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Connecting

April 10, 2020

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Colleagues,

Good Friday morning on this the 10th day of April 2020,

The Associated Press fanned out across New York City, following residents for 24 hours as they try to survive - and do their part - to save a city under siege

by a pandemic. Click [here](#) to view the package of stories, titled, “The Fight for New York.”

The lead story in the package opens today’s issue of Connecting.

Our colleague **Steve Herman**, White House bureau chief for the Voice of America and a former AP journalist, brings us an inside look at his beat and how it’s been impacted by the pandemic.

Need a break from all the coronavirus news? That’s a question posed in today’s The Poynter Report by senior media writer **Tom Jones**, who offers up some of his own suggestions. Click [here](#). If you have some of your own to share with Connecting colleagues, send them along over the weekend.



AP GROUND GAME : Go inside the hard-hit areas and all the places in between with AP’s global team of journalists as the world tries to stem the spread of the coronavirus. Hosted by AP’s Ralph Russo.

Listen [here](#).

Have a great – safe – healthy weekend!

Paul

A city under siege: 24 hours in the fight to save New York



Carla Brown, executive director for the Charles A. Walburg Multiservice Organization arrives to pick up meals from a caterer, Monday, April 6, 2020. (AP Photo/Robert Bumsted)

By ADAM GELLER

NEW YORK (AP) — Brooklyn is dark except for the streetlamps when Carla Brown's alarm goes off at 5:15 a.m. -- much too early for an average Monday. But with the coronavirus laying siege to New York, today looms as anything but ordinary.

Brown runs a meals-on-wheels program for elderly shut-ins and in her embattled city, that label suddenly fits nearly every senior citizen. For two weeks, she's been working 12- to 14-hour days, taking over routes for sick or missing drivers. Today, she has to find room on the trucks for more than 100 new deliveries.

She pulls on jeans, grabs her mask and heads for the Grand Army Plaza subway station, wearing a sweatshirt with Muhammad Ali's name printed across the front.

"He's one of my idols," Brown says. "And I just felt like I was ready for the fight today."

What other choice is there?

Before the pandemic swept in, America's biggest, loudest city often lived up to its own hype. Then the coronavirus all but shut it down, claiming lives from the Bronx to the Battery and beyond. Now the hush, whether at midnight or midday, is broken mostly by the wail of ambulances. Streets long ago rumored to be paved with gold are littered with disposable medical gloves.

Over 24 hours, a taxi driver will cruise those desolate streets, searching for the few workers who need to keep moving. A bodega owner will make a promise to a customer he hopes he'll never have to keep. An emergency room doctor and a paramedic will labor to hold down a death toll that on this day threatens to surpass the number killed at the World Trade Center on 9/11.

Read more [here](#).

Covering the White House in the midst of COVID-19



**Temperature check for Steve Herman in the basement of the West Wing.
(Credit: Alex Wong/Getty Images)**

(Steve Herman is the White House bureau chief for the Voice of America. A Connecting colleague, he was a newsman in the AP Charleston, WV, bureau in the mid-1980's before working in the AP Broadcast News Center, 1988-90.)

By Steve Herman ([Email](#))

WHITE HOUSE - The James Brady Press Briefing Room is a changed place. Most of the 49 seats are unoccupied during news conferences. The daily briefer is never the press secretary, it's the president.

Donald Trump did not utilize the room to talk with reporters until COVID-19 reached pandemic proportions.

For the first three years of the Trump administration, my Voice of America colleagues and I took turns in our assigned seat in the fourth row between Fox News Radio and National Journal.

The first wave of culling due to social distancing left every other seat unoccupied and sent us to the back room in a shared seat with PBS.

The second wave left just two occupied seats per the seven rows. Now VOA is only in the room when we take our turn as the radio pooler. Some networks have dropped out of the rotation due to fear of infection so VOA volunteers as often as possible, even though that means sitting close enough to several people and wandering photographers at a distance less than the CDC-recommended six feet.

So far, three journalists who have spent time in the briefing room have reported coronavirus-like symptoms.

Getting into the room and within questioning-range of the president -- either for the pool sprays or the briefings -- requires passing two temperature checks, one at the Northwest gate and the other inside the West Wing.

