermos of coffee for him to take along.

And when I was old enough to be of legal drinking age, which was 18 then, my friends and I used to hang out at Johnny Unitas' Golden Arm restaurant and bar, where we would get an occasional glimpse of our hero.

So personally, the loss of the team, and the team name, was a double blow.

With no team to root for, I then started dating a guy from Cleveland and so I rooted for the Browns. After that relationship ended, I ended up moving to the Washington D.C. metro area, and became a Redskins fan out of necessity because "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

And then I watched as the Browns moved to Baltimore to become the Ravens, and Cleveland was allowed to keep the Browns' name. And then the Ravens won the Super Bowl. Sigh.

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Today in History column sparks George Wallace memory

Joe McKnight ([Email](#)) - Monday's Today in History column used in Connecting led with: "On Jan. 14, 1963, George C. Wallace was sworn in as governor of Alabama with the pledge, 'Segregation forever!' - a view Wallace later repudiated."

A couple of months earlier in November 1962, I was working in the Birmingham AP bureau when Wallace won election. About midnight Wallace showed up in the Birmingham News City Room, adjacent to AP, for a news conference. I stepped out of the bureau to hear what he had to say. He preened for photographers, handed cigars to reporters and told them "Alabama is my baby now." Then he added: "I don't give a damn what you write about me, just spell my name right -- that's W A L L A C E."

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1969 strike and the AP's Columbus bureau

Joe McKnight ([Email](#)) - Catching up on some back issues of Connecting where you asked about the 1969 strike by the AP chapter of the American Newspaper Guild.

My recollection is that the teletype-setter operators were not on strike but generally honored Guild picket lines. The walkout in the Columbus bureau was unanimous. Our broadcast editor had chosen that week to take sick leave for a hernia repair and was not affected. The AP Bureau was on the fourth floor of The Columbus Dispatch building and its publisher forbade pickets on the sidewalk outside the main entrance. Pickets were limited to the door into the bureau, which was across a hall from elevators and the bathroom. Mostly, there was a lone picket, sometimes two.

Bill Cheesebrew, the one teletype-setter operator on duty when the walkout began, agreed to stay and work provided he did not have to cross a picket line. As assistant chief of bureau, I had stayed in the office overnight along with Bureau Chief Al Dopking. We kept copy flowing on state and broadcast circuits into the morning. As soon as stores opened. I went to a hardware store four blocks away and bought a two-gallon enameled bucket, akin to the country-style "sweet pot," that my grandmother had at her farm in Alabama in the 1920s. We put it in the photo darkroom and it became Cheesebrew's bathroom. And it was my job to periodically empty and clean it in the bathroom across the hall.

Up in the day, Bureau Chief Tom Dygard came in from Indianapolis and recently retired Kansas City Bureau Chief Frank Gorrie, arrived to augment our staff. Dygard took over as news editor and Gorrie handled rewrites and became our sports editor. Dopking had recently interviewed Perry Smith, a veteran small-town newspaper editor, Al called him and Smith became Ohio broadcast editor. On the second day, two women trained as teletype-setter operators arrived from Florida. I met them at the airport and got them checked in at the Neil House Hotel on High Street across from the West side of the Ohio Statehouse. The Dispatch building was across South Third Street on the East side of the statehouse. Dygard and Gorrie also had rooms at the Neil House. A pedestrian tunnel connected the hotel with an underground parking garage beneath the statehouse lawn, so they could walk from the hotel into a statehouse annex across from the Dispatch building. We would watch from the office until they appeared at the door of the annex. Then one of us would dart across the street and escort them into the office. When he wasn't working Cheesebrew slept on a counter-top in the darkroom. Dygard, Gorrie, Dopking, Smith and myself worked 10-12 hour shifts that week. I got sneers and trite remarks when I crossed the picket line, but never felt threatened. As I recall, the strike lasted six or seven days. At the end Gorrie and Dygard returned home and bureau operations quickly returned to normal. Smith was assigned a statehouse beat and within a year became the main AP statehouse staffer.

