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Connecting August 17, 2020

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Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this the 17th day of August 2020,

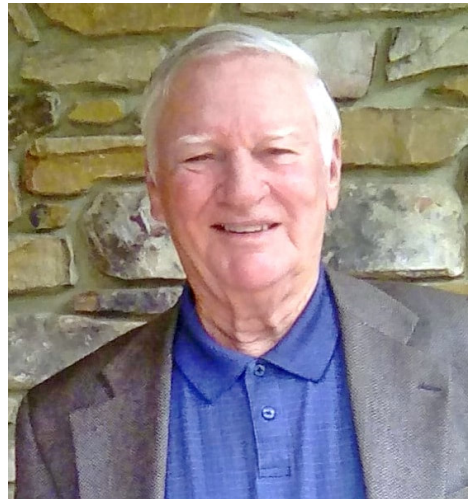
The 2020 Democratic National Convention begins tonight to formally announce its candidates for the presidency and vice presidency will be like no other.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the convention will be almost entirely virtual, with online video addresses. Former Vice President Joe Biden is expected to accept the nomination on Thursday and last week announced his running mate as U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris.

As noted in Politico Playbook, the convention "doesn't feel anything like it has in the past. There are no throngs of delegates, party faithful, press and hangers-on streaming into Milwaukee, where Democrats were supposed to gather this week to officially pick their next leader. Instead, we're all still scattered across the country, stuck in our homes watching the whole bizarre spectacle on screens between 9 and 11 each night."

Many of our Connecting colleagues have covered national political conventions and we'd welcome their thoughts on the unique format of this convention - and ask that you share Favorite memories of the in-person conventions you've covered in the past.

"Conventions have become scripted, made-for-television events," our colleague **Walter Mears** ([Email](#)) told Connecting on Sunday night.



"So what changes is the loss of what you might call the studio audience. That may make the show less interesting to watch. Hard to see what the public reaction will be. I don't know whether there will be the so-called convention bounce for the nominees with it all online. The show will go on - no telling what the impact will be on the campaigns."

Mears, who retired from the AP in 2001 after covering 11 presidential campaigns including that in 1976 for which he won a Pulitzer Prize, recalled one of his most memorable conventions:

"At the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago. riotous demonstrations against the Vietnam war and against Lyndon Johnson drowned out the convention and doomed the Democrat ticket. Mayor Richard Daley had the galleries packed with his people - most of them on the city payroll. Any criticism - indeed any mention of the riots in the streets outside was answered by chants of We Love Mayor Daley. The convention went on guarded by troops. The inside and the outside were different worlds. I was staying in the Conrad Hilton Hotel across the street from Grant Park - the center of the riots. The whole area was tear gassed. I remember the smell of tear gas that

penetrated to my closet-size room. Add to that a cab strike and a phone strike which made it all worse. Unforgettable but not a favorite convention.”

I look forward to hearing from you.

One last thing - Connecting is not making run to become the next car magazine, but we bring you even more of your stories of your first or favorite vehicle. No stopping you now. If you have a favorite story and photo to share, vvvrrrooommm, bring it on.

Here's to a great week – be safe, stay healthy.

Paul

Odd stories



Q&A with Rich Somma ([Email](#)), AP Oddities editor

What makes a good Odd story?

What I look for in odd news is something that most people can relate to. A funny or ironic situation, something strange, bizarre or mysterious. And I'm always looking for animal stories. They are always among the most popular and universally loved. Also, Florida: Anyone who keeps an eye out for odd stories knows that most of them come from this special state.

Any all-time favorites?

We did a story a long time ago about a man who was driving on a highway when his hood open. Instead of pulling over and closing the hood, the man stubbornly continued to drive for miles while trying to stand up and peer out the window. I believe that one was one of the most popular stories for quite a few days.

A recent favorite: A criminal defendant tried faking his death to avoid a jail sentence, but prosecutors say his phony death certificate had a glaring spelling error. The purported death certificate spelled "Registry," as "Regsitry."

Why do you think Oddities are important?

