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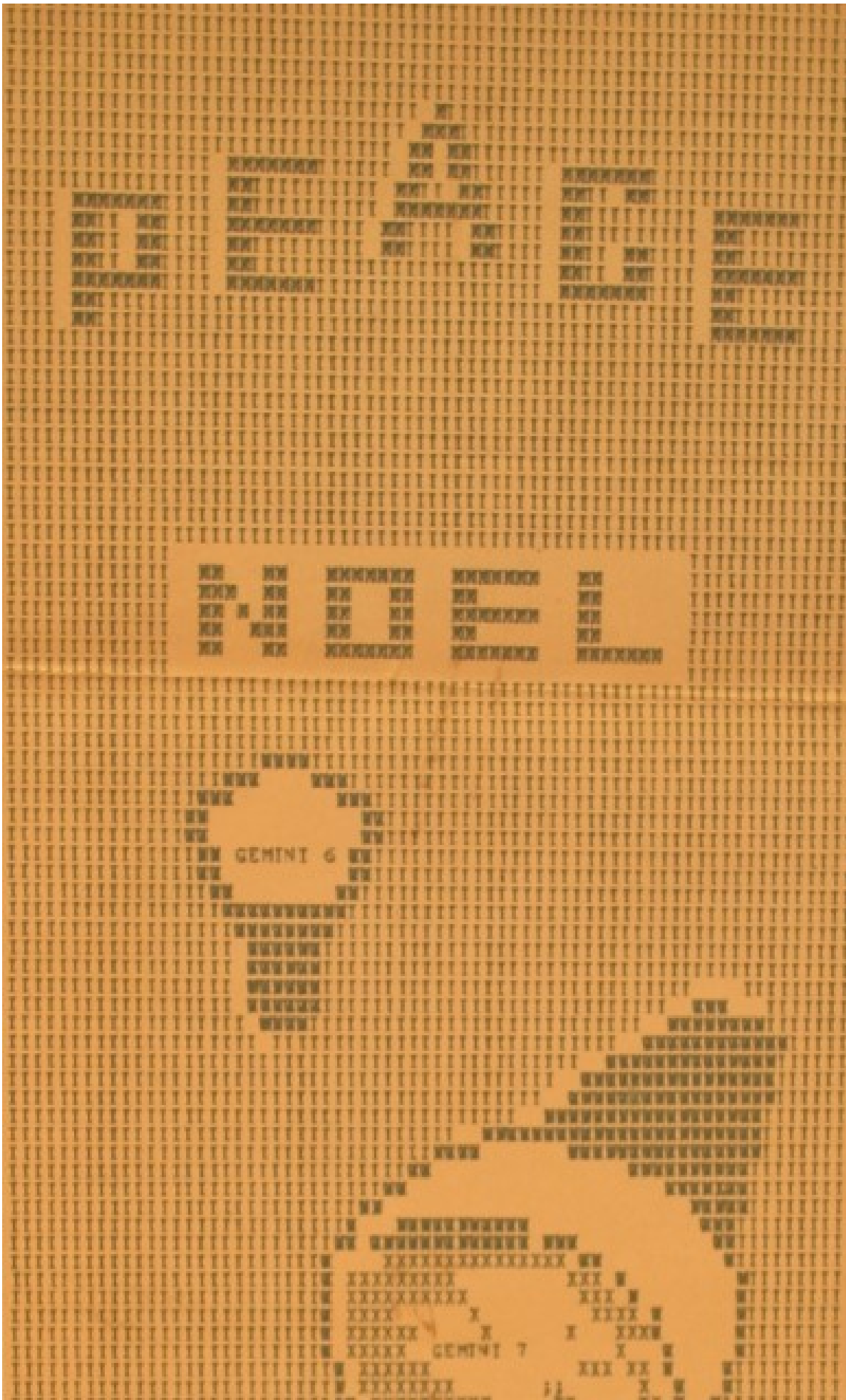
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Connecting December 29, 2020

