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Colleagues,

Good Thursday morning on this the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of October 2020,

Today's Connecting brings the sad news of the death of **Pete Yost**, a 43-year veteran of The Associated Press, who spent the majority of his career in the Washington bureau where he was an investigative reporter.

Yost, who retired in January 2015, died Tuesday at the age of 73.

Even after his departure from AP, wrote our colleague **Will Lester** in a remarkable story on his career, Pete's navy sport coat hung in the AP's office at the federal courthouse in Washington, available for any reporter who might not be appropriately dressed for court.

Several of you shared memories of working with Pete, and if you would like to do so, please send yours along.

Today's issue brings more stories of your most challenging and difficult election coverage.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy.

Paul

## Retired AP investigative reporter Pete Yost dies at age 73



AP reporter Pete Yost, shown in this 2007 file photo. (AP Photo/Scott Applewhite)

## By WILL LESTER

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pete Yost, a retired Associated Press investigative reporter with a fierce, determined style of interviewing that contrasted with his low-key, modest personality, died Tuesday night at the age of 73.

He covered many of the biggest stories of his time and was known throughout Washington journalism and political circles as a dogged investigator who didn't put up with spin and shading the truth.

"I remember thinking when I joined the bureau that Pete was exactly the kind of character I expected to find in a Washington newsroom," said Julie Pace, the AP's Washington bureau chief. "He was a fierce competitor, an expert in whatever he was covering, and a bit intimidating to a new reporter until you realized how generous he was with all of his skill and expertise."

Sandy K. Johnson, a former AP Washington bureau chief who worked with Yost for 25 years, remembers him as "a fearsome member of AP's investigative cadre" who covered stories ranging from the longstanding search for Jimmy Hoffa's killers to the Clinton-Lewinsky investigation. "I will never forget his expletive-laden interrogations that terrified legions of sources and awed his colleagues," she said.

That interview style was remembered vividly by his coworkers and his sources.

"In 48 years as an AP journalist, I had never seen a reporter as determined as Pete Yost. God help anyone who tried to lead him astray," said retired colleague Larry Margasak.

After hearing one of his more animated interviews, former AP colleague Connie Cass was amazed "anyone would talk to a source that way."

"But I quickly learned that despite his sometimes rough language, sources kept taking Pete's calls," she said. "They respected him because even if the story was unflattering, Pete would treat them fairly and get the details right."

Yost was known for his thorough research.

"Pete became an encyclopedia of any issue he dug into — and never forgot a fact or figure," said Nancy Benac, an AP editor who worked with him in Detroit and Washington.

"I once asked him to help me find some information in the voluminous Starr report on President Clinton's affair with a White House intern, years after the report had been issued," she said. "He responded with the precise page number."

Peter Frederick Yost was born in Atlanta on June 24, 1947, the son of Jessie Lee Yost and Frederick Yost. His father was an executive at Rich's department store, a longtime Atlanta landmark. The family later moved to Connecticut, then Philadelphia, where his father got a job at Wanamaker department store and worked his way up to be a vice president. Pete Yost's early ambition was to be a great musician, his wife, Ann Yost said.

"He wanted to be Louis Armstrong or Miles Davis," she said. "He played the trumpet and intended to be a professional trumpet player." But when he realized that his music skills might not be sufficient, he switched his intense focus to journalism.

He got his first taste of journalism as a teenager working at The Philadelphia Inquirer in an entry-level job. He went to the University of Missouri and developed his skills at the newspaper there, then went to work at the Jackson Citizen Patriot in Michigan after a recommendation from a Missouri professor.

His time at Michigan newspapers included a stint at The Flint Journal, where he met his wife, a journalist and novelist.

His tastes included skydiving, which he continued until his main chute failed and he had to rely on an auxiliary. He went one more time to address lingering fears, then his wife-to-be laid down the law: Either no more skydiving or no marriage.



Yost started in the AP Detroit bureau in 1972 and then transferred to Lansing later that year. He returned to Detroit in 1975. He moved to the Washington bureau in 1983 and worked there, covering legal affairs and other beats, until his retirement in January 2015.