There is a hunger for odd news, and when we don't have many of them, we hear from the people who enjoy them. They are important because when you have a lot of news that's heavy and depressing, an odd story can clear the mood and help you refocus. They are fun to share on social media. These stories bring people together.

(Rich Somma is the nephew of our colleague Joe Somma.)

Connecting mailbox

On passing of Sumner Redstone

Eric Quinones ([Email](#)) - A brief note on Sumner Redstone's passing ... When I was covering the media/entertainment business beat for AP in the late '90s, I attended a few luncheon briefings hosted by Viacom and Time Warner to review their quarterly earnings reports. At one such Viacom event, Sumner Redstone made a rare appearance and the various beat writers lined up to

greet him at the behest of the company's PR guy. Redstone gave me a quick hello and moved on to Phyllis Furman of the New York Daily News, who was standing to my left. After Phyllis introduced herself, Redstone paused for a moment, then scowled and said, "I don't like all the articles you write." Phyllis, without missing a beat, replied, "I don't like all the movies you make." Redstone's stern face broke into a smile and he wagged his finger playfully at her before moving on to the next reporter. (Think of Robert DeNiro doing the "You ... you are good" face to Billy Crystal in the movie "Analyze This.") That moment taught me that NYC tabloid reporters were not to be messed with.

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AP style re describing a person

Lyle Price ([Email](#)) - One of my long-time methods as a journalist of sizing up a company--including at AP during my dozen years with that service--was to scrutinize memos and bulletin boards. I thought it revealed much of company culture as well as policy. Thus as I read the 14 August Connecting re VP candidate US Sen. Kamala Harris and the AP policy to term her Black because she herself as a woman of color used that description herself, my memory turned to one of my favorite AP memos: The one in which New York declared that since Cassius Clay had decided to call himself Mohammed Ali then so would AP. I recollect AP's stated reasoning for this was brief and logical to my mind, but I didn't commit the exact language to memory-- although then, as now, I certainly considered the memo to be memorable.

The time of the Ali memo was after I joined AP on 27 Aug. 1964 -- an anniversary soon to come up again. The memo was placed on a clipboard in the San Francisco bureau. Ali fought under his given name of Clay in defeating Sonny Liston for the heavyweight title in early 1964. So the AP memo re his name had to have come a number of months after Ali beat Liston--and according to Wikipedia, Ali announced just several days after his first Liston fight that he was a Black Muslim and had assumed a Muslim name. The second fight was in 1965 in which he again defeated Liston in a rematch.

I applaud both that and the Ali memo and consider that they both demonstrate wisdom and common sense on the part of AP news standards and policies.

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Rod Davis appointed to Book Critics board

Rod Davis ([Email](#)), an AP staffer in Dallas and Austin from 1972-75, is among 15 appointed last month to the Board of Directors of the National Book Critics Circle.

Davis has worked in every kind of media—radio, television, wire service, newspapers, magazines, and books, in positions ranging from on-air reporter to senior writer to editor. He spent nine years teaching English, at UT-Austin and SMU, and was one of the first hires for the Texas Film Commission. He has written two novels and one nonfiction book. He began reviewing books in the seventies with the AP and the Texas Observer and continues most recently with The Baffler. Davis has also reviewed for Lone Star Lit.

Click [here](#) for link to this story.

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California wildfires





Nick Ut ([Email](#)) – Pictures from two big fires from Lake Hughes and Azusa San Gabriel Mountain in California this weekend.

Stories of your first or favorite vehicle



Jim Carrier ([Email](#)) - First car, first wife, first sailboat.

The 1967 Mustang, bought for \$2,500 new, right out of college. I think it had three-on-the-floor and two bucket seats – just right for newlyweds.

I was working in Connecticut, first at WRUR-Bridgeport, then with the AP in New Haven and Hartford.

The boat, a \$100 Snark made of thick bead foam, taught me sailing. It had a dagger board and lanteen rig. I carried it on top of the Mustang until one day, on I-95, I heard a “fwshoosh,” looked in the rearview mirror, and saw my boat scatter in a thousand shards of white beads. The sun had destroyed the thin fiberglass coating!

