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# Connecting - September 05, 2019

1 message

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# Connecting

September 05, 2019

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Colleagues,

Good Thursday morning on this the 5<sup>th</sup> day of September 2019,

**Andy Lippman's** memories of former Indianapolis chief of communications **Walt Tabak** (and wife **Dot**) sparked the thoughts of another former Indianapolis chief of bureau, his fellow Connecting colleague **Joe McGowan** ([Email](#)).

"I worked with Walt Tabak for four years," Joe wrote. "He was fantastic. And (his wife) Dot was equally fantastic and dedicated to AP and to Walt. If a call came in during the evening from a member having technical problems, he and Dot would get in their car and drive to the member paper, often some distance. While Walt worked on the problem, Dot would nap in the car. Then when Walt had the problem fixed, Dot would drive home and let him sleep so he could work the next day!"

We lead today's issue with news that one of AP's top investigative reporters, **Rick Pienciak**, is leaving the AP. Our colleague **Brian Carovillano**, AP vice president and managing editor, shares with Connecting his note to the staff on Rick. If you have a favorite memory of working with him to share, please send it along.

Have a great day!

Paul

## A thank you to AP's Rick Pienciak for outstanding journalism, mentorship

**Brian Carovillano** ([Email](#)) - "Yeah baby!"

For a long time, I've considered this one of the sweetest sounds in this newsroom. That's because it means Rick Pienciak is on the hunt. AP is blessed with journalists of both great talent and great personality. Even in an organization full of larger-than-life characters, Rick stands out. He's a top-notch investigative editor and one of AP's finest and most dedicated people. He's the kind of person who goes big on everything he does, because his passion for this work is so big. If you're not among the many AP colleagues who worked closely with him, I'm sorry that you missed the opportunity, because after two stints with AP starting in 1972, Rick is moving on. His last day will be Sept. 10.



**Rick Pienciak**

Over the years, Rick has been a reporter, national writer and for many years, a leader of AP's investigative reporting. He was on the scene of stories that defined their eras, from Three Mile Island to Jonestown. In between his stints with AP, he helped lead The Daily News in its heyday, serving as

both chief of investigations and as metro editor, the latter of which was his job on Sept. 11, 2001. He also had a side career as a writer of true crime books, one of which was adapted for television by CBS.

Since returning to AP in 2007, he has helped drive some of our most important journalism of recent decades, including winners and finalists for many of the most prestigious awards in our business. Stories that had real impact and changed peoples' lives. From the perils of aging nuclear plants to the presence of pharmaceuticals in your water supply; from the dangers of cadmium in your kids' jewelry to the false promises of dental floss - there is so much knowledge the world would lack were it not for the work of Rick and his many collaborators.



**Pienciak in 1975**

His work has always been about more than big projects. Some of his most important contributions over the years have been around breaking news, like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the Fukushima nuclear crisis. On these big stories, Rick made our reporting deeper and more sophisticated. The result: we broke big news and set the agenda on stories of global import.

We have benefitted greatly from having him as a colleague. Many of us - I put myself at the head of this list -- have learned from him and are better journalists for having worked side-by-side with Rick. He has mentored and counseled AP journalists in all corners of the world, advising them on how to shake public records loose from government agencies, how to extract hard-hitting stories from data, and most importantly how to hold the powerful to account for their actions. The public figures who have drawn Rick's attention included presidential candidates, governors, university presidents and very recently, the opera superstar Placido Domingo.

As he moves on to another phase of his life and his career, please join me in wishing Rick all the best and in thanking him for his many years of long hours, outstanding journalism and mentorship at AP. To quote Rick's favorite singer, James Brown: "Thank God for the journey."

**Rick's email is - [rpienciak@ap.org](mailto:rpienciak@ap.org)**

## Beats worth remembering

**Charles Hanley (Email)** - Joe McGowan's great little story (in Wednesday's Connecting) about beating his AP seniors (and with them everybody else) at the 1962 U.S.-British summit brought to mind another summit and another AP beat, though one perhaps not quite so honorable. In the now-it-can-be-told category:

As the 50 Rock-based "Canada correspondent," I covered the 1981 G-7 summit in Ottawa with London's Arthur Gavshon and the White House's Jim Gerstenzang. During a photo op walk-past of the final summit table in the Parliament building, as I brought up the rear of the press group, I impulsively -- unthinkingly, without premeditation, with no felonious or malicious intent -- snatched one of the seven copies of the final communique neatly arrayed around the table awaiting the arrival of the seven grandees. I rushed back to our cubby hole at Canadian Press, where Arthur was elated at the work of his larcenous young colleague. (I don't know whose copy I filched, but hoped it was Reagan's, since he wouldn't have read it anyway.)