Yost, who loved his reporting job and hoped to work until age 70, retired a couple of years short of that goal in early 2015 because of the onset of Lewy body dementia, Ann Yost said. He is survived by his wife; sons Adam and Ben; daughter Emily and five grandchildren.

Even after his departure, for some time Yost's navy sport coat hung in the AP's office at the federal courthouse in Washington, available for any reporter who might not be appropriately dressed for court.

"Pete was the kindest, most gracious mentor on the beat I could have ever asked for, and his career was a living, breathing encyclopedia of Justice Department history," said Eric Tucker, who followed Yost as Justice Department reporter. "It was apparent from day one that I would have big shoes to fill.

"Years after his retirement, the desk phone will still ring with old sources who'd expected to have him pick up."

Click here for a link to this story.

## **Remembering Pete Yost**

**Jim Drinkard** (Email) – I remember a time when Pete was on the trail of campaign finance conflicts of interest by Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., who was chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on defense - one of the 12 chairs known as "the Cardinals." He found out that Murtha had scheduled a fundraising event at the Army-Navy Country Club, near the Pentagon, across the Potomac in Virginia. He and interactives reporter Kevin Vineys rented a van with semi-opaque windows and went to the site that day hoping to get some film footage of lobbyists coming and going. Pete wore a blazer and tie, looking to get in and snoop around, while Kevin stayed in the van. The exercise provided video to go with a March 23, 2009 "Influence Game" story. It detailed how a former Murtha aide had started a lobbying firm to cash in on his boss' powerful position - collecting huge fees from defense contractors who in turn got millions in Congressional budget earmarks for their firms. Murtha and other lawmakers got big campaign contributions. The lobbyist, Paul Magliocchetti, later went to prison and Congress was forced to ban the practice of earmarking.

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**Robert Glass** (<u>Email</u>) - Pete had a passion for rooting out corruption in high places, which truly made him angry. I once scribbled down this quote from Robert Penn Warren's "All the King's Men," based on Huey Long, and gave it to him: "Man is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud. There is always something." He didn't say a word, just pinned it on his wall.

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Pete Yost, left, and Matt Kelley in Washington bureau in 2005. (Photo/Haraz Ghanbari) Photo courtesy of AP Corporate Archives.

**Matthew Kelley** (<u>Email</u>) – Pete and I worked together for several years in the early 2000s on the special assignment team in the Washington bureau, including teaming up to report on documents we obtained about George W. Bush's Texas Air National Guard service under freedom of information laws.

Pete was a fierce reporter -- he vigorously (and often profanely) cross-examined sources and would not be bamboozled. He had a very strong sense of justice and belief in the truth, no matter where it led or who it angered. He was extraordinarily meticulous about facts.

Although he was usually fairly quiet except for his sometimes rather loud questioning of sources, and therefore hard to read, under that exterior was one of the kindest people I have ever met. The reason why he was so vigorous and precise in his reporting was that he really cared about people, especially those who were being shafted by the powerful and influential. That combination of strong resolve and deep caring for others was an example of the kind of person I want to be. I can honestly say that I'm a better person for having known and worked with Pete.

(Matthew Kelley worked for AP from 1991 until leaving in 2005 to work at USA Today, and then went to law school. He is a lawyer in the Media and Entertainment practice group at Ballard Spahr LLP, Washington, where he represents news organizations including AP (and USA Today) in a wide range of issues, including defamation defense and public records access matters.) **Kelly Kissel** (<u>Email</u>) - Pete was one of the good guys who made regular pilgrimages to Arkansas for Whitewater.

The obit notes his colorful conversations with sources, but he had the same with editors.

Expletive-laden echoes likely still bounce around the universe, or at least the Little Rock bureau. When he and John Solomon would get at one another, it was a joy to behold.

The youngsters in the bureau were taken aback the first time, but quickly grew to just watch in awe. I loved working with Pete.

