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Connecting December 23, 2020

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AP's Kathy Gannon (left) and photographer Anja Niedringhaus pictured in 2012 – two years before Niedringhaus was killed and Gannon seriously wounded while covering preparations for Afghan national elections when an Afghan police officer opened fire on the car in which they were riding. Gannon was named Tuesday as AP's news director for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this the 23rd day of December 2020,

Please join me in congratulating our colleague **Kathy Gannon** ([Email](#)) on her promotion to AP news director for Afghanistan and Pakistan – a region she has covered for more than three decades.

Today's Connecting also brings you more contributions to two of our recent series – one on your favorite Christmas stories and the other on your life and how it changed in 2020, the year of the pandemic. Thanks to **Andy Lippman** and **Jim Reindl** for sharing their stories.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy.

Paul

Kathy Gannon named AP news director for Afghanistan and Pakistan

Veteran AP correspondent Kathy Gannon has been appointed news director for Afghanistan and Pakistan, in an announcement Tuesday by Vice President for International News Ian Phillips and Middle East News Director Karin Laub.

In their memo to staff:

Gannon's expertise and depth of knowledge about Afghanistan and Pakistan are unrivaled. She is bringing more than three decades of reporting experience in the region to this job.

Gannon has covered the region since 1988, a period that spans the withdrawal of Russian soldiers from Afghanistan, the assassination of Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto, the bitter Afghan civil war between Islamic factions and the rise and fall of the Taliban. Gannon was the only Western journalist allowed in Kabul by the Taliban in the weeks preceding the 2001 U.S.-British offensive in Afghanistan.



In April 2014, Gannon was seriously wounded while covering preparations for Afghan national elections when an Afghan police officer opened fire on the car in which she was riding. Her colleague and close friend, AP photographer Anja Niedringhaus, was killed in the attack.

She underwent 18 surgeries and returned to Afghanistan and Pakistan where she has explored sexual abuse in Islamic madrassas, took a deep dive into so-called honor killings of hundreds of women at the hands of their family members each year and followed Taliban's sweep through Afghanistan. In 2019, she covered another presidential election in Afghanistan.

Going forward, she will be leading coverage on the U.S. troop drawdown in Afghanistan, Pakistan's struggles with Islamic fundamentalism, the resurgence of Islamic State extremists and a host of other issues.

Gannon is a native of Timmins, Ontario. She was the city editor at the Kelowna Courier in British Columbia and worked at several Canadian newspapers before her career took her overseas. She has lived in Israel, Japan, Pakistan and Afghanistan.



Kathy Gannon, sitting left center, investigative reporter Adil Jawad, sitting left, camera operator Muhammad Farooq, standing left, and photographer Fareed Khan, standing center, conduct an interview with Neha, a 14-year old Christian girl who forcibly married a 45-year old Muslim man in Karachi, Pakistan, Nov. 11, 2020. (Photo courtesy Muhammad Farooq)

She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the International Women's Media Foundation Courage In Journalism Award, the Overseas Press Club Award for best newspaper or wire service reporting from abroad and AP's Oliver S. Gramling Award in Journalism.

In 2005, Gannon authored "I is for Infidel: From Holy War, to Holy Terror, 18 Years Inside Afghanistan," an examination of the Taliban and post-Taliban period, published by PublicAffairs.

Click [here](#) for a link to this announcement.

Kathy Gannon's email – kgannon@ap.org

For more than 25 years, he was the AP bureau chef on Christmas Day

Andy lippman ([Email](#)) - I am certainly not noted for my cooking.

But when I was introduced a few years ago to a staffer at the LA bureau, she brightened and said, "Oh, I've heard of you. You're the guy who used to cook lunch for the staff on Christmas Day."

I'm the guy.

For more than 25 years, I'd pack the car full of food and drive down to the bureau in (fill in the blank) Louisville, Indianapolis, or Los Angeles to bring Christmas lunch to people who were working on the holiday.

It started with a single lunch for George Hackett in Louisville. He always volunteered to work the day shift on Christmas, so I would bring him down a Cornish game hen with cranberry sauce, rolls and dessert. I'd make something for myself and we'd share an hour together since none of the local restaurants were open.

