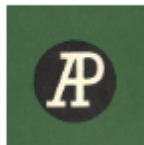


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The landmark Christmas tree at New York's Rockefeller Plaza stands out Dec. 26, 1947 as a few hardy pedestrians make their way through the snow drifts of one of the heaviest winter storms in years. (AP Photo/Harry Harris) (Photos courtesy AP Corporate Archives)

Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning on this the 2nd day of December 2020,

Back when The Associated Press made its headquarters home at 50 Rockefeller Plaza, employees had a bird's eye view of one of New York City's biggest events – the lighting of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree.

It's a time of joy that has been part of the city's holiday celebration since 1931. (The AP moved into Rockefeller Plaza in 1938.) But the lighting of the tree tonight at 9 EST will differ from the past: due to pandemic and social distancing restrictions, there will be no public access to the plaza for the lighting ceremony. The event will be broadcast from 8-10 p.m. EST on NBC. Click [here](#) for more.

Our colleague **Bruce Richardson**, who once worked at 50 Rock before AP moved to a new location in 2004, brings you memories of that magical time and collected the memories of a few other colleagues. Got your own special memory and photo of the tree lighting? I hope you send it along.

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS: Our first response is in to Connecting's call for random acts of kindness that you've made or that others have made for you. Please share any story you might have.

Joyce Rosenberg (Email) - Almost every morning I'm out walking the streets of my Manhattan neighborhood by 8a. On Sunday, as I passed by one of the outdoor enclosures that restaurants are now allowed to build, I saw a man huddled asleep in the corner. I also saw the tail, feet and snout of a hound, probably a beagle, nestled under a blanket in his arms. I took \$10 out of my pocket, quietly walked over and tucked it under the man's bag so it wouldn't blow away. The pup started to pick up its head and I said, "it's OK," and left. I hope the man felt comforted when he awoke. Thank you, Paul, for the opportunity to talk about this. I'm not looking for accolades, just hope that it will help people think about helping others.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy.

Paul

A magical time at 50 Rock: Lighting of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree



Dignitaries on stage turn to admire the sight moments after the 87th annual Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree was illuminated, Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2019, in New York. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

By **BRUCE RICHARDSON** ([Email](#))

Another New York City tradition rolls around today (Dec. 2) when the tree lighting at Rockefeller Plaza takes place on television (NBC). I was around for the first televised event in 1997 when I worked at 50 Rock but not for the first tree lighting that took place in 1931. AP opened its offices at 50 Rock in 1938.

I came to New York City in 1971 after a few years in Chicago AP and at that time, the tree lighting was mainly for people who worked in that area and others who came to the city to see it.

I'm not saying the AP people like to party, but, Christmas was a special time. Too bad we didn't have the cell phones like we have today because there would be lots of personal pictures and postings to look back on.

I worked mainly on the 7th floor and at one time my office window looked out toward the ice skating rink and the plaza where the tree is always placed. Every one of AP's five floors had windows that looked out on the plaza.

I asked a number of former '50 Rockers' for their remembrances:

Hal Buell ([Email](#)), who ran photo operations for the AP before he retired, says that Rockefeller Center back in the day—late 50s and into the 60s and onward -- was the center of holiday spirit for those of us who passed through its fairyland of Christmas cheer and great joyful buoyancy. I recall that the mood followed us into the several floors at 50 Rock where so many toiled daily.

Throughout the year the news flow was intense but there seemed in those December days everyone lightened up a bit. It was a cheerful treat as I recall, just getting to and from the borders of Rockefeller Plaza to the door of No. 50, where a window with an AP teletype churned out the A wire nonstop.

There were parties aplenty during the couple of weeks before and after the Rockefeller Christmas tree was lighted in early December. I recall several held in one of the restaurants that surrounded the skating rink. The place was way too small and the AP crowd spilled out into the concourse. I often wondered whether any non-AP types homeward bound found their way to the bar for a quickie or two. We had tickets but I would describe that as limited security.