I recall he interviewed Whitewater figure David Hale either in jail or at a halfway house that had a thermostat on the fritz, which kept the room very hot. As Hale was the star (or is that Starr) witness against President No. 42, Pete was able to fashion that into a lede about the heat coming to bear. The man had a knack for getting his point across.

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Larry Margasak (Email) - In 48 years as an AP journalist, I had never seen a reporter as determined as Pete Yost. God help anyone who tried to lead him astray. I remember covering a federal court hearing with Pete, and filed a lead from a courthouse lobby pay phone. I learned during the call that Pete's lead had been changed in the story he had previously filed. There was a recess while I still had the phone and I let him know about the change. He took the phone and the explosion was so loud that I thought the court police officers would come and get him. Pete was such a fierce reporter that I always was glad we were on the same side. Many times you have a mentor who was a veteran when you started at an AP bureau. I always considered Pete a mentor, even though we were contemporaries. He was that good. Pete was one of my all-time journalism heroes.

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**Jim Rubin** (<u>Email</u>) - In this most distressing of times, reading Pete's obit gave me a sense of pride in having once been his colleague.

Few of us could match his dogged reporting skills. But we can take some solace in having been a part of an organization that provided a platform for such skill and determination.

# Memories of your most unusual or challenging election



"Votomatic" machine - notorious for its butterfly ballot and dimpled and hanging chads - on display in the Old Florida Capitol,

**Bill Kaczor** (<u>Email</u>) – For me, the most unusual or challenging election are the same: Florida 2000.

I was dispatched from Pensacola, where I was correspondent, to Miami to cover a race that turned out to be too close to call on election night. A recount was required to settle the issue. No, not that one. I was covering 17 contested Florida U.S. House races and one of them went to a recount. State Rep. Elaine Bloom, a Miami Beach Democrat, had taken a 711-vote lead over Republican incumbent E. Clay Shaw of Fort Lauderdale early Wednesday morning with 97 percent of precincts reporting. When all the votes were counted later Wednesday the lead shifted to Shaw by 614 votes but still too close to call. When the recount was completed a week later, Shaw was declared the winner by 589 votes. That was 52 votes more than the 537-vote margin that gave Republican George W. Bush Florida's decisive 25 electoral votes. Focused on the congressional races, I was almost oblivious to the commotion in the bureau over the presidential results on election night. For the next five weeks, though, I was consumed with the presidential recount. I spent nearly all of that time in Tallahassee, ground zero for the recount, except for a brief trip back to Pensacola to cover a federal court hearing on overseas ballots, most of them military.

I mainly covered efforts by the leaders of the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature to intervene in the process and give Bush, brother of Florida's then-Gov. Jeb Bush, the state's electoral votes regardless of how the recount turned out. Another story was about Tallahassee lawyer Barry Richard, a lifelong Democrat, hiring on as Bush's lead in-state attorney. Richard had been president of the Young Democrats club as a University of Miami student and served a couple terms as a Democratic state representative before losing in the Democratic primary for state attorney general. Richard, who also did a lot of media work, told me he might have gone with Gore, but Bush's people asked him first. He acknowledged that some members of his law firm, which had strong Democratic connections, were unhappy with him. Richard, though, said the recount issues involved unsettled law and, therefore, a good lawyer should be able to argue either side.

One of the most unusual moments was interviewing New York Gov. George Pataki, a Republican recount observer, in a park across the street from the Tallahassee library, where a team of judges was going over ballots from South Florida. The local court clerk told me it was very calm inside, "like walking into the room where somebody's taking final exams." The building must have had good soundproofing because it was anything but calm outside. About 50 flag-waving Bush backers chanted "President Bush" and "Nay-nah-nah-nah, hey-hey-hey, goodbye." That was after the U.S. Supreme Court ordered a temporary halt to the recount until the justices could hear Bush's appeal of the Florida Supreme Court decision that had allowed it to go forward. A smaller Gore contingent shouted "count every vote."

