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Connecting April 27, 2020

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Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this the 27th day of April 2020,

Today's Connecting Spotlight shines on our colleague **Betsy Blaney**, who traveled a unique path to becoming a journalist:

For 20 years, she was a professional tennis player and instructor – and even served as a line judge in 1973 for one of the most famous tennis matches of all time, the Battle of the Sexes, Billie Jean King vs. Bobby Riggs in the Houston Astrodome.

Betsy retired from her second career as a journalist in February after working as a radio producer at Texas Tech Public Media following a 25-year career in print journalism. Most recently, she was the AP's West Texas correspondent, based in Lubbock for more than 16 years and covering 65 counties in the region. She was a reporter at the Lewisville (Texas) News and the Fort Worth Star-Telegram before joining the AP in Dallas and moving months later to Lubbock.

CORRECTIONS : In Friday's issue, relating to the story of Ginny Byrne's death, The last name for Reilly and Alex is Dundon. An item in Friday's Connecting on Anick Jesdanun's cousin deciding to run the New York City Marathon in his honor gave the wrong date of Nick's death. He died April 2.

AP GROUND GAME : In this episode of the "Ground Game: Inside the Outbreak" podcast, host Ralph



Russo talks to AP Fact Check Editor Karen Mahabir and reporter Amanda Seitz about how social media platforms have become a hotbed of misinformation, conspiracy theories and skepticism around the coronavirus pandemic.

Listen [here](#) .

Be safe, stay healthy and send along your contributions.

Paul

Connecting profile **Betsy Blaney**



Betsy Blaney, in New York in 2018 at US Open

What are you doing these days?

I stepped into retirement in early February, with plans to teach tennis a dozen or so hours a week, play as much pickleball as possible, hike in nearby state parks, travel to bucket-list spots around the globe, read to underprivileged children and volunteer for a local non-profit hospice organization.

I've navigated unfamiliar terrain plenty in my life. The most recent was a layoff in late 2016. Then came learning radio production in my final full-time job at the Lubbock NPR affiliate. Nothing, however, prepared me for how rapidly my retirement world, the entire world would change.

My retirement plans are still in place. When those activities begin in earnest is anyone's guess. But it will be when I feel safe; I am prepared for a long haul.

During these days of staying safely at home, I am up early. I journal, add paragraphs to a book I'm working on, and do some yoga and stretching. I've found a tall wall on the very-vacant Texas Tech campus against which hit tennis balls. I walk a few miles daily and often meander my neighborhood on my bike. Though I enjoy my backyard deck/pergola, I find myself on my front porch. I get a chance to see people!

How did you get your first job with the AP? Who hired you? What were your first days like?

My arrival at AP came after briefly stepping into PR at a medical center in Dallas following nearly a decade in journalism. I knew pretty quickly that PR wasn't a good fit, so I called the Dallas AP office to arrange a test. Several months later, after interviews with Rod Richardson and John Lumpkin, I became a newswoman in September 2000. I remember Rod's words perfectly: "the demands of the job are often unreasonable." They could be but the adrenaline rushes were pretty cool, too.

Early days including an assignment that took me high above Dallas in a blimp. The pilot let me drive it briefly! Not too long after that, there was a local connection to the bombing of the USS Cole and the escape of the Texas Seven from a Texas prison.

Eight months later, I was named AP's West Texas correspondent, covering a quarter of Texas's 254 counties out in The Big Empty, a position I held until December 2016. Bob Knight's arrival at Texas Tech brought challenges I never anticipated. Don't get me started on Mike Leach, OK?

Who played the most significant role in your careers and how?

Over the course of my two careers – professional tennis and journalism – I enjoyed the great good fortune to come across immensely good, earnest people who always supported, encouraged and challenged me. I don't know how to adequately thank them. In their own way, each nourished dreams I'd had since age 10 – to play on the tour and to work for AP.



At London Olympics, helping Anne Peterson (left) cover volleyball at Earl's Court

At AP, Linda Leavell, Rod Richardson, Jaime Aron, John McFarland and Michelle Williams were absolutely the best. Lois Norder, Kathie Hinnen and Joan Krauter at the Fort Worth Star-Telegram wrung out the best from me as the cops and courts reporter.

Tennis-wise, coaches and friends kept telling me I had the talent. What I lacked was discipline and great fitness. In time that too came and resulted in my playing at the US Open and at Wimbledon, and to win a women's doubles title in Sweden in 1981.

