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Connecting

October 23, 2020

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Colleagues,

Good Friday morning on this the 23rd day of October 2020,

Our colleague **Walter Mears** ([Email](#)) covered 11 presidential elections during his 41-year AP career and won a Pulitzer Prize for his work on the 1976 campaign. But he considers the most difficult election he covered to be the 1958 Vermont Republican gubernatorial primary when he was Montpelier correspondent.

“I was solo, covering the Republican primary for governor. We had no elaborate election system - AP Vermont member newspapers reported returns, and I took and compiled the numbers in Montpelier. It turned out to be the closest count in history - so close that a 50-vote mistake by one member made it a virtual tie. It took all night to get that sorted out before we could declare the winner - the margin was just over 100 voters, as I recall. A long and difficult night at my phone and adding



machine. In the very Republican Vermont, the GOP nominee was sure to be the next governor. It all made for a very long and nervous night.”

Who knew?

Got your own memory of the most difficult, challenging election you covered? Please send it along.

Today’s issue brings you more of your fond memories of **Pete Yost**, longtime Washington AP investigative reporter who died Tuesday. (If you would like to send an email or postal note of condolence to his family, drop me a note and I will provide you contact information.)

And our colleague **Carl Robinson** ([Email](#)) was profiled in his hometown Australian newspaper – so we bring you that story and his interesting life story in today’s Final Word.

Have a great weekend – be safe, stay healthy.

Paul

More of your memories of Washington’s Pete Yost

David Briscoe ([Email](#)) - Scott Applewhite's wonderful portrait photo of master reporter Pete Yost (in Thursday’s Connecting_ captured the man who personified Washington's great evolving investigative team for me. And Will Lester's well-crafted obituary filled out the great memories I have of Pete and his work. It also discreetly pointed me to read about Lewy body dementia which finally broke a great man. For me, Pete was as disarmingly kind as he was straight-forward and tough on the powerful, his sources and even a few colleagues. We’ve lost a great AP asset and share his family's grief for a good man.



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Mike Holmes ([Email](#)) - I’d long admired Pete Yost’s work, but I didn’t get to work with him until Texas Gov. George W. Bush started running for president while I was Austin correspondent.

Pete was looking into Bush's background and had asked for his gubernatorial files. Because six years in office generates a lot of paper, the governor's staff provided Pete with an index of file topics, offering to produce an individual file if Pete were interested.

He phoned me one morning. His review hadn't yet turned up much that looked promising, but there was an item that caught his eye: "Any idea what this file called 'Hydrilla' might be about?"

I wracked my brain. Suspicious oil drilling? Mysterious donor? Secretive lobbyist? Then I remembered: Hydrilla is an invasive aquatic plant that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had been battling in fishing and boating lakes.

No scoop, but we had a good laugh.

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Larry Paladino ([Email](#)) - We had quite an array of journalists at the AP in the '70s and that included Pete Yost, who seemed to make friends easily with everyone and who handle major stories as soon as he arrived. The one I recall most vividly was the Jimmy Hoffa kidnapping. We were having a picnic in bureau chief Rich Oppel's backyard (the only one of those I ever recall being held) when there was a phone call about the Hoffa disappearance from the Machus Red Fox restaurant not far away. Yost was immediately dispatched and we were off and running on a major and lengthy continuous national story. Yost eventually got transferred to Washington, D.C., as did Jon Wolman from our office, and later, I think, Owen Ullman. I reunited with Wolman and Yost at the D.C. office when I was in Washington in May 1985 for an Army reunion and we posed together for a picture. Wolman, who died last year, went on to become publisher of the Detroit News. (The photo above shows, I to r, Wolman, Larry Paladino, Yost.)



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Dan Sewell ([Email](#)) - Can't add much to the wonderfully done obit by Will Lester, but two things:

If a reporter out in the states needed sources, background or other info on federal law enforcement agencies in Washington, Pete and Michael Sniffen were always able and willing to help.

And, Pete and I did tag-team reporting visits in Arkansas for many months on the Whitewater investigation and other allegations against the Clintons in the '90s.

