

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)[View as Webpage](#)

Connecting
September 23, 2020

Click [here](#) for sound of the Teletype

[Top AP News](#)
[Top AP Photos](#)

[Connecting Archive](#)
[AP Emergency Relief Fund](#)
[AP Books](#)

Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this the 23rd day of September 2020.

Connecting was supposed to go on hiatus the rest of the week as Editor **Paul Stevens** and his wife, **Linda**, traveled and took a break for a few days. But headquarters approved an emergency vacation relief allocation Tuesday and I was enlisted to sit in the editor's chair in Paul's absence. Send contributions or feedback to markmitt71@yahoo.com.

Today's issue includes word of a new book by former Associated Press international editor **Thomas Kent** titled *Striking Back: Overt and Covert Options to Combat Russian Disinformation*. There will be a Zoom webinar at noon EST Wednesday, Sept. 30, to discuss Tom's insights. It also will be carried on YouTube Live. Click [here](#) for links to register or tune to YouTube Live.

On Monday, Connecting reported the death over the weekend of a former AP photographer in Vietnam, **Steve Stibbens**, at age 83. Stibbens was the first reporter

sent to Vietnam by Stars and Stripes, which carried a wonderful obituary that is included here.

Connecting is sad to report the unexpected death Tuesday of a good friend of AP, **Laura Sellers**, retired managing editor of The Astorian in Astoria, Ore. Family said she had been feeling ill and died at a medical center in Portland.

Laura served two separate stints on the board of directors of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, the second time becoming its president in 2015-16. In retirement she became co-director of the NewsTrain of digital journalism training around the country, a project started by APME and underwritten by AP and several major foundations and newspaper groups.

I got to know Laura and her husband, Carl Earl, during my years as APME executive director. Laura was a talented editor with a wildly creative mind, a free spirit, a bundle of fun and a supporter of great journalism.

Have a great day.

-- Mark Mittelstadt



Laura Sellers (right) shared a laugh with two other past presidents of the Associated Press Media Editors -- Karen Magnuson (left) and Suki Dardarian (next to Laura) at an APME dinner in New Orleans in September 2019. Between Magnuson and Dardarian is then outgoing president Angie Muhs.



Death of AP/APME friend Laura Sellers

Laura Sellers, retired managing editor of The Astorian, Astoria, Ore., died unexpectedly Tuesday. Her husband, Carl Earl, told friends she had not been feeling well and was at a medical center in Portland for a procedure when she passed away. Family said the death was not related to COVID-19.

Laura served two separate stints in the early 2000s on the board of directors of the Associated Press Managing Editors, an association of editors whose newspapers and online operations were members of The Associated Press. During her second turn she was elected president, serving from 2015-16. The group was renamed during her time on the leadership ladder to Associated Press Media Editors to reflect the changing titles of leaders in America's newsrooms. A year ago the group merged with another editors organization, the American Society of News Editors, to create the News Leaders Association, a group in which she was still active. In retirement she became co-director of NewsTrain, a digital journalism training project started by APME and continued around the country with support from AP as well as major foundations and newspaper groups.

"The human world has lost an amazing woman today," Laura's sister, Kim Sellers Gillies, wrote on Laura's Facebook page. "She was an editor in Oregon and loved the art of the English language. Her wit was bar none and her thoughts were deep. Laura loved traveling, cooking with friends, brewing ale, and riding a Harley up and down the Oregon coast with husband, Carl, by her side and her Welsh Terriers in tow. Our visits were few throughout life, but we had some epic camping trips in Glacier Park, Mont., as kids and family lake fun in Brownwood, Texas."

Laura was a native of Las Cruces, N.M., and attended the University of North Texas and Southern Methodist University. In addition to her husband, she is survived by a stepdaughter, Crystal Earl, of Harrison, Ark., and two sisters. A full obituary was not available at press time.

Sellers Gillies closed her note: "Ride on, write on, cheers to you."



Former Stars and Stripes combat correspondent Steve Stibbens at work during an ambush in Vietnam in 1963. Photo contributed/Stars and Stripes

Stars and Stripes on the death of former AP war correspondent Steve Stibbens (Stars and Stripes)

The first Stars and Stripes reporter sent to cover the Vietnam War — Marine Gunnery Sgt. Steve Stibbens — died Saturday in Dallas at age 84.

