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Connecting

October 12, 2020

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Colleagues,

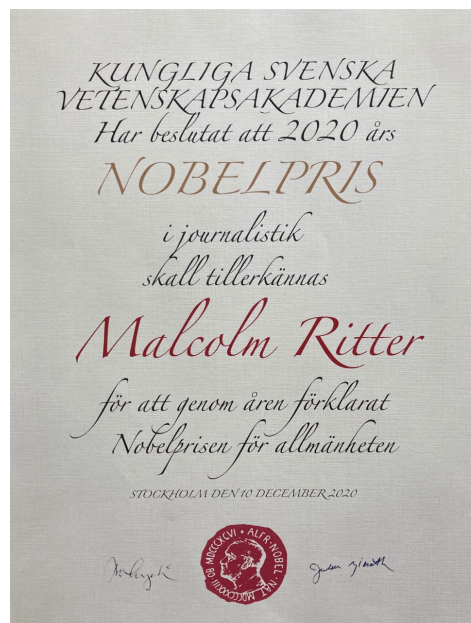
Good Monday morning on this the 12th day of October 2020,

Our spotlight for the beginning of this new week shines on our colleague **Malcolm Ritter**, who retired Oct. 2 after 36 years as an AP science writer in New York.

Malcolm was working as a reporter at the Rapid City (SD) Journal, covering science, medicine and religion — which he called the miracle beat — when his work was seen by the late **Jack Cappon**, a longtime AP editor, while looking for a science writer. The rest, as Malcolm relates in a delightful profile, is history.

The image at right? No, Malcolm did not win a Nobel Prize. That's a bogus Nobel Prize in journalism presented at his going-away party - in Swedish, of course. It says the Academy awarded the prize to Malcolm, "who through the years has explained the Nobel Prize to the public."

Connecting is always on the search for profiles of colleagues. If you're interested personally or know of someone who ought to be profiled, please drop me a note. Besides proving a delightful read for your colleagues, you are helping preserve our history by sharing your experiences: each issue of Connecting is entered into the AP archives.



WRITTEN A BOOK IN THE PAST YEAR?

AUTHORS ALERT: If you have written a book in the past year, Connecting would like to feature it in our annual listing of books authored by Connecting colleagues. The book issue will appear in a couple weeks – so this is an invitation to send me the following: Name of book, jpg image of the cover and your headshot, and 300 words on the book including where it can be purchased. Send along the information soon.

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

Paul

Connecting Profile Malcolm Ritter



Malcolm and his wife Jane, taken in New York City's Central Park by friend Heather Bickham.

Q. How did you get the AP science writer job?

In 1983 I was working at the Rapid City (SD) Journal, covering science, medicine and religion — the miracle beat. By pure chance the late Jack Cappon, who was then a top AP editor in New York, happened to see a few of my stories while looking to hire a science writer. At an APME meeting in South Dakota, he sought out my boss and said, "I gotta talk to this guy." And in March of 1984, I went to work at 50 Rock.

Q. So a 29-year-old kid from South Dakota hit the big time. How did that feel?

Sometimes it was frightening. I'd lie awake at night, anxious about whether I'd made some factual error in a story I'd filed that day. Finally, a psychologist hypnotized me and said firmly, "When a story is done, it's done." That fixed the problem.

Q. Did you have any training in science?

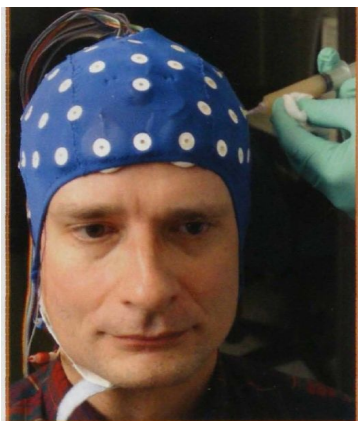
No. I had double-majored in journalism and economics at the University of Minnesota. Never thought about science writing until, as a general-assignment reporter at the Bismarck (ND) Tribune, I was assigned to help with a special section on alternative energy. I loved explaining how it worked, and that revealed my calling.