The big parties in the late 60s morphed into separate department gatherings, often in a nearby saloon (Pig & Whistle) on 48th street was a favorite for photo types.) A couple of years I rented a suite at the Waldorf and we lugged in our own ice and "refreshments." And there was another at the Women's National Republican Club on 51st street.

Tree lighting ceremonies morphed over the years to an NBC Television Spectacular and AP gatherings moved to executive offices on the 5th, 6th, and 7th floors overlooking the tree ceremony, though the 9pm lighting made for a long wait.

One of the annual events for several years was the visit to all AP offices and newsrooms by Santa Claus himself, ringing his small bell and “ho-hoing” himself through news desk arrangements and into executive offices including those of Presidents Wes Gallagher and Keith Fuller.

At one such visit photo editor Claudia DiMartino posed with Santa. The picture (at right) turned up several months ago on CONNECTING with the question, “Who is that Santa? I can’t recall whether anyone got it right...the answer, Eddie Adams (longtime AP photographer and winner of a Pulitzer Prize).



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Susan Clark (Email), who is now AP’s Travel Coordinator, but who was in Corp Comm for many years, had these recollections:

In the early 80’s, I think 81 or 82, we organized the first AP Xmas Party and it was held in the Board Room and it was catered by the Cafeteria where they made sandwiches. We catered for 500 people and the cafeteria made trays of little sandwiches. And beer and wine were served. I remember the carrying in the trays of sandwiches. That was the first time we had a holiday party for the staff at 50 Rock.

From our Corp Comm window we had a unique view and watched the tree arrive and immediately discussions were underway for our Tree Lighting Party. For me it was the highlight of the year.

I loved working on the planning of the party. Together with my colleagues we decided what we would eat, drink and who would be invited to our VIP event. The mailing of invitations went out to mostly to the staff who had been helpful to us during the course of the year and to some of our important media colleagues, who we called on often. But that became difficult as the crowds got larger it was more difficult for the outside media to get into 50 Rock.

Staff from various departments paid their respects and loved to be at our party, it was always considered one of the highlights of the building.

One year we even had Johnnie Cochran, the American lawyer and O.J.'s lawyer. He had been attending a recording at the Nippon Television Network NTV which was based next to our Corp Comm office on the 8th floor. Johnnie was invited in for a glass of wine and that was our celebrity event. During those years, many stars passed our office and we got to meet them. I sat at the front desk near the front door and made it my business to meet them.

The Christmas Tree lighting party was always a memorable way to start the Christmas festivities every year.

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Janis Magin Meierdiercks (Email), who worked alongside Susan, added these recollections:

The lighting of the Rockefeller Christmas tree was an excuse for AP's Corp Comm department to throw a party in the eighth-floor office at 50 Rock, for two reasons: One was the festive show that our neighbor, NBC, produced for broadcast. The other was the throngs of people who made it impossible to leave the building after work — you had to leave by 3 p.m. or you were stuck until 9, so may as well enjoy.

One year I invited my brother and he couldn't get through the crowd to 50 Rock — I recall having to brave the crowds and convince the police officers to let him through the barricades! I had the privilege of being there for the event for five years, from 1996 through the 2000 tree lighting.

Each year, Susan Clark and I would walk over to the Amish Market to buy wine, cheese and crackers and other snacks — here in Hawaii, we call them pupu — and we would put out a spread for the staff and invited guests. We would invite people from the AP departments on our floor, as well as some of the media reporters who covered AP, from Editor and Publisher and other trade press, to enjoy the show from the Corp Comm office, which had an OK view considering we were not at the corner of the building.

I do recall one year going down to the general desk on the fourth floor, where we watched the tree lighting from the front-row seats in the executive editor's corner office — at the time that was Bill Ahearn.

In 1999, I recall watching — on the TV in the office — Rosemary Clooney singing "White Christmas" while standing next to the Prometheus sculpture at the skating rink below ground level. I believe that was only a week or two after she had paid a visit to the eighth floor. AP loaned CBS the use of the executive dining room for Charles Osgood's interview with Clooney for "Sunday Morning" so Clooney didn't have to travel over to their studio after finishing another interview at the Japanese television studio on the other side of the Corp Comm office. As she left, she waved and said hello to all of us who gathered to see her. After I moved to Honolulu, I saw her in concert shortly before she died in 2002.

