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Connecting - July 24, 2019

1 message

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Wed, Jul 24, 2019 at 8:48 AM

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Connecting

July 24, 2019

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this the 24th day of July 2019,

Larry Thorson was news editor in Tel Aviv and London when our colleague **Marcus Eliason** worked in both bureaus - and the two reunited recently when Thorson was in New York.



Larry (left) and Marcus

Not only did Marcus recruit Larry into Connecting membership but also convinced him to profile his 25-year career for his new colleagues.

Larry was born and raised in Dubuque, Iowa...is a fellow graduate of the University of Iowa...served as an infantryman in Vietnam...worked in Philadelphia (where his bureau chief was Doug Bailey) and New York...then onto foreign service in Tel Aviv, London, Tokyo and Berlin before retiring in 1995.

We lead today's issue with his fascinating account.

Have a great day!

Paul

Some of his best AP memories are the people, teamwork, smart and steady fellow staffers



Larry Thorson at the keyboard in the London bureau in the mid-1980s when he was news editor; Myron Belkind was COB. Larry says that's a TV crew filming B-roll for some reason he can no longer remember: "I'm quite sure it wasn't because of something I had done."

Larry Thorson (Email) - It was a great relief to my mother when the AP hired me in 1970 to start in the Philadelphia bureau on the day before my 30th birthday. Whew, this could finally be the start of a career. It wasn't as if I hadn't worked before that. After college (U of Iowa class of '63) I volunteered for the Peace Corps (Thailand, teaching English to teens), then the draft board caught me for the next two years (Vietnam in 1967 as an infantryman with the 199th Infantry Brigade, which patrolled west of Saigon). At that point my life's ambition emerged: foreign correspondent.

How to make it happen was the next issue, so that I could figure out how the wider world worked, perhaps even suggest ways to fix it. Never had studied journalism. Needed some experience. Maybe some academic study to round out my fairly extensive foreign experience. First job in news materialized with the Rockford (IL) Morning Star. Fairly easy for someone already a veteran when draft boards were snatching young men from their jobs as cub reporters.

The U of Chicago offered a tuition-paid scholarship to study international relations, so I left the Morning Star but still found reporting work the next summer when the UPI bureau in Chicago needed vacation replacements. The next year, after I stopped pretending to be a graduate student while demonstrating at every opportunity against the war of which I was a veteran, I found the same summer job at the UPI bureau in San Francisco.

The AP, which I considered a prime candidate to make me a foreign correspondent, finally deigned to interview me (previously I hadn't had enough experience) and offered a post in the Philadelphia bureau. At last! A career beckoned. Not easy to love the low starting pay (less than what I'd made at the Morning Star). Two years later I was promoted to New York to work on the World Desk handling foreign news. Grooming, I guess, for eventual work overseas. Four years there, big break came: No. 2 slot in Tel Aviv opened, and I said Yes, thanks.

Here's a quick summary of my almost 20 years as a foreign correspondent, 1976 to the end of 1995: seven years in Tel Aviv including three as bureau chief, five years in London as news editor, three years in Tokyo as Asia news editor, five years in Berlin as plain old writer, which is what I really wanted. Still, covering unification of East and West German, end of the Iron Curtain and the Soviet Union, became burnout for me, and now, writing in 2019, I can say I've written little since then.

Settled in Florida with fishing as the expensive hobby for a few years, then sailing as another expensive hobby to the present, plus taking care of repeated health problems, when is there time to write?



Larry Thorson, circa 1980; AP Photo/Corporate Archives

And stimulating stuff doesn't come along at the same pace as when I covered three smallish Israeli wars and the epochal visit to Jerusalem of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, grabbed the bylines on obits of Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan, climbed Mt. Sinai for a feature. Another feature on a loopy Belgian artist spray-painting boulders blue in the Sinai Desert. Better than that was 15 years later, in Berlin, covering Cristo's giant project of draping Germany's Reichstag building with silvery fabric.

Some of the best memories are fine people I worked with again and again, in bureau after bureau. Teamwork is essential when the AP is the job, 24 hours a day, always a deadline. People to rely on at the next desk, coming in for the next shift, people at

the next level up toward the editors in New York. Temperamental, no. Give me smart and steady. Sense of humor most welcome.