Q. At AP did you specialize in any areas of science?

I generally wrote about living things or things that were alive at one time. That meant subjects like the brain, genetics, stem cells, dinosaurs, ancestors and early relatives of our own species, and the first people to enter and settle in the Americas.

Q. What are some of your favorite AP experiences?



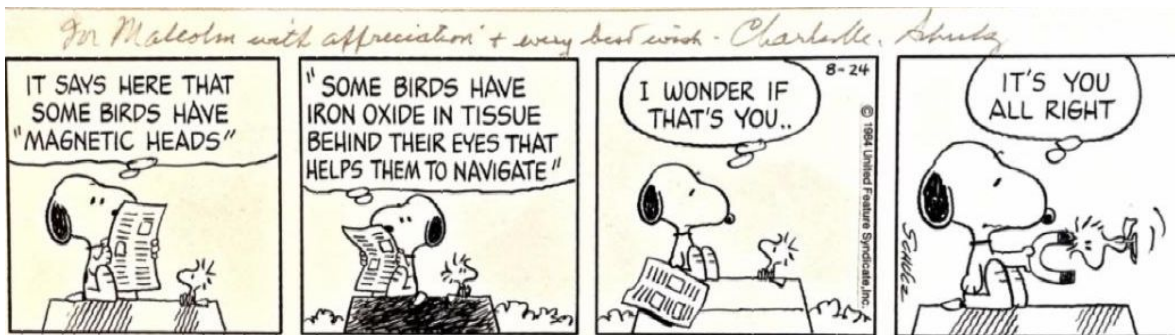
Wearing a skullcap full of electrodes at an Albany lab so I could try to control a computer with my brainwaves. (I was terrible at it, but the story came out well). Peering into a boy's brain while a surgeon worked on it. Operating a robotic surgeon being developed by the Pentagon. (I managed to tie two rubber tubes together). Informing a young woman by phone that her book had just won a Pulitzer; we celebrated together as I collected quotes. Participating in an experiment in South Carolina to see if a brain scan could work as a lie detector. (It worked on me). Doing voiceovers for animations and AP video, which included dubbing in the

English for an indignant Chinese diplomat.



And as I strolled with a paleontologist in the Patagonian desert one day in 1999, we came across what looked to me like a scattering of gravel. He realized it was fossil bone. The next day, a team returned to start digging. But nobody could find the site ... until I spotted it. They eventually uncovered the skeleton of a previously unknown species of two-legged, meat-eating dinosaur.

Q. What are your favorite souvenirs from the job?



My living room wall displays the original drawing for a Peanuts cartoon, autographed by Charles M. Schulz, that was based on one of my stories. It was published just five months after I arrived at AP.

At my surprise retirement party via Zoom last month, my colleagues gave me two particularly precious gifts (smuggled into our apartment the night before by my wife). One was a bogus but real-looking Nobel Prize in Journalism. That's because for

decades I've started work at 5:30 a.m. on days the science prizes are awarded to help cover the news, and to write the final writethru of the stories. The other gift was a very real letter of congratulations from the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, which bestows the science Nobels.

Q. What are your favorite hobbies?

One is photography. I'm a volunteer photographer for Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village. Personal photos of mine have sold at charity auctions and been published by AP and the New York Times.

At the moment I'm in the thick of helping high school seniors write their essays for college applications, a free service I've provided for years. And I've returned to piano playing after 40 years away. I'm currently groping my way through George Gershwin's own arrangement of "I Got Rhythm." I think the guy had three hands.

I also love speaking to graduate j-school classes at New York University and Columbia. I often tell the story of how, early in my career, I asked a scientist how he would test whether his experimental medicine works better than the standard treatment. Easy, he said. He'd set up an experiment with patients, and inject the standard treatment in one arm and the experimental drug in the other arm. Wait, I replied, if all these people get a shot in each arm, how can you tell which medication is helping them? He started to laugh. And that's how I learned that in medical research, an "arm" is a group of patients. So he was saying he'd inject his drug into one group and the standard treatment into the other group. Moral of the story: If an expert tells you something that doesn't sound quite right, ask about it.