One coach encouraged me in 1972 to move to Texas to pursue my tennis. Neil Roush also provided me a chance to be part of sports history. I got to call lines in the Houston Astrodome in 1973 when Billie Jean King faced Bobby Riggs in the Battle of the Sexes. On the 30th anniversary of the match, I wrote a story for the wire on the experience that can be found [here](#).

NOTE: I played against BJK and her doubles partner when I was on the tour. Don't ask the score; it wasn't pretty!

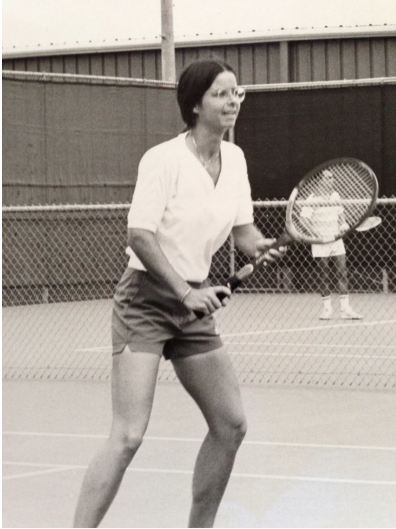
In photo at right, that is me just to the left of Billie Jean King, calling lines.



Would you do it all over again- or what would you change?

There are very few things I would change. Maybe I could have joined the women's tennis tour a few years earlier than I did, but my head/mental toughness needed time to match my physical talent. But in journalism, a field in which reporters and editors wake up every day not knowing what the day will bring, I am completely content with how my career went.

What's your favorite hobby or activity?



Tennis is in my marrow, and I hope to be able to teach for many years to come. Playing, though, is no longer feasible. Though I got new hips in 2016, I can't cover the court like I used to and the risk of dislocation too great. But, I am able to say without equivocation that I was once really good. I also love reading and hiking in beautiful spaces. There, however, will be no more treks to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

What's the best vacation trip you've ever made?

This one is easy. I spent three weeks on Mykonos, staying at a quaint villa on the other side of the island from its small city center. Isla Mujeres also was a standout vacation spot. It's by far the most idyllic place I've ever been. And I plan a return vacation once the pandemic calms.

Names of your family members and what they do?

All of the Blaney siblings are now retired from full-time careers. Brother Chuck still does some carpentry work but as the eldest (70) he's scaling back. Older sister Loranne retired several years ago after helping at-risk youth in a northern California school district, and youngest brother Joe retired in late September after 31 years in the cardiac cath lab in the Milwaukee VA Hospital. We are a very tight cohort emotionally, despite living far from one another. I hope to physically embrace them all again soon.

Betsy Blaney's email is - ecblaney@gmail.com

Sadness over death of Ginny Byrne

Mick Boroughs ([Email](#)) - I was so sorry to hear about Ginny Byrne's passing. She and I both started at AP the same year, 1982, and as two redheads we became fast friends. She was from The Bronx and I was from Burien, Wash. We ended up working together on the Special Services Desk

and exchanged a lot of stories. I remember her telling me about her adventures riding a bike across Iowa one summer. So different from The Bronx! Who knew?! Years after I left AP, we reconnected through Facebook. My condolences to her husband, stepson and all her friends.

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This photo from 1988, when Ginny joined the celebration when my wife and I got married. L-R Mike Hammer (BNC and NYB); Debbie Shapiro and Dave Shapiro (former BNC/NYB), Adolphe Bernotas, (AP Concord, retired); Ginny, Mark Knoller, (former BNC)

Paul Reilly ([Email](#)) - This past week truly was a bad week for AP Broadcast/Radio. First AP Radio stalwart David Melendy passed after a long illness, and now Ginny Byrne who worked at NYB and the New York Bureau. Both, by the way, also Guild leaders at one time or another.

Ginny and I started on the AP broadcast desk in New York at about the same time. We shared an instant connection -- maybe because of our shared Irish heritage, or maybe because I had some Byrne in me (my grandmother was a Byrne). Ginny, to me, was the quintessential New Yorker, boisterous (ok, maybe loud), outgoing, friendly, ready to grab a pint at the end of any shift -- be it 8 a.m. after an overnight (I mean 'early' shift -- 'you're not working the overnight, you're working early') at Hurley's, or midnight at the Pig 'n Whistle after a night shift. (We were too new to see daylight hours while working).

Even after the NY broadcast desk moved to DC, and Ginny stayed behind (like she'd ever leave New York), she stayed in touch with her former colleagues. In fact, for a while she dated one Mark Knoller while he was still at the AP.

I will always remember her hearty smile and great laugh. Heaven just got little noisier.

