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Connecting

April 30, 2020

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The Fall of Saigon



Mobs of Vietnamese people scale the wall of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, Vietnam, trying to get to the helicopter pickup zone, just before the end of the Vietnam War, April 29, 1975. Neal Ulevich/AP Photo

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 Lead 460, two takes 700 up

By GEORGE ESPEL
 Associated Press Writer
 SAIGON AP - The Saigon
 government surrendered un-
 conditionally today and Viet Cong
 and North Vietnamese troops
 occupied the capital. At first
 the South Vietnamese stood in
 doorways and watched the
 troops pour into the city, then
 some began cheering.

Many former government sol-
 diers turned in their arms and
 tried to lose themselves amid
 the civilian population. But
 there were periodic outbursts of
 gunfire - some from pockets
 of resistance and others from
 celebrating Viet Cong and
 North Vietnamese firing into
 the air.

A police colonel shot himself
 in front of the National Assem-
 bly building after walking up to
 an army memorial statue and
 saluting. He died later in a hos-
 pital.

Some South Vietnamese pilots
 continued today to fly plan-
 eloads of relatives and other
 members of the armed forces
 to neighboring Thailand. Sev-
 eral thousand South Vietnam-
 ese fled the country by this
 route Tuesday.

And U.S. officials struggled
 with the logistics of resettling
 the estimated 45,000 South Viet-
 namese it helped to evacuate
 from the country before the
 surrender. The end of official
 American presence in the coun-
 try came late Tuesday.

People in Hanoi raced into
 the streets and embraced each
 other in a "a general explosion
 of joy," the Yugoslav news
 agency Tanjug reported. Flags
 were raised, and the North
 Vietnamese capital "became
 the noisiest and happiest city in
 the world."

"At 11:30 a.m. on April 30,
 1975, the flag of the Provisional
 Revolutionary Government
 PRG of the Republic of South
 Vietnam fluttered above the
 palace of the puppet president
 and on other buildings in the
 city," declared Hanoi's Viet-
 nam News Agency, in a broad-
 cast monitored in Tokyo.

The broadcast reiterated that
 Saigon has been renamed Ho
 Chi Minh City in honor of the
 late North Vietnamese leader.

President Duong Van Minh
 announced his government's
 unconditional surrender in a
 broadcast at midmorning and
 ordered the South-Vietnamese
 armed forces to turn in their
 arms. He was then picked up
 by North Vietnamese and Viet
 Cong troops and taken to an un-
 known location.

Courtesy of AP Corporate Archives

Colleagues,

Good Thursday morning on this the 30th day of April 2020,

Today marks the 45th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War – and our colleague **Peter Arnett**, whose coverage of the war earned him a Pulitzer Prize, brings us a firsthand account that leads today's issue of Connecting.

It is a compelling story – bringing us history as we lived it – and I am appreciative of his work. Another Connecting colleague was working for the AP in Saigon that day – photographer **Neal Ulevich**, also a Pulitzer winner for work in Southeast Asia. His photo is at the top of the page.

Peter wrote an AP book on the fall of Saigon and it can be found [here](#).

If you have memories of that fateful day, please send them along to share with your colleagues.

AP Annual Report: More than half the world's population sees journalism from The Associated Press every day.

The Associated Press released its 2019 annual report Wednesday and it can be viewed by clicking [here](#) .

AP Chairman **Steven Swartz** , president and CEO of Hearst, (at left in photo) and AP President and CEO **Gary Pruitt** began the report with these words:



As we write this letter, The Associated Press is covering the biggest story the world has seen in decades: the coronavirus pandemic. It is a story that touches every corner of the globe.

While much of the world remains under orders to stay home, AP journalists continue to report from the field, telling stories of heroism at hospitals, tragedy in tight-knit communities and acts of kindness that are connecting people in this extraordinary time. Beyond the health crisis, staffers are covering the economic fallout of the outbreak and the impact broadly to society. This work has never been more important.

From portraits of health care workers on Italy's front lines to exclusive reporting on the first test of a coronavirus vaccine in Washington state, AP is harnessing its global footprint to tell stories no one else can. Our journalists haven't missed a beat. They continue to overcome obstacles to cover this pandemic quickly, accurately and without bias, providing essential analysis and critical context.

In these challenging times, AP is at its best. We will not step back; we will step up.

NEW MEXICO ZOOM CHAT - Alums and current staffers of AP's New Mexico operations are invited to take part in a Zoom Reunion this Saturday, May 2, at 2 p.m. Mountain time. If you are interested in taking part, drop me a note at - stevenspl@live.com



AP GROUND GAME : As Brazil careens toward a full-blown public-health emergency because of mounting COVID-19 cases, Latin America's most populous nation is contending with two other crises: economic turmoil and an investigation into President Jair Bolsonaro's action. In this episode of Ground Game, AP Brazil News Director David Biller explains how these three crises are colliding.

