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Connecting November 18, 2020

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this the 18th day of November 2020,

Show us your office – it's a Connecting feature we begin with this issue.

Virtually all of us – whether retired or still working – are doing so out of an office or work space located at home sweet home, thanks (or no thanks!) to the coronavirus pandemic. Most of us have been doing so since the outbreak began nine months ago.

So what's your office space look like? Mine – where I assemble Connecting five days a week – is pictured above. The roll-top desk where my laptop sits was our very first piece of furniture when we lived in Virginia. My loyal shelter-dog Ollie is in a pose but normally sprawls by my side until I push the Send key, signaling to him that we begin our morning walk. (If Ollie's paws were smaller, he'd hasten the process by pushing the Send key himself!)

Ollie, btw, totally enjoyed today's Final Word.

I look forward to hearing from you – and please include yourself in the photo.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy.

Paul

Enjoyment in writing a blog – how about you?

Mike Harris ([Email](#)) - After years of talking about and thinking about writing my memoirs, mostly so my grandkids and future generations of my family would know who Papa and Bubbe Harris were, the pandemic finally got me off my rear end and writing.

But, figuring a book would be too hard to publish, I decided to tell my story as a blog. Since March, I have been writing two blogs a week and thoroughly enjoying the writing and the memories. I've even gotten a small cadre of regular readers - mostly family, friends and former colleagues.



That got me wondering if anyone else among Connecting's loyal readers is writing a blog. I'm sure it would be fun and enlightening to read what others are putting online.

If anyone is interested in reading my musings, they can be found by clicking [here](#).

Connecting series:

Your experiences with receiving threats while on the job

Luckily, the gunman missed



Steve Paulson (Email) - Journalism can be hours of boredom followed by moments of terror, and it sometimes requires taking risks. I've been beaten during riots, threatened with death by the Outlaws Motorcycle Gang and had my pants catch fire while dashing through burning fuel following the crash of a B-52 bomber in an Orlando suburb. One day while taking a break getting ice cream in Orlando, I saw police race up to a nearby bank. I hid behind a fire truck and started taking pictures of a gunman inside the bank with a hostage. He demanded a police getaway car, and I soon found myself staring down the barrel of a gun, that black dot next to the head of a hostage. Just as I took the photo, the gunman fired. Luckily, he missed.

A threat that was probably deserved

Paul Stevens (Email) - "Damn reporters! Get the hell out of here or I'll knock your head off!"

And I probably would have deserved it.

I was AP's Wichita correspondent in 1978 when an explosion in a Titan II missile silo near Rock, Kansas - 40 miles from Wichita - killed two Air Force maintenance workers and severely injured another, and forced the evacuation of about 200 residents of the rural community.

Neither Air Force nor state police authorities revealed much to we reporters on the scene – and what comment we initially got came from the Pentagon. We didn't know it at the time but the missile was not armed with its nuclear warhead.

I continued working the story in the days that followed but no one from the Air Force would comment on what happened and why.

The funeral for one of the deceased Air Force workers was held in Wichita a few days later and after consultation with the Kansas City bureau, it was agreed that I would attend the funeral and see if any family or friends would comment. In retrospect, a bad idea.

I sat in my car that August morning and watched from a distance as the graveside services were conducted, then approached the family as it was leaving the cemetery for their cars. I expressed my condolences, identified myself and asked if anyone would want to tell me about their loved one. That's when one of the men - a relative, I believe - yelled at me in disgust and told me to get out of there. Or else.

I apologized and left the scene, believing there had to have been a better way to get the story than what I did.

Pulling a gun on me

Mike Tharp (Email) - In March 1996 I traveled from L.A. to Jordan, Mont., where an antigovernment Christian Patriot group called the Montana Freeman had entered a standoff with law enforcement. The previous fall, I was the only reporter who had gotten in to interview some of them and wrote a story for U.S. News & World Report.

That spring, I also knew a back way to the ranch where they were holed up. I parked my rental, climbed over a metal fence and waited while two armed Freeman drove down the hill in a VW van. They said they remembered my magazine story but didn't

want to talk to the media right then. I said okay and that I'd come to the fence every day to see if they'd changed their mind.

I drove back toward town on a one-lane dirt road. As I rounded a curve, I saw six black Suburbans parked in a herringbone formation. Behind the open front door of each stood men in body armor, wearing FBI caps, pointing M16s at me.

A guy on a bullhorn told me to get out of the car and show my hands. I did. He told me to take off my cowboy hat. I did. He told me to pull up my coat and turn all the way round. I did.

Then agents walked up, frisked me and told me I was under arrest. I pointed to their M16s. "Those work any better now than they did in Nam?" I asked. One of the older guys grinned. They took me to the lead negotiator of the Hostage Rescue Team, sitting in a warm Suburban. He held a copy of my story from last year.

He started to grill me. I interrupted and told him I was just doing my job, that I'd answer his questions if we swapped information. So we did. And I guess he un-arrested me.

I climbed back into my rental and drove down to the roadblock I'd avoided on the way in. A media scrum stood on the other side. An agent raised the barrier to let me through. The newsies surrounded my rig, yelling questions and pointing cameras. I touched the rim of my cowboy hat and drove back to town.