I joined Tallahassee staffers Brent Kallestad, Jackie Hallifax and Dave Royse for the duration of the recount. We were assisted at intervals by other AP staffers including Linda Deutsch from California, Larry Neumeister from New York and Larry Margasak from Washington, D.C. The AP was among news media from across the globe that had set up shop in Tallahassee. Television networks put up tents in the Capitol courtyard and their satellite trucks ringed the building. One of my favorite recount quotes came from an out-of-state satellite engineer who was working for the BBC. He said, "Florida is a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to vote here."

Nearly a year after the election I was again on temporary duty in Tallahassee, when I wrote about a "Votomatic" machine - notorious for its butterfly ballot and dimpled and hanging chads - being donated for display in the Old Florida Capitol, now a museum of the state's political history. The story was for newspapers published on another auspicious date: Sept. 11, 2001.

**Ed McCullough** (<u>Email</u>) - Our Rome, Italy colleagues can tell this story better, but in a nutshell: at the April 2005 conclave to replace John Paul II, smoke emerged but it wasn't possible to immediately - and beyond doubt! - determine whether it was white (indicating a new pontiff) or black (inconclusive vote). Turns out John Paul anticipated this possible turn of events and insisted, I believe for the first time in Vatican history (or at least the past few centuries), that church bells accompany the puff of white smoke. Prescient and charismatic.

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**Carl P. Leubsdorf** (<u>Email</u>) - There is a footnote to Gene Herrick's account about how the AP's Minneapolis bureau correctly called JFK's election the day after the 1960 election (besides the fact that the father of a future US senator born barely six months earlier wrote the AP bulletin.)

Earlier that morning, UPI had beaten AP to the punch by incorrectly crediting Kennedy with the necessary electoral votes on the basis of is having carried California. There was only one problem; when the total vote was tallied, Kennedy had lost California to native son Richard Nixon.

To this day, however, many accounts of that election still depict Kennedy as celebrating his victory that morning on the basis of the erroneous UPI call, perhaps because it appeared that way in Theodore H. White's classic The Making of the President 1960.

## **Connecting wishes Happy Birthday**



То

## John Harris - jharrisunc@yahoo.com

## **Stories of interest**

## *Mission impossible? Welker on tap to moderate second debate*

**By DAVID BAUDER** 

NEW YORK (AP) — This fall's presidential debates have chewed up moderators.



President Donald Trump steamrolled Chris Wallace with constant interruptions in the first one, a performance that cost the Republican incumbent support in the polls. Susan Page struggled to make the vice presidential candidates adhere to time limits their campaigns had agreed to in advance.

Next up: Kristen Welker.

The NBC News White House correspondent is scheduled to moderate Thursday's second and last session between Trump and Democrat Joe Biden. It's hard not to feel trepidation for her.

Both of her predecessors came into the assignments with more experience. While Welker was one of four questioners at a Democratic presidential debate last fall, this is by far the 44-year-old journalist's biggest stage. Trump and his supporters have already tried to get in her head by attacking her in advance.

Read more here.

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## Being A White House Reporter Wasn't Supposed To Be Dangerous. Then Came COVID-19. (Elle)

#### **BY ROSE MINUTAGLIO**

CBS White House correspondent Weijia Jiang was flying on Air Force One several hours after September's so-called "super spreader" event at the White House Rose Garden when President Donald Trump popped his head into the press cabin to say hello. One week later, he tested positive for COVID-19, and Jiang had a lot to consider. Had she contracted the virus? Had she endangered her nearly two-year-old daughter?

"We've done everything we can to protect ourselves," Jiang tells me, "but some things are out of our control." Two weeks of quarantine and four negative tests later, Jiang went back on-air on October 12 to talk about Trump's return to the campaign trail.

In a pre-pandemic world, White House correspondents like Jiang and her colleague Paula Reid would have been on the road with the president, elbow-to-elbow in gaggles or angling for quotes in crowded briefing rooms. Instead, they're social distancing at presidential pressers and interviewing the nation's most powerful people from home in their pajamas when they can. Members of the Trump administration have repeatedly flouted basic safety precautions like wearing masks and quarantining—putting themselves and all who come in contact with them at risk—as evidenced by the at least 20 White House employees to have contracted the virus so far. Now Jiang, Reid, and other journalists are wrestling with a complicated new reality: Can you safely cover the president if he can't keep himself safe?

