

Connecting - March 13, 2020

1 message

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Colleagues,

Good Friday morning on this the 13th day of March 2020,

In our lead story, Connecting colleague **Victor Simpson** provides an inside look of Italy and how the country where he's lived for almost a half-century has been severely impacted by the coronavirus.

Victor has moved to Rome with his wife **Daniela Petroff** in 1972 when he was appointed news editor and he later became chief of bureau. He retired from AP in 2013 after a 46-year AP career. A shout-out, by the way, to **Daniela**, former AP fashion and Vatican writer, on the recent celebration of her birthday.

We also provide you with a compelling wire essay on coronavirus by **Ted Anthony**, who has written about American culture for the past 30 years. and a thank-you note to AP staff covering the pandemic from AP Managing Editor Brian **Carovillano**. Ted covered the SARS outbreak in China in 2003.

Here are two sites you can reference for the latest on coronavirus that were recommended and shared by colleagues **John Terino** and **Sibby Christensen**:

[CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Situation Summary](#)

[COVID-19: Getting good information as virus crisis unfolds – Freedom Forum](#)

Be smart, be cautious – and share your stories of coronavirus or any other topic on your mind.

Have a safe weekend!

Paul

Lockdown has turned normally lively Rome into a virtual ghost town



Victor Simpson with daughter Debbie and wife Daniela

Victor L. Simpson ([Email](#)) - I was slicing my veal with peperoncino and olive oil at lunch with my daughter Debbie in one of Rome's most fashionable restaurants the other day when I looked up and realized we very virtually the only people in the place.

Gina in Parioli, Rome's equivalent of New York's Upper East side, is usually bustling with business people and chicly dressed mothers from the neighborhood. But that day there was just one other couple with worse news yet to come.

Since Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced in the early hours Sunday that he was putting the entire country under lockdown to fight the coronavirus, life in Italy as we have known it for decades has taken a severe hit.

Conte acted after previous attempts to limit the spread of the virus, which first appeared in the north, failed. Italy became second only to China in the number of cases and the number of deaths.

Italy has always prided itself as being second only to Japan in its number of elderly, but the virus has exacted a heavy toll on people over 80.

The first lockdown was in the northern region of Lombardi and its capital, Milan, an eternal rival of Rome, the nation's capital. The efficient industrialists vs the lazy bureaucrats.

Some saw it as sweet revenge for the scorn heaped on Rome for its year-long garbage crisis, with garbage often unpicked up for days and rotting away on the street, attracting various creatures ranging from rats to sea gulls to wild boars.

But then the lockdown was extended to the entire country, turning the usually lively Rome into a virtual ghost town. There seems to be rules for everything including one close to my heart as an owner of three wirehaired dachshunds that allows dog walking ``near your home and for a limited time.”

That clause was inserted Wednesday after the parks were overrun with families with their dogs, out of work parents with their out of school children.

All schools and universities have been ordered closed until April 5, public gatherings have been banned, soccer games either postponed or played in stadiums without fans. World Cup ski races in Cortina were simply canceled.

Beloved espresso bars first had to close by 6 p.m., putting a damper on the popular early evening Aperitivo. With the latest decree, bars and restaurants simply can't open at any time in the day. That ban put an end to plans for a celebration of a “big birthday” for my wife, former AP fashion writer Daniela Petroff.

About the only positive note was the ease in which I got a rare parking spot in the center of Rome near Piazza del Popolo. Bans on non-residential parking have been lifted.

Italy is one of the most popular places in the world to visit, but hotels and airlines have been flooded with cancellations. My daughter, a PR executive with a luxury hotel group, is now on forced vacation.

Once a poor country, the so-called economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s raised the life styles of millions of Italian and propelled the country's economy into third place in the European Union.

Now many wonder, how many years it will take to recover from the economic damage done by coronavirus.

Analysis: With unease, Americans lurch into coronavirus era



In this March 11, 2020, file photo, a worker from a Servpro disaster recovery team wearing a protective suit and respirator peers out a window as he waits to exit the Life Care Center in Kirkland, Wash., for a break from cleaning the facility. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File)

By TED ANTHONY

So this is where we are:

Major League Baseball's opening day postponed. Broadway and Hollywood grinding to a halt, and March Madness canceled. Universities from Harvard to UCLA telling students to stay away. Most travelers from Europe banned. Tom Hanks, Hollywood's embodiment of everyday American-ness, in isolation in an Australian hospital with the virus. And the speaker of the House of Representatives taking this question Thursday morning: "How prepared is Congress to work from home?"