Listen [here](#) .

Have a good day – be safe, stay healthy.

45 Years Later: The boys of Saigon and a forgotten lady



LAST MOMENTS OF THE WAR, noon, April 30, 1975, as North Vietnamese troops astride a Russian-built T54 tank burst through the steel gates of Saigon's Presidential Palace and capture senior South Vietnamese government officials. AP photo by Frances Starner.

Peter Arnett ([Email](#)) – The other day Paul Stevens suggested I write something for CONNECTING on the Fall of Saigon in 1975, a story I covered with my late AP colleagues George Esper and Matt Franjola. So with the memory of both of them still vivid in my mind 45 years later, here is the something that I came up with.

The AP had stayed with the Saigon story through the mid-1970s even as American readers had moved on to the much more pressing considerations such as the shocking Watergate revelations that were destroying the Richard Nixon Presidency. A peace agreement with North Vietnam that its author, Henry Kissinger, described as an as an honorable conclusion of America's tumultuous 30-year involvement in Vietnam, saw the last U.S. combat troops leave the battlefield in 1973.

I suppose George Esper and I felt more of an attachment to the Vietnam story than many of the other AP reporters and photographers who had willingly and ably served in the Saigon bureau during the most intensive years of the war. I say this expecting a contrary view from former AP colleague Carl Robinson, who like George and I married Vietnamese women and had children there.

Carl has spent the post-war years deeply involved in the country's culture and politics. But George and I had the confidence of AP President Wes Gallagher who made the coverage decisions that mattered in those days.

On the third week in March, 1973, Esper was reporting that South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu was responding to violent communist assaults in the Central Highland by giving up the cities of Pleiku, Kontum and Ban Me Thuot. I was in AP headquarters in New York working on a domestic story at that time, and reading George's stories coming off the telex at the foreign desk I wanted to scream aloud that the war was finally ending. Up in Gallagher's office I made my case that I needed to go to Vietnam right away. He did not seem entirely convinced by my beliefs. He was a year from retirement and had given much of his presidency to the Vietnam story. But he took my hand and said, "Get over there. And we'll need a helluva lot more people joining you if you are right." I was on my way the next day.



GEORGE ESPER (right) and Peter Arnett in the Saigon AP bureau in April, 1975, discuss a telexed message from AP headquarters as communist military forces begin closing in on the city.

Esper met me at the Saigon airport. He told me the Saigon government had written off the northern quarter of the country. The Central Highlands had already gone. South Vietnam had been halved in size in a week. True to his word, Gallagher ordered in reinforcements, and several regional bureau chiefs flew in. In a war where his guys had won five Pulitzer Prizes, Gallagher was determined to maintain the competitive advantage until the end. Other news organizations were also showing renewed interest in the story. On the anxious streets of Saigon and in the French restaurants I began running into some former press colleagues I had not seen in years. Malcolm Browne was back

with his wife Le Lieu reporting now for the New York Times. My old UPI competition Leon Daniels had returned. Each day the roster lengthened. All of us were there to record the death of South Vietnam, all of us with an emotional stake in the story but trying not to let it get in the way.



AP PRESIDENT WES GALLAGHER strove to keep the competitive edge during AP coverage of the Fall of Saigon. Gallagher at a reunion at AP headquarters in the early 1980s with the five Vietnam War Pulitzer Prize winners: (From right): Malcolm Browne, Huynh Cong (Nick) Ut, Gallagher, Eddie Adams, Horst Faas, Peter Arnett.

As the communist military juggernaut thundered closer within hearing distance to Saigon, there were officials within the American Embassy who clung to their conviction that that there would be a negotiated end to the war, a solution that would preserve Saigon's status as the center of a neutralist government. From what I could see it took life from the imaginings of Polish and Hungarian diplomats and others who were dealing with communist bureaucrats in Hanoi, who would say anything to divert attention from the true mission of their military forces. I bumped into Mal Browne and his wife Le Lieu in late April at Givral's Coffee shop. I asked why she had not left the country in airlifts arranged for families of media people. Mal smiled at me confidently and said, "Peter, there will be no final battle, believe me, I am plugged in better now with all sides than I have ever been in my life." Mal's optimism reflected information leaked from Henry Kissinger's State Department to Washington reporters. Mal was a journalist I respected and a friend I adored but I thought he was wrong about this one. "Mal," I said, "You taught me to write only what I see and not what I hear, and what I see is Armageddon around the corner."