Stibbens got his start in journalism at age 12 as editor of The Camp Woodland Springs Echo, a mimeographed summer camp newspaper in Texas, according to the United States Marine Corps Combat Correspondents Association and Foundation. He later worked as a \$10-a-night proofreader with the Grand Prairie Daily News in Texas before enlisting in the Marines in 1953.

Stibbens, whose real name was Cecil, picked up the nickname “Steve” at boot camp after visiting a buddy’s Russian mother who couldn’t pronounce his last name, said his daughter, Suzanne Stibbens, of Arlington, Texas.

His first assignment in uniform was as a clerk in South Korea but he soon became a correspondent with the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

In 1962, Stibbens joined the Pacific Stars and Stripes in Tokyo and was the newspaper’s first reporter to set foot in Vietnam later that year...

...Stibbens left active duty in 1966 to join The Associated Press in Mobile, Ala., but continued service in the Marine Corps Reserve.

In early 1967, he was back in Vietnam for another year covering action on the Demilitarized Zone and at Khe Sanh as an AP war correspondent.

He returned to the United States to become the AP’s photo editor in Dallas. Other journalism assignments included work as a bureau chief at Gannett’s Florida Today in Vero Beach, Fla., and as a reporter at the San Diego Union, the Dallas Times Herald, Newsweek magazine and Texas Business magazine.

Former Stars and Stripes combat correspondent Steve Stibbens at work during an ambush in Vietnam in 1963.

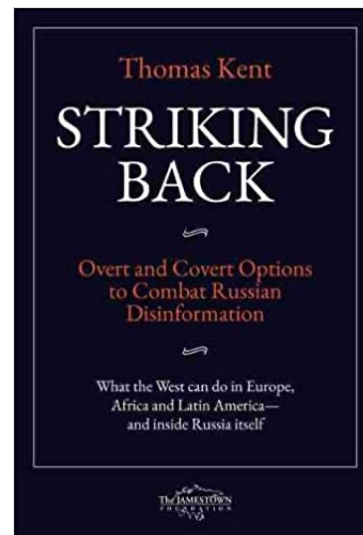
Read full obituary [here](#). Shared by Peggy Walsh

Striking Back: New book by Tom Kent looks at

ways to combat Russian disinformation

Tom Kent, former international editor for The Associated Press and former president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, has written a new book *Striking Back: Overt and Covert Options to Combat Russian Disinformation*. From the publisher's notes:

"Disinformation by Russia and its allies has increased sharply in the past decade, but Western responses have been weak and uncoordinated. Most democratic countries have relied on defensive measures, such as media literacy classes and pressure on social networks to delete Kremlin-controlled accounts.



"Thomas Kent, the former president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, proposes an energetic new strategy: aggressive messaging to combat Russian information operations, while promoting the values of democracy that too many in the West have lost faith in. Focusing on Russian operations in Europe, Africa and Latin America, Kent describes the reluctance of many Western governments to confront Kremlin disinformation. Some are afraid of Kremlin retaliation, while others fear becoming "propagandists" themselves. Kent, a specialist on communication ethics, delves into the difference between propaganda and aggressive promotion of the truth. Kent also describes the little-publicized army of anti-disinformation warriors, independent of governments, who are already at work confronting Russian trolls and even doxing Russian soldiers. Along with independent journalists and fact-checkers, these activists represent a significant potential threat to Russian disinformation. But the groups are small and their funding is haphazard."

There will be a Zoom webinar at noon EST Wednesday, Sept. 30, to discuss Tom's insights. The webinar also will be carried on YouTube Live. Click [here](#) for links to register or tune to YouTube Live.

More of your tales from the overnight

New overnight shift -- why me, Rick Spratling?

Dave Skidmore ([Email](#)) _ A few years into my journalism career, I arrived in the AP's Milwaukee bureau in 1983. About a year later, a new bureau chief arrived -- Rick Spratling, successor to the legendary Dion Henderson.

Until Rick's arrival, the bureau unstaffed from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. But Rick wanted to show the members the AP was serious about offering full service in the great state of Wisconsin. He called me into his office and explained, with a smile, that he was instituting an overnight shift and that I would be the bureau's overnight editor.