This, in mid-March 2020, is now the very abnormal normal in the new United States of Purell — a nation that watched for weeks as the coronavirus erupted in China, South Korea, Iran and Italy before starting down the path of figuring out how to encounter this threat itself.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, something tipped. Words and phrases used intermittently in recent days began coming at Americans in a dizzying fusillade: Canceled. Postponed. Scrapped. Stay home. Don't come in. Don't embrace. Don't shake hands. Social distancing. Unprecedented. Crisis.

“I think it’s finally sinking in how serious this is, and how incredibly unprepared we are going into this. And people are scrambling,” says Dr. Mical Raz, a medical historian and practicing physician who teaches at the University of Rochester.

Which raises the central, delicate question: Are Americans ready to meet this challenge — a challenge distinct from any other that American society has faced in the last few generations?

Read more [here](#). Shared by Mark Mittelstadt.

A salute to AP journalists covering coronavirus

Brian Carovillano ([Email](#)) – AP managing editor, in a note Thursday to AP staff:

This is a time of incredible global upheaval and disruption, the likes of which we have not seen in decades. The coronavirus outbreak is challenging our institutions and upending our cultural traditions in ways that seemed unimaginable just a few short weeks ago. The past 24 hours alone have seen a dizzying cascade of developments, each bigger than the last.

I am sending this note because I’m in awe of the AP’s journalists and journalism. Looking across the report today, there is SO much great reporting, visual journalism and storytelling. Literally, from all regions and all departments of the AP. At a nervous time for the planet, the work that you all are doing makes me at least feel confident that people will have accurate and reliable information at the time they need it most. And our customers are grateful – colleagues on the business side tell us usage and demand is off the charts.

The world needs the AP every day, to cut through the politics and crosswinds of the moment, to tell stories with a wide lens and help a global audience connect the dots of things that may seem distant or disconnected. That has never been more true than it is right now. This week. Today. Tomorrow. We have been challenged with a story of mind-blowing dimensions, but I know we will rise to it because there is no news organization on Earth that is better suited to it.

That’s because of you. A dizzying number of AP journalists have already contributed to our global coronavirus coverage since the outbreak began just a few short months ago (!) in China. By the time this runs its course, there won’t be a person in this organization who hasn’t contributed to the coverage in significant ways.

So, thank you for all that you have done already, and all that you will be doing in the busy weeks and months to come. And thanks, especially, to the team in

Asia who have shown us all how to cover this story aggressively, responsibly, and safely.

An 87th birthday salute to our colleague Malcolm Barr



From left, HSWC board members Amy Thurman, Ellen Aders, Michelle Kisiorek and Wagner Shelter Executive Director Meghan Bowers, wish Malcolm Barr a happy birthday at Va. Beer Museum party organized by wife Carol. Courtesy Photo/HSWC

By Roger Bianchini

Royal Examiner of Front Royal, Virginia

One of Royal Examiner's contributing writers, former Associated Press journalist Malcolm Barr Sr., was honored at his 87th birthday party, Tuesday, March 10, by the Humane Society of Warren County (HSWC) and its Julia Wagner Animal Shelter, among other friends.

Barr is a former president of HSWC and a still active and avid supporter of the Society and the Shelter's work on behalf of the County's stray and abandoned animals. Still, Barr said he was "surprised and honored" that his birthday celebration included a two-pronged present delivered by the Wagner Shelter's Executive Director Meghan Bowers and some of the current HSWC board members.

Those presents were a canvas inscribed with dog paw prints and notice that one of the shelter's homeless dogs has been named "Malcolm" after the Rockland octogenarian.

"I hope he will soon find a forever home and that maybe they'll keep his name," Barr said of Malcolm the dog, who was described as a black, friendly, pit bull terrier. "I know I always am very attentive and respond on command when called by it," human Malcolm said of wife Carol's call.

Read more [here](#).