Indianapolis alums stage Zoom reunion



Top Row, from left: Robert Daugherty, John Strauss, Michael Conroy, Diane Balk Palguta; 2nd Row, from left: Jacqui Cook, Susan and Tom Wyman, Paul Stevens, Lisa Greathouse; 3rd Row, from left: Jodi Perras, Andy Lippman, Beth Harris, Doug Richardson; 4th Row: Lindel Hutson, Hank Lowenkron.

John Strauss ([Email](#)) - In a time when so many of us are staying connected through video services, it's no surprise to find a few AP reunions online. In another example last weekend, yours truly joined other former AP Indianapolis veterans for a meetup on Zoom. Also in the group were Andy Lippman, also a former IND bureau chief, who later served as CoB in Los Angeles, and Paul Stevens, who preceded Andy as IND bureau chief before moving to Kansas City; former news editors Lindel Hutson (later CoB in Oklahoma City); Susan Wyman and John Strauss, who also had stops in Nashville and New York and organized the gathering. Others on the call were Beth Harris, now with AP in Los Angeles covering sports and entertainment, and Michael Conroy, AP Indianapolis photographer; Diane Balk Palguda, Jacqui Podzius Cook, Tom Wyman, Lisa Pearlman Greathouse, Jodi Perras, Doug Richardson, Hank Lowenkron and former Indianapolis, and later Washington, photographer Bob Daugherty, who covered the Watergate hearings, President Nixon in China, the Paris peace talks with Kissinger, and other major stories during his 43-year AP career.

Isolation swimming pool



Ken Fields ([Email](#)) - We are still hunkered down here in Mill Creek, Washington. My son Ryan has swapped out his garage camping tent for a swimming pool. I've included a photo of three-year-old granddaughter Ellie in the pool in the garage. We have been maintaining our isolation by getting deliveries from Costco, Amazon and local grocery. I did make one trip (with mask and gloves) to a nursery that has lots of open outside space for some flowers and veggies. I can work in the garden once the weather gets drier. Our grandson, Deacon, was born February 13 of this year and we have only been able to see him twice. My daughter Robyn sends a video of Deacon to us every day using an app called Marco Polo. We seem to be on the downward side of the "curve" and our governor is planning on relaxing some of the restrictions starting May 4, so we are hopeful.

Best of the Week

AP gets 'blockbuster' scoop on China's delay in warning of the coronavirus



AP PHOTO / EMILY WANG

Based on internal documents and analysis by medical experts, AP revealed that China kept the new coronavirus secret for six days, during which thousands were likely infected and setting the stage for the global pandemic.

What and when did authorities in China know about the coronavirus' initial spread and did they react fast enough? Those have become burning questions as COVID-19 tears a deadly and destructive path across the globe.

Among the toughest to answer, too.

China, said by press freedom watchdogs to be the world's leading jailer of journalists, is keeping the tightest of reins on information about how it managed the spread of the disease from its origins in the city of Wuhan.

The Associated Press went further than anyone in cracking open the information lockdown with an exclusive story that rose above another week of searing journalism about the pandemic from the agency's teams around the world.

Read more [here](#) .

Best of the States

The cost of Trump environmental rollbacks: Health woes hit minority communities hardest



Activist Hilton Kelley poses along the railroad tracks that divide East and West Port Arthur, Texas, March 23, 2020. “Now we may not drop dead (today),” Kelley said of environmental protection rollbacks and the communities surrounding the refineries and plants. “But when you’re inundated day after day ... we’re dead. We’re dead.” AP PHOTO / DAVID J. PHILLIP

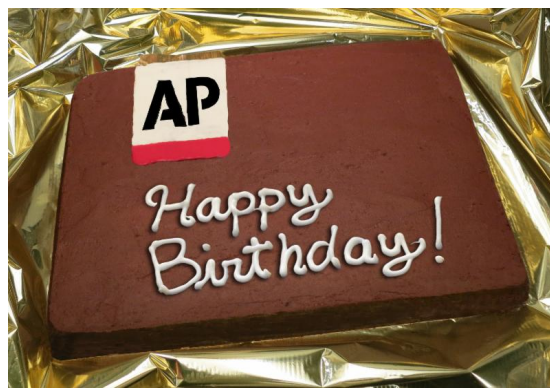
The Trump administration's rollback of regulations has had a real cost in terms of public health among minorities. AP’s Ellen Knickmeyer reported that's nowhere more apparent than in the shadow of the big oil refineries and chemical plants that have grown up around African American neighborhoods on Texas' Gulf Coast.