Armageddon arrived a few days later in the early hours of April 29. Heavy Soviet-built artillery pieces, dragged down the Ho Chi Minh Trail from the north, shelled Tan Son Nhut Airport, destroying aircraft and buildings. I tumbled out of my bed at the Caravelle Hotel and ran to the roof to watch the airport burning. I phoned Esper from the Caravelle bar to alert New York that the attack would

end the airlift of endangered Vietnamese, and all talk of political accommodation. It would also trigger Option 4, the final pullout, the evacuation of all essential personnel and journalists by helicopter to American warships off the coast. It would be the last chance to leave.

George messaged Wes Gallagher and told him he and I had decided to stay behind, along with reporter Matt Franjola, a veteran correspondent who had been covering the Cambodian war with distinction. Gallagher objected to Franjola remaining behind because he was concerned that it would enlarge the risk for all of us, but he agreed when Esper advised him, "Matt is determined to stay and if we force him he is going to stay for someone else. Request you please reconsider and let me hit this story hardest." I felt I should offer a fuller explanation for my own decision to remain behind because to many it would seem foolhardy, especially to my wife Nina. I had promised to leave when the time came. I sent a message to Gallagher saying that because I was in Vietnam at the beginning, I felt it was worth the risk to be there at the end to document the final hours. I did not tell him that I would contrive to miss the last helicopter if he insisted I leave.

Saigon Surrendered

An Editorial Responsibility Not Yet Finished

The land war in Asia which could not be won is over—mercifully. As the helicopters which used to remove troops from the battlefield whisked the last Americans from the embassy in Saigon, some South Vietnamese were still trying to follow. But there was nothing else to be done at the end of a 30-year war which had no other logical conclusion.

That old incoercible revolutionist Thomas Paine wrote: "He who is the author of a war, lets loose a contagion of hell, and opens a vein that bleeds a nation to death." Removal of the last Americans from Saigon might be the tourniquet which stanches the flow of blood. It was at least the only decision left open to the United States.

It was not merely the Vietnamese who bled. In the 14 years since the United States first sent military personnel into the harbor of Saigon and on into the steaming rice paddies infested with revolutionaries, this nation paid a price in blood and treasure which cannot be reckoned in mechanical computers nor smoothed in endless rhetoric.

Southern Americans, like South Vietnamese, have known the agony of defeat. They will understand the necessity of avoiding recriminations, and of stopping marches in the sea.

What is needed now is humanitarian acts. While the North and South Vietnamese are working out their differences, hungry individuals and maimed soldiers need food and medicine. It is too early for us to forget South Vietnam and all those words stand for until there is stability for them who were forced to remain in that shell-shocked land.

The United States' responsibility is not yet finished. "The Americans have destroyed the economic base of that region they hoped to preserve as a separate country," wrote Frances Fitzgerald in one



Horror Of War

South Vietnamese forces follow terrified children as they flee down Route 1 near Trang Bang, South Vietnam, Jan. 31, 1975, after a Skyraider plane misdirected a napalm strike. The girl at center has ripped off her burning clothing. The picture was made by Associated Press photographer Hynek Cong Ut. It was a Pulitzer Prize in 1975.

of the most widely acclaimed books about the area, *Fire in the Lake*. They have, instead of ending the drive for reunification, destroyed the regional political groups that held out in resistance against it. They have uprooted the sect populations and flattened the local ethnic, religious and cultural peculiarities beneath a uniform, national disaster. If Vietnam is to be independent, it must now have a national government."

Reconstruction is a dreadfully painful time, as any Southern historian can attest. It will be especially painful in Vietnam because there is so much to rebuild and so little to work with. But the American interest lies in maintaining a working relationship with the new structure, scornful though it will be toward Americans.

The United States did not let loose the contagion of hell in Vietnam; that was the normal consequence of a civil war which raged for 30 years. There is no reason for us to carry that burden of guilt forever. Neither should the United States forget that it has a humanitarian obligation to help those who remain.

—REG MURPHY

GIs: '65 Heroes, '75 Targets

By PETER ARNETT

SAIGON — Ten years ago I watched the first U.S. Marines arrive to help South Vietnam. They were greeted on the beaches by pretty Vietnamese girls in white silk sarongs who draped flower leis around their necks.

A decade has passed. On Tuesday, I watched U.S. Marines shipping the last Americans out of South Vietnam. They were the same, circuitous-looking young men of a decade ago.

But the Vietnamese were different. Those who didn't have a place on the last helicopters out of Saigon were there in thousands of them left behind — hoisted, hooped and scaffolded with the U.S. Marines guarding the landing zone.

Some Vietnamese threw themselves over

walls and wire fences, only to be thrown back by the Marines. Bloodshed was avoided seemingly only by good luck and had aim on the part of some angry Vietnamese soldiers who shot at a few buses and departing helicopters.