Tales of sports writing newbies

Charles Richards ([Email](#)) - Mike Harris' comments about the schooling that AP veterans sometimes needed to give "sports newbies" reminded me of a change that was made to a game story of longtime Southwest sports editor Denne Freeman.

This was in the 1980s – before AP writers could transmit their stories directly by computer.

One fall Sunday afternoon, early in the fourth quarter of a Dallas Cowboys game, Denne phoned the AP Dallas desk from the press box in Texas Stadium and began dictating his game story except for the first paragraph or two or three, which he would add later. (Usually, Denne's game stories began moving on the wire within seconds of the final gun.)

On this particular Sunday, the "sports newbie" who took the dictation noticed that Denne had used "kicked" several times and "punted" only once, so he made a change.

Denne was rather displeased that a story carrying his byline had a kicker "punting" a field goal.

Paul Stevens (Email) – Robert Lee “Bob” Zimmer and his wife Lynda were among our very first couples friends when we met at Little Rock Air Force Base in 1969, when Bob and I were members of the staff of the base newspaper, the Air Scoop (and Lynda went to work for the afternoon Arkansas Democrat). After our USAF service ended, we both joined the AP – Bob in the Little Rock bureau and me in Albany.

Bob had many interests, but sports was low on that list, so when I learned he had been named AP’s Champaign, Ill., correspondent, whose prime responsibility was farm writing but also included University of Illinois sports, I thought, wow, he is tackling new territory. Like everything he did, however, he did it well.

A favorite story he told me on himself was when he first covered an Illini home basketball game. Next to him on press row was the UPI correspondent. The game ended in regulation in a tie, and Bob gathered his notes, got up and left the arena to phone in the result to the Chicago bureau. When the staffer on the other end learned the score was tied, he told Bob to get the heck back in there – that they played overtime. Meanwhile, the UPI writer had seen him leave and followed him out to file a story with the UPI bureau.

We laughed about it later and I recall he really took to sports, even accompanying the Illini to a Rose Bowl appearance. Bob died suddenly in 1992 and I miss him greatly. His wife Lynda ([Email](#)) remains our friend and is a Connecting colleague.

AP promotes Ron Nixon to be its global investigations editor

NEW YORK (AP) — The Associated Press has promoted acclaimed reporter, editor and data journalist Ron Nixon to be its global investigations editor, overseeing teams of reporters around the world and helping to infuse the AP’s global news report with accountability reporting and a strong investigative ethos.



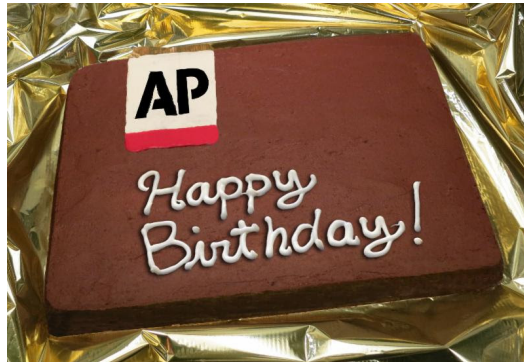
The announcement was made Thursday by Senior Vice President and Executive Editor Sally Buzbee.

“Ron’s integrity, his passion for smart reporting and his commitment to helping everyone he meets make him the ideal leader for AP’s scrappy, ambitious investigative team,” Buzbee said. “We care deeply about this work and are thrilled to have found the right person to lead it.”

Nixon joined the AP in early 2019 as international investigations editor, managing a team of investigative reporters in the U.S. and abroad. In that role, he has guided the AP's ongoing coverage of the war in Yemen, including investigations that found the United Nations was investigating corruption in its own agencies, and uncovering efforts by Houthi rebels to block aid efforts.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Bill Kole.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



to

Sandy Johnson - sandykjohnson@yahoo.com

Estes Thompson - estest48@gmail.com

Nancy Trott - trottnan222@gmail.com

On Saturday to...

Larry Blasko - lglasko@yahoo.com

Steve Fox - steve@silverfoxco.com

Pat Milton - pam1414@aol.com

Sarah Postle - dpostle2@comcast.net

On Sunday to...