I sputtered. "What monstrous injustice is this?" I asked (silently, to myself). I found a way to ask, a little more diplomatically, "Why me?" Rick explained, his smile broadening, that the overnight was an essential shift and he needed to assign his best

staffer to it. Inwardly, I knew I was not the best staffer, I was the newest. But what could I say?

I never did thank Rick for the honor. But, if he is out there in Connecting land, I would like to thank him for a great lesson in management. I applied it to good effect years later as the manager of a small team in a government bureaucracy.

-0-

Learning the ropes from 'early supe' Glenn Wolf

John Dowling ([Email](#)) _ To all of the memories of the overnight at AP I must add a remembrance of the wonderful Glenn E. Wolf, who was the “early supervisor” (his preferred title) in Chicago for many years.

When I started in the bureau as a part-time night office assistant in the spring of 1979 Glenn was already a fixture who appeared each night like clockwork just before 11 pm. He was an intimidating presence, at least to 22-year-old me – a stocky taciturn man with a steely brush cut, dark-rimmed glasses and a voice that seemed to come from the bottom of a quarry. One of the last duties of my shift was to fetch the first editions of the morning papers from the Tribune Tower two blocks away, and I would lay them on the desk within Glenn’s reach and slink away.

Then, promoted to vacation relief newspaperman, I got to know Glenn through a harrowing six-month stint on the late-late shift, through a dark cold Midwest winter and the purgatory that was basketball season. He was a courtly and considerate man with a ready smile and a dry sense of humor. He was a small-town boy (Princeton, Ill.) who joined AP in the mid 1950s after graduating from the University of Illinois and serving in the Army. He was a master of the arcane art of managing copy flow on the 66 wpm wires on which small newspapers received all of their AP news, reshuffling the queue so budgets and other top stories moved by an appointed hour. He was a smart and judicious editor and a decisive desk supervisor. He started every night by filling the kill drawer with pickup prospects which nightside had left for him but which Glenn knew the state and world didn’t really need to know about.

He preferred the overnight (but please call it “the early”) in part because it gave him time to ride his bike and tend his vegetable garden in the distant semi-rural Chicago suburb where he lived; in the summer he had a classic farmer tan. He also valued the lack of direct contact with managers, whom he would sometimes go months without seeing. He was a loyal Guild member but otherwise kept his opinions of the current administrations to himself, though he once let it be known that he had received a substandard mark on a performance appraisal for “contacts with key government officials,” whom he presumably should have been schmoozing between 11 pm and 7 am.

In fact Glenn was a rock of the bureau, perhaps THE rock. It was a tumultuous few years for news in Chicago, with a massive plane crash, the Tylenol murders, political upheaval and racial turmoil. But no matter what chaos he inherited from nightside, things were always serene and ship-shape by the time dayside arrived.

Anyone who doubted Glenn’s importance was set straight when, in 1983, Glenn landed in the hospital with serious health problems. We were all concerned for Glenn but also (selfishly) terrified for ourselves: Someone else was going to have to work the

overnight five days a week, for who knew how long. I drew a relatively light sentence, about eight weeks, a miserable experience which I commemorated by growing a scruffy beard and which strengthened my resolve to transfer to the statehouse in Springfield, where there were often long hours but no overnight.

I didn't have much contact with Glenn after that. Some later management team decided Glenn should be broadcast editor, an epic miscasting that may have been intended to push him out. He was several years retired by the time I returned to Chicago as news editor in 1993, and I remember having a hand in his obit a couple of years later. I was stunned to learn he was only 68, so he was barely 50 when I first knew him.

I came to treasure what I learned working with Glenn and the other older men (yes anyone over 35 was a man) with whom I worked at the start of my AP career. They came from what seemed to me a prehistoric era of manual typewriters, perforated tape, a hammering chorus of teletypes and the floor of the bureau as ashtray, but they shared a quiet, granite-hard sense of duty and commitment. They worked hard on tough schedules mostly in anonymity and for not much money, because they knew it was important to get the news to people. That has always stayed with me and I hope it endures.

-0-

Edit Saul Pett? Who, me?

Mike Rouse ([Email](#)) _ The "early" shift gave me some of the most memorable moments of my 10-year AP stint in Charlotte.

Some were the occasional calls from New York, usually Ed Dennehy. If Ed appreciated something you'd done, like a contribution to a national roundup, he'd let you know it. You were alone in the bureau but you always had the feeling that you were working with someone else.