Q. Names of your family members and what they do?



My wife Jane is retired, having been a textbook editor in New Jersey and a special education teacher at a Brooklyn high school. Older son Matt is a data scientist near Boston, and with his wife Meredith the parents of our 6-month-old granddaughter Emily (at left, who I look forward to spending more time with in retirement.) Younger son Scott works in the special events office of the New York City Parks Dept. He and his wife have a golden retriever who is in love with Jane. I can relate to that.

Q, You're a couple weeks into retirement. How does it feel so far?

Like a string of Saturdays, I have to remind myself that other people are working.

Q. Have you fully embraced your new life and left your AP job completely behind?

Yes. After the three Nobel Prizes in science were announced last week, I emailed coverage suggestions for only the physics and chemistry awards. That's pretty good, right?

Malcolm Ritter's email - malc1737@aol.com

One of those 'proud mama moments'



Pat Kreger (Email) - It's good to have "proud mama moments." If you're a parent, you know what I mean. You are suddenly, unexpectedly confronted with the truth your child is no longer... a child. And what is more surprising and happy is realizing they are a successful adult!

My moment came recently in the frozen food aisle of our local Hy-Vee, Osage Beach, MO. There in the case I spotted Lean Cuisine's Peanut Chicken Stir Fry among the many frozen food options. "My baby did that!" I excitedly thought. Arianne, now 26 (pictured at right), is a product development food scientist for Nestle USA, based in suburban Cleveland.

That SKU (stock-keeping unit) was her first big project after being hired in the spring of 2019. As the lead, she was in charge of everything from ingredient sourcing and traceability (for food safety) to developing the recipe, writing the nutrition and ingredient statements (the label), scaling the recipe to a specific Nestle manufacturing plant and then overseeing its first production run. That run was 40,000 cases with 8 units per case! I remember her excited phone call from Jonesboro, AR when the plant manager presented her with the very first dinner off the line. That was last October, and Arianne's Peanut Chicken Stir Fry hit grocery freezers in January.

Since that first project, she's worked on about 18 other products. Nestle is the world's largest food company, with many brands in the US and worldwide. Stouffers, Lean and Life Cuisine and Sweet Earth are some of her brands in the U.S. She's also collaborated on the Garden Gourmet Brand, available in 13 European nations.

Arianne is proud to remind me the U.S. has the safest food supply in the world and would say, "Thank a food scientist." She now lives on an active farm, growing and processing her own food. I'm just glad that kid who used to drive me crazy in the kitchen when she wouldn't follow a recipe and insisted on experimenting is doing well.

(Pat Adsit Kreger was an AP Broadcast Executive in Kansas/Missouri and Illinois/Indiana from 1981 to 1994, working parttime after her and husband Chris' first daughter was born in 1989.)



More thoughts on the Contrarian Grammarian

Lyle Price ([Email](#)) - Re Adolphe Bernotas and his Oct. 7 parody of cliches and padded journalese: Instead of praising someone I've known for decades and decades as someone widely renowned as an advocate for forthright journalism and telling things as they are or is or should be as well as being gifted and diligent as a wire service stalwart who remains mentally alert following his retirement at AP I will simply content myself to admiring his non-brevity in making a point better than I have ever seen in print before in this lifetime of mine on the planet Earth--and may he continue to do so on and on and on forever more endlessly and without cessation!

-0-

Joseph Young ([Email](#)) - A few remarks from an experienced photojournalist and news photographer.

This quote from Contrarian Grammarian Hints:

"-- Don't say cameras flashed when you can say flashbulbs popped (even though flashbulbs haven't been used in cameras in about 60 years)"

Camera DON'T FLASH but the bulb in the flash attachment does!

Flashbulbs don't pop but on occasion they have exploded. When fired, a flashbulb flashes and only once.

Flashbulbs have not usually been used by most professional photographers since the electronic flash (strobe unit) but were sold to users that put them flash attachments on or hooked up to non-professional cameras.

