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Connecting - December 23, 2019

1 message

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Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this the 23rd day of December 2019,

A Merry Christmas and a Happy Hanukkah to our Connecting colleagues as we begin the holiday week.

Our Monday Profile focuses on colleague **Masha Hamilton**, whose first try for an AP position didn't work out but her second try succeeded - and led to AP positions in Augusta (Maine), Indianapolis, New York and Israel before moving to Moscow with the Los Angeles Times, launching two nonprofits, authoring books and teaching. A full career that continues today.

I got lots of Wirespeak contributions over the weekend and will feature them in Tuesday's edition.

Have a great day!

Paul

Connecting Profile

Masha Hamilton



I had just graduated from Brown in Rhode Island and was traveling around the country in my International Harvester Scout looking for work as a television reporter, since I'd been working in that role at the PBS station during my senior year in college.

I heard from my friend Brian Naylor in Maine, who reported - and still reports nationally - for NPR, that the AP was hiring, and I went to take the test. While taking

the test - literally right in the middle of it - I suddenly realized how much I wanted this job. I didn't get it. Jon Kellogg called me to tell me. I still remember that phone conversation, me pacing in the kitchen of the house where I was living as he said, "This isn't the worst thing that will happen to you." "So there is worse ahead? I don't find that comforting," I responded, and we laughed.



In Indianapolis bureau

I was hired by the local newspaper, the Brunswick Times Record, and then applied again to the AP for a legislative relief position, and got it. The warm and wise Pete Slocum was my first boss. The temporary position turned into a permanent one, I worked for Dave Swearingen in Indianapolis and then to the General Desk and the Foreign Desk under the incomparable Nate Polowetzky, and then was sent to Israel where I worked for five years for Nick Tatro, one of the best journalists I have ever known.



Staffers in AP's Tel Aviv Bureau in 1985. Left to right: Newswoman Ruth Sinai, photographer Heidi Levine, business manager Ilana Balaban, and newswomen Masha Hamilton and Earleen Fisher. (AP Photo/Corporate Archives/Anat Givon)



AP Interviews Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir (right) at the prime minister's office in Jerusalem in 1987. From left: Acting Chief of Middle East Services Nick Tatro; Tel Aviv News Editor Masha Hamilton; and Director of World Services Larry Heinzerling. (AP Photo/Corporate Archives)

I left the AP then, transferring to Moscow for the Los Angeles Times for five years and then going on to publish novels, founded two nonprofits (the Camel Book Drive and the Afghan Women's Writing Project,) worked as head of communications for the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan in 2012-13 and then from 2013-2016 as head of communications for an international nonprofit working primarily in Africa.



Lebanon: Cradling a Syrian

Now I teach on a variety of topics (just returned from Thailand where I taught 10th graders creative activism), work on the next novel and am leading a collaborative project around art and immigration that will exhibit starting in January in Maryland.

I very much believe the AP gave me the foundations for much of what has come since. Under razor-sharp editors like Ellen Nimmons, I learned that every single word mattered, and you can always find another one to cut. I covered some compelling stories, made friends that have lasted until now and I still feel myself to be part of the AP family. No job since has felt quite like that.

refugee infant in northern
Lebanon 2015.

Masha Hamilton's email is -
masha@mashahamilton.com

His papal 'graduate study' under AP's Victor Simpson



Anthony Hopkins, left, and Jonathan Pryce in a scene from "The Two Popes." Photo: Peter Mountain/Netflix

Dan Wakin ([Email](#)) - My first foreign posting with the AP was to Rome where I studied from 1992 to 1998 under the master journalist and great Vaticanista Victor Simpson. It was the John Paul II era, and the pope frequently made news. Victor, the news editor, was also generous in parceling out John Paul's foreign trips to correspondents in the bureau so I had a good opportunity to cover him up close.

After I joined The Times in 2000, I took on the religion beat in Metro. So with that, plus my Italian fluency and AP Rome experience, I became a logical helping hand for the paper's Rome bureau. I was one of several Times correspondents parachuting in for the last two conclaves. Meanwhile I had moved to the Culture desk as a reporter and eventually deputy editor before moving on to other assignments. The desk's movie editor knew all this and made a fine assignment. Hence the following reporter's notebook.