One lunch grew to two in Indianapolis, and by the time I got to LA in 1989, two lunches had grown to six or seven-since I often cooked enough for the day and night shifts.

My holiday routine often reminded me of the scene in "I Love Lucy" where Lucy and Ethel were making candies and the chocolate would be coming off the conveyor belt so quickly that they fell on the floor.

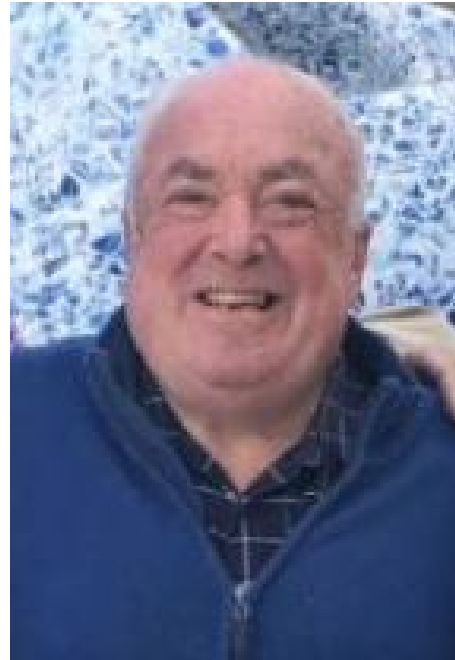
I never had a Cornish game hen fall on the floor, but I often ran out of oven space. I'd have hens ready to put in the oven and have other cooked meals cooling in the refrigerator. Then, I'd have to find containers to put everything in and get them to the bureau without gravy sloshing onto the car floor. The dog loved that.

One year, I didn't realize that the oven wasn't working (that shows how much I used it), and I had to wait for someone to come over to fix it. Lunch turned into an early dinner that year.

And the meals became more elaborate. Cornish game hens became glazed hens. I added sweet potatoes and more vegetables and more kinds of desserts, plus sparkling sodas.

Then, hens became turkeys. And when I got tired of cooking one year, I ordered turkeys, stuffing and all the trimmings from a local Boston Market restaurant.

Off I'd go, with the dog licking his lips in the back seat and me singing carols on the radio as I'd drive to the bureau and share an hour with the staff.



After I had gone on disability and later on to early retirement, I continued the tradition, but less people now worked in LA on Christmas Day. Staffing on Christmas day dwindled to one or two people. It didn't bother me.

But, I knew all good things were coming to an end.

I called the desk two years ago and asked how many people would be working Christmas Day.

"Only so-and--so, Andy"

Wait. Isn't he in San Diego?"

Never mind. This caterer doesn't go that far-even on Christmas.

Now, the LA bureau is closed on Christmas Day and so is my oven.

But the memories are still piping hot.

(Among his AP assignments, Andy Lippman served as chief of bureau in Louisville, Indianapolis and Los Angeles.)

Thoughts on the year from Sarajevo



The Reinds, a Continental Couple, Asia, top left, North American, bottom left, Europe, right (bobsled track on Mt. Trebevic', site of 1984 Winter Olympics).

Jim Reindl (Email) - As the New Year turned over, Graca and I stood on the streets of Georgetown, Malaysia, gazing at the fireworks exploding across the night sky. We'd just finished dinner at Indigo in the Blue Mansion Hotel. Our holiday vacation, half of which was spent barefoot wandering the sands of Gili Meno Island in Indonesia, was nearly over. Our return to Timor-Leste was a couple days away.

We returned home to Dili contemplating our future after nearly three years on the island, where I ran communications for USAID and she was the chef for the U.S. Ambassador. Life was good but wanderlust was setting in. When the comms job in Cairo opened, I decided to apply with her blessing. Shortly after that, the comms job in Sarajevo opened. Hedging my bets, I swapped out all references to Cairo and Egypt for Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina and sent my letter. I waited to see who I might hear from.

Life went on even as we heard about the coronavirus and joked darkly about what would happen if it hit Dili with its nearly non-existent health service. February turned to March and March turned into a holy hell of confusion. First the State Department approved "authorized departure," which meant anyone who felt threatened or at risk from the virus could return to the states no questions asked. We vowed to stay, feeling secure in our house and knowing I at least could telework as that started to become the norm.