But the whole, frantic dash from Saigon by the Americans — and the bitter resentment of the thousands of Vietnamese who couldn't

go — seemed a sad but accurate reflection of what relations between Americans and Vietnamese had come to in the 10 years since these flowers were plucked given to the Marines.

Americans and the South Vietnamese used to get along pretty well. That was in the days when the U.S. Marines first arrived in Vietnam imbued with a determination to see the war through.

The South Vietnamese army, depleted then, watched with wonder as first the Marines and then the paratroopers and the American infantry came to steamboat bays to trudge the coastal plains and mountain valleys in a punishing, unfamiliar environment.

Vietnamese officers began aging the American way. The Americans seemed always

to have better pressed uniforms and more detailed maps and diagrams. Nearly 20,000 Vietnamese officers flew to the United States for education or advanced training, and they returned with American slang expressions and an American taste for firepower and massive military supplies.

But something went wrong along the way. To win a war like Vietnam, the subject to study was not the American way but the Communist Vietnamese way. They were launching the war in their own country.

The South Vietnamese instead learned the American way to use firepower. Mating at the other side with war planes and artillery, effective only so long as there were bombs and shells.

See WAR, Page 16-A

PANIC OUTSIDE EMBASSY

Pleas of Forsaken Viets Cut Through Eerie Night

By CHAD HUNTLEY

SAIGON (UPI) — The night was eerie with flare light as hundreds of Vietnamese gathered outside the U.S. Embassy. They were begging Americans to help them flee their country.

"Please take my children," cried a young woman as she clutched an American holding an embassy radio. "They are half-American and the Viet Cong will kill them."

Marine guards in full battle gear and embassy officials in civilian garb stood within the gates of the white concrete fortress-like building.

"I worked for the Americans 17 years," said a Chinese man. "Why are they leaving me? I'm their friend."

Dozens of abandoned cars lined the broad boulevard outside the embassy as their owners sought refuge within.

Most were Vietnamese who had worked for Americans or had half-American children. But many were from wealthy or well-to-do families.

"I have gold," said a well-dressed young man to an American. "If you help me get out of Vietnam, I'll give you \$200,000."



More Reports Inside

The costs of America's lengthy involvement in the Vietnam War were staggering. The bitter memories will long remain. Pictures and related stories on Pages 8-A, 9-A and 10-A.

INDEX

Astronomy 2-C	Features 2-B
Business 5-C	God Health 3-B
Celestine Sibley 5-B	Gotten on Bridge 2-C

CALIFORNIA BASE

Americans and Viet Dependents Detained

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. (UPI) — Hundreds of Americans and their Vietnamese dependents settled into temporary quarters in a remote corner of this 125,000-acre Marine Corps base Tuesday — hot, dusty, bone-tired and angry that the government was preventing them from making the final leg of their long journey home.

The first planeload of American and Vietnamese refugees who had already undergone processing by federal authorities in Gary, Indiana, in southern California Tuesday morning, and by the time Marine buses ferried the 330 passengers to Camp

able to tell him how long he would be detained. "I'm an American citizen, I don't have any dependents. I've been through three and one-half days of processing in Guam, and now they tell me they're going to hold me here," Mamey said. And we hope the Vietnamese they'd be accepted in a land of freedom to make their new home," he added.

Part of the confusion was apparently attributable to the designation of this camp as a refugee processing center to handle displaced Vietnamese, not American citizens and their officially sponsored relatives. Processing teams from the State de-

AP coverage of the Fall of Saigon was headlined in April 30, 1975, issues of newspapers across the United States. The Atlanta Constitution by-lined George Esper's lead story on the communist victory. Peter Arnett shared page one with his account of the struggle of U.S. Marine's security guards to prevent the US Embassy being overrun by Vietnamese civilians desperate for helicopter evacuation.

The last desperate hours of Saigon played out in monsoon rain. From the roof of the Eden Building I watched as the dark shapes of helicopters disappeared

into the night. Below in the streets a few people were looking into the sky and gesturing, some with small travel bags in their hands. But it was too late to fly away. By late in the night the helicopters were gone. I went down to the AP office.

As all who had ever worked with George knew, he was a driven man when it came to the news, an incredible resource for the AP. I wrote in my autobiography *LIVE FROM THE BATTLEFIELD* about that moment: "Esper was on the telephone, dialing the Embassy even though officials had stopped answering. He had sat at that same table for a decade pounding out his leads on an old Underwood typewriter. He never got the professional credit he deserved. His coverage had appeared in more American newspapers than any other reporter in recent years. He was still unknown and underpaid and the last to complain. And at 3 a.m. in a city about to die, he was phoning dead switchboards and biting the bits of gristle that passed for fingernails. Esper was worrying about whether he had written enough that day and I figured that he already sent 10,000 words to New York. He was gaunt, his eyes were burning with exhaustion. I said to him, 'Let's get the hell out of here George. We've got to get some sleep.' He muttered to himself and returned to the string of telexes arriving from New York that were piling up on the floor, most of them from member newspapers seeking status reports on staff members who had already evacuated to the 7th fleet."



