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Connecting - January 16, 2019

1 message

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Ed Blanche, during a quiet visit to West Belfast's Milltown Cemetery, contemplates the human cost of Ireland's long conflict. Just in front of him is the grave of Bobby Sands, the first IRA militant to die in the Maze Prison hunger strike last year.

Ed Blanche during visit to West Belfast's Milltown Cemetery - from 1982 AP World, courtesy of AP Corporate Archives.

Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning!

Today's issue brings a wire story on the death of AP correspondent **Ed Blanche** - and memories of some of his colleagues who worked with him during his 29 years with the AP as foreign correspondent and Middle East editor.

If you have a memory to share, please send it along.

Have a good day!

Paul

Longtime AP journalist Ed Blanche has died at age 76



In this Oct. 1982 file photo, AP Correspondent Ed Blanche, right, interviews Reverend Ian Paisley, Member of Parliament, leader of Ulster's Democratic Unionist Party in Belfast, Northern Ireland. (AP Photo/Corporate Archives, File)

BEIRUT (AP) - Ed Blanche, a longtime correspondent and Middle East editor for The Associated Press who covered transformative events from Northern Ireland to Lebanon, has died, his family said Tuesday. He was 76.

Blanche died Sunday in Beirut after losing a battle with cancer, said his wife, Mona Ziade.

Blanche joined the AP in London in 1967 and went on to cover various crises around the world, including the 1967 Arab-Israeli war soon after he was hired as well as the Northern Ireland conflict. He also covered countries including Angola, Indonesia, Vietnam and Iran and reported extensively from Lebanon during the country's 1975-90 civil war.

Blanche moved to Nicosia, Cyprus, in 1986 where he was a Middle East editor for 10 years.

"Ed was known for his bravery and commitment to truth during the toughest times in Beirut and for reporting from Lebanon accurately and fairly," said John Daniszewski, the AP's Vice President and Editor-at-Large for Standards. "He was a strong defender of AP's values, and a mentor to a generation of younger journalists who passed through the AP bureau or who worked at Beirut's Daily Star newspaper."

Blanche left the AP in 1996 because he wanted to resettle with his family back in Beirut, which he always considered to be his second home, Ziade said. The couple helped relaunch Lebanon's Daily Star newspaper, which had ceased to publish in the mid '80s at the height of the country's civil war. Blanche was initially foreign editor, then editor of the paper.

He left the Daily Star in 2003 to pursue a career of freelance journalism, specializing in military and strategic affairs. Julie Flint, longtime journalist and friend, said he had for years been working on a book on the history of warfare. She described him as a "consummate agency journalist."

Vietnam War correspondent and military writer Joe Galloway said he remembers first meeting Blanche in Jakarta in 1968 where Blanche was posted as foreign correspondent. "He was a great friend and a great competitor and I miss him being in this world," he said.

Born on May 16, 1942 in Newark, England, Blanche was described by colleagues as an energetic journalist who loved to share his knowledge and mentor younger colleagues.

"Ed was an 'old school' wire service journalist, always willing to volunteer for challenging assignments, energetic and hard-working in the field," said Robert H. Reid, AP's former Middle East regional editor, now senior managing editor of Stars and Stripes. "Over his years of reporting, Ed had built up an impressive knowledge of the Middle East with all its political and social complexities and was always willing to share his insights with colleagues who were new to the region."

He is survived by his wife and their daughter, Tamara, and two children, Jay and Lee, from a previous marriage.

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

Memories of Ed Blanche



AP Middle East News Editor Ed Blanche meets Jamal, a rare white camel, while reporting on smugglers and security measures along Jordan's border with Iraq in 1992. The camels are bred for Bedouin sheiks in the Jordanian dessert. (AP Photo/Corporate Archives/Yousef Allan)

Myron Belkind (Email) - As news spread of the kidnapping of Terry Anderson in Beirut on March 16, 1985, Ed Blanche immediately volunteered to go to AP Beirut from his base in London. "If AP needs someone to go to Beirut, I am ready to go," I recall Ed saying. It was typical of Ed, to be eager to report from dangerous areas, as he did for many years from Northern Ireland. I passed on his request to foreign editor Nate Polowetzky, and within days Ed was on his way to Beirut - and a new chapter in his life based in the Middle East.