But most memorable moment came when I was working the early with Ray Stephens in Washington during the 1969 strike. President Johnson gave a State of the Union address and New York sent Saul Pett, whose work I greatly admired, from New York to do a color stories. Pett returned to the bureau to file, and Stephens instructed me to handle his AMs story. Who, me? Edit Saul Pett? Just like you'd edit anybody else, said Stephens.

I edited as Pett worked on his PMs piece, and I saw him watching me out the corner of his eye. When his AMs lead started moving, he got up, sauntered over to the printer and apparently read every word. Then, saying nothing, he went back to his desk and got back to work on the overnight story. After a while, he pulled the last page out of his typewriter, evened the edges of his pages, walked over and plopped them onto my desk. "Here," he said. "Here's another can of worms for you."

Connecting mailbox

Ed Williams ([Email](#)) _ It's officially autumn! Today is the autumn equinox when day and night are equal lengths. Here's to crunchy leaves and crisp walks (and a possum at our birdfeeder just now).



Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



To

Joni Beall – glbbq@gmail.com

Trenton Daniel – tdaniel@ap.org

Kristin Gazlay – kgazlay@ap.org

Tom Leone – tleone@ap.org

Jon Rust – jrust@semissourian.com

Greg Thompson - gregmbt@aol.com

Stories of interest

Turkey probes death of American journalist Andre Vltchek

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkish authorities are investigating the death of an American author and journalist who died while traveling overnight from the Turkish Black Sea coastal city of Samsun to Istanbul, Turkey's state-run news agency reported Tuesday.

Andre Vltchek, 57, and his wife were traveling inside a rented, chauffeured car and arrived in front of their Istanbul hotel at around 5:30 a.m. Tuesday. His wife tried to wake him up to tell him they had arrived but could not do so, the Anadolu Agency reported.

Medical teams called to the scene declared him dead, it said.

The Istanbul chief prosecutor's office immediately launched an investigation into the death and his body was taken to a forensic medicine institution to be examined, Anadolu reported.

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

-0-

Jailed Morocco journalist probed by court on rape charge

RABAT, Morocco (AP) — A Moroccan journalist and human rights activist held by authorities for weeks on charges of undermining state security, receiving foreign funding and rape, appeared before an investigating judge in Casablanca on Tuesday.

Omar Radi's hearing focused on the charges of "indecent assault with violence and rape" based on a complaint filed by a woman, according to his lawyer, Miloud Kandil.

"Radi has denied the allegation of rape and maintained his innocence throughout the hearing," Kandil told The Associated Press.

Radi, who was arrested in late July and jailed in Casablanca, has become something of a cause celebre for journalists in Morocco. The 34-year-old gained prominence last year after his arrest for a tweet that criticized a judge for upholding heavy prison sentences against anti-government protestors.

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

-0-

Former ABC bureau chief tells story of fleeing China (ABC)

It was late on a Friday evening and I was about to head home from the ABC's Beijing office when the telephone rang.

On the other end of the line was a man from the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission.

He refused to give his name but insisted one of the ABC's Chinese staff write down the statement he was about to dictate.

The man told us our reporting had "violated China's laws and regulations, spread rumours and illegal, harmful information which endangered state security and damaged national pride".

It was August 31, 2018, and I had been the ABC's China bureau chief since January 2016, working alongside reporter Bill Birtles.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Arnold Zeitlin

The Final Word

The men behind QAnon (ABC)

For nearly three years, QAnon followers have been feverishly deciphering thousands of cryptic clues and predictions posted online by the shadowy persona of "Q" at the center of a metastasizing movement that experts say is the first far-right extremist conspiracy theory in the modern era to penetrate mainstream American culture and Washington politics. Yet, a consensus of leading researchers and critics who study and debunk QAnon disinformation told ABC News that a key to identifying "Q" has been hiding in plain sight for years -- on a pig farm south of Manila in the Philippines -- at least until recently.

Read more [here](#).



Today in History - September 23, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Sept. 23, the 267th day of 2020. There are 99 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 23, 1952, Sen. Richard M. Nixon, R-Calif., salvaged his vice-presidential nomination by appearing on television from Los Angeles to refute allegations of improper campaign fundraising in what became known as the "Checkers" speech.