Click [here](#) to read Dan Wakin's story in Sunday's New York Times on the Netflix film that debuted last Friday, "The Two Popes."

Life's Many Questions (including, wear your seatbelts!)

Gene Herrick ([Email](#)) - Was it real? Am I alive, or dead? Those are two very important questions Kitty Hylton, my long-time mate, and I had last Thursday.

God is real; God is alive and still giving blessings.

Here is what happened. We were driving in the flow of traffic, northbound on Interstate 581, and right through the middle of Roanoke, Virginia. It was high noon, and the sun was bright and encouraging. We were in the center lane, surrounded by cars, and including a big semi-trailer truck.

It was peaceful until, suddenly, the semi slammed into the rear of our car. "What was that," we screamed. Kitty looked through the rear-view mirror and saw the huge front end of the truck. Seconds later, he hit us again, hard. Seconds later, the truck rammed us again, this time sending the two of us, and the car, flying across one other lane of traffic and into the center retaining wall. Crunching of metal, fright, fear, jarring. Immediately following hitting that wall, we careened back across all three lanes and into the right edge retaining wall. More glass; more metal. The car came to a halt.

We both stared straight ahead. It was eerily quiet. Were we dead? Were we hurt? Kitty and I turned our heads to look at each other. Are we alive? Were we hurt? At that moment we didn't know the answer. Finally, we touched, and asked "Are you okay?" Tentatively, we said that it appeared so. We moved our body parts, etc., and said we didn't hurt anywhere. I realized I had a cut on my right elbow, and it was bleeding a little.

Yes, thank God, we were wearing our seat belts.

Second later, I looked up to see the truck racing down the highway, apparently to escape. I grabbed my cell phone and called 911, only to get the wrong district, but they quickly switched me to the proper one. I gave the operator our position and some description of what happened, including the escaping truck. Within seconds

and rescue ambulance arrived, as did the police. They briefly question us, and then we got into the ambulance for the trip to the hospital.

Still in wonderment, scared, moving our body parts to see if by now we could realize if we were injured. After a wait, we got in to the system and were checked out, CAT Scans for Kitty, and an elbow bandage for me.

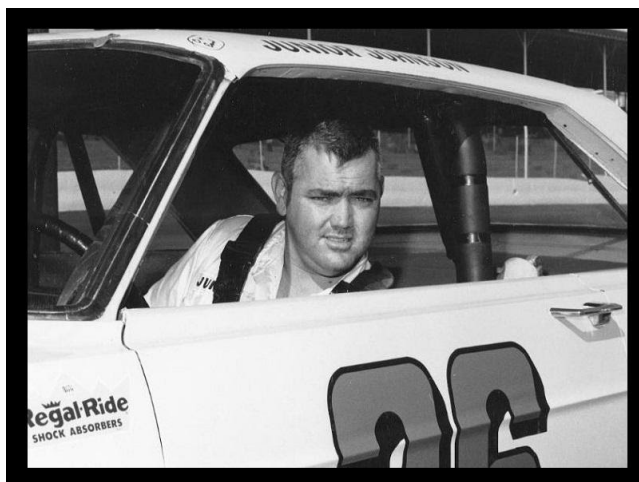
Dear God, how could this be? Yes, you know, and thanks from both of us.

Christmas is the time to reflect on the birth of Christ, but also a time of love, and thanks.

Remembering Junior Johnson

Mike Harris ([Email](#)) - Robert Glenn "Junior" Johnson died this past week at the age of 88. He was known for a lot of things. He was one of the of the early NASCAR racers who had actually been a moonshine runner. In fact, he spent 11 months in a Federal Prison after being caught at his family's still, but he was never run down on the road. He went on to a Hall of Fame career as a driver, mechanic and team owner and was eventually pardoned by President Ronald Reagan. I spent considerable time with Junior during my career as AP's auto racing writer and almost always found it enjoyable and illuminating. He was full of what I always called country wisdom.