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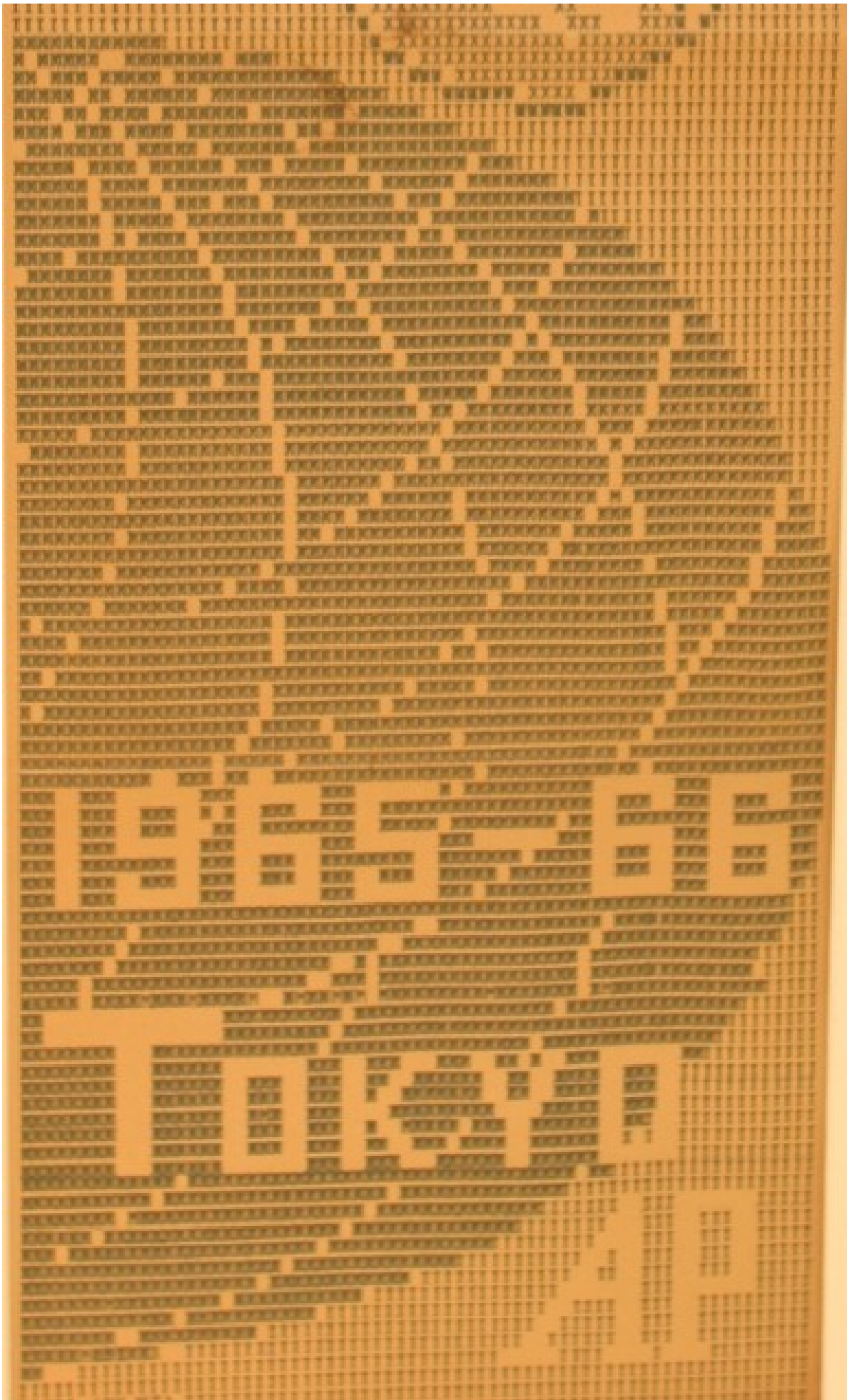




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AP Tokyo operator Nobutoshi Tsurono created this 1965 design symbolizing the meeting in space of Gemini-6 and Gemini-7.

Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning on this the 29th day of December 2020,

Ye Olde Connecting Editor dropped the ball when the newsletter was void of any Teletype art over the Christmas holiday, breaking with tradition, so here is an image for those readers who noticed the omission.

Most of the Christmas art was done on the Christmas Eve shifts, noted our colleague **Francesca Pitaro** of AP Corporate Archives, but she did share the above image that was not Christmas-centric.

Here's to a great day – be safe, stay healthy.

Paul

A Covid story that starts backwards, ends backwards



Campbell Gardett ([Email](#)) - Everyone has their own COVID story. Mine starts backwards and ends backwards. Not that it's really ended, of course. For all I know, the story may get even more backwards by the time the virus is done.