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Joe Galloway (Email) - When I moved to Jakarta, Indonesia, as UPI bureau chief in 1968 the "opposition" AP bureau chief was Englishman Ed Blanche, short, wiry, red hair and red beard. We became fast friends. We fought hard for every story,

every day. But when night fell we went off the clock and partied hearty. Ed and Mike Carlton, Australian Broadcasting correspondent, formed a rock band. They played the Creedence Clearwater songbook and did it well. Their first paid gig was a Muslim circumcision ceremony. I met up with Ed again in 1977 in London when I was visiting from Moscow. We kept up over the years via email as he met and married former UPI reporter Mona Ziade and moved first to Cyprus then on to Beirut. He was a great friend and a great competitor and I miss him being in this world.

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Terril Jones (Email) - AP, 1982-97 - I was very sorry to hear of Ed Blanche's passing. He and Mona Ziade were my anchors when I was introduced to baptism-by-fire coverage of the Middle East when i was sent from AP Paris to Cyprus in 1990 to help with coverage of Gulf War I, back when it was Operation Desert Shield. I remember sitting down in the Nicosia bureau facing a wall with a giant map on the Middle East, with patient explanations from Ed and Mona and Walter Putnam about the geography (note where Jordan and Iraq share a border), what to ask the Baghdad stringer on his daily call, and how to order Metrio (sweet, thick, black Greek coffee) and soujoukos sausage sandwiches from the cafe downstairs. Ed was the epitome of what I imagined "Our Man in Cyprus" to be -- knowledgeable and fast with the news and writing, quick with an answer or retort to NY, and knowing how to kick back after a day's work. He introduced me to his favorite Nicosian restaurants which I still remember 29 years later - Romantica (Italian) and Abu Faisal (Lebanese), the latter of which the owner later lost in a gambling spree.



Ed in 1990

These spots are where Ed and Mona also introduced me to Greek Retsina white wine, fermented with pine resin (Walter introduced me to hummus, preferably poolside at the Cleopatra Hotel). Ed also encouraged me to cross the line in one of the world's last divided cities and go visit the Turkish-held northern Cyprus. (And finally to understand Monty Python's reference to Rauf Denktash). In a country of similar size to New Hampshire the two sides were worlds apart. Crossing the U.N.-patrolled border reminded me of going through Checkpoint Charlie, and opened my eyes to one of the most enduring modern conflicts and some of the Mediterranean's unique offerings, whether the time-tunnel port of Kyrenia and ruins of Saint Hilarion on the Turkish side or the alleged birthplace of Venus at Paphos and the topless tourists at Ayia Napa beach on the Greek side. I did a world of learning in those six weeks, and Ed and Mona are indelibly linked to it. I hope Ed knew how much he stayed with the people who passed through his bureaus. They don't make them like him anymore.

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Hugh Lunn - of Brisbane, former Reuters Jakarta bureau chief and good friend of Ed Blanche:

Once we were stuck in hot old Djakarta for the weekend and we both said wouldn't it be good if we could go up to one of those six Australian embassy homes in the hills at Bogor with their swimming pools and tennis court. You normally had to be invited, but Ed said if we showed up and knocked on a door, with our winning personalities they'd be sure to ask us to stay.

Well we did just that.

We got through the door, got a cup of tea - and the couple asked why we were up that way and Ed, thinking quickly, said "We've just come up for a drive". We almost got away with that until Ed bent over to pick something up off the hardwood floor and out of his shirt fell his large green toothbrush and as it rattled along the floor we both watched in very fear.

"So why did you bring your toothbrush on the drive?" asked the wife.

Ed made it worse by saying: "I make it a rule to always take my toothbrush wherever I go in Indonesia in case I get something stuck in my teeth."

They didn't believe us and said goodbye - and we drove back to Djakarta.

