



Paul Shane <pjshane@gmail.com>

# Connecting - December 11, 2019

1 message

**Paul Stevens** <paulstevens46@gmail.com>  
Reply-To: paulstevens46@gmail.com  
To: pjshane@gmail.com

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# Connecting

December 11, 2019

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this the 11<sup>th</sup> day of December 2019,

Shortly after sharing with Connecting her thoughts on The Washington Post story on how U.S. administrations misled the public about the war in Afghanistan, our colleague **Kathy Gannon** landed an interview with former Afghan President Hamid Karzai. He argued Tuesday that Washington helped fuel corruption in his nation by

spending hundreds of millions of dollars over the past two decades without accountability. To read the story, click [here](#).

Today's Connecting brings you more compelling stories from the tragic Operation Babylift aircraft crash in Vietnam - including one from colleague **Dodi Fromson** who was almost aboard the flight.

Operation Babylift was a plan by the U.S. government to get thousands of displaced Vietnamese children out of Vietnam. The first plane to leave as part of that mission took off on April 4, 1975, just a few weeks before the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War. But shortly into the flight, a malfunction forced the pilot to crash land the C-5 cargo plane into a nearby rice paddy. Out of the more than 300 people on board, the death toll included 78 children and about 50 adults, including Air Force personnel. More than 170 survived.

Paul

## Thoughts on the Washington Post's 'Afghanistan Papers' reporting

**Robert Burns** ([Email](#)) - Paul, you asked for thoughts on the Post's Afghanistan Papers report.

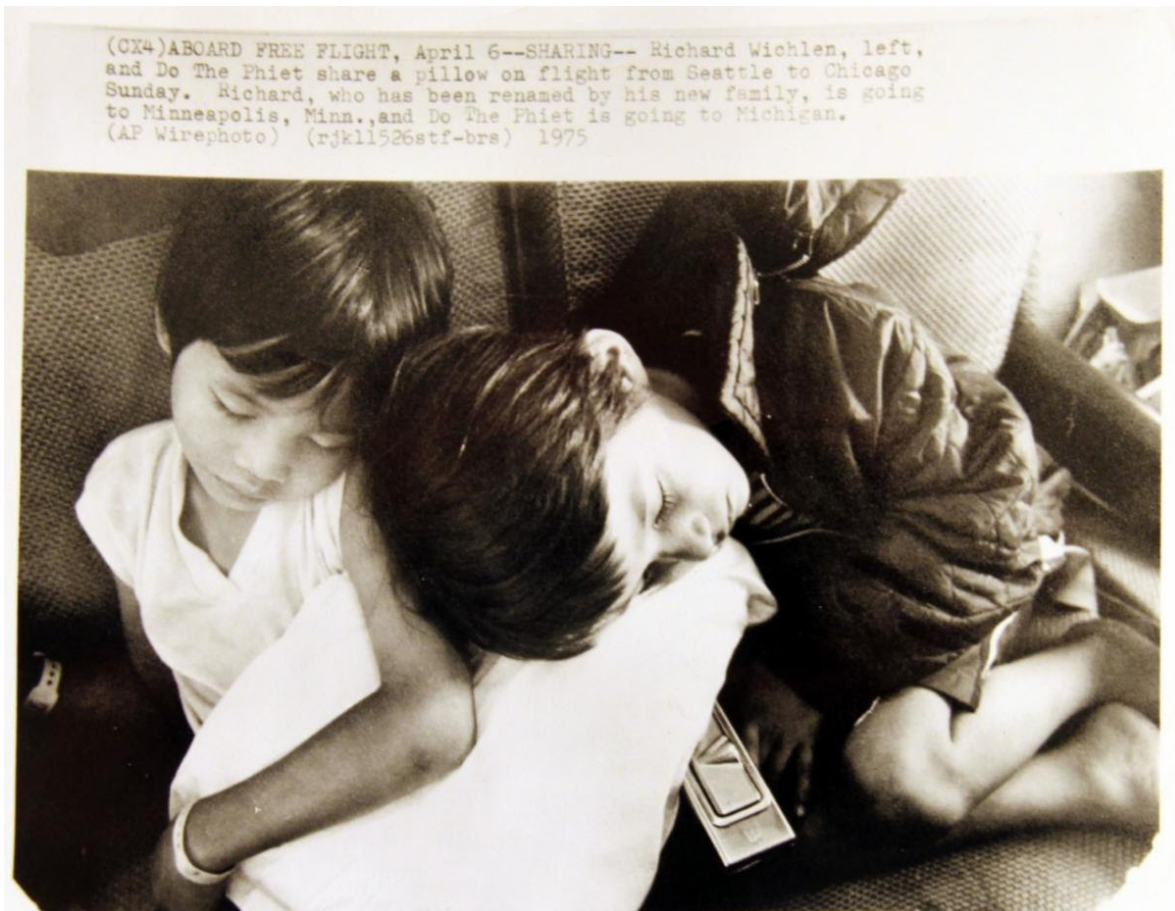
First, I'd like to note that no one in the AP has more experience and better insight into the war than Kathy Gannon, whose years of work on the ground has made an immeasurable contribution to the world's knowledge about the war. We cannot say enough about the heroic efforts Kathy has made over the years.