Then rumors started circulating that a bunch of the Americans would be sent home. The rumors solidified into knowledge that the order was under discussion in the Embassy. And then on March 19, it came. We were given two days to pack for home on the assumption we'd be back. Our tickets were so last minute we went through three airports in three covid- infested countries, getting out of Singapore only hours before the country closed its borders. We had no PPE and none was for sale in the airports. In Narita we encountered all manner of strangely dressed people from plastic sheets and bags to full body suits.

Back to Chicago. And winter, which we hadn't seen since 2013. The silver lining was reuniting with our kids and friends – covid-cognizant, of course. Sometime after our arrival, I was notified by the Mission in Sarajevo that I was a finalist (Egypt never did connect with me). Once hired in May, the long process began to renew my security and medical clearances and negotiate with the mission in Timor-Leste on my end date.

On Aug. 17, I touched down in Sarajevo at 2:25 PM. Graca joined me in October. Twelve months and four continents later, I suspect we'll be spending our New Years Eve this year hunkered down in our apartment in downtown Sarajevo across from the Miljacka River, about 100 meters from the National Theater that covid shut down months ago and avoiding the outside air in the world's fourth most polluted city. Winter weather aside, though, BiH and Sarajevo are beautiful.

Yes, I believe you could say 2020 was a year like none other.

Liz Keating named to interim city council post in Cincinnati

Dan Sewell ([Email](#)) - Liz Keating, whose grandfather former AP Board Chairman William J. Keating died earlier this year, has been named to serve as an interim city council member in Cincinnati.



Three council members have been indicted on federal corruption charges this year, so there are three appointees to serve until the cases are resolved - one had already pleaded guilty and resigned, or until elections next year.

She is planning to [run for a full term](#) in 2021.

Click [here](#) for the wire obituary for her father from May.

Thanks for remembrance of his sister Peggy Say



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)

Terry Anderson (Email) - Thanks to David Briscoe for his lovely remembrance of my sister Peg (in Tuesday's Connecting). I did indeed know of and appreciate her extraordinary dedication and unceasing efforts to win my freedom, as I did Lou's (Boccardi).

While I was held, we sometimes heard of her activities on the radio, and my captors would tell me of stories about her in the local papers. They always gave us hope.

During the last weeks of her life, when she was suffering from periodic dementia and increasing blindness, she often spoke of those years of lobbying world leaders, and of the many journalist friends like David she had made. She was unique.

A pandemic atlas: How COVID-19 took over the world in 2020



A man wearing a mask walks past graffiti depicting a globe in the Orcasitas neighborhood in Madrid, Spain, Monday, Sept. 28, 2020. Journalists from The Associated Press around the world assessed how the countries where they are posted have weathered the pandemic — and where those countries stand on the cusp of year two of the contagion. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



Volunteers spray disinfectant in an alley to help contain the spread of the new coronavirus at the Santa Marta slum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020.

Journalists from The Associated Press around the world assessed how the countries where they are posted have weathered the pandemic — and where those countries stand on the cusp of year two of the contagion. (AP Photo/Bruna Prado)

By The Associated Press

Almost no place has been spared — and no one.

The virus that first emerged a year ago in Wuhan, China, swept across the world in 2020, leaving havoc in its wake. More than any event in memory, the pandemic has been a global event. On every continent, households have felt its devastation — joblessness and lockdowns, infirmity and death. And an abiding, relentless fear.

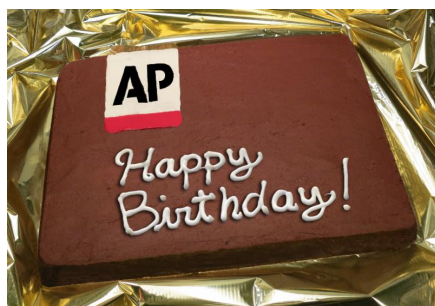
But each nation has its own story of how it coped. How China used its authoritarian muscle to stamp out the coronavirus. How Brazil struggled with the pandemic even as its president scoffed at it. How Israel's ultra-Orthodox flouted measures to stem the spread of the disease, intensifying the rift between them and their more-secular neighbors.