He was a legend in stock car racing. But, more than that, he was a really good and interesting man. The first time I met Junior was in 1980 at the track in North Wilkesboro, NC, very close to his home in the little town of Ronda. I walked up to Junior in the garage area to see if I could get a quote or two for a story I was working on. I introduced myself and he just said, "Later, boy!" I was a little embarrassed, but I shook it off. I didn't see him again until late that afternoon. He walked across the alley and grabbed me by the arm. "I can talk now," he said. "My story was long done, but I asked him several questions anyway, and we talked for a while. As I thanked him, he said, "Ya'll come by the house in the morning for breakfast." Then he walked away. I asked another writer if he knew what Junior meant and he told me that Junior and his (first) wife Flossie had a big country breakfast at their farm for practically the entire racing community. Of course, I went. As I walked around the



farmhouse looking at all the famous people that I didn't yet know, Junior suddenly appeared at my elbow and said, ``Come with me, boy!" We walked down the hall, down a flight of stairs and across the basement to a cabinet, which he proceeded to unlock. He reached in grabbed a capped mason jar and handed it to me. ``Don't drink too much at one time," he said, grinning. Then he was gone, back up the stairs. Of course, I took a swig from that jar and thought I was going to die. But it was one hell of an experience. And I still have that mason jar and a lot of great memories of an interesting and complex man that I got to know well over the years. RIP Junior!

Connecting sky shot - Georgia



Atlantic Sunrise at St Simons Island, Georgia. Shared by Hank Ackerman.

Bob Moen retires after 36-year AP career

Bob Moen has finished up a 36-year career in which Rockies News Editor Matt Volz said he "guided the AP's report for Wyoming and North Dakota with a cool, steady hand that was a model for his co-workers." His last work day was Dec. 17.

Moen, a journalism graduate of the University of Kansas, joined the AP in 1983 as a vacation relief staffer in Phoenix. Six months later, he moved into a permanent reporting position in Bismarck, North Dakota. In 1998, he was promoted to correspondent in Cheyenne, where he has spent the rest of his career.



Volz said Moen covered "just about everything an AP newsman and correspondent could have thrown at him, whether it was the Red River flood of 1997 that emptied the city of Grand Forks or turning Lawrence Welk's boyhood home in North Dakota into a museum. He was there when ex-USSR premier Mikhail Gorbachev gave a speech to the University of Wyoming in 2011; he was also there when a federal judge had to order the university to let 1960s radical William Ayers speak on campus.

"Moen covered the statehouse in both Bismarck and Cheyenne. He covered the rise and fall of governors, senators, representatives and Dick Cheney as George W. Bush's running mate. He reported on coal and mining production, the controversy surrounding snowmobiles in Yellowstone, Wyoming's legalization of gay marriage and the crowds that gathered at Grand Teton National Park for the total solar eclipse of 2017.

"But Bob had a special place in his reporter's heart for sports. He covered everything: University of Wyoming football and basketball, high school basketball, the Frontier Days rodeo. He spent a decade or more reporting on the career of Bismarck's own light heavyweight boxing champion, Virgil Hill. And in 1998, when Mark McGwire broke Roger Maris' longstanding record of 61 homeruns in a season, Bob was in Maris' hometown of Fargo to get fans' reactions.

"More recently, Bob has been the dayside breaking news staffer keeping a watchful eye over Wyoming, Colorado and Montana. There is nothing he won't take on, and he does it with great professionalism and a great attitude that has benefited and been a positive influence for us all. Please join me in thanking Bob for all of his years of service."

Moen is the son of the late Fred Moen, whose 38-year AP career included duties as chief of bureau in Nashville, Phoenix and Kansas City. Fred Moen retired in 1984 and died seven years later.

The Master Who Reported Truth By Making Things Up



A distinguished reporter for Newsweek and then The Washington Post, Ward Just turned to fiction in 1970 and wrote 19 novels. (Washington Post photo by Larry Morris).

By MORT ROSENBLUM ([Email](#))

TUCSON, Arizona - "Damn," a saddening email began, "we have lost one of the truly greats; a great reporter, a great man." Ward Just has died at 84. No one I've known epitomized like he did good journalism at the farthest extremes of its outer dimensions.

This is a tribute to him and a reflection on what we are losing at the top end of a vital profession that has never been more essential.