By comparison, my experience there is almost negligible, although I have traveled to Afghanistan a few dozen times since 2001 for short visits with senior Pentagon leaders. My one comment about the Post's project is that it reflects multiple layers of U.S. leadership failure. One example not mentioned by the Post was the surge of "insider attacks" by Afghan soldiers and policemen against American and other coalition forces. As with other aspects of the war, U.S. leaders tended to dismiss these insider attacks as a fleeting problem, a minor disturbance of no strategic importance. They were wrong about that. I recall that in 2012, as the number of attacks and U.S. deaths mounted, Pentagon officials and U.S. military officials in Kabul dismissed these as "isolated incidents." This was their well-practiced public response, even as the problem escalated during the summer of 2012. In a single 10-day period in August, Afghan forces attacked their coalition partners seven times, killing nine Americans. For the year to that point, there had been 32 such attacks,

killing 40 coalition (mostly American) troops. Eventually, effective security steps were taken and the rate of such attacks plummeted.

## More on the tragic crash of Operation Babylift flight

*He escorted three survivors to U.S.*



**Barry Sweet** ([Email](#)) - I was also involved in the baby lift. After the crash, I was able to board the next plane out of Vietnam - a flight organized by an adoption agency in Oregon. The adoption agency said the only way I could get photos was if I boarded and took care of some of the kids who I understood had survived the Orphan Baby crash. When it arrived in Seattle for refueling, I continued with them to Chicago. I took this photo of two of them, and the third was at my feet in a carry-all basket. The kids were tired from the trip and slept most of the time. Since I only had \$20, I called the AP office in Chicago and they sent someone to the airport when I

arrived and we went to the office where I put out the photos. Went back to the airport and flew home to Seattle.

The child on the left was Richard Wichlen and on the right, Do The Phiet. Richard, who was renamed by his adoptive family, went to Minneapolis and Phiet was going to a family in Michigan. I have had no contact with them since that flight.

I will never forget this flight.

## ***A shattering sight when stretchers arrived***

**Joe Galloway (Email)** - I was riding the desk in the UPI Saigon bureau the day the A5 Baby Lift aircraft crashed outside Tan Son Nhut.

We had a small radio that received tv audio, aircraft radio transmissions AND car phone conversations. It was tuned to listen in on the US Ambassador's limo telephone. He had just seen the A5 off the runway and was heading back to the Embassy when he was notified that the plane had crashed shortly after takeoff. We filed a bulletin and I was dispatched to 7th Field Hospital near the airport. Had just arrived at the Emergency Room entrance when a green military ambulance backed up. The crew pulled a stretcher out of the ambulance - one stretcher with the bodies of a dozen or more babies piled on it. The sight was shattering. When I got back to the bureau, I asked to be replaced in Saigon so I could go home to Singapore. I had been in Saigon for two months at that point. Later that month of April 1975, I was riding the desk in the UPI Bangkok Bureau the day Saigon fell.