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Norbert Schiller ([Email](#)) - Ed was more than just a fellow journalist working for the same agency - he was a true friend and mentor. I was a photographer and he was the Middle East news editor but in many ways we were the same, looking to cover the story the best we could. I had utmost respect for Ed because he came from the old school of journalism I most admired; hands on, no bullshit and no whining. Ed was a journalist's journalist.

Connecting mailbox

He was on Baltimore desk the night Colts moved to Indy

Marty Steinberg ([Email](#)) - Thank you, Carol Bowers, for your wonderful recollection of the Baltimore Colts midnight move to Indianapolis! (See Tuesday's Connecting) I was the one who was working the Baltimore late shift that night - March 29, 1984. It was hours after my daughter's fourth birthday. I don't have vivid memories of the details, but I do remember being quite anxious about being alone in the middle of the night as this huge story was breaking. Suffice it to say that Marvelous Marv Schneider settled me down. In his calm and soothing voice that helped countless of AP staffers, he told me, "Don't worry, just try the member if you get stuck." I survived, and transferred to the New York General Desk a few months later.

A Google search didn't yield the fruits of my labor, but [here](#) is Dave Anderson's take on the Colts' move, from The New York Times.

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Don't forget the full-color weather map

Joe Galu ([Email](#)) - Ken Doctor left out one of USA Today's most outstanding features -- a huge, gorgeous, full-color weather map. (See Tuesday's Connecting.) It prompted hundreds of other newspapers to upgrade their weather maps and forecasts. (Much like the newspapers which print great big baseball standings.)

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What scared me - 'rockets'!

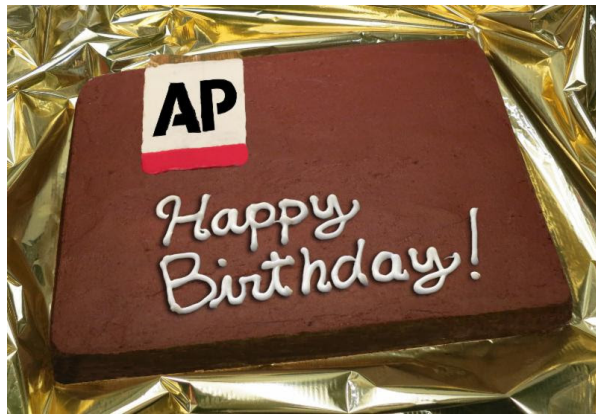
Ford Burkhart ([Email](#)) - At the Foreign Desk, in 1971 to '76, you were scared of "rockets," from overseas bureaus complaining about an error or a delayed bulletin, but they kept you on your toes. You worried about 'rockets' from the seventh floor (is that right? seventh? i hope so). I must say, Stan Swinton, a VP and director of World Services, was generous with the positive "rockets" (I still have a few) as well as the other kind, as was Nate Polowetzky, foreign editor. Both helped us newcomers on the desk learn the ropes, fast. I was a bit scared, yes, but always thankful for both.

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A memory in wake of Carol Channing's death

Mike Doan ([Email](#)) - On Carol Channing: In 1969 I prepared to post a photo of her in a Las Vegas review. Someone told me, "Are you sure you want to send this on the AP wirephoto line? Look at her pantyhose...if you look closely, it is...well...revealing!" I called her publicist, who told me, "Miss Channing prefers that the photo be sent that way." (And it was, but the quality of wirephoto was so poor then, I doubt if anything was visible in newspapers.)

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



To

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Stories of interest

Facebook is committing \$300 million to support news, with an emphasis on local (Nieman)

By **CHRISTINE SCHMIDT**

Facebook and the local news industry both had tough 2018s - but on wildly different levels. Facebook began the year by shifting its News Feed algorithm in favor of more "meaningful interactions" and less Page/news content. That evolved to include focuses on trusted news, local news, and informative news. Some viral-focused publishers folded from the loss of traffic.

(Other things, you know, also happened, like Cambridge Analytica and PR scandals and 30 million accounts hacked and threats of arresting Mark Zuckerberg at Heathrow and the words "A Genocide Incited on Facebook" appearing in a headline.)