The Washington Post's media reporter recently queried what it was like transitioning from what was routine inside the White House to the risky.

Navigating the West Wing, I replied, has been "like trying to avoid triggering an invisible delayed-action land mine."



**Steve Herman in his home studio/bureau in Wilton Woods, Virginia.
(Photo credit: Rosyla Kalden)**

Paul Farhi noted that I have covered natural disasters, worked in combat zones and traveled to Fukushima, Japan, in 2011 to report on the nuclear reactor meltdown. I stated that I've never felt "as much apprehension about getting to a story as riding the Metro to the White House over the past week."

I no longer ride the Metro. Service has been severely reduced. For a couple of weeks, I would then drive from northern Virginia to downtown D.C. until the parking garages began to pull down the shutters at 6pm. Now I use Lyft and hope a car door handle doesn't contain the virus.

A few correspondents and photographers have begun wearing masks. None of those on the podium, standing far less than two meters apart, do. So far, no reporter has asked a question with mask covering mouth.

One journalist for a small right-wing cable TV news channel has defied the social distancing diktat of the White House Correspondents' Association, which controls the seating, standing in the back of the room -- ostensibly as a guest of the press secretary -- and has been repeatedly called on the president. The

WHCA removed One American News Network from the seat rotation as punishment, but Chanel Rion is undeterred. Trump knows well who she is. There is a photograph of the president's hands on her bare shoulders at the most recent Mar-a-Lago Christmas party.

The president is less familiar with some of the reporters who have not reported that COVID-19 might have been created in a North Carolina lab.

"Who are you with?" Trump sometimes asks reporters -- usually those who are African-American or Asian.

The briefings can drag on for more than two hours. They star the president with Vice President Mike Pence and the two physicians, Anthony Fauci and Deborah Birx in supporting roles. The reality program is officially the White House coronavirus task force briefing. Trump refers to them as news conferences. COVID-19 is a key topic. But presidential comments, based on Trump's whims or reporters' questions, can also include oil prices, Joe Biden's mental state, the million-dollar base salary of the head of the Tennessee Valley Authority and a possible pardon for the "Tiger King."

On the days when VOA doesn't have a seat in the briefing room or one of my colleagues (usually White House Senior Correspondent Patsy Widakuswara) occupies the chair, I cover them from a newly configured studio located in the small library room of my rambler home in a historic hamlet halfway between the White House and George Washington's Mount Vernon.

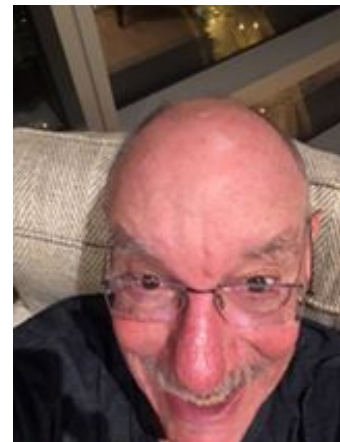
Here I frequently reflect that the first U.S. president had to contend with a smallpox epidemic. Yellow fever was a worry in Washington until the end of the 19th century. The Spanish Flu a century ago claimed 3,000 Washingtonians. Now we wait to see if COVID-19 will trump that toll.

Your stories of life under specter of COVID-19

From publisher and AP board member to 'hair salon owner'

Elizabeth Brenner ([Email](#)) - Here at Salon Brenner, our first (and only) client emerged from his socially isolated haircut with only two, small (new) bald spots. Once I learned to hold the clippers right-side-up - it was like cutting the grass. (Which, come to think of it, is another thing I've never done.)

Client told Stylist to "Keep her day job". He did not leave a tip.



(**EDITOR'S NOTE** : Our Connecting colleague Betsy Brenner's client was her husband, Steve Ostrofsky. Betsy was publisher of the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel from 2004-2016 and served on the AP Board of Directors from 2009-2016.)

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When our social isolation becomes a debtor's prison



David Kaish ([Email](#)) – *in the Albany Times-Union* - This week I found myself doing something foreign to me: figuring out which bills our family business could afford to pay.