Lynn Erickson, who I met at the University of Rochester, and I were married 18 years. She moved with me to Sioux Falls and Minneapolis, and then to Rapid City, where I was news editor at the Rapid City Journal. We divorced in 1984, and she retired as a special-ed teacher in New Hampshire. We had one daughter, Amy, now 45, who works at Boston College, and is now caring for Lynn in Massachusetts.



Gene Herrick (Email) – The 1950 Studebaker was a shakeup in automobile design. Its pointed nose was the talk of the industry. I bought one in 1951 shortly after returning from covering the Korean War. I thought it was “Neat.” It got a lot “Eyes” from passersby’s, but it was different in many other ways. The color was kinda sexy, and it had a feature known as “Hill Holder,” a brake feature that made driving in Seattle 100 % more comfortable and safe.

Seattle has a lot of hills, and stopping on one of them for traffic lights is an adventure of coordination, skill, guts and fear. Having the left foot on the clutch, and the right on the brake, made for adventure when the light turned green. Switching the right foot from brake to gas pedal, letting out on the clutch, and not roll quickly back into the guy behind, was an act of courage and fear.

However, with the new “Hill Holder” life became normal. When one stepped on the gas, and let out on the clutch, the Hill Holder released automatically. Whew.

The car had a negative. It was too light in rear end weight. I had to get two 100-pounds sacks of sand and place on the inside of the trunk to give enough traction.

One worrisome adventure was when I had to cover a huge forest fire North of Seattle. It was just a two-lane road going into a little town being threatened, and the flames were making an arch over the road. However, Ole Bess, the camera, and me made it through.

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Brendan Riley (Email) - I was one of those gearhead teen-agers, always working on cars. Had owned a dozen by the time I graduated from college. First one was a 1929 Model A that I bought for \$75 with paper-route money at age 13. Wasn't supposed to drive it til I got a license at 16 -- but managed to get a few pre-license miles on it anyway. This is a downloaded photo. Wish mine had looked like this, but not even close.



Arnold Zeitlin ([Email](#)) - I've always had a place in my heart for the Peugeot. It was the car in which I learned to drive in Nigeria. Until going to Nigeria in 1966 as AP's West Africa correspondent at the age of 34, I had never learned to drive. I'd been a big city guy, with no need of a car, even though my dad offered to buy me a Chevy when I turned 16 and was eligible for a learner's permit. I figured in Nigeria the time had come. We had a company car, a blue Peugeot 404 and a company driver, an Ibo fellow named John from east Nigeria. He essentially taught me in that Peugeot. I had to take a driver's test to get a Nigerian driver's license. The test area was a large field in Lagos. Standards were loose. While I waited, a fellow showed up for the test in his truck. He took the driver's test, failed it, and drove away in his truck. I passed.

When civil war broke out in 1966 in Nigeria, John fled Lagos for east Pakistan, which was trying to secede under the name Biafra. I hired another driver. Victor was a veteran who had served in the British army in Burma and was a wonder in getting that Peugeot through military roadblocks in Nigeria. I later discovered he was blind in one eye. I kept him on, if my memory serves right, and passed Victor on to my successor in Lagos, Mort Rosenblum, along with that blue Peugeot 404.

Best of the Week

AP staff works through injuries and destroyed homes to cover Beirut blast



Photographer Hassan Ammar receives treatment at a Russian field hospital during coverage of the Beirut explosion. PHOTO COURTESY HASSAN AMMAR

Despite countless obstacles in the wake of a towering explosion, AP's talented and resourceful Beirut staff responded immediately, delivering compelling coverage seen worldwide.

Tuesday afternoon's deafening explosion tore through Beirut and shattered everything in a few terrifying seconds, badly damaging the AP bureau and the homes of several AP employees in the Lebanese capital. Three employees were injured in their homes by broken glass.