ON THE DAY SAIGON FELL, YOUNG NORTH VIETNAMESE soldiers visited the AP office in Saigon with a local stringer, Ky Nhan, who said he was sympathetic to the Vietcong. In photo at right to left, Vietnamese interpreter, George Esper watching soldier detail attack route on map, NVA Sergeant Binh Huan Lam, Arnett, NVA Sergeant Tran Viet Ca, and Matt Franjola. Esper wrote a quick story about the event, and the soldiers watched as it was teletyped to New York.

Franjola and I joined Esper in the office soon after dawn on April 30 as the city teetered on the brink of history, abandoned by the official Americans and the

many Vietnamese civilian and military officials who for 30 years had believed in the dream of independence and democracy. The American Embassy had been warning that the advancing communist forces were ruthlessly subjugating civilian populations. My reading was that our real danger would come only if the few remaining South Vietnamese military forces decided upon a last-ditch effort to resist in the streets of the city. But that seemed doubtful as I walked over to the office from my hotel. Down a side street I noticed that military garments had been discarded, even the boots, by soldiers who were deserting. We were joined in our office by a middle-aged American woman named Frances Starner, a freelance journalist with a pleasing, confident demeanor who had been covering Southeast Asia for years for an assortment of regional magazines. I didn't know her very well, but understood she knew much more about the region than I did. Frances told us she had been with the Marines in the Pacific in World War II and remained in region based in Bangkok. She offered to help out and Esper handed her one of the office Nikons.

Esper had assigned an interpreter to listen to Saigon radio broadcasts, and soon there was a shout from the monitoring booth. Complete surrender was being announced by the newly appointed President, Duong Van Minh, the same "Big Minh" who had led the coup d'etat against the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in 1963. Esper typed his bulletin announcement and rushed it to the teleprinter operator. No matter how belated or insignificant, it was concrete evidence to the world that the war was over. The New York foreign desk soon sent us a message that our surrender bulletin had been five minutes ahead of UPI's, proving again that while wars may start and end, and leaders rise and fall, the only important determinant in the news industry is to be first with the story.

Esper was delighted with the feat and stood up and stretched and announced he was going down to the street to see what was going on. He had been at his desk for four straight days and I wished him luck but he was back at his typewriter within five minutes, ashen faced. While crossing Lam Son Square, a Vietnamese police colonel in full uniform accosted him and stuttered in broken English, "It's finished," before walking away 10 feet and then raising a .45 pistol and blowing his brains out. For a second George thought the bullet might be for him and his wrote his story with shaking hands.

I checked my watch. It was 11:25 a.m. I told George I was going back outside to see for myself. As I stepped on to Tu Do Street I heard the beep-beep of a truck horn. A large vehicle drove by through the business district toward the Saigon river. My heart stopped. It was a Russian Molotova and riding in the back was a score of young communist soldiers dressed in floppy green uniforms and pith helmets. Their faces were filled with seriousness and wonder as they gazed up at the high-rise buildings in the center of Saigon, probably the first tall structures they had ever seen. Other vehicles followed. The Vietnamese civilians in the streets just looked up in surprise. I saw a couple wave at a truck and keep walking. A large green and blue Vietcong banner suddenly billowed from the Caravelle Hotel flagpole. The staff must have been sewing it in secret for a week. I started up the stairs to file a story. This was it, this was the end of it all, this was what a generation of Americans had fought against and what several American presidents had plotted to prevent. And the end had come so quickly and anticlimactically. The people hiding on the

stairways were pressing against me, and someone asked, "What is happening," and I answered, "the VC are outside."

I pushed my way through the crowd at our door and fell exhausted to my knees. Esper looked over to me. I was totally tongue tied. George helped me to a typewriter. "Peter, what the hell is wrong," I heard him asking. I gestured for paper and began writing a bulletin that began, "Saigon, April 30. Vietnamese Communist troops occupied Saigon peacefully today, rolling down the tree-lined boulevards in Russian trucks with their flags flying. The people of Saigon watched quietly from the sidewalk. No shooting could be heard." I tottered to the teleprinter room and thrust the page at our beefy Vietnamese operator Tammy. He read the bulletin and gasped and attempted to flee the room. Esper and I pressed down on his shoulders until he finished punching the tape, and he then disappeared out the bureau door and was gone for days. By early afternoon on April 30, the rout was complete, with Frances Starner providing us with an eyewitness account of the armored assault on the Presidential Palace and the capture of General Big Minh. With a big grin, she handed Esper a roll of film from the Nikon camera we'd given her. "I think I got some good pictures on that," she said with confidence.