Sitting in our nearly empty medical clinic, I spent twenty minutes on the phone with NYSEG negotiating the utility bill. Shot off an email to an automatic door company explaining we couldn't renew the maintenance contract on our two sliding doors. I asked the landlord to let us pay half our monthly rent. I emailed our medical supplier saying we couldn't afford our April statement, and didn't know when we could. I canceled our water cooler service and the monthly lease on payroll software. I asked our insurer to let us stagger premium payments on business insurance and workers comp.

By the time I left the office, I was stressed out and depressed. While my experience was hardly unique – millions of small businesses like ours are financially suffering due to the coronavirus lockdown – I was nearly surprised by my feelings. The act of fending off creditors was entirely new to me.

Read more [here](#) .

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How safe?

Norm Abelson ([Email](#)) - Is there a danger of feeling too safe, too protected, tucked away here in Moody, Maine, a small seaside town, some 300 miles north of New York City? Can it feel as though the coronavirus is not the imminent threat it is in Boston, the closest metro area, about 80 miles to the south? Is it too easy to wink at the proscriptions?

For Magdalene and me, the answer is “sort of,” so we're being extra cautious and staying aware.

Fear is a powerful motivator, but up here there is little visible evidence to feed it. A few mask-less folks walking their dogs along the dirt road that fronts our house. A natural gas truck rumbling by. The rubbish picked up as usual Wednesday morning. Brad Foss, our delivery person, stuffing the Portland Press Herald and the New York Times into our newspaper box as the sun rises.

And yet there is the reality of it.

In Maine, as I write this, there are 537 confirmed cases, and 14 deaths.. There exists a severe shortage of respiratory therapists to operate ventilators. Gov. Janet Mills has ordered all persons arriving in Maine to self-quarantine for two weeks, and suspended all lodging operations and short-term rentals in this tourist-dependent state.

Because of age and medical conditions, both of us are considered to be in the highest risk group. Magdalene is busy fashioning cloth masks, while I am washing and wiping like crazy.

After all, even here in the country, the virus could be lurking just around the corner.

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Where have all the big jets gone?



Mark Mittelstadt ([Email](#)) - If you're curious where all the large passenger jets that used to fly in and out of your airports have gone, there's a good chance some are being parked for a time in the southern Arizona desert.

Major airlines are moving large parts of their fleets to airfields around Tucson. The arid conditions and wide open spaces make the area an ideal place to store, at least temporarily, aircraft currently not needed as a result of the virtual collapse of the travel industry due to COVID-19 shutdowns. The dry air does not cause rust and general deterioration of airplane parts. Crews cover engine ports and other openings to keep out dust and take other measures to ready them for storage.

From our home in the fast-growing suburb of Marana, on the northwest corner of Tucson, Mary and I have noticed several large aircraft flying low, apparently descending to Pinal County Airpark, a boneyard approximately 18 miles away.

In the past few days they're also going to Marana Regional Airport, a small airfield that usually is home to small general aviation aircraft and the occasional corporate jet. In the past couple mornings locals have been surprised to see large aircraft tails jutting from the desert. Two dozen jets (pictured) have been parked at the southeast end of the Marana airport. The mayor has directed town public works to clear more desert land to store as many as 80 aircraft.

Tucson International, which has experienced a 95 percent drop in passenger service, also is looking to recover a portion of lost revenue by also parking and storing airlines' jets.

Connecting mailbox

More of that wire lingo

Charles Richards ([Email](#)) - And there was "pox" = police; "scotus" = Supreme Court; "how pls" = "You haven't forgotten my earlier request, have you?"; "unfind"; "unknow"; and "uppick"

John Willis ([Email](#)) - Speaking of wire service lingo, the best ever for me was printed in Connecting a few years back. The late Sue Manning often ran the night tour or weekends in Spokane (SX), when I was the correspondent in the late 70s. When she left for the evening or the day, she would notify to Seattle via the talk wire: "SX UnManning". She was literally unManning the buro. Searching through the rubble that fills the lower space of one of my bookcases in the office I finally found my Directory of The Associated Press, which was last updated with the new pages September 15th 1981. What a find!