My wife and I had a little retirement ranch in a remote valley in Idaho. We thought we'd be there forever. But – surprise! – we got older. After 12 years, health issues were taking their toll. We realized we needed town services. So we decided to sell the

ranch and move over the mountain to the Wood River Valley, where civilization beckoned. Great medical care! So many places to be with other people! Great access!

There was just one catch. We signed our real estate sales contract at the beginning of February, 2020 – and we committed to move at the end of March. In those 50 days, everything turned upside down. Our plans were made in one kind of world, and by the time we had to put them into effect, that world was gone.

As it turned out, our moving day was the very day Blaine County shut down. The county was affected early because of an international ski event in early March that proved to be a super-spreader. We had to call the sheriff to get permission to come. We needed to set up our utilities, but that was their first week of working from home, and right hands were still looking for left. We needed cable service, but Cox couldn't come inside the house to do the needed work.

Using my phone, I emailed friends to tell them how we'd moved. They emailed back and said: "You've got it backwards! This is when you move TO the remote ranch, not AWAY from it!" So it seemed.

Engineers call it a common mode failure when a single unexpected error affects every part of a system and shuts it down. That's what had happened. The way we need other people, the way we're built to interact and help each other – all of us had taken those things too much for granted, and now they were gone. The single fact of peoples' separation threatened everything.

And yet ... Good things also happened. The medical care here was indeed great, the dedication of health care workers amazing. I got howling neighbors in place of howling coyotes, and that was a good trade. Our new neighborhood was also full of families and children, signs of hope not seen on our ranch. And even during those hurried visits to the grocery store, you felt new relief and connection with others when you exchanged a few commonplace words, now filled with new meaning.

Amid all the challenges and tragedies of COVID, it might seem backwards to suggest that the disease has presented us with gifts. But certainly, there have been lessons. Will we remember the lessons when COVID is behind us?

Will we remember how the virus laid bare the incredible complexity of our interconnected systems? How amazing it is that those systems work, even in normal times? Will we remember how hard people work? And how much we need each other, not as means to an end, but for our own selves and our humanness?

Maybe we can do that. It would be a gift worth having.

The New Year un-resolution

Norm Abelson (Email) - I'm not sure that the New Year's resolution is all that it's cracked up to be. For me it most often boils down to champagne-induced high-flown promises, followed soon after by guilt and failure.

Here are a few that were up for consideration this year: I'm pledging to quit my cigar habit. I'll cut back on my use of the f-word. My diet will include more plant life and fewer cheeseburgers. I will increase my exercise routine. I will pay my bills on time. I will stop coming up with corny, off-color jokes to bedevil Magdalene.

Now I know damn well that few, if any, of these proclamations have a snow-ball's chance of surviving past January. So this year I've decided to get out of the resolution business. I'll just do the best I can to be an improved version of me. But, listen, I'm not putting anything in writing.

Happy New Year to all.

Greek traditions at New Year's

Jean Capellos (Email) - In this year of the Corona, Greek traditions were few.

New Year's is a most special day where a coin is placed in the center of a delicious bread of a rich, chestnut color (maybe has a little anise in it...not sure) with sesame seeds on the top. The bread is cut in a unique manner. The host of the celebration slices the first piece for the "House"...if the coin is in that slice, EVERYONE in the family is blessed with good health and happiness! The second slice, to the oldest, third....fourth and so on to the youngest. Whoever gets the slice with the coin is specially blessed all year long. May I add, the bread makes the most delicious toast ever. Full disclosure: I have never made the bread. The yia-yias, aunts etc. were the Greek bakers. It's funny, Paul. I remember silver dollars in the center! As the years have passed, it has been quarters, even dimes.

About the New York Times returning a Peabody

Ed McCullough (Email) - Egregious reporting and editing lapses that prompted the NYT to return the Peabody award for its sensational but untrue Caliphate podcast were "institutional" and not just a star reporter's, executive editor Dean Baquet stated. Which if uncorrected may mean more are inevitable. Two years ago, Baquet commented in a NYT town hall (Aug. 2019) that "we built our newspaper to cover one story," Russia collusion by President Trump - which turned out to be false. Two months ago, the following assessment was in Times' media columnist Ben Smith's article (Oct. 11), "The paper is in the midst of an evolution from the stodgy paper of record into a juicy collection of great narratives." May be time to update the revered

motto from "All The News That's Fit to Print" to "Great Narratives Too Juicy to Pass Up."

The River of Life

Gene Herrick ([Email](#)) - Since the beginning of time mankind has had to travel the River of Life, be it the Amazon, or the peaceful Colorado River.