I can't remember how many hours we beat them all by, although we did share with CP after a bit, in gratitude for their hospitality. Canadians are nice people, of course, nice enough to let sticky-fingered Yank reporters walk around unsupervised in sensitive places.

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**David Morris (Email)** - Reading Joe McGowan's account reminded me of my own "beating Washington" moment in 1988, though mine had a more frustrating ending.

I was on the phone with a good source who was plugged into Pennsylvania politics and, by virtue of family, then-Vice President Bush. The source mentioned just getting off the phone with Bush, who said President Reagan was about to announce his nominee for attorney general - former Pennsylvania Gov. Dick Thornburgh.

I ended the call as quickly as I could and made other calls to confirm the news. As I wrote a bulletin for the state wire, Harrisburg Correspondent Rich Kirkpatrick told me to share my scoop with the Washington Bureau. The desk staffer who answered the phone said he would pass along my "tip" and hung up!

Shortly after we moved the state-wire bulletin, CNN flashed the AP logo on the air and read the bulletin I had written, complete with attribution. A few minutes after that, AP moved a bulletin from Washington, attributing the information to CNN!

By the time I joined the Washington bureau six years later, the frustration was long gone, but I had a great time busting the chops of the guy who answered the phone

that day.

## Floods are mysterious; floods are treacherous; floods are heartbreaking

**Gene Herrick** ([Email](#)) - Like millions of people around the world who are deeply interested in Hurricane Dorian, and the tremendous amounts of water that are dispersed, I find myself reminded of some of the significant floods I have covered as an Associated Press photographer.

After returning from being a War Correspondent in the Korean War, I was assigned to the Seattle bureau where I helped handle Korean War pictures, and at the same time serve as the area AP photographer.

I covered one flood there that was a doozy. I went into this little town, which was surrounded by water, and engulfed many parts of the town. I met three men standing on the sidewalk, their feet almost in the water. I overheard one man say, "You know, I am mad as heck at the catfish in there!" "Why," asked one of them. "Well, I'll tell you, they are eating my strawberries!"

Looking up, I saw a house submerged up to the second story in flood water. A man, I assumed to be the owner, was in a boat, floating at the water level, and he was painting the side of his house. I'm not kidding.

Also, in that same general area, I started to walk out on a flood levee to get a better view of the debris floating past. It was nighttime. I found a farmer who was walking along the area with a lantern, and I asked him to accompany me out on the levee so that I could see better. As we started to walk on the levee, I saw a tree sapling wiggle around wildly on my right. I stopped, told the farmer to turn around and walk as fast as he could - But do not stomp - back to where we started. We did, and just as we stepped on regular land, that whole levee collapsed and melted away! That was a thank you God moment.

Later, while working out of the Minneapolis bureau, I covered floods on the Sioux River, and the upper Mississippi River. Looking back, they were not very exciting. However, the worst one I covered was where the Tennessee River flows into the Ohio River, which then immediately joins the south flowing Mighty Mississippi River. That was an experience and a half.

The roaring flood waters at that junction were a spectacular sight. For one picture, I walked out onto a railroad bridge spanning the Ohio River at Cairo, Illinois. There was no walkway, just the tracks on top of the wooden ties. I could see the flood waters by looking down through the ties, which was a thrill I'd never had. The vista over the railings was awesome. The flood waters were only one inch short of going over the flood walls and going down into the city of Cairo.

During that flood, the Corps of Engineers intentionally broke down a federal levee into a flood-rights area of Arkansas, thus relieving a tremendous force of water. I went into the area and visited a refugee camp. People had illegally settled in that area. I found a woman lying on a cot, with some seven of her children. I took the picture and sought their names. They all had different last names.

When I first got to the area of the flood, I grabbed a hotel room in Cairo, just a block from the flooded river. After taking pictures from the railroad bridge, I decided that I was very, very tired after going almost three days without sleep. The city was lower than the river, and the flood waters were about one inch from going over the levee. I said to heck with it, I was going to bed. In the meantime, my hotel room had been occupied by three other journalists. I kicked one of them out of the bed so that I could get some sleep in my room, which I had never occupied.

I covered many other floods on the Mississippi River near Memphis, and in Arkansas.

The last significant water issue was at my home in Upper Arlington, Ohio. There had been heavy rains for days, and the nearby Olentangy River was at flood stage. Even though my neighborhood stood much higher, the high river waters caused the drain systems to back up, and back into the basements of nearby homes. Our basement had flood waters of about three feet. I had gone to the store and bought a sump-pump. Standing in the deep water, I proceeded to get the pump installed and working.