Joe Galloway ([Email](#)) - UP and UPI Downholds referred to the perennial budget cuts that were visited on the bureaus on orders of NX financial wizards. It started with the tough actions of H.B. (Save a Nickel) Mickle, UP financial controller in the olden days. Some of us still have our Downhold Club membership cards signed by Save a Nickel! Ref Oldtime wire jargon here is the famous resignation message: Upstick Job Asswise.

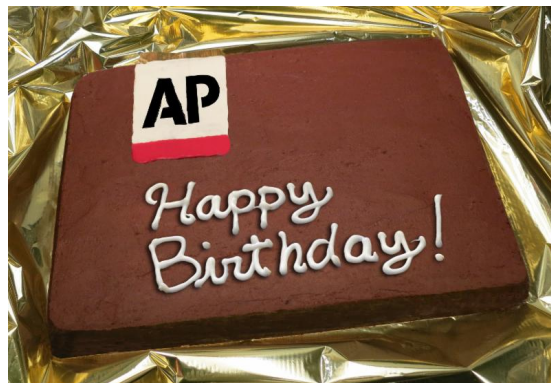
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Super moon, stunning sunrise in Las Vegas



Norm Clarke ([Email](#)) - You've likely had your fill of full moons but I wanted to share this lucky shot with you. I didn't expect to see a super moon at 5:55 am Wednesday when I parted the drapes. Lucky for me because the super moon and the soft light of dawn were gone five minutes later.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



to

Ed Breen - ebreen@indy.rr.com

On Saturday to...

Bobbie Seril - spqr985@aol.com

On Sunday to...

Jim Lloyd - jarthurlloyd@gmail.com

Nick Ludington - nickl68266@aol.com

John Temple - jtemplermn@gmail.com

Welcome to Connecting



Pat Furgurson - ebfurg@comcast.net

Steve Clark - scclark25@gmail.com

Stories of interest

McClatchy furloughs about 115 employees to deal with the impact of coronavirus (CNN)

By KERRY FLYNN

New York (CNN Business) McClatchy (MNIQQ), owner of 30 US newspapers, announced on Thursday it will furlough 4.4% of its employees, lay off four executives and reduce some executive compensation to address the financial pressures from coronavirus.

The company, whose newspapers include the Pulitzer Prize-winning Miami Herald, The Kansas City Star and The Sacramento Bee, employs about 2,700 people, so the plan translates to more than 115 temporary job losses. The reductions will mostly affect McClatchy's advertising department, while the editorial department will be spared, McClatchy Vice President of News Kristin Roberts told CNN Business in an interview on Thursday.

"We're taking some steps that helps us make sure that our expenses are aligned with our revenue," Roberts said. "Everybody in the local news business and in the news business at large has seen their revenue pressured by the impact of the coronavirus. We have worked very carefully and quite precisely and that's allowed us to insulate our news team from these cost reductions."

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

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White House reverses position after blocking health officials from appearing on CNN

By Oliver Darcy

New York (CNN Business) Vice President Mike Pence's office reversed course on Thursday afternoon, after declining for days to allow the nation's top health officials to appear on CNN and discuss the coronavirus pandemic, in what was an attempt to pressure the network into carrying the White House's lengthy daily briefings in full.

After this story was published, Pence's office allowed for the booking of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Robert Redfield for CNN's Thursday night coronavirus town hall. Dr. Anthony Fauci was also booked for Friday on "New Day."

Previously, Pence's office, which is responsible for booking the officials on networks during the pandemic, said it would only allow experts such as Fauci or Dr. Deborah Birx to appear on CNN if the network televised the portion of the White House briefings that includes the vice president and other coronavirus task force members.

Read more [here](#) .

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White House tests journalists for COVID-19

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House tested journalists for COVID-19 before Thursday's press briefing, marking the latest effort by the White House

and the White House Correspondents' Association to keep the new coronavirus off the campus.

The testing followed a report that a member of the White House press corps who was at the White House on Tuesday has experienced symptoms consistent with the disease. The journalist ended up testing negative and is feeling better, Jonathan Karl, the association's president, said in an e-mail Thursday.

Read more [here](#).

Today in History - April 10, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, April 10, the 101st day of 2020. There are 265 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 10, 1912, the British liner RMS Titanic set sail from Southampton, England, on its ill-fated maiden voyage.