But despite the mayhem and injuries, the AP team sprang into action to deliver standout coverage of an event that killed more than 170 people and injured

some 6,000, sending a mushroom cloud over the city.

The staff encountered obstacle and after obstacle from the moment of the explosion. The phone network in Beirut stopped working, but staff quickly adapted and found that the audio function on the WhatsApp service continued to function. Staffers used it to let each other know they had survived and communicate about what they were seeing.

Read more [here](#).

Best of the States

The pandemic crisis ‘laid bare’ in AP report from Texas maternity ward



Clarissa Muñoz, who contracted COVID-19, shares a photo of her baby at DHR Health in McAllen, Texas, July 29, 2020. Munoz had to be isolated from her child after giving birth. AP PHOTO / ERIC GAY

As the coronavirus hit the borderland of the Rio Grande Valley hard, strong planning and coordination led to AP's first reporting from a COVID-19 maternity ward in a powerful all-formats package.

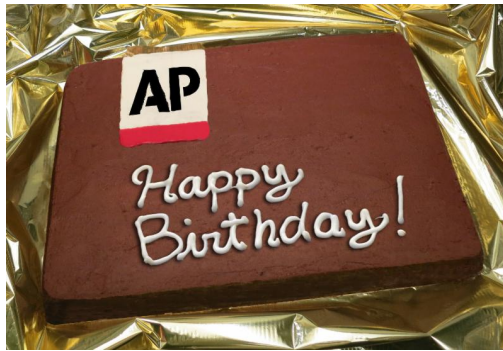
A new mother who had unknowingly contracted the coronavirus saw the harsh reality of the pandemic in the Rio Grande Valley first hand: The first moments Clarissa Muñoz spent with her baby were not only cut cruelly short, but she

couldn't even hold the infant. To see her newborn, she would have to call the nursery over video chat.

That image, documented in photos, video and text, is just the first example of the stark contrast between this part of the United States – with a combination of poor health and poverty – and other regions with more hospital beds and the other resources needed to fight the virus. As Austin-based reporter Paul Weber wrote, “The U.S. failure to contain the pandemic has been laid bare.”

Read more [here](#).

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



To

Richard Menzl - rmenzl@earthlink.net

Yvette Mercourt - yvette.mercourt@orange.fr

Stories of interest

***Trump's attacks on the Postal Service
deserve sustained, red-alert coverage from
the media***

(Washington Post)

By Margaret Sullivan
Media columnist

Listen to President Trump long enough, and, despite his penchant for falsehood, you'll eventually hear some unvarnished truth.

That happened Thursday when he stated his intentions clearly in an interview with Fox Business Network. He doesn't want to approve billions in emergency funding for the cash-strapped and struggling U.S. Postal Service for a simple reason: to prevent Democrats from expanding mail-in voting during the pandemic.

His words were stark: "Now, they need that money in order to have the Post Office work, so it can take all of these millions and millions of ballots." He added that holding back funding means "they can't have universal mail-in voting, they just can't have it."

In other words, he doesn't want American citizens, fearful of exposure to the coronavirus, to have every opportunity to vote in November.

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

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The revolution will be aestheticized: some thoughts on Instagram Politics (Substack)

By MARY RETTA

It's quite possible that the American media landscape has never been as chaotic or fragile as it is today. Infamous billionaire Jeff Bezos owns The Washington Post. In June, The New York Times published an op-ed from a Republican senator suggesting the military should be sent in to violently quell protests in the streets. Outlets across the board including Refinery29, Vogue Magazine, and Bon Appetit have been outed for institutional racism, and even more outlets like VICE, The Atlantic, and Conde Nast laid off substantial staff, many of whom were women or people of color, citing budget restraints amid the pandemic. It seems the decline of traditional journalism has been a long time coming: interest in print media has been decreasing for decades, but today even established online publications don't seem to be safe: several

niche, mission-driven, nonprofit journalism projects like Study Hall and Unicorn Riot have gained popularity as of late, and many are turning to Twitter for live updates or first hand accounts about protests instead of relying on the news. Most recently, an even more surprising outlet has joined the party: Instagram.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Susana Hayward.