Ward spent 18 months in Vietnam as war began to widen, sidelined briefly when grenade fragments lodged in his back. His Washington Post dispatches exuded futility. In 1967, back home, he wrote an analysis months before the Tet Offensive. America didn't listen.

"This war is not being won," it began, "and by any reasonable estimate it is not going to be won in the foreseeable future. It may be unwinnable." It ended in close focus on a 19-year-old grunt named Truman Schockley.

"Smoking a Lucky Strike and staring off into the mountains, Schockley died with a sniper's bullet through the heart and stopped breathing before the cigarette stopped burning. The company commander sent a platoon into the underbrush to look for the sniper, but the sniper had left. Schockley was put in a green body bag and sent to Bongson for transport to Saigon and then home."

Read more [here](#).

Click [here](#) for a Washington Post remembrance story.

Best of the Week

How tramadol, touted as the safer opioid, became a 3rd world peril



A drug user lies unconscious by the side of a road in Kapurthala, in the northern Indian state of Punjab, Oct. 31, 2019. Authorities in Punjab, the center of India's opioid epidemic, cracked down on tramadol, a man-made

opiate that was touted as a safer alternative to other opiates, but regulators acknowledge that curtailing abuse is all but impossible. Tramadol is still easy to find. AP PHOTO / CHANNI ANAND

It was supposed to be the safer opioid, a way to fight pain with little risk of addiction.

That promise has meant much less regulation of tramadol than other opioids. And its relatively low cost has made tramadol the drug of choice in many developing countries, where it is touted as everything from a mood enhancer to an elixir that can improve sexual stamina.

National writer Claire Galofaro spent months researching the issue after this summer's United Nations world drug report depicted tramadol as "the other opioid crisis." She downloaded so many documents about tramadol that she ultimately ran out of space on her computer and had to buy an external hard drive.

Read more [here](#).

Best of the States

AP Exclusive: Accidental shootings show nationwide gap in police training



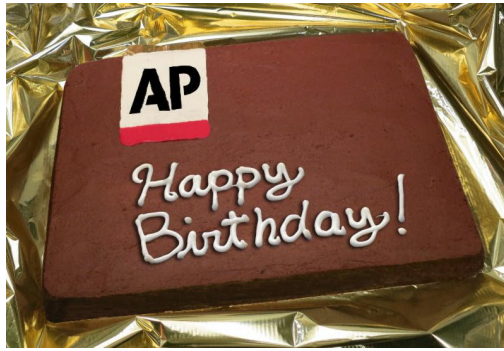
AP Photo/Ted Warren

A mother shot fatally shot in front of her 3-year-old son. A suspect killed while an officer tried to handcuff him. A Homeland Security agent shot at a Texas high school by a U.S. marshal fumbling with equipment. These are among the more than 1,400 unintentional discharges Seattle reporter Martha Bellisle found in an investigation that highlights the shortcomings of police weapons training.

No agency tracks how often local, state and federal officers accidentally fire their weapons. Over the course of more than a year, Bellisle sent records requests the nation's 20 largest law enforcement agencies and to police departments in the largest cities in each state. She also scoured media sites and requested information from federal police. Her efforts resulted in the documenting of 1,422 unintentional discharges by 258 law enforcement agencies since 2012. She and West Desk video journalist Krysta Fauria traveled to Iowa to interview the husband of the woman who was killed when an officer's gun discharged, documenting how he and his children are still scarred by the tragedy.

Read more [here](#).

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



to

Donna Bryson - donna@innoabrd.com

Stories of interest

Saudi sentences 5 to death for Jamal Khashoggi's killing



(AP Photo/Hasan Jamali, Archive)

By **ABDULLAH AL-SHIHRI** and **AYA BATRAWY**

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) - Saudi Arabia sentenced five people to death on Monday for the killing of Washington Post columnist and royal family critic Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul last year by a team of Saudi agents.

The killing of Khashoggi stunned the international community and also many Saudi citizens, who were deeply shocked that a Saudi national could be killed by 15 government agents inside one of the kingdom's consulates.

Another three people were sentenced to prison for a combined 24 years, according to a statement read by the attorney general's office on Saudi state TV. No individual breakdown for the sentencing was given.