With African American and Hispanic communities in the Houston region already suffered higher rates of asthma and other diseases than the nation at large, AP’s Ellen Knickmeyer decided to focus on the area for a story on ordinary Americans living through the Trump administration’s public health and environmental rollbacks.

The Houston and Port Arthur region had seen a half-dozen major industrial accidents – explosions, chemical releases and fires – that had forced evacuations, killed people and exposed communities to hazardous plant emissions. But at the same time, the administration was cutting back on rules limiting and monitoring harmful industrial pollutants, slashing enforcement for violators and weakening an industrial-disaster rule that had mandated more emergency planning and more public disclosure on risks.

Read more [here](#) .

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



to

Jim Carrier - jimcarrier@msn.com

Sally Hale – sallyhale00@gmail.com

Larry McDermott – lmcdermott@aol.com

Dan Sewell – dsewell@ap.org

Stories of interest

What happens when a local newspaper dies (Washington Post)

By David Von Drehle
Columnist

What comes after the death of the local newspaper?

This question is suddenly urgent in Denver, of all places, a thriving metropolis that used to be one heck of a newspaper town. Long after most places had settled on a single local paper, the Mile High City sustained a swashbuckling newspaper war, pitting the broadsheet Denver Post against the tabloid Rocky Mountain News. The Rocky finally died during the depths of the Great Recession, just shy of its 150th birthday. Now, a barrage of cuts and resignations in recent weeks may have left the Denver Post mortally wounded.

I would love to wax nostalgic about the Denver Post, where luck placed me behind a typewriter in the sports department at 17. Yes, a typewriter. It wasn't even electric. And my long walk to school was uphill both ways.

But as the novelist Peter De Vries noted, nostalgia ain't what it used to be. The long-predicted demise of robust, self-funding local newspapers is upon us — a fact made clear by the arrival of so-called vulture capitalists to scoop up papers from coast to coast, including the Denver Post, and drain them of their

remaining profits. This is no time for wistfulness. To imagine what will replace them, we need to be clear-eyed about why they are dying.

Read more [here](#) .

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The White House attempts to humiliate CNN's Kaitlan Collins (Washington Post)

By Erik Wemple

CNN on Friday made sure its viewers knew not to inject bleach to protect themselves from covid-19. In multiple segments, the network's hosts denounced President Trump's unfathomably dumb remarks from Thursday evening about covid-19 treatments involving disinfectant and light. Host Anderson Cooper was unmerciful regarding the White House's shifting explanations for those remarks: It first blamed the media for taking them out of context; Trump later explained that they were merely sarcastic comments aimed at reporters.

"It's just sad to see the president of the United States, any of the president of the United States ... just blatantly making up something," said Cooper. "They hadn't lined up their lies, they came up with a different lie."

Though some folks might say that those words sound like a resistance media organization, they actually represent objective reporting. Footage from the briefing made clear that there was nothing sarcastic about the comments, nor did the media take them out of context. The president just couldn't own his stupidity.

Later on Friday, CNN White House correspondent Kaitlan Collins received a strange request from a White House official, one that she subsequently detailed on Twitter:

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

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Honest Apologies for Why I Couldn't Talk During Quarantine (New York Times)

By Julia Shipllett

Ms. Shipllett is a writer, comedian and actor in Brooklyn.

Hey, I'm so sorry I didn't text you back this afternoon. I was finishing a 1,500-piece puzzle of a basset hound wearing a cowboy hat for the second time.

I apologize for not answering your FaceTime earlier! I was curious how long it would take me to pluck each and every single one of my leg hairs and then decided to find out. Five hours 36 minutes!

Please forgive me for bailing on our group Zoom yesterday. The past week has gotten really busy with this stop-motion animation about a forbidden love affair between a Q-Tip and a cotton ball I've been working on. It feels like an important story to tell right now.

Ugh, I'm the worst for not picking up on Skype last night. After the unemployment website crashed for the 74th time, I smashed my laptop on the ground. It's currently in four pieces so it's been a little hard to use since then.

Read more [here](#) . Shared by John Brewer.

The Final Word



Connecting colleague David Seaton, a longtime Kansas newspaperman, died April 18 at the age of 80. He served as editor and publisher of the Winfield Daily Courier from 1981 to 2009. His brother Edward Seaton, chairman of the Manhattan (Kansas) Mercury, shared this tribute.

Today in History - April 27, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, April 27, the 118th day of 2020. There are 248 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 27, 2011, powerful tornadoes raked the South and Midwest; according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, more than 120 twisters resulted in 316 deaths.