On this date:

In 1815, the Mount Tambora volcano on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa exploded in one of the largest eruptions in recorded history, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths.

In 1865, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, a day after surrendering the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House, said farewell to his men, praising them for their "unsurpassed courage and fortitude."

In 1916, the Professional Golfers' Association of America was founded in New York.

In 1925, the F. Scott Fitzgerald novel “The Great Gatsby” was first published by Scribner’s of New York.

In 1932, German President Paul Von Hindenburg was reelected in a runoff, with Adolf Hitler coming in second.

In 1947, Brooklyn Dodgers President Branch Rickey purchased the contract of Jackie Robinson from the Montreal Royals.

In 1966, English author Evelyn Waugh, 62, died in Combe Florey, Somerset, England.

In 1968, “In the Heat of the Night” won best picture of 1967 at the 40th Academy Awards; one of its stars, Rod Steiger, was named best actor while Katharine Hepburn was honored as best actress for “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner.”

In 1971, a table tennis team from the United States arrived in China at the invitation of the communist government for a goodwill visit that came to be known as “ping-pong diplomacy.”

In 1981, imprisoned IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands was declared the winner of a by-election to the British Parliament.

In 1998, the Northern Ireland peace talks concluded as negotiators reached a landmark settlement to end 30 years of bitter rivalries and bloody attacks.

In 2005, Tiger Woods won his fourth Masters with a spectacular finish of birdies and bogeys.

Ten years ago: Polish President Lech Kaczynski (lehk kah-CHIN’-skee), 60, was killed in a plane crash in western Russia that also claimed the lives of his wife and top Polish political, military and church officials. “Designing Women” co-star Dixie Carter, 70, died in Houston.

Five years ago: During the National Rifle Association’s annual convention in Nashville, Tennessee, a succession of potential Republican presidential rivals slung criticism and cracked jokes about Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was expected to announce her White House candidacy. The Apple Watch made its debut.

One year ago: Holden Matthews, the white son of a sheriff’s deputy, was arrested in connection with a string of fires that destroyed three black churches in rural Louisiana; authorities said his father helped arrange for his arrest. (Matthews pleaded guilty to federal and state criminal charges in February; sentencing is set for May.) Scientists released the first image ever made of a black hole, revealing a fiery, doughnut-shaped object in a galaxy 53 million light-years from earth.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Liz Sheridan is 91. Football Hall of Famer John Madden is 84. Reggae artist Bunny Wailer is 73. Actor Steven Seagal is 68. Folk-pop singer Terre Roche (The Roches) is 67. Actor Peter MacNicol is 66. Actress Olivia Brown is 63. Rock musician Steven Gustafson (10,000 Maniacs) is 63. Singer-producer Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds is 62. Rock singer-musician Brian Setzer is 61. Rock singer Katrina Leskanich (les-KAH'-nich) is 60. Actor Jeb Adams is 59. Olympic gold medal speedskater Cathy Turner is 58. Rock musician Tim "Herb" Alexander is 55. R-and-B singer Kenny Lattimore is 53. Actor-comedian Orlando Jones is 52. Rock musician Mike Mushok (Staind) is 51. Rapper Q-Tip (AKA Kamaal) is 50. Former Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens is 45. Actor David Harbour is 45. Blues singer Shemekia Copeland is 41. Actress Laura Bell Bundy is 39. Actor Harry Hadden-Paton is 39. Actress Chyler Leigh is 38. Pop musician Andrew Dost (fun.) is 37. Actor Ryan Merriman is 37. Singer Mandy Moore is 36. Actor Barkhad Abdi (BAHRK'-hahd AHB'-dee) is 35. Actress Shay Mitchell is 33. Actor Haley Joel Osment is 32. Actress Molly Bernard (TV: "Younger") is 32. Country singer Maren Morris is 30. Actor Alex Pettyfer is 30. Actress-singer AJ (AKA Amanda Michalka (mish-AL'-kah) is 29. Actress Daisy Ridley is 28. Singer-actress Sofia Carson is 27. Actress Audrey Whitby is 24. Actress Ruby Jerins is 22.

Thought for Today: "Your actions, and your actions alone, determine your worth." – Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966).

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

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