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## ***I was almost on that plane***

**Dodi Fromson (Email)** - That was probably (my late husband) Murray Fromson's most gut-wrenching story for CBS News. He had been out at Tan San Nhut Airport, finished what he was assigned to cover, was heading back to the CBS News Bureau at the Caravelle Hotel when he thought he heard a crash, rushed back. The footage is horrific, followed by his now infamous ender, "When will this misery ever end?"

What he didn't know till much later is that I was almost on the plane. I had received a call in Hong Kong (where I was living with our two children) from the U.S. Consulate, did I have a valid passport (yes, always) and would I be willing to

accompany a planeload of orphans to the U.S.? I could stay on and visit family before returning to HKG. Of course, I said yes and began to prepare for departure in hours.

The next call from the Consulate: No need but thank you for offering your services. Too many tiny children are very ill. We found several RN's who will accompany the flight.

I had hoped to surprise Murray with my quick arrival/departure. Fate had another idea in mind!

## *My first AAA story*

# A UFO sighting in New Mexico

**Charles Richards** ([Email](#)) - My first A-wire byline came in the spring of 1964, about two months after I accepted a job offer from UPI to work in its Albuquerque bureau. I was 22 and fresh out of journalism school at Texas Tech. (This was 14 years before my 25-year career with the AP began in Dallas in 1978.)

The last Sunday in April of 1964, reports were circulating about a reported UFO sighting two days earlier by a police officer in Socorro, N.M., 75 miles south of Albuquerque.

The news reached President Lyndon Johnson and members of Congress, resulting in the Air Force dispatching two investigators on Sunday from Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio - home of Project Blue Book, the Air Force's official investigation into the UFO phenomenon.

UPI bureau chief John McMillian told me to hit the road for Socorro -my first out-of-town assignment. Albuquerque Journal photographer Ray Cary (who was also my roommate) and I rode there together. We arrived at the reported UFO sighting northwest of Socorro about the same time as the two UFO investigators.

Lonnie Zamora, a 31-year-old City of Socorro patrolman, said he abandoned his pursuit of a speeding vehicle about 5:45 p.m. Friday afternoon when he heard what sounded like a blast, or roar. His first thought, he said, was that a small building near a private airfield might have exploded.

Instead, northwest of town he came upon what he said he first thought was an overturned vehicle about 150 yards away. It was silver and oval-shaped, like a football, he said. Then he saw what appeared to be two white objects that may have been individuals in coveralls.

As he walked toward the object, he said he again heard the roar or blast that had brought him to the scene, and he saw flames and heard a sharp whining sound. He said he threw himself to the ground, fearing an explosion. But then the craft rose about 20 feet off the ground, then slowly flew west, eventually becoming a speck in the sky and disappearing in the distance.

Cary's photograph that appeared alongside my front-page story in the Monday morning edition of the Albuquerque Journal (and on the A-wire) shows Zamora alongside the two Air Force investigators as they used a Geiger counter to check for radioactivity. (The guy behind them in the picture - that's me!)

## Podcast produced by AP's Mike Hempen covers role of nonprofit news

**Bill McCloskey** ([Email](#)) - Mike Hempen, volunteer producer of podcasts for the National Press Club, is a supervisor at AP Broadcast in Washington. The latest offering covers a key component of the news industry - [Nonprofit News And The Vital Role It Plays](#)

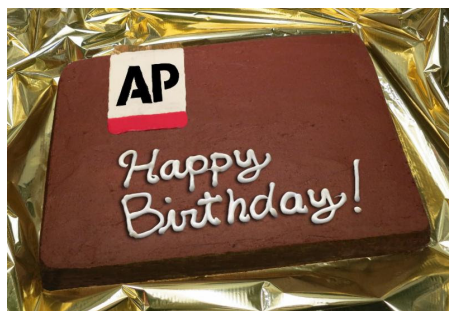
The podcast covers the important role that nonprofit newsrooms play in many communities across the country. Club member Shannon Fisher interviews Jason Alcorn of the Newsmatch Project, an annual gift-matching campaign. November and December are key fundraising months for nonprofits, so it's a very timely interview.