On this date:

In 63 B.C., Caesar Augustus, the first Roman emperor, was born.

In 1806, the Lewis and Clark expedition returned to St. Louis more than two years after setting out for the Pacific Northwest.

In 1846, Neptune was identified as a planet by German astronomer Johann Gottfried Galle (GAH'-luh).

In 1932, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded.

In 1939, Sigmund Freud (froyd), the founder of psychoanalysis, died in London at age 83.

In 1949, President Harry S. Truman announced there was evidence the Soviet Union had recently conducted a nuclear test explosion. (The test had been carried out on Aug. 29, 1949.)

In 1955, a jury in Sumner, Mississippi, acquitted two white men, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, of murdering Black teenager Emmett Till. (The two men later admitted to the crime in an interview with Look magazine.)

In 1957, nine Black students who'd entered Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas were forced to withdraw because of a white mob outside.

In 1987, Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., withdrew from the Democratic presidential race following questions about his use of borrowed quotations and the portrayal of his academic record.

In 1999, the Mars Climate Orbiter apparently burned up as it attempted to go into orbit around the Red Planet.

In 2001, President George W. Bush returned the American flag to full staff at Camp David, symbolically ending a period of national mourning following the 9/11 attacks.

In 2002, Gov. Gray Davis signed a law making California the first state to offer workers paid family leave.

Ten years ago: The U.S. delegation walked out of a U.N. speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (ah-muh-DEE'-neh-zahhd) after he said some in the world had speculated that the U.S. staged the September 11, 2001 attacks in an attempt to assure Israel's survival. Congressional Republicans unveiled their "Pledge to America," a strongly worded manifesto promising to return government to the people. Teresa Lewis, 41, was executed by the state of Virginia for arranging the killings of her husband and stepson to collect on a \$250,000 insurance policy.

Five years ago: In the first canonization on U.S. soil, Pope Francis elevated to sainthood Junipero Serra, an 18th-century missionary who'd brought Catholicism to the American West Coast. Earlier in the day, the pontiff met with President Barack Obama at the White House and was greeted by adoring crowds during an outdoor procession. Chinese President Xi Jinping, visiting Seattle, addressed Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos, billionaire investor Warren Buffett and other top American and Chinese business leaders, vowing his country would work to remove barriers to foreign investment and improve intellectual property protections. Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn resigned, days after admitting that the world's top-selling carmaker had rigged diesel emissions to pass U.S. tests during his tenure; Winterkorn denied any personal wrongdoing.

One year ago: During a meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations, President Donald Trump denied telling the president of Ukraine that his country would only get U.S. aid if Ukraine investigated the son of Democratic rival Joe Biden. World leaders gathered at the Climate Action Summit at the United Nations pledged to do more to prevent a warming world from reaching even more dangerous levels; even before they spoke, they were scolded in a speech by teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg, who shamed them for their inaction by repeatedly asking, "How dare you?" Hundreds of thousands of travelers were left stranded across the world after the British tour operator Thomas Cook collapsed, immediately halting almost all of its flights and hotel services and laying off employees; the 178-year-old company had helped create the package tour industry.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Julio Iglesias is 77. Actor Paul Petersen (TV: "The Donna Reed Show") is 75. Actor/singer Mary Kay Place is 73. Rock star Bruce Springsteen is 71. Director/playwright George C. Wolfe is 66. Rock musician Leon Taylor (The Ventures) is 65. Actor Rosalind Chao is 63. Golfer Larry Mize is 62. Actor Jason Alexander is 61. Actor Chi McBride is 59. Country musician Don Herron (BR549) is 58. Actor Erik Todd Dellums is 56. Actor LisaRaye is 54. Singer Ani (AH'-nee) DiFranco is 50. Rock singer Sam (formerly Sarah) Bettens (K's Choice) is 48. Recording executive Jermaine Dupri is 48. Actor Kip Pardue is 44. Actor Anthony Mackie is 42. Pop singer Erik-Michael Estrada (TV: "Making the Band") is 41. Actor Aubrey Dollar is 40. Actor Brandon Victor Dixon is 39. Actor David Lim is 37. Pop singer Diana Ortiz (Dream) is 35. Actor Cush Jumbo is 35. Actor Skylar Astin is 33. Former tennis player Melanie Oudin (oo-DAN') is 29.

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

paulstevens46@gmail.com