When we overlapped one time, I learned one of the reasons the Little Rock staff always seemed so happy to hear that Pete was coming back: he always brought bags of McDonald's breakfasts with coffee for the whole staff.

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Dave Skidmore ([Email](#)) - Mention of Pete's blue sport coat in Will Lester's moving obit caused me to remember an incident from the 1988 Republican convention in New Orleans. In those days, almost the entire DC bureau traveled to the conventions to cover them and edit the copy. (We hadn't quite realized in those pre-internet times that we could edit the copy remotely.) After a desk shift, Pete, David Briscoe and Jim Rubin (I think), I, and perhaps others went to a jazz club -- all of us blue-blazered. The entertainment was jazz bagpipes (definitely an acquired taste). A New Orleans native (not blue blazered) stood near our table. He looked at us with thinly veiled contempt, shook his head, said "You Republicans probably dig this sh---," and walked off. That sparked a roughly 15-minute argument over which of us looked like a Republican. Briscoe, I know from recent Facebook comments, definitely is not a Republican. (Nor am I.) I don't know whether Pete had a political preference. I do know that he was whip-smart, persistent, and unfailingly gracious to colleagues. I was sorry to hear of his death.

More memories of difficult elections

Larry Margasak ([Email](#)) - Thanks to Bill Kaczor for reminding me (in Thursday's Connecting) of our Florida-Washington-California team that handled many aspects of Bush v. Gore in 2000. I should add AP Radio's Tony Winton (before multimedia days) to the names in Bill's note about the Tallahassee-based crew. One personal memory is having a Philadelphia connection, along with then-Florida House Speaker Tom Feeney, which enabled me a few times to get him on the phone to start talking about cheesesteaks before getting down to business. He was a critical player during the recount. The work was nonstop, although that didn't stop Tallahassee correspondent Brent Kallestad from introducing us to a local dive bar. I recall Brent working so many hours that he learned one day his electricity was getting shut off for non-payment. It was an exciting time, and made us proud to be working on a multi-bureau AP team - something that became more common later.

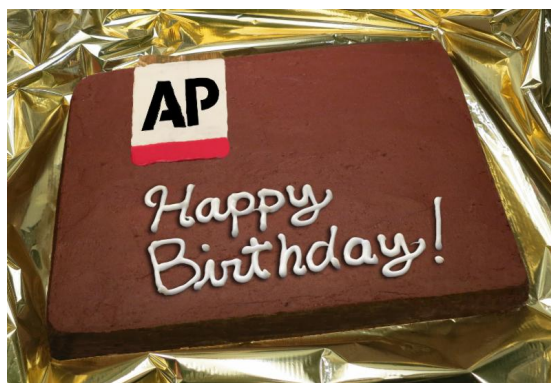
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A review of new book of Martha Gellhorn's letters

Charles Hanley ([Email](#)) - Connectors might be interested in [this lengthy review](#) of a new book of Martha Gellhorn's letters, in which that redoubtable war correspondent (from the Spanish Civil War to El Salvador) reflected passionately and insightfully on her occupation, the role of journalism, love, sex etc. etc. Wonderfully done piece by Fintan O'Toole. (Favorite line, not one of hers, but Ward Just's: Her voice "had so much gravel in it you could walk on it.")

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



Steve Loeper – stveloeper@hotmail.com

On Saturday to...

John Brewer – jcbrewer8@gmail.com

On Sunday to...

Marty Thompson – martythompson@hotmail.com

Welcome to Connecting



Matt Bokor – mattbokor@gmail.com

Matthew Kelley - KelleyM@ballardspahr.com

Stories of interest

NBC's Welker sharp in first turn as debate moderator



Moderator Kristen Welker of NBC News during Thursday night's debate in Nashville, Tenn. (Jim Bourg/Pool via AP)

By DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — Moderator Kristen Welker — with the help of an offstage mute button — helped give Americans the substantive, crackling debate over leadership that had been missing so far during the 2020 presidential campaign.