## Celebrating 20 years with AP



Colleagues celebrate Tehran-based photographer Vahid Salemi's 20-year anniversary with AP in Tehran, Iran, on Monday. From left: correspondent Amir Vahdat, cameraman Mohsen Ganji, correspondent Nasser Karimi, photographers Vahid Salemi and Ebrahim Noroozi, cameraman Saeed Sarmadi, and producers Mohammad Nasiri and Mehdi Fattahi. (Photo courtesy Jon Gambrell)

## Connecting wishes Happy Birthday

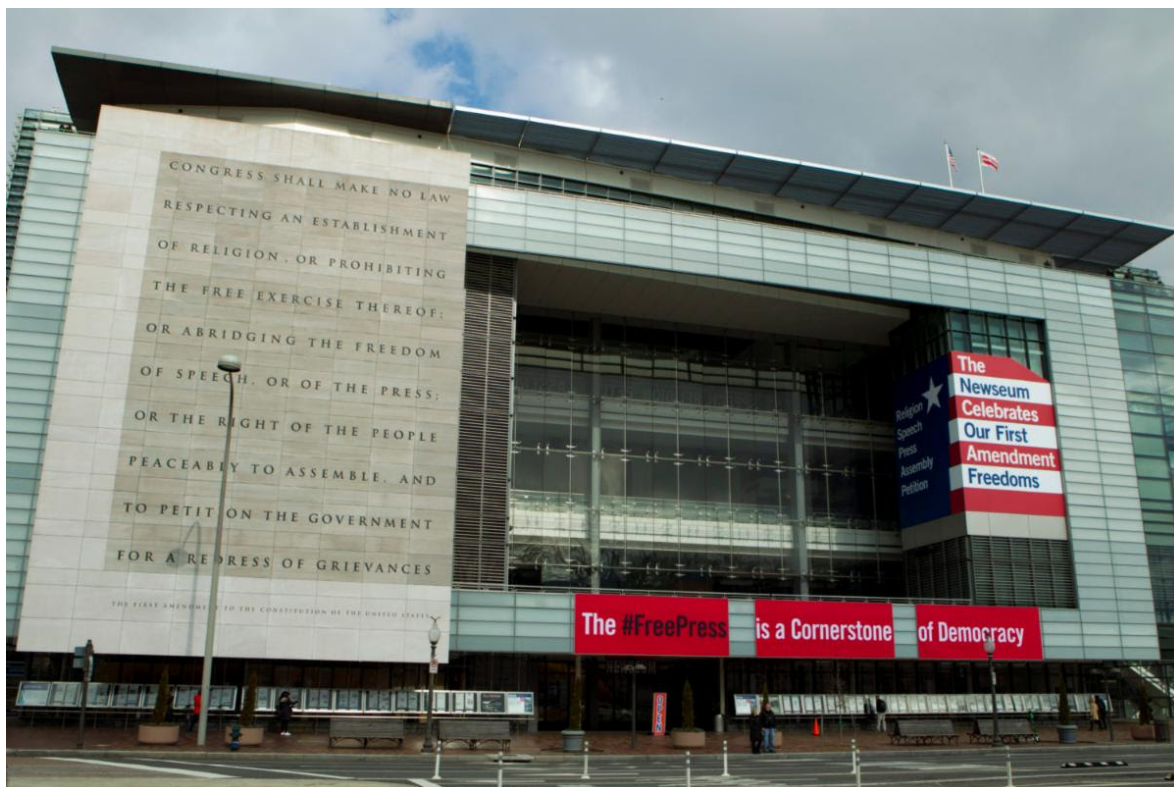


To

Daryl Beall - [peacefriendship2004@yahoo.com](mailto:peacefriendship2004@yahoo.com)

## Stories of interest

***The Newseum is closing this month. Here's the plan for what's inside.*** (Poynter)



**The Newseum. (AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana)**

**By PETE CROATTO**

The Newseum's closure is an opportunity, not a death sentence, said its leader.

"I have great optimism that we'll have an exciting new footprint somewhere, maybe footprints," executive director Carrie Christoffersen told Poynter in a phone interview Wednesday. "We'll have to see what the future really brings and what we settle on as our next steps. It really is just wide open."

The museum will close to the public Dec. 31. The Freedom Forum, the Newseum's creator and primary funder, sold the Newseum's Washington, D.C., building in January after years of financial struggle.