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It Took Newsweek Three Days and a Staff Revolt to Apologize for Kamala Harris Birtherism Op-Ed (Daily Beast)

By LLOYD GROVE

Editors and executives at Newsweek, a formerly prestigious and popular magazine that in recent years has suffered from self-inflicted wounds and even a criminal investigation of its business practices, are once again digging themselves out of a public relations hole.

Newsweek Editor-in-Chief Nancy Cooper and the magazine's recently hired opinion editor, Trump-backing conservative activist and attorney Josh Hammer, apologized on Friday after nearly a week of defending a right-wing law professor's op-ed questioning Sen. Kamala Harris' U.S. citizenship and her eligibility to be Joe Biden's running mate.

"This op-ed is being used by some as a tool to perpetuate racism and xenophobia. We apologize," read the editor's note that replaced their earlier detailed defense of the op-ed. "[T]o many readers, the essay inevitably conveyed the ugly message that Senator Kamala Harris, a woman of color and the child of immigrants, was somehow not truly American."

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

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Ted Cruz, others rip Washington Post over ‘sick’ Robert Trump obit headline (Fox News)

By Dom Calicchio

The Washington Post “should be ashamed of itself” over its headline on an obituary for Robert Trump, brother of the president, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, wrote Sunday morning.

Just after midnight, Cruz retweeted a screen capture from The Post’s website, which included a headline reading: “Robert Trump, younger brother of President Trump who filed lawsuit against niece, dies at 71.”

“This headline, on an ‘obituary’ no less, is sick,” Cruz wrote. “WaPo should be ashamed of itself. Robert Trump, RIP.”

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

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A Historic Failure in Journalism

By CARY JORDAN

It’s Thursday, August 13, 2020. And if you remember nothing else from today, please just remember this... there is not a story happening in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

While one might think that a Category 2 hurricane appearing out of nowhere, without warning, and ravaging a major city in America’s upper Midwest is a story worth being told, it isn’t. Because in case you haven’t heard, there’s another tell-all book about President Trump about to be published.

If you thought it mattered that, on Monday, nearly 150,000 Americans in this city had their lives literally paralyzed, in every way 21st-century life can be paralyzed, by a weather event so extreme its physical impact can be seen from outer space, you’d be wrong.

Not a story.

Because on Tuesday, Joe Biden announced Kamala Harris as his running mate, and every major cable news outlet in the country is now rightly entering its 50th consecutive hour of pundits from the left and right offering their platitudes on why it was or wasn't a good pick.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Mike Holmes.

Today in Hifstory - August 17, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Aug. 17, the 230th day of 2020. There are 136 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 17, 2017, a van plowed through pedestrians along a packed promenade in the Spanish city of Barcelona, killing 13 people and injuring 120. (A 14th victim died later from injuries.) Another man was stabbed to death in a carjacking that night as the van driver made his getaway, and a woman died early the next day in a vehicle-and-knife attack in a nearby coastal town. (Six suspects in the attack were shot dead by police, two more died when a bomb workshop exploded.)

On this date:

In 1915, a mob in Cobb County, Georgia, lynched Jewish businessman Leo Frank, 31, whose death sentence for the murder of 13-year-old Mary Phagan had been commuted to life imprisonment. (Frank, who'd maintained his innocence, was pardoned by the state of Georgia in 1986.)

In 1960, the newly renamed Beatles (formerly the Silver Beatles) began their first gig in Hamburg, West Germany, at the Indra Club.

In 1964, Teamsters union president Jimmy Hoffa was sentenced in Chicago to five years in federal prison for defrauding his union's pension fund. (Hoffa was released in 1971 after President Richard Nixon commuted his sentence for this conviction and jury tampering.)

In 1969, Hurricane Camille slammed into the Mississippi coast as a Category 5 storm that was blamed for 256 U.S. deaths, three in Cuba.

In 1978, the first successful trans-Atlantic balloon flight ended as Maxie Anderson, Ben Abruzzo and Larry Newman landed their Double Eagle II outside Paris.