A somber mood rises as I recall visiting the Newseum in Washington DC a few years back. My Berlin friend and colleague Hansi Kraus is memorialized at the Newseum along with others who did not survive a mob ambush in Somalia. Do not forget the fine photographers who have to get closer to the action than the reporter with a notebook.

Remembering AP's first stringer in Afghanistan - Sabahuddin Kushkaki

Henry Bradsher ([Email](#)) - On the subject of stringers and staffs in Afghanistan, AP's first stringer there was Sabahuddin Kushkaki. Watson S. Sims hired him in 1959 when, as New Delhi bureau chief, Wally was responsible for all of South Asia.

Sabah was a beneficiary of the 1950s modernization effort in Afghanistan. The government sent him to the University of Nebraska to earn a bachelor's degree, and he then got a master's in journalism at another U.S. university. Returning home as the country's first trained journalist, he soon wore three hats: editor of the official English-language Kabul Times, head of the government's Bakhtar news agency, and a journalism teacher at Kabul University.

In those days we paid South Asian stringers by the item filed. Sabah recognized that there would be little news for him to report. He sought a flat \$50 a month. Wally agreed.

As Sabah began improving Afghan journalism, he wanted a foreign agency's news for Bakhtar to distribute. In 1963, by then Delhi bureau chief, in competition with Reuters I sold him the right for Bakhtar to pick up AP's Tangier newscasts for \$200 a month. (That was AP's standard rate for small agencies in that part of the world. When Nepal wanted a world agency, I tried to sell in Kathmandu for \$200, but they signed with AFP for \$250 a month - including a \$50 a month kickback to the official who made the decision. The West German agency DPA had also sought that contract, handing out the then-latest electronic gadgets as bribes.)

When I was AP bureau chief in Moscow in the mid-60s, Sabah came there on an official trip as head of Kabul Radio. Then he quit his government jobs to start his own newspaper, Caravan. It quickly became recognized as the best independent source of honest news in Afghanistan. In the last democratic government, Sabah was also the minister of information and culture.

In 1973 the Afghan prime minister, Mohammed Daoud Khan, overthrew his cousin, King Mohammed Zahir Shah, and became the absolute ruler. Caravan was forced to close. When I then visited Kabul and phoned Sabah, he embarrassingly said he could not meet me. Daoud's clampdown was tight. Among other things, his thugs tortured to death the senior diplomat who had translated for me when I interviewed the king in 1963.

Daoud was killed in the April 1978 coup that brought Communists to power. Sabah was one of many locked up in a murderous prison. Amnesty International put him on its list of "prisoners of conscience". When the Soviet Union invaded in December 1979, killing the American-educated Communist leader to install a stooge, Sabah was released -- one of the few survivors of that prison.

Soon, he was tipped off that the new regime was going to imprison him again. He fled over the mountains to Pakistan, and his family followed. From Peshawar, stranded in a desperate situation, he wrote to me. I had recently finished a sabbatical writing my first book on Afghanistan at Washington's Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Emphasizing the "prisoner of conscience" status, I convinced the center to sponsor Sabah as a guest scholar, bringing him and his wife to Washington for a paid year.

After that, he broadcast to Afghanistan for the Voice of America for a while before returning to Peshawar, the cross-border focus of Afghan resistance groups. The only textbooks then available in Afghan schools were Communist ones. Sabah wanted to produce honest materials that could be smuggled across the border to schools in resistance areas. By then, I was in the U.S. government, so I stayed on the sidelines as my wife pulled strings to get an official American grant for this.

But the Pakistani-favored radical Islamic resistance elements in the Communist-fighting mujahideen did not want honest secular materials. Sabah was driven out, returning to Washington. An observant but secular Moslem, he became more intensely devout, learning to recite the entire Koran by heart. He ended up driving a Washington-area taxi until his death in 2000.

Connecting mailbox

***Remembering that special night 50 years ago
while working in the wire room of Sun-Times,
Daily News***

John Teets - Fifty years ago tonight (July 20), I was about to drop out of Northwestern to keep a lowly job I fell in love with. I was a night copy clerk in the wire room for The Sun-Times and The Daily News- the loud enclosure between the two newsrooms where dozens of teletype printers from the Associated Press, United Press International, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, City News Bureau and private telex clients clattered away 24/7 to keep me, and you, current on everything from bus accidents in Peru to Chicago hotel fires. It was electric.