Read more here.

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## DHS Proposes to Change Admission Period Structure for F, J and I Nonimmigrants

### Release Date: September 24, 2020

WASHINGTON—The Department of Homeland Security has announced a proposed rule to require a fixed period of stay for international students, exchange visitors and foreign information media representatives to encourage program compliance, reduce fraud and enhance national security.

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Establishing a Fixed Time Period of Admission and an Extension of Stay Procedure for Nonimmigrant Academic Students, Exchange Visitors and Representatives of Foreign Information Media, proposes to remove the duration of status framework that currently allows aliens in F, J and I classifications to remain in the United States for as long as they maintain compliance with the terms of admission.

Read more **here**. Shared by George Arfield, who also shared this Tweet: Mathieu von Rohr, @mathieuvonrohr - Dear U.S. journalists: This may not seem like the most important issue right now, but please take note that the DHS is proposing massive restrictions for foreign correspondents. The plan is to limit their stay in the U.S. to 240 days (from 5 years)!

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## Taking pictures is a basic freedom: No law should

*limit it* (New York Daily News)

By CAITLIN VOGUS NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

#### Connecting - October 22, 2020

Banning photography and video recording of people in public without their permission in a misguided attempt to combat sexual harassment would deprive the public of images and information about newsworthy and historic events. Society would be worse off with such a law, and the First Amendment prohibits it.

Journalists and documentarians, in particular, rely on the First Amendment right to record to report the news. News photography has captured countless events in ways that words alone cannot. Photos and recordings allow the public to better understand current events, to engage in public debate on the issues raised by these events and, ultimately, to hold their elected officials accountable.

Any law prohibiting photographing or video recording people in public without their permission would violate the First Amendment and deprive the public of important information about current events that directly affect their daily lives.

Read more **here**. Shared by Mark Mittelstadt.

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## Here Are the Hundreds of Sites in a Pay-to-Play Local News Network (New York Times)

#### By Davey Alba and Jack Nicas

A fast-growing network of nearly 1,300 websites is filling a void left by vanishing local newspapers across the country. But many of their stories are ordered up by conservative political groups and corporate P.R. firms, a Times investigation found.

We are publishing the names of those sites so readers can see whether the sites target their area.

See the sites:

We compiled the list with the help of Global Disinformation Index, an internet research group, which analyzed Google advertising and analytics data imprinted in the sites' digital codes to find links between the sites. We then confirmed that sites belonged to the network by analyzing their layouts, bylines, privacy policies and "About" pages, as well as by interviewing employees and examining internal records of the companies behind the sites.

Read more here. Shared by Dennis Conrad.

## Today in History - October 22, 2020

Connecting - October 22, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Oct. 22, the 296th day of 2020. There are 70 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 22, 1979, the U.S. government allowed the deposed Shah of Iran to travel to New York for medical treatment [–] a decision that precipitated the Iran hostage crisis.

#### On this date:

In 1797, French balloonist Andre-Jacques Garnerin (gahr-nayr-AN') made the first parachute descent, landing safely from a height of about 3,000 feet over Paris.

In 1811, composer and piano virtuoso Franz Liszt was born in the Hungarian town of Raiding (RY'-ding) in present-day Austria.

In 1836, Sam Houston was inaugurated as the first constitutionally elected president of the Republic of Texas.

In 1883, the original Metropolitan Opera House in New York held its grand opening with a performance of Gounod's "Faust."

In 1906, French post-impressionist painter Paul Cezanne died in Aix-en-Provence at age 67.

In 1934, bank robber Charles "Pretty Boy" Floyd was shot to death by federal agents and local police at a farm near East Liverpool, Ohio.

In 1962, in a nationally broadcast address, President John F. Kennedy revealed the presence of Soviet-built missile bases under construction in Cuba and announced a quarantine of all offensive military equipment being shipped to the Communist island nation.