Jack Limpert - jlimpert@washingtsonian.com

Welcome to Connecting



Karen Kaiser - kkaiser@ap.org

Stories of interest

Rupert Murdoch could save lives by forcing Fox News to tell the truth about coronavirus — right now (Washington Post)

By Margaret Sullivan
Media columnist

The insidious feedback loop between President Trump and Fox News is no secret.

When Trump says “jump,” the network leaps into action. And what the president hears on Fox News often dictates his own pronouncements and policies — which, in turn, are glowingly represented in Fox News’s coverage and commentary.

That’s never been anything short of dangerous, since the effect has been to create a de facto state-run media monster more devoted to maintaining power than shedding light on the truth. But now the mind-meld of Fox News and Trump is potentially lethal as Trump plays down the seriousness of the coronavirus and, hearing nothing but applause from his favorite information source for doing so, sees little reason to change.

There’s one person who could transform all that in an instant: Fox founder Rupert Murdoch, the Australian-born media mogul who, at 89, still exerts his influence on the leading cable network — and thus on the president himself.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Sibby Christensen, Dennis Conrad.

Jazz center Rudy Gobert joked about coronavirus, touched reporters' recorders days before positive test (USA Today)

By STEVE GARDNER

The coronavirus is no joking matter, and the NBA made that clear Wednesday night, suspending its season after a Utah Jazz player preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19.

A person familiar with the situation confirmed to USA TODAY Sports that the player was Utah center Rudy Gobert. And on Monday, Gobert had appeared to joke about the coronavirus after an interview session with reporters.

He made a point to touch all of their tape recorders and microphones on his way to the team's shootaround.

Two days later, Gobert was listed as "questionable" with an illness on the team's injury report before its game at Oklahoma City. His coronavirus test result was reported before Wednesday's tip-off against the Thunder, and after the teams were pulled off the court, the game was postponed.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Dennis Conrad.

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Pakistan anti-graft body arrests newspaper, TV mogul Rehman

By MUNIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's anti-graft body Thursday ordered the arrest of the owner and editor-in-chief of Pakistan's largest independent group of newspapers and TV stations in a decades-old case related to allegations of tax evasion in a real estate purchase.

Mir Shakilur Rehman's Jang Group of Newspapers, which includes Geo TV, has been critical of the government. He was arrested in the eastern city of Lahore, the National Accountability Bureau said, without giving additional details.

Rehman's arrest drew condemnation from the country's journalistic community, with Geo News calling the arrest a "political victimization."

"This is an attack on the freedom of expression," said Rana Jawad, Geo News' news director.

Pakistan, one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to work, has witnessed an intensified crackdown on journalists, human rights workers, activists and members of civil society in recent years.

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

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Top editors leave HuffPost and BuzzFeed News amid growing doubts about the future of digital news (Washington Post)

By Paul Farhi

In the span of just a few weeks, the top editors of two leading digital-news outfits called it quits. Ben Smith, who ran BuzzFeed News for eight years, took a job writing a column at the New York Times; Lydia Polgreen is leaving HuffPost to oversee a podcast company.

Two does not make a trend, but it does raise a question: Do their departures — smack in the middle of the busiest news cycle in years — say something about the troubled state of the digital news media?

Both editors answer with a firm no. They say their decisions were personal, not an extension of some larger industry malaise. Nevertheless, it's impossible not to notice the context.

HuffPost and BuzzFeed were once the shooting stars of the new-media galaxy, innovators that showed “legacy” media organizations how news could be edited and packaged for the young and digitally savvy. The former pioneered high-volume commentary, almost entirely liberal, and eventually coupled it with some first-class reporting, becoming one of the first digital-only news organizations to win a Pulitzer Prize. The latter began as a purveyor of “listicles,” quizzes and other clickbaity content but under Smith developed into a newsroom that broke several important stories but also famously flopped in its reporting about special counsel Robert S. Mueller III's investigation of President Trump.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Len Iwanski.

Today in History – March 13, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, March 13, the 73rd day of 2020. There are 293 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 13, 2013, Jorge Bergoglio (HOHR'-hay behr-GOHG'-lee-oh) of Argentina was elected pope, choosing the name Francis; he was the first pontiff from the Americas and the first from outside Europe in more than a millennium.

On this date:

In 1639, New College was renamed Harvard College for clergyman John Harvard.

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed a measure prohibiting Union military officers from returning fugitive slaves to their owners.