In total, 11 people were on trial in Saudi Arabia for the killing, but the government has not made their names public. All can appeal the preliminary verdicts.

Read more [here](#).

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These Reporters Lost Their Jobs. Here Are the Stories They Couldn't Tell. (New York Times)



From left: Gary Warner, former state bureau chief for The Bulletin in Bend, Ore.; Nanette Light, a former reporter for The Dallas Morning News; Gabriel San Román, former reporter for The OC Weekly.Credit...From left: Joe Kline for The New York Times; Nathan Hunsinger for The New York Times; Federico Medina for The New York Times

By Sarah Mervosh, Amy Harmon and Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs

They were experts on New Orleans public schools and Oregon state politics. They shared the news when a popular high school basketball player in Colorado returned to the court after a knee injury, and they helped solve the mystery of a City Hall cake vandalism in Texas. At newspapers big and small - for moments grand and modest - these local newspaper journalists told the stories of their communities.

Until one day, when they were gone.

Across the country this year, more than 1,000 newspaper employees lost their jobs, highlighting a crisis in local journalism that has been intensifying for more than a decade. The shrinking of local news - driven by factors including a decline in print advertising and the mergers of newspaper companies - has serious consequences, from decreased voter turnout to increased polarization.

And then there are the lost stories.

In interviews, eight one-time local journalists told us about the stories they still had in their notebooks. To capture their images, we turned to photojournalists who used to work alongside them, until they lost their jobs as well.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Sibby Christensen, Mike Holmes, Len Iwanski, Mike Feinsilber, Doug Pizac.

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Hundreds of 'pink slime' local news outlets are distributing algorithmic stories and conservative talking points (CJR)

By Priyanjana Bengani

An increasingly popular tactic challenges conventional wisdom on the spread of electoral disinformation: the creation of partisan outlets masquerading as local news organizations. An investigation by the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia Journalism School has discovered at least 450 websites in a network of local and business news organizations, each distributing thousands of algorithmically generated articles and a smaller number of reported stories. Of the 450 sites we discovered, at least 189 were set up as local news networks across ten states within the last twelve months by an organization called Metric Media.

Titles like the East Michigan News, Hickory Sun, and Grand Canyon Times have appeared on the web ahead of the 2020 election. These networks of sites can be used in a variety of ways: as 'stage setting' for events, focusing attention on issues such as voter fraud and energy pricing, providing the appearance of neutrality for partisan issues, or to gather data from users that can then be used for political targeting.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Richard Chady.

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The Human Toll of the 2019 Media Apocalypse (Medium)

By **MAYA KOSOFF**

Being a journalist in 2019 meant working under the gun. In January, over a thousand journalists lost their jobs as layoffs hit Gannett, BuzzFeed, AOL, and HuffPost. Vice laid off 250 employees in February; New York Media laid off 32 employees in March; in April, G/O Media let go of 25 people. New Orleans' Times-Picayune let go the entire staff, 161 employees, in May after the newspaper was sold to a competitor; in August, Pacific Standard shut down after a decade of publishing. No company or sector of news was spared. NBCUniversal laid off 70 employees in two rounds of layoffs in August and September. Spin Media Group cut 29 jobs in September and January; Cox Media Group, which owns the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, announced plans to lay off 87 people in September. Sports Illustrated laid off more than 40 employees in October. In November, the Toronto Star and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation had a combined 108 layoffs.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Michael Rubin.

The Final Word

A Longing for the Lost Landline (New York Times)

By **ROGER COHEN**

This is a lament for the landline, a rhapsody for its dial tone, a hymn to the way it connected people. It's the little things we miss. The landline was a focal point of the home, an antidote to atomization and loneliness, those scourges of our age.

I still hear my mother, at our London home, answering the phone in her singsong voice: "Double-one-nine-five." Then calling out: "Is Roger home?" People actually took calls for somebody else! They were, through such random encounters, entwined in the lives of others. My mother might ask afterward, "Darling, who's Caroline?" I could not avoid some response, however evasive.

I see the black rotary phone perched on a ledge by a window at the center of the house. On this object we all converged. I see my perfumed mother (Ysatis by Givenchy) handing me the receiver. Such were the small rites and connective tissue of the pre-solipsistic era.