It might not have a permanent home in a few weeks, but Christoffersen said the Newseum will continue in its various spin-offs. Five traveling exhibits are in session - with another to come - as well as exhibits in Washington's two airports. The museum's loan program remains active.

As for whether a permanent location - or locations - has been considered, Christoffersen demurred.



Read more [here](#).

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## ***Column: A letter to the next owner of the Chicago Tribune: We need you.*** (Chicago Tribune)

**By MARY SCHMICH**

To: The Next Owner of the Chicago Tribune

From: A Chicago Tribune Journalist

Hello, next owner, whoever you may be.

I'm writing today on behalf of Tribune journalists past, present and future, all of us who have had - and, with your help, will have - the great fortune of working at one of the greatest newspapers in the world, located in one of the world's great cities.

We don't know who you are yet. But we know we need you, and urgently. Let me tell you why.

First, though, let me tell you who we are.

We're a staff that works seven days a week, at all hours, to make sure that the citizens of Chicago and its suburbs know what's going on. We believe that accurate information and informed opinion are vital to the city's well-being.

Read more [here](#).

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# ***Newspaper criticizes film's take on Olympic bombing coverage***

**By KATE BRUMBACK**

ATLANTA (AP) - After a bomb exploded in a downtown Atlanta park midway through the 1996 Olympics, a security guard initially cast as a hero was recast as a villain virtually overnight. More than 20 years later, a movie to be released later this week, "Richard Jewell," explores the roles played by law enforcement and the media in the guard's ordeal.

Now the movie is drawing its own share of criticism.

Kevin Riley, the current editor of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, is disputing the film's depiction of the newspaper's reporting and decision-making processes, especially the portrayal of reporter Kathy Scruggs, who the movie implies traded sex with an FBI agent for a tip on the story.

In an op-ed, Riley wrote that there's no evidence Scruggs committed the breach of journalistic ethics implied in the movie and disputed implications that the newspaper's reporting was sloppy.

In an interview with The Associated Press, director Clint Eastwood dismissed the criticism of his movie, which is based on a 1997 Vanity Fair article by Marie Brenner, by saying the paper likely is looking to "rationalize" its actions.

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

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## ***Save Local Journalism! A new project is trying.*** (New York Times)

**By David Leonhardt**

**Opinion Columnist**

Anyone who's worried about the state of local journalism faces a conundrum.

On the one hand, good local news coverage brings big societal benefits, as multiple studies have found. When newspapers shrink or close, voter turnout and civic engagement tend to decline, while political corruption and polarization rise. Even I - a journalist, obviously - have been surprised by the magnitude of these findings.

On the other hand, some of the country's largest local newspaper owners, like GateHouse Media (which recently bought Gannett) and Alden Global Capital, don't seem to care about good local news coverage. They're stripping newspapers of their assets to make a buck. So if you decide to support your local newspaper by subscribing to it, you may be supporting good journalism - but you may not.

That's why I was pleased to hear about the American Journalism Project, a new group created to support nonprofit local publications. Today, it's announcing its first batch of grants - 11 of them, to publications around the country. I recognized the names of several winners, like WyoFile, VTDigger and The Connecticut Mirror, because readers of this newsletter have emailed me about them when I've asked which local publications you trust.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Mike Feinsilber.

## Today in History - December 11, 2019



**By The Associated Press**

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 11, the 345th day of 2019. There are 20 days left in the year.

### **Today's Highlight in History:**

On Dec. 11, 2001, in the first criminal indictment stemming from 9/11, federal prosecutors charged Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee), a French citizen of Moroccan descent, with conspiring to murder thousands in the suicide hijackings. (Moussaoui pleaded guilty to conspiracy in 2005 and was sentenced to life in prison.)

### **On this date:**

In 1792, France's King Louis XVI went before the Convention to face charges of treason. (Louis was convicted and executed the following month.)

In 1816, Indiana became the 19th state.

In 1844, the first experimental use of an inhaled anesthetic in dentistry took place as Dr. Horace Wells of Hartford, Connecticut, under the influence of nitrous oxide, had a colleague extract one of his teeth.