The NBC News White House correspondent worked hard Thursday to keep control of the second and final encounter between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, steering but not stifling exchanges.

Midway through the debate, she even received a compliment from the Republican president, who said, “So far, I respect very much the way you handled this.”

Welker also benefited from a different Trump, who resisted the interruptions that spoiled his first debate with Biden. The second was canceled when Trump objected to a virtual format after he caught COVID-19, replaced by dueling town hall meetings that satisfied no one.

Read more [here](#).

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Mexico broadcaster: Pope’s civil union quote not broadcast

By NICOLE WINFIELD and MARIA VERZA

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A Mexican television broadcaster confirmed Thursday that Pope Francis’ bombshell comments endorsing same-sex civil unions were made during a May 2019 interview that was never broadcast in its entirety.

Broadcaster Televisa said Thursday that the emphasis of its interview was on clergy sexual abuse and suggested it didn’t consider the comments on civil unions as newsworthy because Francis had previously indicated support for them.

The Vatican, which had the full interview in its archives, apparently allowed the comments to be aired now in the documentary “Francesco,” which premiered Wednesday.

In the movie, which was shown at the Rome Film Festival, Francis said gays shouldn’t be kicked out of families or made miserable. “What we have to have is a civil union law; that way they are legally covered,” Francis said.

Read more [here](#).

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Trump Posts '60 Minutes' Interview After Telling Lesley Stahl: 'That's No Way to Talk' (New York Times)

By Michael M. Grynbaum and Maggie Haberman

President Trump made good Thursday on a threat to post unfiltered footage from a "60 Minutes" interview he taped earlier this week with the anchor Lesley Stahl — an interview that Mr. Trump abruptly cut short, complaining that Ms. Stahl was "negative" and biased.

In posting the 38-minute clip on Facebook, Mr. Trump urged viewers to "look at the bias, hatred and rudeness on behalf of 60 Minutes and CBS." But the footage shows Ms. Stahl, a "60 Minutes" correspondent since 1991, calmly and firmly asking the president about the coronavirus and other topics as Mr. Trump grows increasingly irritated.

At the start of the footage on Facebook, the president suggests that Ms. Stahl was not being "fair," before proceeding to complain about her inquiries on the economy and the rising numbers of coronavirus cases in more than 40 states. "You brought up a lot of questions that were inappropriately brought up, right from the beginning," Mr. Trump says.

"Don't you think you should be accountable to the American people?" Ms. Stahl replies.

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

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TIME Replaced Its Logo on the Cover For the First Time in Its Nearly 100-Year History. Here's Why We Did It (Time)



BY EDWARD FELSENTHAL

Edward Felsenthal is the Editor-in-Chief and CEO of TIME.

I don't often use this space to direct your attention to other publications, but I do recommend you check out an article Science published online on Sept. 24. Titled Singing in a Silent Spring, it adds a new entrant to the list of uplifting changes in the natural world that occurred when we humans went into temporary retreat at the start of the pandemic. It appears that in the relative hush of the San Francisco Bay Area this

past April and May, the song of the white-crowned sparrow became quieter and sweeter than it had been before.

This has been a year of so much pain, hardship, chaos and loss. And yet as nations around the world begin to rebuild from the pandemic, it is clear that we also have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change our tune. Our issue this week, in partnership with the World Economic Forum, explores that opportunity, which the forum's chairman, Klaus Schwab, has called "The Great Reset." How can we seize this moment of disruption to push for a world that is healthier, more resilient, sustainable and just? What do all of us—individuals, businesses and governments—need to do to ensure that we don't simply revert to what was before?

Read more [here](#).

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Trump is doing worse than it seems — but reporters are afraid to say so (Politico)

By JOHN F. HARRIS and DANIEL LIPPMAN

As President Donald Trump heads into his final sprint to Election Day, nearly every news report notes that he is running behind in the polls. Journalists aren't shying away from describing his wilder rhetoric as "studded with lies and falsehoods." It's not hard to find examples of anonymous "advisers" lamenting that Trump is not following anyone's advice but his own.