Connecting sky shot - Manhattan



Malcolm Ritter ([Email](#)) - It's an autumn sundown at the Hudson River, taken from Manhattan with New Jersey across the way. In warm weather my wife Jane and I often take folding chairs to this park along the river and read books. That's how I came to see this about 10 days ago during a warm spell. Luckily my iPhone was handy.

Welcome to Connecting



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Stories of interest

Not Dead Yet: News Site Mistakenly Runs Dozens of V.I.P. Obituaries (New York Times)

By Aurelien Breeden

PARIS — The reports of their deaths really were, as the saying goes, greatly exaggerated.

For a brief moment this week, startled readers of a French news site had to grapple with the apparent demise of Queen Elizabeth II of England; Pelé, the Brazilian soccer legend; Clint Eastwood; Brigitte Bardot; and dozens of other celebrities and world leaders.

As it turned out, the website of Radio France Internationale had mistakenly published about 100 prewritten obituaries for prominent figures.

Several hours after the obituaries first ran on Monday, the public radio station, which broadcasts in France and abroad, apologized and started taking the reports offline. It said unedited drafts had been accidentally published as it moved its website to a new content management system. Tech platforms like Google and Yahoo News then automatically picked up some of the articles.

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

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Decision at Express-News provokes irony, nostalgia, and sadness (San Antonio Report)



The former home of the San Antonio Light will be the new home of the San Antonio Express-News as the Hearst Corp. intends to sell the building that has been the Express-News' home for more than ninety years. Credit: Scott Ball / San Antonio Report

By Rick Casey

Last week's announcement that the San Antonio Express-News will be moving into the old San Antonio Light building while struggling to sell its current home inspires feelings of irony, nostalgia, and sadness.

The irony is that the E-N is moving to the former home of its bitter rival for the better part of a century. A death match by the early 1990s, it ended strangely. The Hearst Corp. closed the Light and bought the Express-News from Rupert Murdoch, who began his invasion of America with the purchase of the morning San Antonio Express and the afternoon San Antonio News in 1973.

Murdoch imposed a condition: Hearst had to keep the entire Express-News staff, which meant that very few Light employees and none of the executives were transferred over. The late Bob Danzig, who was head of Hearst Newspapers at the time, came down to calm the waters as San Antonio became the latest of the nation's one-newspaper cities.

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

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Why are public thinkers flocking to Substack? (Guardian)

By SEAN MONAHAN

I started a Substack two weeks ago and it's going better than I thought it would. Friends texted me: "Congratulations on the launch." To which, I responded: "Heh, thanks it's a blog." Another pinged: "You joined the movement!" The best reaction was an encouraging tweet from fellow Substacker, Michelle Lhoq: "Let us all welcome [Sean] to the Substack stripper pole, where writers dance for our readers loose change and tell ourselves we're the future of media hehe."

Michelle's sangfroid about the media hullabaloo regarding Substack makes sense to me. It's a Faustian bargain to commodify your personality. You're free from the limiting influences of institutions. This is of course why the most famous Substack defectors – Glenn Greenwald, Matt Taibbi, Andrew Sullivan and now Matt Yglesias – moved to the platform. Yet, input from editors is inevitably just replaced with the pressure of analytics. As teen YouTubers, who were the earliest to experiment with commodifying their personalities confess, the quantification of attention both positive and negative quickly influences our decisions. There are some sides of ourselves our subscribers want to see, others people would prefer not to ... This applies doubly to controversial views.

Read more [here](#). Shared by John Brewer.

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The President vs. the American Media (New York Times)

By Ben Smith

The president has some bones to pick with the American media: about our "bias," our obsession with racism, our views on terrorism, our reluctance to express solidarity, even for a moment, with his embattled republic.

So President Emmanuel Macron of France called me on Thursday afternoon from his gilded office in the Élysée Palace to drive home a complaint. He argued that the Anglo-American press, as it's often referred to in his country, has blamed France instead of those who committed a spate of murderous terrorist attacks that began with the beheading on Oct. 16 of a teacher, Samuel Paty, who, in a lesson on free speech, had shown his class cartoons from the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo mocking the Prophet Muhammad.

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

The Final Word

Mayor Max for president? (Idyllwild Town Crier)



A group of ladies visit Mayor Max at his home. PHOTO BY PHYLLIS MUELLER



Some of the lucky canine honorary deputies. PHOTO COURTESY OF PHYLLIS MUELLER

By Jenny Kirchner

Despite COVID-19, Mayor Max has still been busy. While he's not out greeting visitors in the center of town as he did pre-COVID, he has had visitors to his home.

Chief of Staff Phyllis Mueller said, "We are doing lots of private visits at the mayor's house so we can control distancing. Everyone wears their masks and takes them off just for the photo."

Mayor Max will also do a private visit to a house, Airbnb or lodge, but only if all county and state health guidelines are met.

Read more [here](#). Shared by **Michael Rubin**, who said, "Since we have official dogs in Connecting, this might fit in — Max the mayor of Idyllwild, a bucolic mountain community east of Los Angeles. Authors and actors have lived there or thereabouts for years, including Aldous Huxley and Charles Laughton from the 30's and 40's."