Spain witnessed the deaths of thousands of elders. Kenyans watched as schools closed and children went to work, some as prostitutes. India's draconian lockdown brought the rate of infection down — but only temporarily, and at a horrific cost.

At year's end, promising vaccines offered a glimmer of hope amid a cresting second wave of contagion.

Read more [here](#).

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



Donna Bryson - donna@innoabrd.com

Stories of interest

Number of Journalists Killed for Their Reporting Doubled in 2020 (New York Times)

By Oscar Lopez

MEXICO CITY — The number of journalists killed as a result of their work more than doubled in 2020, an international media watchdog group said on Tuesday, with armed conflict and gang violence making Mexico and Afghanistan among the deadliest countries for reporters globally.

At least 30 journalists were killed worldwide this year, according to the watchdog group, the Committee to Protect Journalists, with 21 of those killings carried out as a direct response to the reporters' work, compared to 10 in 2019.

"It's appalling that the murders of journalists have more than doubled in the last year, and this escalation represents a failure of the international community to confront the scourge of impunity," Joel Simon, the C.P.J.'s executive director, said in a statement.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Sibby Christensen.

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Dominion worker sues Trump campaign and conservative media (AP)

By DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — An election systems worker driven into hiding by death threats has filed a defamation lawsuit against President Donald Trump's campaign, two of its lawyers and some conservative media figures and outlets.

Eric Coomer, security director at the Colorado-based Dominion Voting Systems, said he wants his life back after being named in false charges as a key actor in "rigging" the election for President-elect Joe Biden. There has been no evidence that the election was rigged.

His lawsuit, filed Tuesday in district court in Denver County, Colorado, names the Trump campaign, lawyers Rudy Giuliani and Sidney Powell, conservative columnist Michelle Malkin, the website Gateway Pundit, Colorado conservative activist Joseph Oltmann, and conservative media Newsmax and One America News Network.

Read more [here](#).

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Relief bill could save thousands of local news jobs (Save the News)

By Sally Davidow

This article first appeared on the website of the NewsGuild-CWA.

The relief bill in front of Congress includes a NewsGuild-supported provision that will expand Paycheck Protection Program loans to local newsrooms across the country.

“Local news is facing an extinction-level event and this is an important step to help stem the layoffs and closures of newsrooms across the country,” NewsGuild President Jon Schleuss said Monday.

The bipartisan bill expands PPP eligibility to publicly-traded newspaper companies with more than one location, as long as the location does not have more than 1,000 employees. At least 60% of the loan must be devoted to paying employee salaries for the loan to be forgiven.”

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

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Pulitzer Board Rescinds New York Times’s ‘Caliphate’ Citation (New York Times)

By Marc Tracy

The Pulitzer Prize Board said on Tuesday that it would no longer recognize the New York Times podcast “Caliphate” and a related article as a 2019 Pulitzer finalist. The board stripped The Times of its finalist status four days after the news organization announced that the 2018 audio series did not meet its standards for accuracy.

“Caliphate” and the related report, “The ISIS Files,” by the podcast’s co-host Rukmini Callimachi, had been named finalists in the Pulitzer Prize’s international category last year. After an internal investigation that ended on Friday, The Times contacted the Pulitzer board and offered to give up the finalist citation.

“Upon review, the Pulitzer Prize Board has accepted The Times’s action and rescinded its designation as a 2019 Pulitzer finalist,” the Pulitzer board said in a statement on

Tuesday.

Read more [here](#)

The Final Word

Covid-19 Means Millions of Americans Face the Holidays With Loss (Wall Street Journal)

By Jennifer Levitz

Round Rock, Texas, resident Mandy Troia recently put a note on her Facebook page, telling friends to get in touch if they needed a little assistance meeting expenses this holiday season.

She helped one friend with gas money, gave another a gift card and another money to cover a prescription and some food. She says she was inspired by her late father, Tom Vint, a 72-year-old Sunday school teacher who died from Covid-19 in September.