We all travel in our little boats, and face the travails of life – some good, and some not so well, but we learn the lessons of life.

I, in my little boat, have traveled thousands upon thousands of miles, and some 94.6 years living life to its best and worst. I have found that mankind changes over time. Science is always changing our lives. Education changes our way of thinking. Nature changes our environment. Religious beliefs expand and detract, and medicine is always wonderment.

However, I believe that politics, especially the year 2020, has had one of the most chilling and fearful years of our nation. Regardless of one's political affiliation, 2020 will go down in history as probably the worst era for this country.

The last four years has been an enigma. We have a president who has served almost four years, but has no political experience; who rules by the seat of his ego, who teases and torments Congress, and a president who has spread fear throughout his dynasty. The world of psychiatry has identified his problem. No one has done anything out it. This is not a Republican, or Democrat, or Independent problem. We all suffer. Oh yes, throw in the Coronaviris and you have another disaster. The president knew from the beginning of the outbreak, which has developed into a national disaster with the loss of life reaches into the hundreds of thousands of deaths and did virtually nothing to help.

As a former long-time journalist, and now an old man, many days and nights are lived in fear – fear of what the president will do to harm our people – stupid ego battles that involve his denial of the election. What will he do with, or without Congress; will he cause riots on Jan. 6 (Congress votes on confirming the election results); what will he do on Inauguration Day; what will he do about leaving the White House?

These problems are constant and everlasting to the public. It is a nightmare to the elderly. We don't know what will happen to our boat on the River of Life.

In-betweenland: As 2020 slips away, an American snapshot



FILE - In this Dec. 21, 2020, file photo, a man walks past giant numerals for "2021" to be used in the upcoming the New Year's eve festivities in New York's Times Square. (AP Photo/Frank Franklin II, File)

By TED ANTHONY

GLENSHAW, Pa. (AP) — The enormous signs, selling for just \$9.99, greet shoppers at the suburban supermarket's entryway, carrying a holiday message that means something very different this year: "GATHER," they shout, even as the state's governor urges citizens to do precisely otherwise.

To come together or to stay apart: one of the countless, sometimes excruciating dilemmas that Americans find themselves caught between as a disheartening year is finally and enthusiastically shown the door.

They're caught between presidents, one of whom is clear that he really doesn't want to go away. They're between a ragged year of pandemic and either a successful vaccine or another chapter of upheaval. They're between people on one side who say the country's crashing and burning – and people on the other side who say the same thing.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Dan Sewell.

Requiesce in pace



By **Margalit Fox**

Dec. 27, 2020 Updated 2:00 p.m. ET

Reginald Foster, a former plumber's apprentice from Wisconsin who, in four decades as an official Latinist of the Vatican, dreamed in Latin, cursed in Latin, banked in Latin and ultimately tweeted in Latin, died on Christmas Day at a nursing home in Milwaukee. He was LXXXI.

Scott Charton ([Email](#)) - Margalit Fox is a now-retired veteran NYT obit writer.

Child labor in palm oil industry tied to Girl Scout cookies



A boy collects palm kernels from the ground at a palm oil plantation in Sumatra, Indonesia. (AP Photo/Binsar Bakkara)

By **ROBIN McDOWELL** and **MARGIE MASON**

They are two young girls from two very different worlds, linked by a global industry that exploits an army of children.

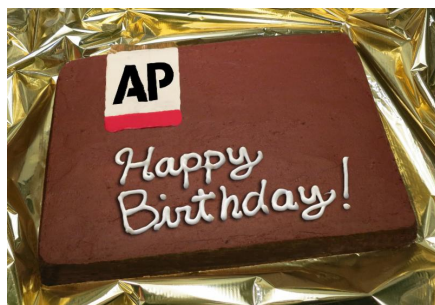
Olivia Chaffin, a Girl Scout in rural Tennessee, was a top cookie seller in her troop when she first heard rainforests were being destroyed to make way for ever-expanding palm oil plantations. On one of those plantations a continent away, 10-year-old Ima helped harvest the fruit that makes its way into a dizzying array of products sold by leading Western food and cosmetics brands.

Ima is among the estimated tens of thousands of children working alongside their parents in Indonesia and Malaysia, which supply 85% of the world's most consumed vegetable oil. An Associated Press investigation found most earn little or no pay and are routinely exposed to toxic chemicals and other dangerous conditions. Some never go to school or learn to read and write. Others are smuggled across borders and left vulnerable to trafficking or sexual abuse. Many live in limbo with no citizenship and fear being swept up in police raids and thrown into detention.