Today in History - Nov. 18, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 18, the 323rd day of 2020. There are 43 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 18, 1978, U.S. Rep. Leo J. Ryan, D-Calif., and four others were killed in Jonestown, Guyana, by members of the Peoples Temple; the killings were followed by a night of mass murder and suicide by more than 900 cult members.

On this date:

In 1883, the United States and Canada adopted a system of Standard Time zones.

In 1916, the World War I Battle of the Somme pitting British and French forces against German troops ended inconclusively after 4 1/2 months of bloodshed.

In 1928, Walt Disney's first sound-synchronized animated cartoon, "Steamboat Willie" starring Mickey Mouse, premiered in New York.

In 1963, the Bell System introduced the first commercial touch-tone telephone system in Carnegie and Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

In 1966, U.S. Roman Catholic bishops did away with the rule against eating meat on Fridays outside of Lent.

In 1985, the comic strip "Calvin and Hobbes," created by Bill Watterson, was first published. (The strip ran for 10 years.)

In 1987, the congressional Iran-Contra committees issued their final report, saying President Ronald Reagan bore "ultimate responsibility" for wrongdoing by his aides. A fire at London King's Cross railway station claimed 31 lives.

In 1991, Shiite (SHEE'-eyet) Muslim kidnappers in Lebanon freed Anglican Church envoy Terry Waite and Thomas Sutherland, the American dean of agriculture at the American University of Beirut.

In 1999, 12 people were killed when a bonfire under construction at Texas A-and-M University collapsed. A jury in Jasper, Texas, convicted Shawn Allen Berry of murder for his role in the dragging death of James Byrd Jr., but spared him the death penalty.

In 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled 4-to-3 that the state constitution guaranteed gay couples the right to marry.

In 2004, Britain outlawed fox hunting in England and Wales.

In 2009, two days before turning 92, Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., set a record for longest-serving lawmaker in congressional history at 56 years, 320 days. (That record was broken in 2013 by U.S. Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich.)

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama rallied former diplomatic and military chiefs from both parties to pressure reluctant Republican senators into ratifying a nuclear weapons deal with Russia. (The Senate ratified the treaty the following month.) General Motors stock resumed trading on Wall Street, signaling the rebirth of an American corporate icon that had collapsed into bankruptcy and was rescued with a \$50 billion infusion from taxpayers. Felix Hernandez of the Seattle Mariners was chosen as the AL Cy Young Award winner.

Five years ago: The Islamic State group announced that it had killed a Norwegian man and a Chinese man after earlier demanding ransoms for the two. Raphael Holiday was executed by the state of Texas; he'd been convicted of setting a fire that killed his 18-month-old daughter and her two young half-sisters at an East Texas home in Sept. 2000. Jake Arrieta of the Chicago Cubs aced out Dodgers stars Zack Greinke and Clayton Kershaw for the NL Cy Young Award while Houston lefty Dallas Keuchel won the AL honor.

One year ago: The Trump administration said it no longer considered Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be a violation of international law; the position marked a reversal of four decades of American policy, and undermined efforts by the Palestinians to gain statehood. China said a 55-year-old man had been diagnosed with bubonic plague after killing and eating a wild rabbit; two other plague cases had already been discovered in the capital Beijing. Beauty company Coty said it was buying a 51 percent share of reality TV star Kylie Jenner's beauty business in a deal that valued her company at about \$1.2 billion.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Brenda Vaccaro is 81. Author-poet Margaret Atwood is 81. Actor Linda Evans is 78. Actor Susan Sullivan is 78. Country singer Jacky Ward is 74. Actor Jameson Parker is 73. Actor-singer Andrea Marcovicci is 72. Rock musician Herman Rarebell is 71. Singer Graham Parker is 70. Actor Delroy Lindo is 68. Comedian Kevin Nealon is 67. Pro Football Hall of Fame quarterback Warren Moon is 64. Actor

Oscar Nunez is 62. Actor Elizabeth Perkins is 60. Singer Kim Wilde is 60. Actor Tim Guinee is 58. Rock musician Kirk Hammett (Metallica) is 58. Rock singer Tim DeLaughter (dee-LAW'-ter) is 55. Actor Romany Malco is 52. Actor Owen Wilson is 52. Actor Dan Bakkedahl is 52. Singer Duncan Sheik is 51. Actor Mike Epps is 50. Actor Peta Wilson is 50. Actor Chloe Sevigny (SEH'-ven-ee) is 46. Country singer Jessi Alexander is 44. Actor Steven Pasquale is 44. Rock musician Alberto Bof (Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real) is 43. Rapper Fabolous is 43. Actor-director Nate Parker is 41. Rapper Mike Jones is 40. Actor Mekia Cox is 39. Actor-comedian Nasim Pedrad (nah-SEEM' peh-DRAHD') is 39. Actor Allison Tolman is 39. Actor Christina Vidal is 39. Actor Damon Wayans Jr. is 38. Country singer TJ Osborne (Brothers Osborne) is 36. Fashion designer Christian Siriano is 35. Actor Nathan Kress 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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