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Rick Cooper, (Email), former Benefits Manager, recalled: All I remember is the crowds in the plaza and the families visiting the office. To be honest, with my commuting situation, my last direct non-stop train left Grand Central at 6:10pm so I really couldn't stick around. After that trains ran once an hour and involved a transfer resulting in a two-hour plus trip.

One thing I do remember was one of the Rock Center elevator starters showed me a shortcut through the sub-basement under the Rock Center Concourse which took me from our building to the corner of Fifth Avenue and 48th Street avoiding all of the crowds.

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Thanks to my former co-workers for offering their recollections of the old days at 50 Rock and Christmas.

In 2020, AP photographers captured a world in distress



Agustina Canamero, 81, and Pascual Perez, 84, hug and kiss through a plastic film screen to avoid contracting the coronavirus at a nursing home in Barcelona, Spain, on June 22, 2020. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

By **JERRY SCHWARTZ**

Behold, a world in distress:

A 64-year-old woman weeps, hugging her husband as he lay dying in the COVID-19 unit of a California hospital. A crowded refugee camp in Lesbos, Greece, engulfed in flames, disgorges a string of migrants fleeing this hell on Earth. Rain-swept protesters, enraged by the death of George Floyd in police custody, rail against the system and the heavens.

This is the world that Associated Press photographers captured in 2020, a world beset by every sort of catastrophe -- natural and unnatural disaster, violent and non-violent conflict.

And, in every corner of that world, the coronavirus.

There are the living: Women cover themselves head to toe with chadors, protective clothing and gas masks to prepare a body for burial in Iran. An octogenarian couple kiss through plastic in Spain.

There are the dead: Relatives, traveling by night and by boat, travel down a Peruvian river to bring a body home for burial. Row upon row of new graves are dug in the largest cemetery in Latin America.

And there are those who negotiate the grim space between life and death -- among them, 16 Italian doctors and nurses exhausted from their labors, their faces haunted and haunting.

Read more [here](#).

Recalling the day when Terry Anderson was freed



Former U.S. hostage and Associated Press chief Middle East correspondent Terry Anderson, left, is greeted by Louis D. Boccardi, center, President and chief executive officer of the Associated Press as Anderson's sister, Peggy Say, right, looks on shortly after Anderson's arrival to the Wiesbaden Air Force hospital, Thursday, Dec. 5, 1991 in Wiesbaden. (AP Photo/Thomas Kienzle) (Photos courtesy AP Corporate Archives)



AP HQ Former hostage and Associated Press Chief Middle East Correspondent Terry Anderson, right, hugs Associated Press Deputy International Editor and Nick Tatro, his

predecessor in Beirut outside the Associated Press headquarters in New York on Tuesday, Dec. 10, 1991. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)



Wearing a "Hello World" sweatshirt printed with his picture, former hostage Terry Anderson greets happy colleagues on Tuesday, Dec. 10, 1991 at the Associated Press headquarters in New York as he walks with his arm around fiancée Madeleine Bassil. "This is my homecoming," he told reporters at the airport earlier, "this is where my people are." (AP Photo/Ron Frehm)

Marty Steinberg ([Email](#)) - I remember the day Terry Anderson arrived at 50 Rock following his release from captivity.

We on the General Desk were struggling with the William Kennedy Smith rape trial when the newsroom was invaded by the media. Cameras — still and video — lined the wall to document Terry's arrival. As usual, we had CNN on the TVs, with the sound off.

CNN suddenly flashed a "breaking news" chyron. We thought the moment that we had awaited for nearly seven years had finally arrived. But the breaking news was from Florida: The "Jupiter woman" was called to testify against Smith. (She was from Jupiter, Florida.)

Instead of seeing video of Terry entering 50 Rock, we saw a blue dot obscuring the face of Smith's accuser. Some of us APers were so disappointed that we booed.

Finally, Terry came marching in triumphantly and we all went nuts.