The landline was a shared thing. Conversations took place at unplanned moments. Overhearing was unavoidable. I would pull back the net curtain I never liked and gaze out on suburban nothingness. I could not take the call to my room.

Read more [here](#).

Today in History - December 23, 2019



By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Dec. 23, the 357th day of 2019. There are eight days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 23, 1968, 82 crew members of the U.S. intelligence ship Pueblo were released by North Korea, 11 months after they had been captured.

On this date:

In 1783, George Washington resigned as commander in chief of the Continental Army and retired to his home at Mount Vernon, Virginia.

In 1805, Joseph Smith Jr., principal founder of the Mormon religious movement, was born in Sharon, Vermont.

In 1913, the Federal Reserve System was created as President Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act.

In 1941, during World War II, American forces on Wake Island surrendered to the Japanese.

In 1948, former Japanese premier Hideki Tojo and six other Japanese war leaders were executed in Tokyo.

In 1954, the first successful human kidney transplant took place at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston as a surgical team removed a kidney from 23-year-old Ronald Herrick and implanted it in Herrick's twin brother, Richard.

In 1972, a 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck Nicaragua; the disaster claimed some 5,000 lives.

In 1975, Richard S. Welch, the Central Intelligence Agency station chief in Athens, was shot and killed outside his home by the militant group November 17.

In 1986, the experimental airplane Voyager, piloted by Dick Rutan (ruh-TAN') and Jeana (JEE'-nuh) Yeager, completed the first non-stop, non-refueled round-the-world flight as it returned safely to Edwards Air Force Base in California.

In 1995, a fire in Dabwali, India, killed 446 people, more than half of them children, during a year-end party being held near the children's school.

In 1997, a federal jury in Denver convicted Terry Nichols of involuntary manslaughter and conspiracy for his role in the Oklahoma City bombing, declining to find him guilty of murder. (Nichols was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.)

In 2001, Time magazine named New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani its Person of the Year for his steadfast response to the 9/11 terrorist attack.

Ten years ago: Richard and Mayumi Heene (HEE'-nee), the parents who'd pulled the "balloon boy" hoax in hopes of landing a reality TV show, were sentenced by a judge in Fort Collins, Colorado, to jail (90 days for him, 20 days for her). Gary Patterson, who'd guided TCU to its best season in 70 years, became the first

Associated Press Coach of the Year from outside the six conferences with automatic BCS bids. Yitzhak Ahronovitch, captain of the Exodus during a 1947 attempt to take Holocaust survivors to Palestine, died in northern Israel at age 86.

Five years ago: The movie "The Interview" was put back into theaters when Sony Pictures Entertainment announced a limited release of the comedy that had provoked an international incident with North Korea and outrage over its canceled showing. The NFL's troubles with domestic violence were selected the sports story of the year in an annual vote conducted by The Associated Press.

One year ago: Amid criticism and fallout from the resignation of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, President Donald Trump pushed the Pentagon chief out the door two months earlier than planned; in a series of tweets, Trump appeared to question why he had put Mattis in his Cabinet in the first place.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ronnie Schell is 88. Former Emperor Akihito of Japan is 86. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Paul Hornung is 84. Actor Frederic Forrest is 83. Rock musician Jorma Kaukonen (YOR'-mah KOW'-kah-nen) is 79. Rock musician Ron Bushy is 78. Actor-comedian Harry Shearer is 76. U.S. Army Gen. Wesley K. Clark (ret.) is 75. Actress Susan Lucci is 73. Singer-musician Adrian Belew is 70. Rock musician Dave Murray (Iron Maiden) is 63. Actress Joan Severance is 61. Singer Terry Weeks is 56. Rock singer Eddie Vedder (Pearl Jam) is 55. The former first lady of France, Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, is 52. Rock musician Jamie Murphy is 44. Jazz musician Irvin Mayfield is 42. Actress Estella Warren is 41. Actress Elvy Yost is 32. Actress Anna Maria Perez de Tagle (TAG'-lee) is 29. Actor Spencer Daniels is 27. Actor Caleb Foote is 26.

Thought for Today: "Oh, for the good old days when people would stop Christmas shopping when they ran out of money." [-] Author unknown.

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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