New Membership Director to Support Nearly 4,000 Nonprofit News Staff

By INN Staff

Michelle Morgante ([Email](#)) (a Connecting colleague) joins the Institute for Nonprofit News on Oct. 12 to facilitate connections among members and build added support for the nearly 4,000 people now working in INN member news organizations. Morgante will be working to fire up more peer groups, mentoring programs, a member award program, regional gatherings and other network opportunities to

speed growth of the field and provide more resources for the individuals leading this nonprofit news movement.

A veteran of newsrooms across the United States and Latin America, Morgante has nearly 30 years of experience in print, digital and broadcast journalism as a reporter, editor and manager. Her background includes tenure as deputy managing editor for National Public Radio; managing editor of the award-winning McClatchy daily, The Merced Sun-Star; and more than two decades with The Associated Press, where Morgante was an editor and bureau chief, as well as a foreign correspondent. She was a co-founder of the AP's Diversity Council and has supported the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, the Society of Professional Journalists and CCNMA/Latino Journalists of California as a member and chapter officer.



Read more [here](#).

Connecting sky shot - Storm Lake, Iowa



Mark Mittelstadt ([Email](#)) - Dust and smoke from western fires created a rose-colored sunrise over Storm Lake, Iowa. This was taken from my mother's house, where we visited to celebrate her 90th birthday.

Best of the Week

AP launches 'Looking for America' series with an immersive trip into Appalachia



AP Photo/Maye E Wong

Assignments don't come much more challenging or ambitious: Take a road trip across the nation to see how Americans in different regions and are facing the confluence of COVID-19, economic meltdown, racial protests and a tumultuous presidential election. And this first installment came with high expectations, as it had to both launch the series and hold its own as a story. The team of Minneapolis-based enterprise reporter Tim Sullivan, New York enterprise photographer Maye-E Wong and Chicago video journalist Noreen Nasir came through beautifully.

The story draws attention to Ohio communities in the much-maligned Appalachian region, thoughtfully acknowledging both the truths and the enduring stereotypes so often associated with it. In particular, the piece showed us why the region feels even more isolated now – its residents see COVID-19 deaths and racial unrest from a distance, mostly on TV.

The package looked terrific, with powerful photos and video, and Samantha Shotzbarger handling the digital presentation. The story played extremely well over an extended period of time, even four days later carrying a remarkable average audience engagement of three minutes.

Read more [here](#).

Best of the States

AP ties Supreme Court nominee to faith group said to subjugate women



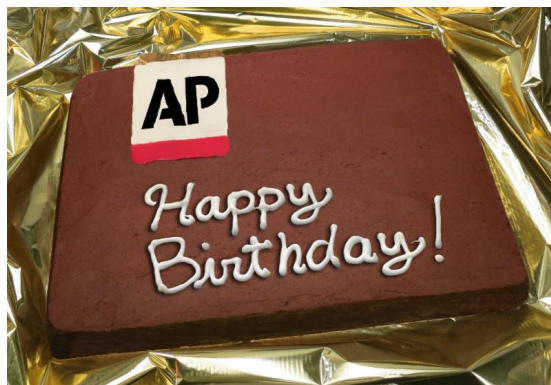
When President Donald Trump nominated Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, Barrett and her supporters clearly did not want to discuss the nominee's ties to a religious group called People of Praise, despite news reports over the years that said she was a member.

Enter Providence, Rhode Island, reporter Michelle Smith and national investigative reporter Michael Biesecker. The pair documented Barrett's deep ties to the charismatic Christian group and painted a detailed picture of the organization's beliefs and practices from its early days to the present.

The day after the original story ran, Biesecker followed up with another exclusive detailing how the organization had systematically deleted all mentions of Barrett and her family from its website.

Read more [here](#).

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



to

Craig Whitney - crwhitney65@gmail.com

Stories of interest

Both sides of news avoidance (The Hill)

BY STEPHANIE EDGERLY, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR

The recent tidal wave of news about President Donald Trump and Melania's COVID diagnoses, his taxes, the spread of infection delaying action on Amy Coney Barrett as Supreme Court Justice, wildfires in California, the vice presidential debate, protests across the country on racial injustice, and the rising COVID death toll all seems unavoidable.