In mid-afternoon as we worked over our stories, a local stringer photographer named Ky Nhan came through our office door with two North Vietnamese soldiers. Esper did not even look up from the phone where he was trying to raise the Saigon telephone office for a long-shot call to the United States. I was reminded by a comment from a news colleague years earlier who was impressed with George's telephone tenacity and who suggested he would be on the phone if the communists ever took Saigon. I walked over to greet the two visitors. One of them had an AK assault rifle slung over his shoulder. The other was clearly in charge because he carried a Russian pistol displayed in a leather holster on his belt.

As I approached them photographer Ky Nhan flung his arms wide and exclaimed in English, "I have guaranteed the safety of the AP office. You have no reason to be concerned. I have been in the VC for years." I looked at him in surprise because in the years he had been selling us pictures of the war he was a rather passive fellow. He then said, "I have told them all about the AP, that you are all good people, and we come here to visit you as friends". Our silent visitors were smiling now, and Esper stood and shook their hands in welcome, as grateful as I that we were not their prisoners. They joined us in a modest snack of yesterday's pastries and some warm Coca-Cola, but turned down a shot of cognac from a bottle I kept in the desk for special occasions.

I suggested to George that he interview them, and they willingly answered his questions. Binh Huan Lam and Tram Viet Ca were both sergeants, both 25, and both from Hanoi. They explained they were infantrymen whose unit had successfully attacked Bien Hoa two days earlier, and had ridden into Saigon with a tank brigade that morning. They showed us their route on an office map of the area and were so self-assured I presumed they were intelligence operatives. George moved to the teleprinter room to begin punching directly to New York the first interview with the conquerors of Saigon. The two soldiers followed him and looked somewhat puzzled at the incoming AP news wire clacking over a second teleprinter. I tore one of the stories from the machine and asked Ky Nhan to translate, and he read in Vietnamese, "President Ford

declared that the evacuation of Americans from Vietnam closes a chapter in the American experience. The president asked all Americans to close ranks, to avoid recriminations about the past, to look ahead to the many goals we share, and to work together on the great tasks that need to be accomplished. " Our Vietnamese visitors looked pleased.

I remained in Saigon for two weeks with George Esper, Matt Franjola and Frances Starner who had joined the AP staff for the duration. I left on a Vietnamese government-chartered flight for Bangkok along with most of the international press corps. I carried many of the stories the censors had disallowed, along with Frances Starner's film. George and Matt left during May, leaving Frances in charge of the bureau into the next year. Eventually her film of the North Vietnamese T54 tank assault on the Saigon Presidential Palace gate entered the photo archives of AP, and eventually Frances saw it published. I'm not sure about this part of the story, but I did hear she made a fuss about getting credit for it. Frances Starner died after a lingering illness in Bangkok in 1997, at age 77, six years before the publication of the well-regarded Associated Press Photographic History, "Vietnam, The Real War". On page 296, see the great picture, and the credit, Photograph by Frances Starner.



PETER ARNETT (RIGHT) interviews western news colleagues mid April, 1975, flying out of Saigon to Bangkok in a communist government aircraft two weeks after the Fall of Saigon. Arnett carried photographs and news stories that had been blocked by censors.

Connecting mailbox

Words you can live by

Jane Vercelli ([Email](#)) - I am writing to share a quotation from Michael J. Fox who was the honoree at my son Lars' graduation from New York University in 2008. The graduation was held at Yankee Stadium with about 20,000 people in attendance. All the dignitaries on the podium received polite applause, but when actor Michael J. Fox, who was diagnosed at age 29 with Parkinson's Disease, stood up, the stadium erupted in a standing ovation. He said nothing, just stood up, but everyone understood that just showing up and standing up called for nothing less.

Here is a quote from Michael J. Fox that I kept near me when I was undergoing 30 days and nights of continuous chemotherapy for lymphoma at Massachusetts General Hospital in 2017. (Two years later, my doctor said I was cured.)

"Don't spend a lot of time imagining the worst-case scenario. It rarely goes down as you imagine it will, and if by some fluke it does, you will have lived it twice."

-0-

Ted Kooser a pen pal of our colleague Sister Donalda

Sister Donalda Kehoe ([Email](#)) - I've just finished reading Wednesday's Connecting (I do this after breakfast) and when I read the e-mail message Chris Sullivan submitted, I got so excited I nearly jumped out of my skin. Ted Kooser and I have been Pen Pals for over a decade, and I thought of submitting that very poem, but instead chose one of those 100 verses he wrote to a good friend during his illness, and included a similar one in my fun quotes to you recently. Mr. Kooser can print so small on postcard messages, one is led to believe he could write the Our Father on the head of a pin.