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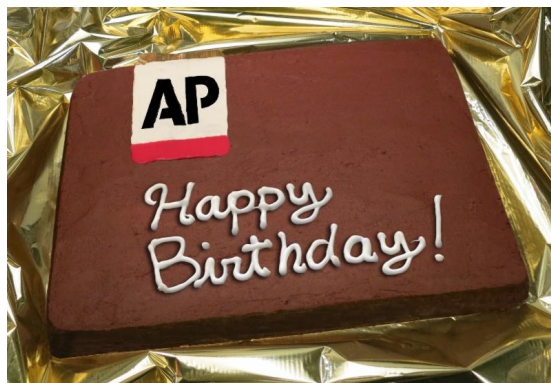
Mark Mittelstadt (Email) - Clearing out boxes of papers and memorabilia that had accompanied us in three moves and 5,300 miles I came across this button made in 1985 or 1986 to remember Terry Anderson and Tom Sutherland, who at the time were being held hostage by militants in the Middle East. Both men had connections to Iowa State University -- Anderson graduating in 1974 with dual degrees in journalism and mass communication; Sutherland was awarded a master's degree and PhD in animal breeding in 1958. My recollection is the button was created by Iowa State and distributed by Iowa Daily Press Association, possibly at the newspaper association's annual convention.

Anderson, then Chief Middle East correspondent for The Associated Press, was abducted by militants from the street in Beirut after finishing a tennis game on March 16, 1985. Sutherland, Dean of Agriculture at the American University of Beirut in

Lebanon, was kidnapped by Islamic Jihad members near his Beirut home on June 9, 1985.

Sutherland was released on Nov. 18, 1991; Anderson on Dec. 4 of that year. Sutherland's 2,353 days in captivity was second longest only to Anderson's of nearly seven years.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



John Miller - jwm77uk@gmail.com

Nancy Shipley - nrosesz@aol.com

Doug Waggoner - dougwag@mchsi.com

Barbara Worth - barbaraworth@comcast.net

Stories of interest

'Fake news' about a Covid-19 vaccine has become a second pandemic, Red Cross chief says (CNN)

By Harmeet Kaur and Naomi Thomas, CNN

(CNN) Covid-19 vaccines are fast approaching, but a second pandemic might impede efforts to recover from the first, according to the president of a global humanitarian aid group.

That second pandemic: "fake news" about those very vaccines.

Francesco Rocca, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said in a virtual briefing to the UN Correspondents Association on Monday that governments and institutions needed to implement measures to combat growing mistrust and misinformation.

"To beat Covid-19, we also need to defeat the parallel pandemic of mistrust that has consistently hindered our collective response to this disease, and that could undermine our shared ability to vaccinate against it," he said.

Read more [here](#).

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The 2020 debate moderators reflect on what worked and what didn't (Poynter)

By: Louis Jacobson

From the point of view of moderator Chris Wallace of Fox News, the first 2020 presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden seemed promising — at least for the first few moments.

"My initial reaction was, 'This is great — they're going to engage with each other!'" Wallace said. "Not long after, you began to feel, 'This is getting out of control.'"

Trump's constant interruptions of Biden with contradictions and put-downs ultimately made the debate impossible for viewers to follow. Goaded by frustration, Biden hit back, calling Trump "a clown" and telling him to "shut up."

At one point, Wallace said, the producer in his earpiece told him, "Stop Trump from interrupting Biden!" Wallace said he thought to himself, "What does he expect me to do, hit a trap door on the president of the United States? There's not much you can do in that situation."

Read more [here](#).

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Pakistan court resumes appeal hearing in Daniel Pearl murder (AP)

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's top court on Tuesday resumed the hearing of an appeal from the family of American journalist Daniel Pearl against the acquittal of a British-born Pakistani man convicted over the 2002 beheading of the Wall Street Journal reporter.

The key suspect in Pearl's slaying, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, was sentenced to death and three others were sentenced to life in prison for their role in the plot. But a lower Pakistani court in April acquitted him and three others, a move that stunned the U.S. government, Pearl's family and journalism advocacy groups.

The acquittal is now being appealed separately by the government and Pearl's family, a process that under Pakistani law could take years. The government has opposed Sheikh's release, saying it would endanger the public. He is to remain in custody until the appeals are resolved.