And yet, there are many in this country who are unaware of any of these events. How is it possible to avoid news when the news is more abundant and accessible than ever before?

Research from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism suggests that news avoidance is fairly common. The pre-COVID 2019 Digital News Report finds that 32 percent of people, across 38 countries, self-identify as someone who will often or sometimes avoid the news. In the U.S., this proportion is higher at 41 percent.

A more recent report, based on the U.K., finds that news avoidance during the pandemic is a more frequent practice, with 66 percent saying they avoid the news because of its negative on impact their mood.

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

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Detainee reform would be fitting legacy, James Foley's mom says (New Hampshire Union Leader)

By Kevin Landrigan

ROCHESTER — Diane Foley, the mother of slain freelance journalist James Foley, said a fitting legacy for her son would be for the next elected Congress and president to embrace legislation that would help rescue other Americans detained by ISIS and other terrorist groups around the globe.

Last June, the U.S. Senate unanimously approved the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act that the Foley family and those of three other families killed by ISIS terrorists have championed.

It would allow the U.S. president to impose sanctions against any person responsible or complicit in “hostage-taking or unlawful detention” of American citizens.

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

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She's a One-Person Newsroom, But Lee Enterprises Kept Cutting (WVTF.com)



Floyd Press Managing Editor Ashley Spinks is the only full-time editorial staff at the weekly paper. CREDIT MALLORY NOE-PAYNE / RADIOIQ

By MALLORY NOE-PAYNE

It may be the weekend but reporter Ashley Spinks still has a full schedule. It begins with a Pride parade in downtown Floyd.

"I'm Ashley, I'm from the Floyd Press," she introduces herself to a parade participant with a smile, notebook in hand.

Spinks and I walked to the parade route together from the Floyd Press headquarters. The office itself is an old brick building in a downtown that isn't just small, it's less than half a square mile. Fun fact, says Spinks, there's only one stop light in the entire county.

Another fact: there's also only one full-time newspaper reporter.

Spinks' technical title is Managing Editor of the Floyd Press, but in practicality she's reporter, photographer, layout designer and editor. Each week she single-handedly pulls together the 16-20 page newspaper. And she does it all for \$36,000. The paper does also have one ad manager and one customer service representative.

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

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Farewell to a Great Newspaperman (National Review)

By KYLE SMITH

I was stunned to see we've lost Jim Dwyer, an old-school shoe-leather newspaperman who spent many years with Newsday, the Daily News, and the New York Times. Dwyer died of cancer at 63 on Thursday and won the Pulitzer Prize for his columns in 1995. Metro journalism seems to be a dying art these days, when most young journalists — I think Jim would, like Jimmy Breslin and Pete Hamill, preferred to be known as a “reporter” — get into the business either because they want to cover national/international/sociological issues or because they want to do commentary, preferably on television. Dwyer went out there and hit the streets nosing around for something new, talking to ordinary people, gathering facts, notably rounding up the individual stories behind the Sept. 11 attacks that went into the book, *102 Minutes: The Unforgettable Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers*.

Dwyer once said that, having studied metro columnists such as Breslin, Hamlin, and Murray Kempton — all of them now departed — “From all of those guys, and so many more, I learned that you have to report. It might sound obvious, but that doesn't make it less true. You have to report the hell out of a story. Then, maybe, you can write it.” Dwyer was interested in understanding, not grandstanding. It's amazing what you can learn if you actually go out looking for stories rather than just pontificating over a chyron. R.I.P. to one of the greats.

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

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Court: Press, others remain exempt from dispersal orders

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Journalists and legal observers will be exempt from federal officers' orders to disperse during Portland protests as federal agencies appeal a lower court's preliminary injunction, a federal appeals court panel ruled Friday.

The panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in a split 2 to 1 ruling, declined the emergency motion by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Marshals Service, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported. The motion sought to put on hold the injunction that U.S. District Judge Michael H. Simon granted on Aug. 20.