AP Photo of the Day



President Donald Trump presides over a fast food reception for the Clemson Tigers at the White House on Monday. | Susan Walsh/AP Photo

Stories of interest

Company known for deep cost-cutting offers to buy Gannett

By MAE ANDERSON

NEW YORK (AP) - A hedge fund-backed bid to buy Gannett Co., the publisher of USA Today and several other major dailies, is renewing fears of consolidation and job losses - as well as a decline in the quantity and quality of news coverage - in the already battered newspaper industry.

MNG Enterprises, better known as Digital First Media, offered \$1.36 billion on Monday for Gannett, saying in a letter that it can run the company more profitably via tight cost controls and consolidation of operations such as printing and administration.

Gannett said its board will review the proposal.

Investors gave the deal a vote of confidence, immediately pushing Gannett stock up more than 20 percent to almost \$12, the amount Digital First is offering.

The proposed deal is the latest indication newspapers aren't done suffering from the punishing effects of the internet. Over the past decade, U.S. papers have struggled as giants like Google and Facebook siphoned off readers and advertising dollars.

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

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Gannett and USA Today: Two Reasons Why They're Weak and Vulnerable

Jack Limpert (Email) - USA Today and Gannett are the target of Digital First Media, a hedge fund-owned company known for stripping weakened media properties of whatever assets they still have.

USA Today was started in 1982 by Gannett and its boss Al Neuharth. It was a brilliant move at the time-a newspaper that would be available all over the country. By 1987 it has more than five million readers and Neuharth proudly showed off USA Today's sleek new headquarters in Rosslyn, across the Potomac River from the nation's capital.

Why was USA Today so successful? When business people were traveling, they could open their hotel room door in the morning and USA Today would be there with its pretty good national news coverage and very good sports coverage. USA Today was always a pleasant surprise for the business traveler-and for advertisers it was an upscale audience.

Then came broadband and Google and Apple and the business traveler no longer needed a newspaper. By the time you opened the hotel room door in the morning, you'd checked your email and the latest news and didn't need a newspaper. USA Today no longer had a good reason for being.

Reason number two: When USA Today was founded in 1982, Al Neuharth and Gannett were riding high. Since the 1960s Gannett had been buying locally owned newspapers and increasing profits by bringing in good business practices.

What good business practices really meant is we'll bring in business professionals and a new editor schooled in how to maximize profits. Increase profits by 15 percent a year or you're out of a job.

At first some of the badly managed local papers got better but the drive to maximize profits ultimately took the heart and soul out of most its newspapers. For an editor, it was don't talk to us about good journalism, show us an improved bottom line.

It's now painful to watch the vultures try to strip Gannett and USA Today of whatever excellence is remaining, but it's been a long time coming.

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Newsonomics: Let the 2019 Consolidation Games begin! First up: Alden seeks to swallow Gannett (Nieman)

By KEN DOCTOR

Alden Global Capital, the most reviled newspaper owner in the business, now wants to buy Gannett, the United States' largest daily newspaper company. As reported Sunday evening by The Wall Street Journal - and then confirmed via early Monday morning press release - Alden, through its Digital First Media/MNG Enterprise ownership, has offered a 23 percent premium for Gannett.

Alden apparently told reporters it had been in recent contact with Gannett about the offer. But later on Sunday night, Gannett's USA Today told a different tale, with a company source saying "there has been no communication regarding a proposal to the company." But this morning, an updated version of the story acknowledged Gannett had "officially received an unsolicited proposal to acquire the company."

This may be the first newspaper mergers-and-acquisitions story of 2019, but it definitely won't be the last. Consolidation (and the cost-cutting that comes with it) remains the dominant strategy in the daily newspaper industry. If revenue continues to drop at or even near double-digit levels, the consensus thinking is that radically reducing expenses through consolidation is about as good a card as anyone has to play. Eliminate or reduce corporate staffs, centralize everything that can be centralized, and maybe in some cases continue to make small investments in newer revenue streams.