Meanwhile, in local journalism, news deserts expanded and more newsrooms faced more cuts, with Alden Global Capital's strip mining of The Denver Post creating a special outcry - all while reporters stayed squeezed as pawns in their parent companies' games.

Read more [here](#).

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'The first test case': Amid the Bezos divorce, The Washington Post tries to sift between the tawdry gossip and the real news (Vanity Fair)

By JOE POMPEO

The divorce of Jeff and MacKenzie Bezos, announced first on social media and then promptly followed by an epic National Enquirer report (complete with intimate texts between Bezos and the woman he was having an affair with), was bound to produce a presidential tweet. And after Bezos's Washington Post published a front-page story on Trump's efforts to conceal his meetings with Vladimir Putin, the president let fly: "So sorry to hear the news about Jeff Bozo being taken down by a competitor whose reporting, I understand, is far more accurate than the reporting in his lobbyist newspaper, the Amazon Washington Post. Hopefully the paper will soon be placed in better & more responsible hands!"

The Bezoses are-were-the richest couple in the world, so their split, however tawdry some of the details, is a news story of giant import-as much import, say, as the

president's cover-up of an alleged dalliance with a porn actress. Bezos is the founder of a trillion-dollar company that has revolutionized the way we shop and live. In addition to Amazon, of course, he also owns one of America's most powerful news organizations, which has been at the forefront of shaping our understanding of the current political crisis. Shouldn't one of America's great newspapers be able to cover the hand that feeds it?

Read more [here](#).

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Our take: What Digital First's bid for Gannett means (Poynter)

By RICK EDMONDS

Is the end of Gannett, as we know it, at hand?

A hedge fund, known mainly for operating newspaper properties on the cheap, is trying to take over Gannett, the nation's largest publicly traded newspaper company.

Here are some updates and some context:

What's the latest? The Wall Street Journal's Sunday scoop that a bid was in the works has now happened. First thing Monday morning MNG, which operates its papers as Digital First, announced it was offering \$12 a share, a 23 percent premium on Gannett's closing price Friday. A rich hedge fund, Alden Global Capital, owns MNG. This would be a \$1.36 billion deal if accepted. Gannett replied only that its 10-member board of directors will consider the bid.

Is this likely to happen? It is no sure thing. The 23 percent premium will be attractive to shareholders who have seen Gannett's value falling, but it's not huge (Rupert Murdoch offered nearly double the share price when he bought Dow Jones and the Wall Street Journal a decade ago). Also, Digital First has accumulated only 7.5 percent of Gannett stock, not enough of a stake to exert much leverage.

Read more [here](#).

Today in History - January 16, 2019



By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 16, the 16th day of 2019. There are 349 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 16, 1920, Prohibition began in the United States as the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution took effect, one year to the day after its ratification. (It was later repealed by the 21st Amendment.)

On this date:

In 27 B.C., Caesar Augustus was declared the first Emperor of the Roman Empire by the Senate.

In 1547, Ivan IV of Russia (popularly known as "Ivan the Terrible") was crowned Czar.

In 1865, Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman decreed that 400,000 acres of land in the South would be divided into 40-acre lots and given to former slaves. (The order,

later revoked by President Andrew Johnson, is believed to have inspired the expression, "Forty acres and a mule.")

In 1912, a day before reaching the South Pole, British explorer Robert Scott and his expedition found evidence that Roald Amundsen of Norway and his team had gotten there ahead of them.

In 1935, fugitive gangster Fred Barker and his mother, Kate "Ma" Barker, were killed in a shootout with the FBI at Lake Weir, Florida.

In 1942, actress Carole Lombard, 33, her mother, Elizabeth, and 20 other people were killed when their plane crashed near Las Vegas, Nevada, while en route to California from a war-bond promotion tour.

In 1978, NASA named 35 candidates to fly on the space shuttle, including Sally K. Ride, who became America's first woman in space, and Guion S. Bluford Jr., who became America's first black astronaut in space.