Suddenly, our daytime baby-sitter called to me from the top of the stairs. "Come quick, I think Miss Nancy (my wife) is dying." Nancy was a nutritionist at the Nisonger Center at Ohio State University. Two months earlier, Nancy had delivered our baby daughter. At that time, doctors found that she had colon cancer of the worst kind. She never got out of bed. I ran up the stairs, dripping with water, and rushed to my wife's side. I sat down on the edge of the bed, held her head in my arms. Nancy immediately died in my arms.

Our blended family of six boys, and now a baby girl, had to bond and face the uncertain future.

Floods are mysterious; floods are treacherous; floods are heartbreaking.

# Connecting mailbox

## *'Fraught' thought*

**Norm Abelson** ([Email](#)) - Have you noticed lately the repeated use of the word "fraught"?

My time-worn Webster's New World Dictionary tells us this about the word: "...filled, charged, or loaded (with): as, the situation is fraught with danger." Myself, I usually prefer filled, charged or loaded. Why? Some damn good writers and editors at the AP taught me long ago that in writing, clarity ranks high, right next to accuracy. So while I'm not opposed to diversity in language usage, clarity trumps it.

I came upon this "fraught" thing when I noticed, and began circling, its repeated use, especially in the NYTimes. What brought fraught on? Maybe it's because the times we live in are filled, charged and loaded with bad stuff. More likely it's just the way a particular word catches on, becomes overused and then fades away.

I know this pre-occupation with word usage isn't all that important. But it does present a welcome option to getting all het up over the endless inanities in presidential tweets.

Full disclosure: I admit to having used the word once myself in an earlier Connecting piece. And I'm fraught with guilt over it.

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***Here's some great AP work***



**Richard Uliano** ([Email](#)) - Thanks for all your great Connecting. And here's some great Associated Press work I spotted on my radio station's web page. Click [here](#) to view.

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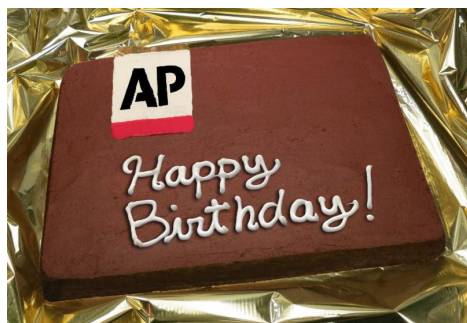
***Connecting sky shot - Manhattan sunset***





Shared by Claude Erbsen.

**Connecting wishes Happy Birthday**



to

Tad Bartimus - [hanagirl@aol.com](mailto:hanagirl@aol.com)

Jim McElroy - [jmcelroy37@comcast.net](mailto:jmcelroy37@comcast.net)

## Stories of interest

***Opinion: The Challenges Of Being A Foreign Reporter In China*** (NPR)



Frank Langfitt spent 10 years covering China for NPR and The Baltimore Sun. When he offered a free ride service in Shanghai, he found passengers spoke candidly as he drove them to their destinations. Courtesy of Kuan Yang

*Frank Langfitt (@franklangfitt) is NPR's international correspondent in London and was previously based in Shanghai, China. His new book is [The Shanghai Free Taxi](#).*

**By FRANK LANGFITT**

When I worked as a newspaper reporter in Beijing in the late 1990s, I received a tip about something extraordinary: China's paramilitary People's Armed Police had shot two farmers to death and wounded 17 while trying to put down a village uprising against high taxes. After confirming details with witnesses by phone, I flew to China's southeast to investigate further. Government agents met me as I stepped off the jetway.

"Welcome, Mr. Langfitt," said a female official, pretending we were old friends, in hopes I wouldn't make a scene.

I figured the government knew my flight number by listening to conversations on my office phone, a common practice. A group of officials, including police, whisked me off to a nearby hotel room for interrogation. I saw interrogations as reporting opportunities, so I answered questions with questions.

Read more [here](#).

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## ***Newspaper trade mag Editor & Publisher sells to media consultant*** (New York Post)

**By KEITH J. KELLY**

Editor & Publisher, a 118-year-old journalism magazine that nearly went out of business in the wake of the Great Recession, has been sold to a new company headed by media consultant Michael Blinder.

Blinder, head of Blinder Group since 1999, pledged to continue publishing a monthly print edition of the mag in addition to the daily newsletter, a website and E&P's annual newspaper awards show, known as The EPPY awards.

Blinder also said he wants to expand E&P beyond its roots as the bible of the newspaper industry.

"We will not stop publishing a print edition, but I am going to expand it," he said. "We're not just a magazine for the newspaper industry. We want to be a magazine for all news publishers, from specialty magazines and digital publications to blogs."

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

## Today in History - September 5, 2019



### By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Sept. 5, the 248th day of 2019. There are 117 days left in the year.

#### Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 5, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford escaped an attempt on his life by Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a disciple of Charles Manson, in Sacramento, California.

#### On this date:

In 1774, the first Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia.