Read more [here](#).

Today in History - January 15, 2019



By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 15, the 15th day of 2019. There are 350 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 15, 1929, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta.

On this date:

In 1559, England's Queen Elizabeth I was crowned in Westminster Abbey.

In 1862, the U.S. Senate confirmed President Abraham Lincoln's choice of Edwin M. Stanton to be the new Secretary of War, replacing Simon Cameron.

In 1892, the original rules of basketball, devised by James Naismith, were published for the first time in Springfield, Massachusetts, where the game originated.

In 1919, in Boston, a tank containing an estimated 2.3 million gallons of molasses burst, sending the dark syrup coursing through the city's North End, killing 21 people.

In 1943, work was completed on the Pentagon, the headquarters of the U.S. Department of War (now Defense).

In 1961, a U.S. Air Force radar tower off the New Jersey coast collapsed into the Atlantic Ocean during a severe storm, killing all 28 men aboard.

In 1967, the Green Bay Packers of the National Football League defeated the Kansas City Chiefs of the American Football League 35-10 in the first AFL-NFL World Championship Game, retroactively known as Super Bowl I.

In 1973, President Richard M. Nixon announced the suspension of all U.S. offensive action in North Vietnam, citing progress in peace negotiations.

In 1978, two students at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Lisa Levy and Margaret Bowman, were slain in their sorority house. (Ted Bundy was later convicted of the crime and was sentenced to death. But he was executed for the rape and murder of a 12-year-old girl, which occurred 3 weeks after the sorority slayings.)

In 1981, the police drama series "Hill Street Blues" premiered on NBC.

In 1989, NATO, the Warsaw Pact and 12 other European countries adopted a human rights and security agreement in Vienna, Austria.

In 1993, a historic disarmament ceremony ended in Paris with the last of 125 countries signing a treaty banning chemical weapons.

Ten years ago: US Airways Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger ditched his Airbus 320 in the Hudson River after a flock of birds disabled both engines; all 155 people aboard survived.

Five years ago: In the latest in a series of nuclear stumbles, the U.S. Air Force disclosed that 34 officers entrusted with the world's deadliest weapons had been removed from launch duty for allegedly cheating - or tolerating cheating by others - on routine proficiency tests. A highly critical and bipartisan Senate report declared that the deadly Sept. 2012 assault on the American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, could have been prevented; the report spread blame among the State Department, the military and U.S. intelligence. A \$1.1 trillion spending bill for operating the government until just before the 2014 election steamed through the battle-weary House over tepid protests from tea party conservatives.

One year ago: Singer Dolores O'Riordan of the Irish rock band The Cranberries died at a London hotel at the age of 46; a coroner found that she had accidentally drowned in a bathtub after drinking. American women lost nine of their ten first-round

matches on the opening day of the Australian Open; they included Venus Williams and U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Margaret O'Brien is 81. Actress Andrea Martin is 72. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Randy White is 66. Actor-director Mario Van Peebles is 62. Rock musician Adam Jones (Tool) is 54. Actor James Nesbitt is 54. Singer Lisa Lisa (Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam) is 52. Actor Chad Lowe is 51. Alt-country singer Will Oldham (aka Bonnie Prince Billy) is 49. Actress Regina King is 48. Actor Eddie Cahill is 41. NFL quarterback Drew Brees is 40. Rapper/reggaeton artist Pitbull is 38. Actor Victor Rasuk is 34. Actress Jessy Schram is 33. Electronic dance musician Skrillex is 31. Actress/singer Dove Cameron is 23. Singer-songwriter Grace VanderWaal (TV: "America's Got Talent") is 15.

Thought for Today: "I refuse to accept the idea that the 'is-ness' of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the 'ought-ness' that forever confronts him." - Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968).

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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