The machines gave a ding for a story, two dings for an "urgent," three dings for a "bulletin," and I knew to jump for those bells. That night, City Room staffers outside my soundproofed room clustered around a little portable TV to watch the moon landing. I saw them jump just as I heard more bells than I could count. It was a "flash" on AP - I'd never seen one of those - minimal words just for confirmation, all caps: "WE STEP ON MOON."

I ripped the printed sheet off and flicked it down the chute to the telegraph editor, and it dawned on me: Our own reporters had embraced a change our business would face - TV would be the source for big spot news. Still, maybe those of us who kept the big rumbling presses rolling would provide deep reporting, analysis and commentary. I did my best at that through three decades.

Little did I know how local papers would die because investment-group raiders, abetted by tax laws, perfected their suck-out-the-marrow plan in small towns across the country before moving to bigger cities, crippling or killing papers as they went.

Back then, maybe I suspected the big old, dear elephant, star of the circus I'd fallen in love with, might die in my lifetime, but now....

I cry for that majestic beast and her sisters tonight, just as I cry with joy for Neil Armstrong's small steps in the dust, for his crew, for NASA, for a triumph of math and science when they still got respect, and for a flash of bells that still give me goosebumps.

(John Teets posted the above on Facebook and gave Connecting permission to use. His career included work as Style section editor at the Chicago Tribune, the Editorial Board at the Chicago Sun-Times and editorial assistant at the Chicago Daily News.)

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Meeting up with Hugh van Swearingen



Sally Hale ([Email](#)) - Rick and I met up with Hugh van Swearingen and his friend Nancy Marks (left in above photo) in Three Forks, MT, while making our way west to our new home in Washington. Hugh was bureau chief in Portland, Oregon, when I was news editor there.

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Ebony Reed among strategy leaders named by Wall Street Journal

Ebony Reed, who worked for the AP in Boston and New York for six years, has been named to lead a news audiences initiative at the Wall Street Journal.

She joins the Journal from the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute and the Missouri School of Journalism where she ran an innovation lab and taught media sales courses. Her background is in journalism, business development and advertising with stints at the Associated Press, American City Business Journals (Boston), The Detroit News and The Plain Dealer. She has her M.A. and B.A. from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

She spent more than six years with the AP, first as an assistant bureau chief in Boston and later as director of business development for U.S. local markets in New York before leaving in 2016. As director, she worked with AP directors across the country to find digital and commercial opportunities for the AP.

The Journal said she will begin with a focus on professional women and leading a financial literacy project for the broader public. She will develop future initiatives for minority groups. She will also help continue to change the mix of people we quote in our stories and feature in our photographs. To stay up to speed on how these initiatives evolve, [click here](#).

Click [here](#) for the story.

Stories of interest

Lois Wille, trailblazing Chicago reporter and editorial writer, winner of two Pulitzers, dies at 87 (Chicago Tribune)



Chicago Tribune archive photo

By RICK KOGAN

Her admirers too numerous to count and her influence on this city as deep and profound as that of any elected official, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Lois Wille was a trailblazer of immense talent, fortitude and considerable charm.

She worked for more than three decades as a reporter and editor for the Chicago Daily News, Sun-Times and Tribune. When she retired from the Tribune in 1991, her longtime close friend and colleague Mike Royko said, "Lois Wille has absolutely no weaknesses as a journalist."

Inspired and delighted as a child by the funny paper adventures of fictional reporter Brenda Starr, she began her career at a time when women were rarities in newsrooms.

"The jobs were hard to get," she told a reporter. "The excuse we kept hearing: 'Well, what if you get pregnant? Then you're going to quit.' And what do you say? You vow never to get pregnant? It was nonsense, and it's something a boss or editor would never dare say today."

Wille, 87, died early Tuesday morning, in the wake of a severe stroke at the Clare, the Near North Side high-rise senior independent living community where she lived with her husband of 65 years, Wayne. He was near her when she died, as were two nephews.

Read more [here](#). Shared by John Teets.

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Jeffrey Epstein Pitched a New Narrative. These Sites Published It. (New York Times)

By Tiffany Hsu

After Jeffrey Epstein got out of the Palm Beach County jail in 2009, having served 13 months of an 18-month sentence resulting from a plea deal that has been widely criticized, he began a media campaign to remake his public image.

The effort led to the publication of articles describing him as a selfless and forward-thinking philanthropist with an interest in science on websites like Forbes, National Review and HuffPost.