In 1865, Confederate President Jefferson Davis signed a measure allowing black slaves to enlist in the Confederate States Army with the promise they would be set free.

In 1901, the 23rd President of the United States, Benjamin Harrison, died in Indianapolis at age 67.

In 1925, the Tennessee General Assembly approved a bill prohibiting the teaching of the theory of evolution. (Gov. Austin Peay (pee) signed the measure on March 21.)

In 1933, banks in the U.S. began to reopen after a "holiday" declared by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1934, a gang that included John Dillinger and "Baby Face" Nelson robbed the First National Bank in Mason City, Iowa, making off with \$52,344.

In 1954, the Battle of Dien Bien Phu began during the First Indochina War as Viet Minh forces attacked French troops, who were defeated nearly two months later.

In 1969, the Apollo 9 astronauts splashed down, ending a mission that included the successful testing of the Lunar Module.

In 1975, the first Chili's restaurant was opened in Dallas by entrepreneur Larry Lavine.

In 1980, Ford Motor Co. Chairman Henry Ford II announced he was stepping down, the same day a jury in Winamac, Indiana, found the company not guilty of reckless homicide in the fiery deaths of three young women in a Ford Pinto.

In 1996, a gunman burst into an elementary school in Dunblane, Scotland, and opened fire, killing 16 children and one teacher before killing himself.

Ten years ago: At least 30 people were killed in a series of Taliban suicide bombings in Afghanistan in what appeared to be a failed attempt to free inmates from a Kandahar prison. The Vatican denounced what it called aggressive attempts to drag Pope Benedict XVI into the spreading scandal of pedophile priests in his German homeland. With the biggest fight crowd in the U.S. in 17 years cheering him on at Cowboys Stadium, Manny Pacquiao dominated Joshua Clottey from the opening bell to retain his welterweight title.

Five years ago: In his first visit to the Phoenix Veterans Affairs hospital whose practices sparked a health care scandal, President Barack Obama acknowledged lingering weaknesses in the federal government's response to the chronic delays and false waiting lists in the VA health system. Al Rosen, the muscular third baseman who won the 1953 AL MVP and played on the last Cleveland Indians team to win the World Series, died in Rancho Mirage, California, at age 91.

One year ago: A late winter storm brought blizzards, floods and a tornado across more than 25 states from the northern Rocky Mountains to Texas and beyond. A federal judge in Washington increased to a total of seven and a-half years the prison sentence for former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort for misleading the government about his foreign lobbying work; Manafort was also hit with fresh state charges in New York accusing him of giving false information on mortgage loan applications. (A state judge later threw out those charges.) Cardinal George Pell, the most senior Catholic to be convicted of child sex abuse, was sentenced in Australia to six years in prison for molesting two choirboys in an Australian cathedral. California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed an executive order granting reprieves to all 737 condemned inmates on the nation's largest death row, putting a moratorium on executions during his term as governor.

Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician Roy Haynes is 95. Country singer Jan Howard is 90. Songwriter Mike Stoller (STOH'-ler) is 87. Singer-songwriter Neil Sedaka is 81. R&B/gospel singer Candi Staton is 80. Opera singer Julia Migenes is 71. Actor William H. Macy is 70. Comedian Robin Duke is 66. Actress Dana Delany is 64. Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., is 63. Rock musician Adam Clayton (U2) is 60. Jazz musician Terence Blanchard is 58. Actor Christopher Collet is 52. Rock musician Matt McDonough (Mudvayne) is 51. Actress Annabeth Gish is 49. Actress Tracy Wells is 49. Rapper-actor Common is 48. Rapper Khujo (Goodie Mob, The Lumberjacks) is 48. Singer Glenn Lewis is 45. Actor Danny Masterson is 44. Bluegrass musician Clayton Campbell (The Gibson Brothers) is 39. Actor Noel Fisher is 36. Singers Natalie and Nicole Albino (Nina Sky) are 36. Actor Emile Hirsch is 35. Olympic gold medal skier Mikaela Shiffrin is 25. Tennis star Coco Gauff is 16.

Thought for Today: "History repeats itself. That's one of the things wrong with history." [-] Clarence Darrow, American lawyer (born 1857, died this

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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