In 1864, voters in Louisiana approved a new state constitution abolishing slavery.

In 1882, the nation's first Labor Day was celebrated with a parade in New York. (Although Labor Day now takes place on the first Monday of September, this first celebration occurred on a Tuesday.)

In 1939, four days after war had broken out in Europe, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a proclamation declaring U.S. neutrality in the conflict.

In 1960, at the Rome Olympics, American boxer Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) defeated Zbigniew Pietrzykowski (zuh-BIG'-nee-ehf pee-eh-t-chah-KAHF'-skee) of Poland to win the light-heavyweight gold medal; Wilma Rudolph of the United States won the second of her three gold medals with the 200-meter sprint.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed legislation making aircraft hijackings a federal crime.

In 1972, the Palestinian group Black September attacked the Israeli Olympic delegation at the Munich Games; 11 Israelis, five guerrillas and a police officer were killed in the resulting siege.

In 1984, the space shuttle Discovery ended its inaugural flight as it landed at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

In 1986, four hijackers who had seized a Pan Am jumbo jet on the ground in Karachi, Pakistan, opened fire when the lights inside the plane failed; a total of 20 people were killed before Pakistani commandos stormed the jetliner.

In 1991, the 35th annual Naval Aviation Symposium held by the Tailhook Association opened in Las Vegas. (The gathering was marred by reports that dozens of people, most of them women, were sexually assaulted or otherwise harassed during the meeting.)

In 1997, breaking the royal reticence over the death of Princess Diana, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II delivered a televised address in which she called her former daughter-in-law "a remarkable person." Mother Teresa died in Calcutta, India, at age 87; conductor Sir Georg Solti (johrj SHOL'-tee) died in France at age 84.

In 2017, President Donald Trump announced that he was phasing out the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program protecting young immigrants who were brought to the country illegally, but said he was giving Congress six months to come up with an alternative. (The Supreme Court is expected to decide by June 2020 whether Trump can terminate the program.) Hurricane Irma strengthened to a Category 5 storm as it approached the northeast Caribbean on a path toward the United States.

Ten years ago: Top finance officials from rich and developing countries agreed during a meeting in London to curb hefty bankers' bonuses and maintain stimulus measures such as extra government spending and low interest rates to boost the global economy.

Five years ago: The U.S. and 10 of its key allies, meeting in Wales, agreed that the Islamic State group was a significant threat to NATO countries and that they would take on the militants by squeezing their financial resources and going after them with military might. Ukraine, Russia and Kremlin-backed separatists signed a cease-fire after five months of bloodshed. Former CBS News and CNN correspondent Bruce Morton, 83, died in Washington.

One year ago: The New York Times published an opinion piece from an anonymous senior administration official claiming to be part of an internal "resistance" working to thwart President Donald Trump's "worst inclinations;" Trump responded that if such a "gutless" person exists, "the Times must, for National Security purposes, turn him/her over to the government at once!" At the second day of his confirmation hearing, Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh rejected repeated efforts by Democrats to get him to reveal his views about a president pardoning himself or being forced to testify in a criminal case. Britain charged two men it identified as Russian military intelligence officers with the nerve-agent poisoning of double agent Sergei Skripal. Republican Jon Kyl of Arizona was sworn in to fill the Senate seat left open by the death of John McCain.

Today's Birthdays: Former Federal Reserve Board chairman Paul A. Volcker is 92. Comedian-actor Bob Newhart is 90. Actress-singer Carol Lawrence is 87. Actress Lucille Soong is 84. Former NFL All-Pro quarterback and college football Hall of Famer Billy Kilmer is 80. Actor William Devane is 80. Actor George Lazenby is 80. Actress Raquel Welch is 79. Movie director Werner Herzog is 77. Singer Al Stewart is 74. Actor-director Dennis Dugan is 73. College Football Hall of Famer Jerry LeVias is 73. Singer Loudon Wainwright III is 73. Soul/rock musician Mel Collins is 72. "Cathy" cartoonist Cathy Guisewite (GYZ'-wyt) is 69. Actor Michael Keaton is 68. Country musician Jamie Oldaker (The Tractors) is 68. Actress Debbie Turner-Larson (Marta in "The Sound of Music") is 63. Actress Kristian Alfonso is 56. Rhythm-and-blues singer Terry Ellis is 56. Rock musician Brad Wilk is 51. TV personality Dweezil Zappa is 50. Actress Rose McGowan is 46. Actress Carice Van Houten is 43. Rock musician Kyle O'Quin (Portugal. The Man) is 34. Actor Andrew Ducote is 33. Olympic gold medal figure skater Yuna Kim is 29. Actor Skandar Keynes is 28.

**Thought for Today: "If moderation is a fault, then indifference is a crime." - Jack Kerouac, American novelist (1922-1969)**

## 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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