The Forbes.com article, posted in 2013, praised him as "one of the largest backers of cutting-edge science around the world" while making no mention of his criminal past. The National Review piece, from the same year, called him "a smart businessman" with a "passion for cutting-edge science." The HuffPost article, from 2017, credited Mr. Epstein for "taking action to help a number of scientists thrive during the 'Trump Era'," a time of "anti-science policies and budget cuts."

All three articles have been removed from their sites in recent days, after inquiries from The New York Times.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Steve Graham.

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Column: 10 years later, the death of its daily newspaper still haunts my hometown (Chicago Tribune)

By **ERIC ZORN**

It was a sad day for journalism 10 years ago Tuesday when the final edition of the Ann Arbor News rolled off the presses.

The paper had roots in southeastern Michigan going back to 1835. I'd started reading it as a kid, delivered it door to door as a teenager and still leafed through it idly when visiting my parents. Daily circulation was just 45,147, but as my childhood friend and veteran Ann Arbor News columnist Geoff Larcom put it, the paper "punched above its weight class" in delivering information and analysis.

I was on hand on that drizzly day, July 23, 2009, when Advance Publications Inc., the parent company, pulled the plug on the News and its 274 employees and replaced it with AnnArbor.com, a website with a twice-weekly printed digest staffed by 56 full-time employees paid lower wages than News employees. Industry analysts said Ann Arbor was the first city of any size to lose its only daily newspaper.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Scott Charton.

The Final Word

Gendered Language Like 'Manhole' Will Soon Be Banned From Berkeley's City Codes (CNN)

(CNN) - Soon, there will be no more manholes in the city of Berkeley, California. There will also be no chairmen, no manpower, no policemen or policewomen.

No, that doesn't mean a whole city will be without committee leaders and law enforcement. It means that words that imply a gender preference will be removed from the city's codes and replaced with gender-neutral terms, according to a recently adopted ordinance.

The city voted Tuesday night to replace gendered terms in its municipal codes, like "manhole" and "manpower," with gender-neutral ones like "maintenance hole" and "human effort."

Read more [here](#).

Today in History - July 24, 2019



By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, July 24, the 205th day of 2019. There are 160 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 24, 1969, the Apollo 11 astronauts - two of whom had been the first men to set foot on the moon - splashed down safely in the Pacific.

On this date:

In 1858, Republican senatorial candidate Abraham Lincoln formally challenged Democrat Stephen A. Douglas to a series of political debates; the result was seven face-to-face encounters.

In 1862, Martin Van Buren, the eighth president of the United States, and the first to have been born a U.S. citizen, died at age 79 in Kinderhook, New York, the town where he was born in 1782.

In 1866, Tennessee became the first state to be readmitted to the Union after the Civil War.

In 1915, the SS Eastland, a passenger ship carrying more than 2,500 people, rolled onto its side while docked at the Clark Street Bridge on the Chicago River; an estimated 844 people died in the disaster.

In 1937, the state of Alabama dropped charges against four of the nine young black men accused of raping two white women in the "Scottsboro Case."

In 1959, during a visit to Moscow, Vice President Richard Nixon engaged in his famous "Kitchen Debate" with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that President Richard Nixon had to turn over subpoenaed White House tape recordings to the Watergate special prosecutor.

In 1975, an Apollo spacecraft splashed down in the Pacific, completing a mission which included the first-ever docking with a Soyuz capsule from the Soviet Union.

In 1998, a gunman burst into the U.S. Capitol, killing two police officers before being shot and captured. (The shooter, Russell Eugene Weston Jr., is being held in a federal mental facility.)

In 2002, nine coal miners became trapped in a flooded tunnel of the Quecreek (KYOO'-kreek) Mine in western Pennsylvania; the story ended happily 77 hours later with the rescue of all nine.

In 2005, Lance Armstrong won his seventh consecutive Tour de France. (Those wins were stripped away after Armstrong's 2013 confession to using steroids and other banned performance-enhancing drugs and methods.)

In 2017, in a speech to a national Boy Scout gathering in West Virginia, President Donald Trump railed against his enemies and promoted his political agenda, bringing an angry reaction from some parents and former Scouts from both parties.

Ten years ago: Trying to tamp down a national uproar over race, President Barack Obama acknowledged using unfortunate words in declaring that Cambridge, Massachusetts, police had "acted stupidly" in arresting black scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr., adding he'd invited the Harvard professor and Sgt. James Crowley, the arresting officer, for "a beer here in the White House."