In my excitement of almost losing my skin, I phoned Mr. Kooser and told him about his poem being shared by all your subscribers. He didn't recognize the name Chris Sullivan. This marked my first time hearing his voice, and I submit he could be a radio announcer with the mellow voice he has. (Better on radio than on TV, my first blush impression from having seen pictures of him.)

-0-

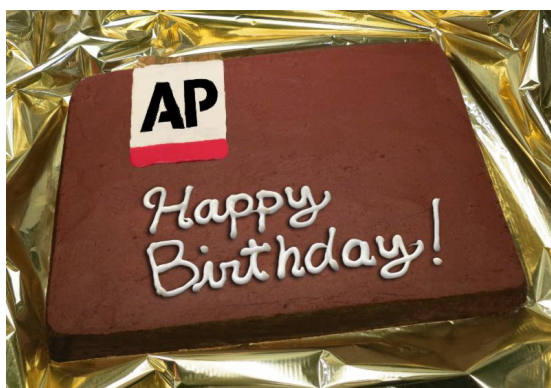
A surprise to meet Ted Kooser's wife

Cliff Schiappa ([Email](#)) - In Wednesday's Connecting, Chris Sullivan offered up two works by Ted Kooser, former U.S. Poet Laureate. During a member visit to the Lincoln (Neb.) Journal-Star in 2005, I met Kathleen Rutledge who was the editor of the paper at that time. I was surprised to learn she was Ted Kooser's wife!

About the word 'newsman'

Jim Carrier ([Email](#)) - Tim Curran's press pass, published April 29, labeled "Kansas City Newsman," reminds me that in today's gender-sensitive world, "newsman" is a loud, proud declaration of a professional position. At least I think so. That's the term I use, but I've been a newsman since the dark ages. My wife, a university prof where gender/identity pronouns have become important, thinks I should use "journalist" or some other neutered term. Jules Loh told me years ago that he wanted one word on his tombstone: "Reporter." What's your term of art?

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



to

Ben Brown – babrown@charter.net

Dick Lipsey - richardiii.runner@usa.net

Sarah Wilson - show4992@gmail.com

And a day late to...

Dave Fritz - fritzdavelv@gmail.com

Stories of interest

Former longtime AP reporter: Trump defamation suits pose a chilling prospect for the press (NC Policy Watch)

By Bob Lewis

In the long and dubious history of nasty presidential politics, the anti-Trump attack ad that the pro-Democrat super PAC Priorities USA paid NBC affiliate WJFW-TV in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, to televise in America's 134th largest market seemed tame enough.

The 30-second spot uses rapid-fire audio snippets of Trump dismissing the seriousness of the nascent but fast-growing COVID-19 outbreak from late January through late March while an on-screen graph ticks increasingly upward as U.S. cases exponentially multiply. In one snippet, Trump appears to dismiss the virus as "a hoax."

Evidently that hit too close to home for Trump's campaign. It sued the tiny northern Wisconsin station for defamation on April 13, claiming that the ad distorted Trump's actual "hoax" comments from a February campaign rally in South Carolina.

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

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Long-Forgotten Cables Reveal What TIME's Correspondent Saw at the Liberation of Dachau (Time)

BY OLIVIA B. WAXMAN

"I have been in Dachau today from the time the first American troops entered until the place was cleared. I will tell you about it chronologically with no attempt to embellish so that you may judge for yourselves."

At 3:00 a.m. on April 30, 1945, TIME war correspondent Sidney A. Olson cabled those words back to news bureau chief David Hulburd. The day before, the Nazis' infamous first concentration camp had been liberated. In the resulting report from Dachau that ran in the following week's issue — the one that proclaimed the impending Allied victory with an image of Adolf Hitler's face crossed out — the magazine relayed Olson's descriptions of box-cars of bodies, the eerie death chambers, the joy of the survivors. And yet, even in a story that leaves readers with no doubt about the cruelty of the Nazi regime, editors left some of the goriest details of Olson's cabled account on the cutting room floor.

But the cable itself survived. Typed copies of the first-person account were tucked away with Olson's belongings, largely untouched until after his death in 1995. It's a document that sheds light not only on the history of World War II and the Holocaust, but on the role of American war correspondents and how their observations informed public opinion about the conflict.

Read more [here](#) . Shared by Cynthia Denham.

Today in History - April 30, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, April 30, the 121st day of 2020. There are 245 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 30, 1945, as Soviet troops approached his Berlin bunker, Adolf Hitler committed suicide along with his wife of one day, Eva Braun.