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

Today in History - October 12, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Oct. 12, the 286th day of 2020. There are 80 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 12, 2002, bombs blamed on al-Qaida-linked militants destroyed a nightclub on the Indonesian island of Bali, killing 202 people, including 88 Australians and seven Americans.

On this date:

In 1492 (according to the Old Style calendar), Christopher Columbus' expedition arrived in the present-day Bahamas.

In 1864, Roger B. Taney (TAH'-nee), the fifth Chief Justice of the United States, died at 87; he was succeeded by Salmon Chase.

In 1870, General Robert E. Lee died in Lexington, Virginia, at age 63.

In 1942, during World War II, American naval forces defeated the Japanese in the Battle of Cape Esperance. Attorney General Francis Biddle announced during a Columbus Day celebration at Carnegie Hall in New York that Italian nationals in the United States would no longer be considered enemy aliens.

In 1957, the Dr. Seuss Yuletide tale "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" was first published by Random House.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon nominated House minority leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan to succeed Spiro T. Agnew as vice president.

In 1976, it was announced in China that Hua Guofeng had been named to succeed the late Mao Zedong as chairman of the Communist Party; it was also announced that Mao's widow and three others, known as the "Gang of Four," had been arrested.

In 1984, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher escaped an attempt on her life when an Irish Republican Army bomb exploded at a hotel in Brighton, England, killing five people.

In 1986, the superpower meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, ended in stalemate, with President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev unable to agree on arms control or a date for a full-fledged summit in the United States.

In 1997, singer John Denver was killed in the crash of his privately built aircraft in Monterey Bay, California; he was 53.

In 2000, 17 sailors were killed in a suicide bomb attack on the destroyer USS Cole in Yemen.

In 2007, Former Vice President Al Gore and the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change won the Nobel Peace Prize for sounding the alarm over global warming.

Ten years ago: The Obama administration announced it was lifting the six-month moratorium on deep water oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico imposed after the BP oil spill. General Motors CEO Dan Akerson and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner (GYT'-nur) met for the first time in New York to discuss GM's initial public offering as the automaker waited for approval from the Securities and Exchange Commission to sell the shares. At least 44 people were killed when a train hit a bus at a crossing in eastern Ukraine.

Five years ago: Princeton University's Angus Deaton won the Nobel prize in economics for work that helped redefine the way poverty was measured around the world, notably in India. Actor Joan Leslie, 90, died in Los Angeles. Jamie Zimmerman, a doctor and reporter with ABC News' medical unit, drowned while on vacation in Hawaii; she was 31.

One year ago: A Black woman, Atatiana Jefferson, was fatally shot by a white Fort Worth, Texas, police officer inside her home after police were called to the residence by a neighbor who reported that the front door was open. (Officer Aaron Dean, who shot Jefferson through a back window, resigned in the days after the shooting and is charged with murder; he has pleaded not guilty.) A large section of a Hard Rock Hotel under construction besides New Orleans' historic French Quarter collapsed, killing three workers. Legislation signed by California Gov. Gavin Newsom would ban the sale and manufacture of new fur products starting in 2023.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Jake Garn, R-Utah, is 88. Singer Sam Moore (formerly of Sam and Dave) is 85. Broadcast journalist Chris Wallace is 73. Actor-singer Susan Anton is 70. Pop/rock singer/songwriter Jane Siberry is 65. Actor Hiroyuki Sanada is 60. Actor Carlos Bernard is 58. Jazz musician Chris Botti (BOH'-tee) is 58. Rhythm-and-blues singer Claude McKnight (Take 6) is 58. Rock singer Bob Schneider is 55. Actor Hugh Jackman is 52. Actor Adam Rich is 52. Rhythm-and-blues singer Garfield Bright (Shai) is 51. Country musician Martie Maguire (Courtyard Hounds, The Chicks) is 51. Actor Kirk Cameron is 50. Olympic gold medal skier Bode Miller is 43. Rock singer Jordan Pundik (New Found Glory) is 41. Actor Brian J. Smith is 39. Actor Tyler Blackburn is 34. Actor Marcus T. Paulk is 34. Actor Ito Aghayere is 33. Actor Josh Hutcherson is 28.

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.**



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