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

Today in History - Dec. 2, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 2, the 337th day of 2020. There are 29 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 2, 1982, in the first operation of its kind, doctors at the University of Utah Medical Center implanted a permanent artificial heart in the chest of retired dentist Dr. Barney Clark, who lived 112 days with the device.

On this date:

In 1804, Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of the French.

In 1816, the first savings bank in the United States, the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society, opened for business.

In 1823, President James Monroe outlined his doctrine opposing European expansion in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1859, militant abolitionist John Brown was hanged for his raid on Harpers Ferry the previous October.

In 1942, an artificially created, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction was demonstrated for the first time at the University of Chicago.

In 1954, the U.S. Senate passed, 67-22, a resolution condemning Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., saying he had "acted contrary to senatorial ethics and tended to bring the Senate into dishonor and disrepute."

In 1957, the Shippingport Atomic Power Station in Pennsylvania, the first full-scale commercial nuclear facility in the U.S., began operations. (The reactor ceased operating in 1982.)

In 1970, the newly created Environmental Protection Agency opened its doors under its first director, William D. Ruckelshaus.

In 1980, four American churchwomen were raped and murdered in El Salvador. (Five national guardsmen were convicted in the killings.)

In 1993, Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar was shot to death by security forces in Medellin (meh-deh-YEEN').

In 2000, Al Gore sought a recount in South Florida, while George W. Bush flatly asserted, "I'm soon to be the president" and met with GOP congressional leaders. Actor Gail Fisher died in Culver City, Calif. at age 65.

In 2016, 36 people died when fire erupted in an illegally converted warehouse in Oakland, California, during a dance party.

Ten years ago: The House voted, 333-79, to censure Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., for financial and fundraising misconduct; it was only the 23rd time that the House had invoked its most serious punishment short of expulsion. LeBron James scored 38 points to lead the visiting Miami Heat to a 118-90 victory over the host Cleveland Cavaliers; it was James' first game back in the city where he had played for seven years before leaving via free agency.

Five years ago: A couple loyal to the Islamic State group opened fire at a holiday banquet for public employees in San Bernardino, California, killing 14 people and

wounding 21 others before dying in a shootout with police.

One year ago: The House's impeachment report on President Donald Trump was unveiled behind closed doors for key lawmakers. Montana Gov. Steve Bullock ended his Democratic presidential campaign; he was the third Western governor to fail to gain traction in the race. Chicago's retiring police chief, Eddie Johnson, was fired in connection with an incident in which he had been found asleep at the wheel of his car. As representatives from nearly 200 countries gathered in Madrid for a two-week meeting on tackling global warming, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged countries not to give up in the fight against climate change.

Today's Birthdays: Former Attorney General Edwin Meese III is 89. Former Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., is 81. Actor Cathy Lee Crosby is 76. Movie director Penelope Spheeris is 75. Actor Ron Raines is 71. Country singer John Wesley Ryles is 70. Actor Keith Szarabjka is 68. Actor Dan Butler is 66. Broadcast journalist Stone Phillips is 66. Actor Dennis Christopher is 65. Actor Steven Bauer is 64. Country singer Joe Henry is 60. Rock musician Rick Savage (Def Leppard) is 60. Actor Brendan Coyle is 57. Rock musician Nate Mendel (Foo Fighters) is 52. Actor Suzy Nakamura is 52. Actor Rena Sofer is 52. Rock singer Jimi (cq) HaHa (Jimmie's Chicken Shack) is 52. Actor Lucy Liu (loo) is 52. Rapper Treach (Naughty By Nature) is 50. Actor Joe Lo Truglio is 50. International Tennis Hall of Famer Monica Seles is 47. Singer Nelly Furtado is 42. Pop singer Britney Spears is 39. Actor-singer Jana Kramer is 37. Actor Yvonne Orji is 37. Actor Daniela Ruah (roo-ah) is 37. NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers is 37. Actor Alfred Enoch is 32. Pop singer-songwriter Charlie Puth is 29. Actors Deanna and Daniella Canterman are 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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