In 1982, the first commercially produced compact discs, a recording of ABBA's "The Visitors," were pressed at a Philips factory near Hanover, West Germany.

In 1983, lyricist Ira Gershwin died in Beverly Hills, Calif., at age 86.

In 1987, Rudolf Hess, the last member of Adolf Hitler's inner circle, died at Spandau Prison at age 93, an apparent suicide.

In 1988, Pakistani President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq and U.S. Ambassador Arnold Raphel (RAY'-fehl) were killed in a mysterious plane crash.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton gave grand jury testimony via closed-circuit television from the White House concerning his relationship with Monica Lewinsky; he then delivered a TV address in which he denied previously committing perjury, admitted his relationship with Lewinsky was "wrong," and criticized Kenneth Starr's investigation.

In 1999, more than 17,000 people were killed when a magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck Turkey.

In 2018, President Donald Trump said he had canceled plans for a Veterans Day military parade, citing what he called a “ridiculously high” price tag; he accused local politicians in Washington of price-gouging.

Ten years ago: A mistrial was declared on 23 corruption charges against ousted Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich (blah-GOY'-uh-vich), who was accused of trying to sell President Barack Obama's old Senate seat; the jury convicted him on one charge, that of lying to the FBI. (Blagojevich was convicted of 17 counts of corruption in a retrial and sentenced to 14 years in prison, but a federal appeals court dismissed five of the counts in July 2015. He was released from a federal prison in Colorado in February 2020 after his sentence was commuted by President Donald Trump.) A suicide bomber in Iraq detonated nail-packed explosives strapped to his body, killing 61 people, many of them army recruits.

Five years ago: A bomb exploded within a central Bangkok shrine that was among the city's most popular tourist spots, killing at least 20 people and injuring more than 100. The National Labor Relations Board dismissed a historic ruling that Northwestern University football players were school employees entitled to form the nation's first union of college athletes. Actor-dancer Yvonne Craig, 78, who played the sexy, crime-fighting Batgirl in the 1960s TV hit “Batman,” died in Los Angeles.

One year ago: A suicide bomber struck a wedding party in the Afghan capital, killing more than 60 people and wounding more than 180 others. Thousands of strangers gathered for the funeral of a woman who was among 22 people killed by a gunman at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas; they gathered after hearing that the woman's longtime companion had few family members left.

Today's Birthdays: Former Chinese president Jiang Zemin (jahng zuh-MEEN') is 94. Former MLB All-Star Boog Powell is 79. Actor Robert DeNiro is 77. Movie director Martha Coolidge is 74. Rock musician Gary Talley (The Box Tops) is 73. Actor-screenwriter-producer Julian Fellowes is 71. Actor Robert Joy is 69. International Tennis Hall of Famer Guillermo Vilas is 68. Rock singer Kevin Rowland (Dexy's Midnight Runners) is 67. Rock musician Colin Moulding (XTC) is 65. Country singer-songwriter Kevin Welch is 65. Olympic gold medal figure skater Robin Cousins is 63. Singer Belinda Carlisle is 62. Author Jonathan Franzen is 61. Actor Sean Penn is 60. Jazz musician Everette Harp is 59. Rock musician Gilby Clarke is 58. Singer Maria McKee is 56. Rock musician Steve Gorman (The Black Crowes) is 55. Rock musician Jill

Cuniff (kuh-NIHF) is 54. Actor David Conrad is 53. Actor Helen McCrory is 52. Singer Donnie Wahlberg is 51. College Basketball Hall of Famer and retired NBA All-Star Christian Laettner is 51. Rapper Posdnuos (PAHS'-deh-noos) is 51. International Tennis Hall of Famer Jim Courier is 50. Retired MLB All-Star Jorge Posada is 49. TV personality Giuliana Rancic is 46. Actor Bryton James is 34. Actor Brady Corbet (kohr-BAY') is 32. Actor Austin Butler is 29. Actor Taissa Farmiga is 26. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Gracie Gold is 25.

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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