On this date:

In A.D. 311, shortly before his death, Roman Emperor Galerius issued his Edict of Toleration ending persecution of Christians.

In 1789, George Washington took the oath of office in New York as the first president of the United States.

In 1803, the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France for 60 million francs, the equivalent of about \$15 million.

In 1900, engineer John Luther "Casey" Jones of the Illinois Central Railroad died in a train wreck near Vaughan, Mississippi, after staying at the controls in a successful effort to save the passengers.

In 1911, a fire broke out in Bangor, Maine, destroying much of the downtown area before it was brought under control the next morning; two deaths were blamed on the blaze.

In 1945, the radio show “Queen for Today” (later “Queen for a Day”) premiered on the Mutual Network.

In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon announced the U.S. was sending troops into Cambodia, an action that sparked widespread protest.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon announced the resignations of top aides H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst and White House counsel John Dean, who was actually fired.

In 1975, the Vietnam War ended as the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon fell to Communist forces.

In 1983, blues singer and guitarist Muddy Waters died in Westmont, Ill., at age 68.

In 1993, top-ranked women’s tennis player Monica Seles was stabbed in the back during a match in Hamburg, Germany, by a man who described himself as a fan of second-ranked German player Steffi Graf. (The man, convicted of causing grievous bodily harm, was given a suspended sentence.)

In 2004, Arabs expressed outrage at graphic photographs of naked Iraqi prisoners being humiliated by U.S. military police; President George W. Bush condemned the mistreatment of prisoners, saying “that’s not the way we do things in America.”

Ten years ago: Heavy winds and high tides complicated efforts to hold back oil from a blown-out BP-operated rig that threatened to coat bird and marine life in the Gulf of Mexico; President Barack Obama halted any new offshore projects pending safeguards to prevent more explosions like the one that unleashed the spill.

Five years ago: Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont formally entered the race for the Democratic presidential nomination with a news conference on Capitol Hill. Vietnam marked the 40th anniversary of the day communist forces seized control of the country with a parade through the capital of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). Rhythm-and-blues singer Ben E. King, 76, died in Hackensack, New Jersey.

One year ago: Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido took to the streets to call for a military uprising against Nicolas Maduro; street battles erupted in the Venezuelan capital. The Trump administration quickly declared enthusiastic support for the Venezuelan opposition effort. President Donald Trump and Democratic congressional leaders agreed to work toward a \$2 trillion infrastructure plan but put off the question of how to pay for it. A gunman killed two students and wounded four others in a lecture hall at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte; a student who helped end the shooting by tackling the gunman was one of the two killed. (Former student Trystan Terrell pleaded guilty to first-degree murder and other charges.) Japanese Emperor Akihito announced his abdication; his 30-year reign ended at midnight, when his son, Crown Prince Naruhito, became the new emperor. Peter Mayhew, the towering

actor who donned a huge, furry costume to give life to Chewbacca in the original “Star Wars” trilogy and two other films, died at his north Texas home at the age of 74. The musical “Hedestown” earned a leading 14 Tony Award nominations.

Today’s Birthdays: Actress Cloris Leachman is 94. Singer Willie Nelson is 87. Actor Burt Young is 80. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden is 74. Movie director Allan Arkush is 72. Actor Perry King is 72. Singer-musician Wayne Kramer is 72. Singer Merrill Osmond is 67. Movie director Jane Campion is 66. Movie director Lars von Trier is 64. Former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper is 61. Actor Paul Gross is 61. Basketball Hall of Famer Isiah Thomas is 59. Country musician Robert Reynolds is 58. Actor Adrian Pasdar is 55. Rock singer J.R. Richards (Dishwalla) is 53. Rapper Turbo B (Snap) is 53. Rock musician Clark Vogeler is 51. Rhythm-and-blues singer Chris “Choc” Dalrymple (Soul For Real) is 49. Rock musician Chris Henderson (3 Doors Down) is 49. Country singer Carolyn Dawn Johnson is 49. Actress Lisa Dean Ryan is 48. Rhythm-and-blues singer Akon is 47. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jeff Timmons (98 Degrees) is 47. Actor Johnny Galecki is 45. Singer-musician Cole Deggs (Cole Deggs and the Lonesome) is 44. Actor Sam Heughan is 40. Actor Kunal Nayyar is 39. Rapper Lloyd Banks is 38. Actress Kirsten Dunst is 38. Country singer Tyler Wilkinson (The Wilkinsons) is 36. Actress Dianna Agron is 34. Country singer Brandon Lancaster is 31. Rapper/producer Travis Scott is 29.

Thought for Today: “There’s a difference between a philosophy and a bumper sticker.” [-] Charles M. Schulz, American cartoonist (1922-2000).

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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