But there's something easy to miss in the barrage of negative stories: By historical standards, Trump's coverage is actually favorable, in one critical respect.

It is giving generous allowance for the possibility that things aren't as bad as they seem for the incumbent, and that he may yet have another surprise in store for anyone who thinks that conventional dynamics of politics apply to him. The reason is simple: Journalists and the political professionals who are their sources emerged from Trump's 2016 upset doubting their own instincts and believing that familiar analytical prisms aren't a reliable way to view this politician.

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

The Final Word

Carl Robinson on love, life, drug addiction and the Vietnam War



ENDURING LOVE: Kim Dung and Carl Robinson share a laugh over their photo in the book *The Bite of the Lotus*. Photo: Sylvia Liber



Wedding in 1969 in Go Cong, Kim-Dung's native province in Mekong Delta and where they first met in Carl's USAID days.

By John Hanscombe
South Coast Register
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia

Apart from a small concrete pagoda out the front, there's no hint of the living history inside this ordinary looking home in a brand new subdivision at Calderwood, south of Wollongong.

But when Carl Robinson answers the door, his American accent and the fragrant Vietnamese pho bubbling on the stove are dead giveaways. So, too, the exotic dark

wooden furniture inlaid with laquerwork and the Vietnamese antiques in a display case.

It might be unremarkable suburbia outside but inside resides a remarkable love story set against all the drama and tragedy of the Vietnam War.

Carl introduces his wife, Kim Dung (pronounced Kim Yoong) who, at 72, retains a good measure of the beauty which caught his eye back in the 1960s, when he was working for USAID, an American aid agency in provincial South Vietnam.

Charged with winning hearts and minds, it was a job which cast a shadow for decades.

"I've been saddled with the CIA thing my whole life, working for USAID which was indeed a cover for the CIA," he says.

"I knew the CIA guys, in fact they even tried to suggest that I work for them. And I said, 'Are you kidding? No.' I was surprised when I came here that people thought that I was a spook."

Carl's life journey - from the Belgian Congo as a child of American missionaries, to university in California and Hong Kong, to South Vietnam in the early 1960s, first as an aid worker then as photo editor for Associated Press, before he fled Saigon when it fell in 1975 and washed up on Australian shores - is set down in an autobiography published last year.

It's a hair-raising ride through the history of the Vietnam War. There are many moments of terror, including a close call near the presidential palace in Saigon, an encounter which exposed the perils of being an American in love with a Vietnamese woman at the height of the war.

"It was really hard for me and Kim Dung to go out in Saigon because people were so insulting, publicly calling her a whore and all that sort of bad shit. And these were our allies.

"Going home one night I took exception to these elite airborne troops in the back perimeter of the palace who were insulting my wife.



"Next thing I knew they were poking an M16 in me and a crowd was gathering and people were stopping in the street yelling things and she was screaming and yelling at me, saying, 'Come on, come home.'

"When I got home, I just broke down, saying 'they hate us, they hate us.'"

Carl describes the book as a personal journey through the entirety of the war, from 1964 until 1975.

"The only hero in the book really is Kim Dung because everyone else is so screwed up," he says.



Boarding a US Army LOH chopper on assignment north of Saigon.



With friend Sean Flynn (right), son of actor Errol Flynn, on a motorcycle trip into the Mekong Delta.

The cast of characters includes Sean Flynn, the photographer son of Errol Flynn, who journeyed with Carl into the labyrinth of drug abuse, and who disappeared mysteriously in 1970.

Carl is open about his drug use, which began with marijuana and opium and ended with heroin. He carried a small stash out with him when he fled Saigon on a helicopter in 1975.

After that, he never used heroin again.

"A lot of people will find that shocking but I'm quite honest about how that happened," he says. "That was something that I never wanted to cover up, even though I never talked about it."

Carl witnessed some of the key events of the war. After Tet, he quit his job at USAID and landed a job in the Saigon press corps. As an Associated Press photo editor in 1972, he sent out to the world Nick Ut's Pulitzer Prize winning photo of a naked Kim Phuc running from a napalm strike, an image emblematic of the Vietnam tragedy.