Five years ago: Air Algérie Flight 5017, an MD-83 carrying 116 people, crashed in northern Mali, killing all on board; it was the third major international aviation disaster in a week. A psychiatrist's patient opened fire at a medical complex in Media, Pennsylvania, killing his caseworker and grazing his psychiatrist before the doctor pulled out his own weapon and fired back, wounding the patient. Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice received a two-game suspension from the NFL following his offseason arrest for domestic violence after an altercation with then-fiancée (later wife) Janay Palmer in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

One year ago: The Trump administration said it would provide \$12 billion in emergency relief to farmers hurt by trade disputes with China and other countries. Brian Kemp, a self-described "politically incorrect conservative" carrying the endorsement of President Donald Trump, won Georgia's GOP gubernatorial runoff; he would go on to defeat Democrat Stacey Abrams in the general election. A federal judge in New York ordered the release of an Ecuadorean immigrant, Pablo Villavicencio, who'd been held for deportation after delivering pizza to a U.S. Army installation in Brooklyn; the immigrant had applied to stay in the country after marrying a U.S. citizen with whom he had two young girls. Ivanka Trump announced the shutdown of her fashion line, which had been targeted by boycotts and prompted concerns about conflicts of interest.

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Aniston is 86. Political cartoonist Pat Oliphant is 84. Comedian Ruth Buzzi is 83. Actor Mark Goddard is 83. Actor Dan Hedaya is 79. Actor Chris Sarandon is 77. Comedian Gallagher is 73. Actor Robert Hays is 72. Former Republican national chairman Marc Racicot (RAWS'-koh) is 71. Actor Michael Richards is 70. Actress Lynda Carter is 68. Movie director Gus Van Sant is 67. Former Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., is 66. Country singer Pam Tillis is 62. Actor Paul Ben-Victor is 57. Basketball Hall of Famer Karl Malone is 56. Retired MLB All-Star Barry Bonds is 55. Actor Kadeem Hardison is 54. Actress-singer Kristin Chenoweth (CHEN'-oh-wuhth) is 51. Actress Laura Leighton is 51. Actor John P. Navin Jr. is 51. Actress-singer Jennifer Lopez is 50. Basketball player-turned-actor Rick Fox is 50. Director Patty Jenkins ("Wonder Woman") is 48. Actress Jamie Denbo (TV: "Orange is the New Black") is 46. Actor Eric Szmanda is 44. Actress Rose Byrne is 40. Country singer Jerrod Niemann is 40. Actress Summer Glau is 38. Actor Shaun McKinney is 38. Actress Elisabeth Moss is 37. Actress Anna Paquin is 37. Actress Sarah Greene is 35. NHL center Patrice Bergeron is 34. Actress Megan Park is 33. Actress Mara Wilson is 32. Rock singer Jay McGuinness (The Wanted) is 29. Actress Emily Bett Rickards is 28. Actor Lucas Adams is 26. TV personality Bindi Irwin is 21.

Thought for Today: "People who jump to conclusions rarely alight on them." - Philip Guedalla, British writer (1889-1944).

Connecting calendar



July 27 - Services for **Ed Shearer**, a longtime AP sportswriter, will be held Saturday, July 27, at 1 p.m. at St. Barnabas Anglican Church, [4795 N Peachtree Rd, Dunwoody, GA 30338](#). In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to: **Lazarus Ministries**, [2270 Defoor Hills Rd NW, Atlanta, GA 30318](#). The family said that so we can thank you, please have acknowledgments sent to: [130 Kimberly Rd, Canton, GA 30115](#). A family contact is Sheri Browne - sheribrowne@att.net

August 6 - A scattering of ashes for former AP Concord and Indianapolis bureau chief **Dave Swearingen**, who died in 2018, will be held Tuesday, August 6, at 10:30 a.m. at Reid State Park, [375 Seguinland Road, Georgetown ME 04548](#). Those attending should meet at the Todd's Point Parking lot and will head over to Half Mile Beach. While there is no formal service, brief remarks will be made. Dave's son Tim can be reached at timswearingen71@gmail.com

August 17 - Albany AP bureau reunion (including other upstate bureaus), 1-5 p.m., Marc and Carla Humbert residence on Tsatsawassa Lake, [68 Marginal Way, East Nassau, NY](#). Contact: Chris McKnight ([Email](#)).

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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