In 1917, British Gen. Edmund Allenby entered Jerusalem two days after his forces expelled the Ottoman Turks.

In 1936, Britain's King Edward VIII abdicated the throne so he could marry American divorcee Wallis Warfield Simpson; his brother, Prince Albert, became King George VI.

In 1941, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States; the U.S. responded in kind.

In 1972, Apollo 17's lunar module landed on the moon with astronauts Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt aboard; they became the last two men to date to step onto the lunar surface.

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed legislation creating a \$1.6 billion environmental "superfund" to pay for cleaning up chemical spills and toxic waste

dumps. "Magnum P.I.," starring Tom Selleck, premiered on CBS.

In 1997, more than 150 countries agreed at a global warming conference in Kyoto, Japan, to control the Earth's greenhouse gases.

In 2004, doctors in Austria said that Ukrainian presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko had been poisoned with dioxin, which caused the severe disfigurement and partial paralysis of his face.

In 2008, former Nasdaq chairman Bernie Madoff was arrested, accused of running a multibillion-dollar Ponzi scheme that destroyed thousands of people's life savings and wrecked charities. (Madoff is serving a 150-year federal prison sentence.) The remains of missing Florida toddler Caylee Anthony were found six months after she disappeared. (Her mother, Casey Anthony, was acquitted of murder in her daughter's death.)

In 2017, chef Mario Batali stepped away from his restaurant empire and his cooking show "The Chew" as he conceded that reports of sexual misconduct "match up" to his behavior.

Ten years ago: Tiger Woods announced on his website that he was taking an indefinite leave from golf to try to save his five-year-old marriage to Elin (EE'-lihn) Nordegren. (However, the couple ended up divorcing in Aug. 2010.)

Five years ago: CIA Director John Brennan, responding to a U.S. Senate torture report, acknowledged that "abhorrent tactics" were used on terror detainees but said it was "unknown and unknowable" whether the harsh treatment yielded crucial intelligence that could have been gained in any other way. An outbreak of the mumps, a highly contagious illness more typically associated with children, continued to spread throughout the National Hockey League.

One year ago: A man who had been flagged as a possible extremist sprayed gunfire near the famous Christmas market in the French city of Strasbourg, killing three people and wounding 13 others; the suspect died in a shootout with police two days later. (A fourth person wounded in the attack later died.) A Virginia jury called for a sentence of life in prison plus 419 years for the man who killed a woman when he rammed his car into counterprotesters at a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. (James Alex Fields Jr. received that sentence in July, 2019.) Time magazine recognized journalists, including slain Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi (jah-MAHL' khahr-SHOHK'-jee), as its 2018 Person of the Year.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jean-Louis Trintignant is 89. Actress Rita Moreno is 88. Pop singer David Gates (Bread) is 79. Actress Donna Mills is 79. Former Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., is 78. Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is 76. Gospel singer Paul Beasley is 75. Singer Brenda Lee is 75. Actress Lynda Day George is 75. Music producer Tony Brown is 73. Actress Teri Garr is 72. Movie director Susan Seidelman is 68. Actress Bess Armstrong is 66. Singer Jermaine Jackson is 65. Rock musician Mike Mesaros (The Smithereens) is 62. Rock musician Nikki Sixx (Motley Crue) is 61. Rock musician Darryl Jones (The Rolling Stones) is 58. Actor Ben Browder is 57. Singer-musician Justin Currie (Del Amitri) is 55. Rock musician David Schools (Hard Working Americans, Gov't Mule, Widespread Panic) is 55. Actor Gary Dourdan (DOOR'-dan) is 53. Actress-comedian Mo'Nique is 52. Actor Max Martini is 50. Rapper-actor Mos Def is 46. Actor Rider Strong is 40. Actress Xosha (ZOH'-shah) Roquemore is 35. Actress Karla Souza is 33. Actress Hailee Steinfeld is 23.

**Thought for Today: "Every man has his dignity. I'm willing to forget mine, but at my own discretion and not when someone else tells me to." [-] Denis Diderot, French philosopher (1713-1784).**

## 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.

**Paul Stevens**  
**Editor, Connecting newsletter**  
[paulstevens46@gmail.com](mailto:paulstevens46@gmail.com)

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