But Carl bristles at being described as a "war correspondent".

His only real combat encounter was on a visit to Khe Sanh during South Vietnam's ill-fated incursion into Laos in 1971, when the base came under intense North Vietnamese artillery fire. It was there, crowded into a bunker while the shells came in that he was passed a cigarette laced with heroin.



AFTER THE FALL OF SAIGON, SAD TIMES: That was on USS Blue Ridge, command ship of 7th Fleet and Operation Frequent Wind, the Saigon evac. I spent first five days on a ship closer to shore and only overnight on the Blue Ridge. I was totally heartbroken and desolate at that stage.

When the end came for South Vietnam, Carl and Kim Dung spent a couple of years in the US before moving to Australia in 1977. That move helped get Kim Dung's family out of Vietnam.

"Australia had diplomatic relations so from the night we arrived here we knew how to get in touch with Vietnam, sending them messages, letters, telegrams, phone calls, packages, money, You couldn't do that in America in 1977. So that sold us on the place."

Carl worked briefly for Associated Press in Sydney before getting a role with Newsweek as a stringer at the same time he and Kim Dung were running a small takeaway shop in Bondi.

His big break came in July 1979, when Skylab fell out of orbit, raining debris all over Western Australia.

"I was suggesting stories and nothing happened until one night the Skylab crashed into the western part of Australia. We had a red phone in this takeaway food shop and it rang and said, 'This is Newsweek in New York. Are you our man in Sydney?' That actually made my career with Newsweek."

After journalism came the Old Saigon restaurant. His Vietnam experience also led to a brief involvement in film making.

He was so familiar with the opium ritual - "I became a 15 pipes a night guy" - that when Kim Dung's friend, director Phil Noyce, began working on the adaptation of *The Quiet American*, released in 2002, Carl was taken on as a consultant. He coached lead actor Michael Caine in the intricacies of the opium smoking ritual.

While on-set in Sydney Caine and fellow actor Brendan Fraser became regulars at the Old Saigon Restaurant established by Carl and Kim Dung in Newtown.

The couple retired to Berry some 20 years ago. Carl became involved with the local Vietnam veterans and led tours back to old battlegrounds including Long Tan. Part of the tour was to introduce Aussie veterans to their former Viet Cong foe.

"We made sure that they actually did meet. They hit it off. We played interpreter for them but after a few beers it was all just having a good time time being in each other's company."

After Berry the couple moved to Queensland for 10 years before returning to the South Coast, and their innocuous new home in Calderwood.

Apart from toying with the idea of writing another chapter in his life story - about his time growing up in the Congo - Carl is doing some voluntary work with with the

Historical Aircraft Restoration Society in Albion Park.

So much living history in a little house in a quiet Calderwood Street.

Today in History - October 23, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Oct. 23, the 297th day of 2020. There are 69 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 23, 1983, 241 U.S. service members, most of them Marines, were killed in a suicide truck-bombing at Beirut International Airport in Lebanon; a near-simultaneous attack on French forces killed 58 paratroopers.

On this date:

In 1864, forces led by Union Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis repelled Confederate Maj. Gen. Sterling Price's army in the Civil War Battle of Westport in Missouri.

In 1910, Blanche S. Scott became the first woman to make a public solo airplane flight, reaching an altitude of 12 feet at a park in Fort Wayne, Ind.

In 1915, tens of thousands of women paraded up Fifth Avenue in New York City, demanding the right to vote.

In 1941, the Walt Disney animated feature "Dumbo," about a young circus elephant who learns how to fly, premiered in New York.

In 1944, the World War II Battle of Leyte (LAY'-tee) Gulf began, resulting in a major Allied victory against Japanese forces.

In 1956, a student-sparked revolt against Hungary's Communist rule began; as the revolution spread, Soviet forces started entering the country, and the uprising was put down within weeks.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon agreed to turn over White House tape recordings subpoenaed by the Watergate special prosecutor to Judge John J. Sirica.

In 1987, the U.S. Senate rejected, 58-42, the Supreme Court nomination of Robert H. Bork.