The AP used U.S. Customs records and the most recently published data from producers, traders and buyers to trace the fruits of their labor from the processing mills where palm kernels were crushed to the supply chains of many popular kids' cereals, candies and ice creams sold by Nestle, Unilever, Kellogg's, PepsiCo and many other leading food companies, including Ferrero – one of the two makers of Girl Scout cookies.

Read more [here](#).

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



Arlon Southall - arlonouthall@aol.com

Stories of interest

Rights groups decry Ethiopia's arrest of Reuters journalist (AP)

By ANDREW MELDRUM

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Media rights groups are protesting the Ethiopian government's arrest of journalists, saying it indicates the erosion of press freedom in the country.

Kumerra Gemechu, a video journalist for the Reuters news agency, was arrested on Dec. 24 at his home in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, and is being detained for 14 days for police investigations, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

"Kumerra's work demonstrates his professionalism and impartiality, and we are aware of no basis for his detention," Reuters Editor-in-Chief Stephen J. Adler said in a statement Monday.

Kumerra's arrest follows the beating of Reuters photographer Tiksa Negari by two Ethiopian federal police officers on December 16, the statement said.

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

-0-

Chinese journalist who documented Wuhan coronavirus outbreak jailed for 4 years (CNN)

By Nectar Gan and James Griffiths

Hong Kong (CNN) - An independent Chinese journalist who reported from Wuhan at the height of the initial coronavirus outbreak has been jailed for four years by a Shanghai court, her lawyer said Monday.

Zhang Zhan, 37, was found guilty of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," according to one of her defense lawyers Zhang Keke, who attended her hearing. The offense is commonly used by the Chinese government to target dissidents and human rights activists.

A former lawyer, Zhang traveled some 400 miles from Shanghai to Wuhan in early February to report on the pandemic and subsequent attempts to contain it, just as the authorities began reining in state-run and private Chinese media.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Doug Pizac.

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HIDING COVID-19: HOW THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION SUPPRESSES PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE PANDEMIC (Intercept)

By PETER MAASS

AS COVID-19 TORE through the United States in the spring, a senior official in the Trump administration quietly reinforced a set of guidelines that prevented journalists from getting inside all but a handful of hospitals at the front line of the pandemic. The guidelines, citing the medical privacy law known as HIPAA, suggested a nearly impossible standard: Before letting journalists inside Covid-19 wards, hospitals needed prior permission from not only the specific patients the journalists would interview, but also other patients whose names or identities would be accessible.

The onerous guidelines were issued on May 5 by Roger Severino, who worked at the conservative Heritage Foundation before Donald Trump appointed him to direct the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services, or HHS. The guidelines made it extremely difficult for hospitals to give photographers the opportunity to collect visual evidence of the pandemic's severity. By tightening the circulation of disturbing images, the guidelines fulfilled, intentionally or not, a key Trump administration goal: keeping public attention away from the death toll, which has surpassed 300,000 souls.

"The last thing hospital patients need to worry about during the Covid-19 crisis is a film crew walking around their bed shooting B-roll," Severino said dismissively in a short press release accompanying the guidelines.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Mark Mittelstadt.

The Final Word

Alternative facts, witch-hunt, bigly: the Trump era in 32 words and phrases (Guardian)

By DAVID SMITH

Donald Trump not only changed much about campaigning, governing and the ways of Washington, even the language of American politics has altered during the Republican's tenure. Trump's rollicking rally speeches and manic Twitter feed conjured new slogans and insults or revived incendiary words with long histories; his allies, opponents and chroniclers searched for new phrases to describe the indescribable. Here is a glossary of some of them from the past five years:

alternative facts

Coined by Kellyanne Conway, the White House counselor, during a Meet the Press interview in January 2017 to defend press secretary Sean Spicer's the false assertion that Trump drew the biggest inauguration crowd ever. Together these formed the original sin of the Trump presidency, culminating in his coronavirus and election denialism.

alt-right

A far-right movement based on white nationalism and antisemitism. One of its leaders, Richard Spencer, described it as "identity politics for white people". When Steve Bannon was running Breitbart News, he called it "the platform for the alt-right". Bannon went on to become Trump's chief strategist during his first race for the White House.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Mike Holmes.