In 1989, three days of rioting began in Miami when a police officer fatally shot Clement Lloyd, a black motorcyclist, causing a crash that also claimed the life of Lloyd's passenger, Allan Blanchard. (The officer, William Lozano, was convicted of manslaughter, but then was acquitted in a retrial.)

In 1991, the White House announced the start of Operation Desert Storm to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. (Allied forces prevailed on Feb. 28, 1991.)

In 1992, officials of the government of El Salvador and rebel leaders signed a pact in Mexico City ending 12 years of civil war that had left at least 75,000 people dead.

In 2003, the space shuttle Columbia blasted off for what turned out to be its last flight; on board was Israel's first astronaut, Ilan Ramon (ee-LAHN' rah-MOHN'). (The mission ended in tragedy on Feb. 1, when the shuttle broke up during its return descent, killing all seven crew members.)

In 2007, Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., launched his successful bid for the White House.

Ten years ago: President-elect Barack Obama made a pitch for his massive economic stimulus plan at a factory in Bedford Heights, Ohio, saying his proposal

would make smart investments in the country's future and create solid jobs in up-and-coming industries. Painter Andrew Wyeth died in Chadds Ford, Pa., at age 91. John Mortimer, the British lawyer-writer who'd created the curmudgeonly criminal lawyer Rumpole of the Bailey, died in the Chiltern Hills, England, at age 85.

Five years ago: The Vatican was called to account for the global priest sex abuse scandal as U.N. experts in Geneva interrogated the Holy See for eight hours about the scale of abuse, and what it was doing to prevent it. The U.S. Senate voted 72-26 for a \$1.1 trillion government-wide spending bill, sending it to President Barack Obama for his signature. The state of Ohio executed Dennis McGuire for the 1989 rape and fatal stabbing of pregnant newlywed Joy Stewart; McGuire gasped and snorted for 26 minutes before he was declared dead, raising questions about the drugs used in his lethal injection. Death claimed actors Russell Johnson ("Gilligan's Island") at age 89 and Dave Madden ("The Partridge Family") at age 82.

One year ago: The Trump administration cut tens of millions of dollars for Palestinian refugees, demanding that the U.N. agency responsible for the programs undertake a "fundamental re-examination." Pope Francis met with survivors of priests who sexually abused them; a spokesman said Francis wept with them and apologized for the "irreparable damage" they suffered. Authorities in Denmark charged inventor Peter Madsen with killing Swedish journalist Kim Wall during a trip on his private submarine. (Madsen was convicted in April and sentenced to life in prison.)

Today's Birthdays: Author William Kennedy is 91. Author-editor Norman Podhoretz is 89. Opera singer Marilyn Horne is 85. Hall of Fame auto racer A.J. Foyt is 84. Singer Barbara Lynn is 77. Country singer Ronnie Milsap is 76. Singer Katherine Anderson Schaffner (The Marvelettes) is 75. Country singer Jim Stafford is 75. Talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger is 72. Movie director John Carpenter is 71. Actress-dancer-choreographer Debbie Allen is 69. Rhythm-and-blues singer Maxine Jones (En Vogue) is 60. Singer Sade (shah-DAY') is 60. Pop/rock singer-songwriter Jill Sobule is 60. Rock musician Paul Webb (Talk Talk) is 57. Actor David Chokachi (CHOH'-kuh-chee) is 51. Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta is 50. Actor-writer-director Josh Evans is 48. Actor-comedian Jonathan Mangum is 48. Actor Richard T. Jones is 47. Actress Josie Davis is 46. Model Kate Moss is 45. Actor-playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda is 39. Country musician James Young (The Eli Young Band) is 39. Rock musician Nick Valensi (The Strokes) is 38. Actress Renee Felice Smith is 34. NFL quarterback Joe Flacco is 34. Actress Yvonne Zima is 30.

Thought for Today: "A fanatic is a man that does what he thinks th' Lord wud do if He knew th' facts iv th' case." - From "Mr. Dooley's Philosophy" by Finley Peter Dunne, American humorist (1867-1936).

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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