In 1981, the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization was decertified by the federal government for its strike the previous August.

In 1986, President Reagan signed into law sweeping tax-overhaul legislation.

In 2001, a second Washington, D.C., postal worker, Joseph P. Curseen, died of inhalation anthrax.

In 2002, bus driver Conrad Johnson was shot to death in Aspen Hill, Md., in the final attack carried out by the "Beltway Snipers."

In 2014, a gunman shot and killed a soldier standing guard at a war memorial in Ottawa, then stormed the Canadian Parliament before he was shot and killed by the usually ceremonial sergeant-at-arms.

Ten years ago: WikiLeaks released 391,831 purported Iraq war logs that suggested more than 100,000 Iraqi civilians had died in the conflict. A gang attacked a teenager's birthday party in Ciudad Juarez (see-yoo-DAHD' WAH'-rehz), Mexico, killing 14 people. The Texas Rangers clinched their first pennant with a 6-1 victory over the defending World Series champion New York Yankees in Game 6 of the AL championship series.

Five years ago: Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton battled Republican questions in a marathon hearing that revealed little new about the 2012 attacks in Benghazi, Libya. Acting on word of an "imminent mass execution" by Islamic State militants, dozens of U.S. special operations troops and Iraqi forces raided a northern Iraqi compound, freeing approximately 70 Iraqi prisoners but losing one American service member. Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., formally declared his candidacy for speaker of the U.S. House.

One year ago: A top U.S. diplomat, William Taylor, told House investigators that President Donald Trump had held back military aid for Ukraine unless the country agreed to investigate Democrats and a company linked to Joe Biden's family; the testimony provided lawmakers with a detailed new account of a quid-pro-quo central to the impeachment probe. Russia and Turkey reached an agreement to deploy their forces across nearly the entire northeastern border of Syria to fill the void left by the abrupt pullout of U.S. forces. Houston Astros pitcher Gerrit Cole suffered his first loss since May as the Washington Nationals took Game 1 of the World Series, 5-4. Kawhi Leonard scored 30 points in his debut for the Los Angeles Clippers in a season-opening win over LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers, 112-102.

Today's Birthdays: Black Panthers co-founder Bobby Seale is 84. Actor Christopher Lloyd is 82. Actor Derek Jacobi is 82. Actor Tony Roberts is 81. Movie director Jan (yahn) de Bont is 77. Actor Catherine Deneuve is 77. Rock singer/musician Eddie Brigati is 75. Rock musician Leslie West (Mountain) is 75. Former Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour is 73. Actor Jeff Goldblum is 68. Rock musician Greg Hawkes is 68. Movie director Bill Condon is 65. Actor Luis Guzman is 64. Actor-writer-producer Todd

#### Connecting - October 22, 2020

Graff is 61. Rock musician Cris Kirkwood is 60. Actor-comedian Bob Odenkirk is 58. Olympic gold medal figure skater Brian Boitano is 57. Christian singer TobyMac is 56. Singer-songwriter John Wesley Harding (Wesley Stace) is 55. Actor Valeria Golino is 54. Comedian Carlos Mencia is 53. Country singer Shelby Lynne is 52. Reggae rapper Shaggy is 52. Movie director Spike Jonze is 51. Rapper Tracey Lee is 50. Actor Saffron Burrows is 48. Actor Carmen Ejogo is 47. Former MLB player Ichiro Suzuki (EE'-cheeroh soo-ZOO'-kee) is 47. Actor Jesse Tyler Ferguson is 45. Christian rock singer-musician Jon Foreman (Switchfoot) is 44. Actor Michael Fishman is 39. Talk show host Michael Essany is 38. New York Mets infielder Robinson Cano is 38. Rock musician Rickard (correct) Goransson (Carolina Liar) is 37. Rock musician Zac Hanson (Hanson) is 35. Actor Corey Hawkins is 32. Actor Jonathan Lipnicki is 30. Actor Sofia Vassilieva (vas-ihllee-A'-vuh) is 28. Actor Elias Harger is 13.

## 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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