On this date:

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was killed by natives in the Philippines.

In 1791, the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel Morse, was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

In 1810, Ludwig van Beethoven wrote one of his most famous piano compositions, the Bagatelle in A-minor.

In 1865, the steamer Sultana, carrying freed Union prisoners of war, exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee; death toll estimates vary from 1,500 to 2,000.

In 1950, Britain formally recognized the state of Israel.

In 1965, broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow died in Pawling, New York, two days after turning 57.

In 1978, 51 construction workers plunged to their deaths when a scaffold inside a cooling tower at the Pleasants Power Station site in West Virginia fell 168 feet to the ground.

In 1982, the trial of John W. Hinckley Jr., who shot four people, including President Ronald Reagan, began in Washington. (The trial ended with Hinckley's acquittal by reason of insanity.)

In 1992, the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was proclaimed in Belgrade by the republic of Serbia and its lone ally, Montenegro. Russia and 12 other former Soviet republics won entry into the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Betty Boothroyd became the first female Speaker of Britain's House of Commons.

In 1994, former President Richard M. Nixon was remembered at an outdoor funeral service attended by all five of his successors at the Nixon presidential library in Yorba Linda, California.

In 2002, South African entrepreneur Mark Shuttleworth arrived at the international space station for an eight-day, seven-night cruise that had cost him \$20 million.

In 2009, a 23-month-old Mexico City toddler died at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, becoming the first swine-flu death on U.S. soil.

Ten years ago: Defending his company against blistering criticism, the chief executive of Goldman Sachs, Lloyd Blankfein, told a Senate hearing that clients who'd bought subprime mortgage securities from the Wall Street powerhouse in 2006 and 2007 came looking for risk "and that's what they got." Former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega was extradited from the United States to France, where he was later convicted of laundering drug money and received a seven-year sentence. Thomas Hagan, the only man to admit shooting Malcolm X, was freed on parole. University of Washington president Mark Emmert was selected as president of the NCAA.

Five years ago: Rioters plunged part of Baltimore into chaos, torching a pharmacy, setting police cars ablaze and throwing bricks at officers hours after thousands attended a funeral for Freddie Gray, who died from a severe spinal injury he'd suffered in police custody; the Baltimore Orioles' home game against the Chicago White Sox was postponed because of safety concerns. Opening statements took place in Centennial, Colorado, at the trial of movie theater shooter James Holmes. Loretta Lynch was sworn in as the 83rd U.S. attorney general, the first African-American woman to serve as the nation's top law enforcement official.

One year ago: A gunman opened fire inside a synagogue near San Diego as worshippers celebrated the last day of Passover, killing a woman and wounding the rabbi and two others. (John Earnest is awaiting trial on charges including hate-crime-related murder and attempted murder; he is also facing charges in a mosque fire that happened weeks earlier.) A construction crane collapsed at the new Google Seattle campus, pinning six cars underneath; two ironworkers and two people in the cars were killed. Oliver North announced that he would not serve a second term as National Rifle Association president; he made it clear that he'd been forced out after his own failed attempt to remove the group's longtime CEO, Wayne LaPierre.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Anouk Aimee is 88. Rock musician Jim Keltner is 78. Rock singer Kate Pierson (The B-52's) is 72. Rhythm-and-blues singer Herbie Murrell (The Stylistics) is 71. Actor Douglas Sheehan is 71. Rock musician Ace Frehley is 69. West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice is 69. Pop singer Sheena Easton is 61. Actor James Le Gros (groh) is 58. Rock musician Rob Squires (Big Head Todd and the Monsters) is 55. Singer Mica (MEE'-shah) Paris is 51. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., is 51. Actor David Lascher is 48. Actress Maura West is 48. Actress Sally Hawkins is 44. Rock singer Jim James (My Morning Jacket) is 42. Rock musician Patrick Hallahan (My Morning Jacket) is 42. Rock singer-musician Travis Meeks (Days of the New) is 41. Neo-soul musician Joseph Pope III (Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats) is 41. Country musician John Osborne (Brothers Osborne) is 38. Actor Francis Capra is 37. Actress Ari Graynor is 37. Rock singer-musician Patrick Stump (Fall Out Boy) is 36. Actress Sheila Vand is 35. Actress Jenna Coleman is 34. Pop singer Nick Noonan (Karmin) is 34. Actor William Moseley is 33. Actress Emily Rios is 31. Singer Allison Iraheta is 28.

Thought for Today: "Fear not those who argue but those who dodge." [-] Dale Carnegie, American writer-lecturer (1888-1955).

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

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