In 1995, a jury in Houston convicted Yolanda Saldivar of murdering Tejano singing star Selena. (Saldivar is serving a life prison sentence.)

In 2001, the nation's anthrax scare hit the White House with the discovery of a small concentration of spores at an offsite mail processing center.

In 2009, President Barack Obama declared the swine flu outbreak a national emergency, giving his health chief the power to let hospitals move emergency rooms offsite to speed treatment and protect non-infected patients.

In 2014, officials announced that an emergency room doctor who'd recently returned to New York City after treating Ebola patients in West Africa tested positive for the virus, becoming the first case in the city and the fourth in the nation. (Dr. Craig Spencer later recovered.)

Ten years ago: The world's leading advanced and emerging countries vowed during a meeting in Gyeongju, South Korea, to avoid potentially debilitating currency devaluations, aiming to quell trade tensions that could threaten the global recovery. San Francisco's Juan Uribe hit a tiebreaking homer off Ryan Madson with two outs in the eighth inning and the Giants held off Philadelphia 3-2 to win the NL pennant in six games.

Five years ago: Hurricane Patricia roared ashore in a sparsely populated area of southwestern Mexico as a Category 5 storm, then quickly abated to a tropical storm. A bus carrying retirees on a day trip through southwest France's wine region hit a truck and went up in flames, killing 43 people. The Justice Department announced that neither Lois Lerner nor any other IRS official would face criminal charges in the political controversy over the processing of applications for tax-exempt status. The Kansas City Royals beat the Toronto Blue Jays 4-3 in Game 6 of the AL championship, earning their second straight trip to the World Series.

One year ago: Republicans briefly brought the Democratic-led impeachment investigation to a halt when around two dozen GOP House members stormed into a closed-door deposition with a Defense Department official. Two business associates of Rudy Giuliani — Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman — pleaded not guilty in a campaign

finance case; prosecutors said they had wanted to use illegal contributions to lobby U.S. politicians to oust the country's ambassador to Ukraine. The bodies of 39 Vietnamese migrants were found inside a refrigerated container that had been hauled by truck to England on a ferry from Belgium. (The truck driver later pleaded guilty to manslaughter.)

Today's Birthdays: Movie director Philip Kaufman is 84. Soccer great Pele (pay-lay) is 80. Rhythm-and-blues singer Barbara Ann Hawkins (The Dixie Cups) is 77. Former ABC News investigative reporter Brian Ross is 72. Actor Michael Rupert is 69. Movie director Ang Lee is 66. Jazz singer Dianne Reeves is 64. Country singer Dwight Yoakam is 64. Community activist Martin Luther King III is 63. Movie director Sam Raimi is 61. Parodist "Weird Al" Yankovic is 61. Rock musician Robert Trujillo (Metallica) is 56. Christian/jazz singer David Thomas (Take 6) is 54. Rock musician Brian Nevin (Big Head Todd and the Monsters) is 54. Country singer-musician Junior Bryant is 52. Actor Jon Huertas is 51. Movie director Chris Weitz is 51. CNN medical reporter Dr. Sanjay Gupta is 51. Bluegrass musician Eric Gibson (The Gibson Brothers) is 50. Country singer Jimmy Wayne is 48. Actor Vivian Bang is 47. Rock musician Eric Bass (Shinedown) is 46. TV personality and host Cat Deeley is 44. Actor Ryan Reynolds is 44. Actor Saycon Sengbloh is 43. Rock singer Matthew Shultz (Cage the Elephant) is 37. TV personality Meghan McCain ("The View") is 36. Rhythm-and-blues singer Miguel is 35. Actor Masiela Lusha (MAH'-see-el-la loo-SHA') is 35. Actor Emilia Clarke is 34. Actor Briana Evigan is 34. Actor Inbar Lavi is 34. Actor Jessica Stroup is 34. Neo-soul musician Allen Branstetter (St. Paul & the Broken Bones) is 30. Actor Taylor Spreitler is 27. Actor Margaret Qualley is 26. Actor Amandla Stenberg is 22.

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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