“It’s how I try to operate and get through every day,” said Ms. Troia, who is 43 and works in the tech industry. “Would Dad be proud of me today, for sucking it up, pushing through and helping someone else?”

Across the U.S., more people are facing loss this year. The U.S. Covid-19 death toll topped 300,000 last week, and hospitalizations from the virus are at an all-time high. A disease unknown when families last gathered for Christmas dinner has exploded to become the third-leading cause of death after cancer and heart disease.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Jessica Bruce.

Today in History - Dec. 23, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 23, the 358th day of 2020. There are eight days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 23, 1954, the first successful human kidney transplant took place at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston as a surgical team removed a kidney from 23-year-old Ronald Herrick and implanted it in Herrick's twin brother, Richard.

On this date:

In 1783, George Washington resigned as commander in chief of the Continental Army and retired to his home at Mount Vernon, Virginia.

In 1913, the Federal Reserve System was created as President Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act.

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt restored the civil rights of about 1,500 people who had been jailed for opposing the (First) World War.

In 1941, during World War II, American forces on Wake Island surrendered to the Japanese.

In 1948, former Japanese premier Hideki Tojo and six other Japanese war leaders were executed in Tokyo.

In 1962, Cuba began releasing prisoners from the failed Bay of Pigs invasion under an agreement in which Cuba received more than \$50 million worth of food and medical supplies.

In 1968, 82 crew members of the U.S. intelligence ship Pueblo were released by North Korea, 11 months after they had been captured.

In 1972, a 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck Nicaragua; the disaster claimed some 5,000 lives.

In 1986, the experimental airplane Voyager, piloted by Dick Rutan (ruh-TAN') and Jeana (JEE'-nuh) Yeager, completed the first non-stop, non-refueled round-the-world flight as it returned safely to Edwards Air Force Base in California.

In 1997, a federal jury in Denver convicted Terry Nichols of involuntary manslaughter and conspiracy for his role in the Oklahoma City bombing, declining to find him guilty of murder. (Nichols was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.)

In 2001, Time magazine named New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani its Person of the Year for his steadfast response to the 9/11 terrorist attack.

In 2003, a jury in Chesapeake, Va., sentenced teen sniper Lee Boyd Malvo to life in prison, sparing him the death penalty.

Ten years ago: Mail bombs blamed on anarchists exploded at the Swiss and Chilean embassies in Rome, seriously wounding two people. Chicago Board of Election Commissioners ruled that former White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel was a resident of the city and therefore eligible to run for mayor.

Five years ago: Protesters blocked access to a terminal and caused significant holiday traffic delays around Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport after staging a Black Lives Matter rally that also briefly shut down part of the Mall of America; the demonstrations were organized to draw attention to the recent police shooting of a Black man in Minneapolis. Peggy Say, 74, who spent nearly seven years on a tireless quest for the release of her brother, AP journalist Terry Anderson, and fellow hostages from kidnappers in Lebanon, died in Cookeville, Tennessee.

One year ago: Boeing ousted CEO Dennis Muilenburg as the company remained engulfed in the crisis stemming from the crash of two of its 737 Max airliners. A court in Saudi Arabia sentenced five people to death for the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, a critic of the Saudi royal family; the five were among 11 people who were put on trial over the killing.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ronnie Schell is 89. Former Emperor Akihito of Japan is 87. Actor Frederic Forrest is 84. Rock musician Jorma Kaukonen (YOR'-mah KOW'-kah-nen) is 80. Rock musician Ron Bushy is 79. Actor-comedian Harry Shearer is 77. U.S. Army Gen. Wesley K. Clark (ret.) is 76. Actor Susan Lucci is 74. Singer-musician Adrian Belew is 71. Rock musician Dave Murray (Iron Maiden) is 64. Actor Joan Severance is 62. Singer Terry Weeks is 57. Rock singer Eddie Vedder (Pearl Jam) is 56. The former first lady of France, Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, is 53. Rock musician Jamie Murphy is 45. Jazz musician Irvin Mayfield is 43. Actor Estella Warren is 42. Actor Elvy Yost is 33. Actor

Anna Maria Perez de Tagle (TAG'-lee) is 30. Actor Spencer Daniels is 28. Actor Caleb Foote is 27.

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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