Today in History - Dec. 29, 2020



By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 29, the 364th day of 2020. There are two days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 29, 1890, the Wounded Knee massacre took place in South Dakota as an estimated 300 Sioux Indians were killed by U.S. troops sent to disarm them.

On this date:

In 1812, during the War of 1812, the American frigate USS Constitution engaged and severely damaged the British frigate HMS Java off Brazil.

In 1845, Texas was admitted as the 28th state.

In 1916, James Joyce's first novel, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," was first published in book form in New York after being serialized in London.

In 1939, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," starring Charles Laughton and Maureen O'Hara, was released by RKO Radio Pictures.

In 1940, during World War II, Germany dropped incendiary bombs on London, setting off what came to be known as "The Second Great Fire of London."

In 1972, Eastern Air Lines Flight 401, a Lockheed L-1011 Tristar, crashed into the Florida Everglades near Miami International Airport, killing 101 of the 176 people aboard.

In 1975, a bomb exploded in the main terminal of New York's LaGuardia Airport, killing 11 people (it's never been determined who was responsible).

In 1989, dissident and playwright Vaclav Havel (VAHTS'-lahv HAH'-vel) assumed the presidency of Czechoslovakia.

In 1992, the United States and Russia announced agreement on a nuclear arms reduction treaty.

In 2006, word reached the United States of the execution of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein (because of the time difference, it was the morning of Dec. 30 in Iraq when the hanging took place). In a statement, President George W. Bush called Saddam's execution an important milestone on Iraq's road to democracy.

In 2007, the New England Patriots ended their regular season with a remarkable 16-0 record following a 38-35 comeback victory over the New York Giants. (New England became the first NFL team since the 1972 Dolphins to win every game on the schedule.)

In 2017, Puerto Rico authorities said nearly half of the power customers in the U.S. territory still lacked electricity, more than three months after Hurricane Maria.

Ten years ago: The Obama administration expelled Venezuela's ambassador to the United States, a day after Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said he would not allow diplomat Larry Palmer to become the U.S. ambassador to his country. Suicide bombers succeeded in killing Iraqi police commander Lt. Col. Shamil al-Jabouri, who was renowned in the tense northern city of Mosul for his relentless pursuit of al-Qaida.

Five years ago: Belgian authorities announced they had arrested two men and seized military-type uniforms and Islamic State group propaganda in connection with a suspected plot to unleash holiday season attacks against police and celebrated locations in Brussels. Former "Glee" star Mark Salling was arrested in Los Angeles for investigation of possessing child pornography. (Salling pleaded guilty in December 2017; he took his own life a few weeks later while awaiting sentencing.)

One year ago: A man opened fire at a church near Fort Worth, Texas, killing two people before being shot and killed by a member of the church's volunteer security team. NBA star LeBron James was named the Associated Press male athlete of the decade. British comedy writer and actor Neil Innes, who frequently worked with members of the Monty Python comedy troupe, died at the age of 75.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Rose Lee Maphis is 98. Actor Inga Swenson is 88. Retired ABC newscaster Tom Jarriel is 86. Actor Barbara Steele is 83. Actor Jon Voight is 82. Country singer Ed Bruce is 81. Singer Marianne Faithfull is 74. Retired Hall of Fame Jockey Laffit Pincay Jr. is 74. Actor Ted Danson is 73. Singer-actor Yvonne Elliman is 69. The president of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, is 67. Actor Patricia Clarkson is 61. Comedian Paula Poundstone is 61. Rock singer-musician Jim Reid (The Jesus and Mary Chain) is 59. Actor Michael Cudlitz is 56. Rock singer Dexter Holland (The Offspring) is 55. Actor-comedian Mysterio Clark is 54. Actor Jason Gould is 54. News anchor Ashleigh Banfield is 53. Movie director Lilly Wachowski is 53. Actor Jennifer Ehle is 51. Actor Patrick Fischler is 51. Rock singer-musician Glen Phillips is 50. Actor Kevin Weisman is 50. Actor Jude Law is 48. Actor Maria Dizzia is 46. Actor Mekhi Phifer (mih-KY' FY'-fuhr) is 46. Actor Shawn Hatosy is 45. Actor Katherine Moennig is 43. Actor Diego Luna is 41. Actor Alison Brie is 38. Country singer Jessica Andrews is 37. Actor Iain de Caestecker is 33. Actor Jane Levy is 31. Singer-actor-dancer Ross Lynch is 25. Rock musician Danny Wagner 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.

Paul Stevens

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