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Connecting

January 27, 2021

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this the 27th day of January 2021,

Among the many signs that you're growing old? When people you hired are now retiring.

Our colleague **Deb Riechmann**, whose AP career began in 1984 when she was my first hire in my role as Kansas City chief of bureau, is new among our retiree ranks after a great AP journey that took her to Hagerstown, Washington (DC), Kabul, Cairo and then back to Washington where she was covering the White House in her last assignment.

Her career journey is highlighted in our lead story for today's Connecting.

In recent correspondence with Deb, whom I had first met when she was working at an Indiana newspaper and I was Indianapolis bureau chief, she revealed: "Retirement is

different for sure. But I'm happy to start a new chapter. I remember the day you told me that I passed my nine-month probation. I had spent that entire day bracing myself because I was convinced you were going to let me go. So glad you didn't."

Me too, Deb, but it was a no-brainer.

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

Paul

Deb Riechmann urges AP colleagues to 'keep up the good fight'



Washington newswoman Deb Riechmann, who covered the White House and the war in Afghanistan during a 36-year career with The Associated Press, has retired, but not before urging her colleagues to "keep up the good fight."

"It's time for the younger crowd to carry the AP torch forward," she said. "Please promote AP's nonpartisan, fact-based journalism in this post-truth age. It's the best thing going for readers, who are desperately trying to find someone to trust."

Washington Chief of Bureau Julie Pace announced Riechmann's retirement, which came on Inauguration Day last week.

"For nearly four decades, Deb Riechmann has been a force at the AP, and in journalism," Pace said. "She's been an award-winning White House reporter, traveled the world with presidents and secretaries of state, and been on the front lines of AP's coverage of the Afghan war. Through it all, she's been a generous and dedicated colleague, someone always ready to help out."



Riechmann, in a note to fellow Washington staffers, said, "It's been a blast: Mob trials in Kansas City. Tagging black bears in the hills of western Maryland. Covering education and transportation in Washington. Learning a ton from a superb team of writers on the Washington bureau's (now defunct) enterprise team and round-the-world travel with Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and former Secretary of State John Kerry. Tack on a three-year reporting stint in Afghanistan, an editing job on the Mideast desk in Cairo and then Trump."

A native of Affton, Mo., Riechmann earned a journalism degree from the University of Kansas in 1980. She worked as a feature writer and business writer with the Lafayette (Ind.) Journal & Courier before joining the AP in Kansas City in 1984. Her first AP move was to Hagerstown in 1987 as the AP's western Maryland correspondent and she worked there eight years before moving to the Washington bureau.

She started in Washington as an education writer, then joined the enterprise team where, Pace said, "she says the retired Mike Feinsilber and current bureau all-stars Nancy Benac and Cal Woodward taught her how to write. Then it was on to the White House, where she covered the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. She was twice awarded the prestigious Merriman Smith prize for presidential reporting on deadline, in 2006 and 2008."

From Washington, Riechmann was assigned to the AP bureau in Kabul, Afghanistan, and spent three years covering the war and breaking a steady stream of news.



Deb Riechmann in Afghanistan. Photo by Bob Burns

“Deb was dynamic in Kabul and one of her greatest strengths was her kindness to all she met and to the Kabul bureau,” said Kathy Gannon, AP news director for Pakistan and Afghanistan. “She helped each and every one become better at what they did. She quickly grasped a complicated and often dangerous story. Deb never stepped away from the difficult story in Afghanistan. She plunged right in. She embraced the often-difficult living.

“Kabul was Deb’s first foray overseas and into a war zone and she jumped in as if she had always been in conflict zones, she learned quickly that we all watch each other’s back and try always to be there for each other. Deb was ALWAYS there for everyone.”

Riechmann moved from Kabul to the Cairo bureau for five months before returning to Washington to cover the State Department, intelligence and finally, the Trump White House.

Pace said, "I personally have learned so much from Deb over the years and have admired her deep commitment to whatever task is put in front of her (as well as her commitment to printing out reams of study material ahead of interviews and events!). But I know she’s eager to get off the treadmill and spend more time with family and take on some fun projects. She insists she doesn’t want a Zoom goodbye, so we’ll find time when we’re all back in the bureau to give her a proper, in-person send-off."

Riechmann said she had been planning to retire for the past year. Her husband Darrell Kepler died of cancer in 2002. She has two stepsons, Ben and Brian. Her grandkids are Maya, 8, and Dimitri, 11.

"It's been a wonderful ride around the world," she said, "more than 140 trips on AFOne and other flights with Cheney, Kerry, Laura Bush, and a few with Trump, including one to Hanoi where I got to ask Kim Jong Un a question. Great times, but also exhausting.

"I'll miss my career, but I'm also eager to have a less hectic life, spend more time with family, two grandkids and friends and perhaps make good on a far-flung dream of salvaging and selling vintage stuff from old buildings and factories. Feel free to stop off in Hagerstown to visit if you're ever on I-70 headed west into the Appalachian foothills. I'm not far off the interstate."

Deb Riechmann's email - debkepler44@gmail.com

About women in the AP

Evans Witt (Email) – Adolphe Bernotas' note in Connecting (1/25) about women in the AP and the Wire Service Guild brought back a lot of memories.

I was just a kid in 1975 when I came to the Washington bureau from California (Sacramento and San Francisco). Guild activity was very intense in San Francisco and pretty intense in the Washington bureau. For one of the AP/Guild negotiations after I arrived in WX, I was recruited by Dick Barnes to help the Guild analyze the payroll data for the negotiations. The AP was required to give the payroll data to the Guild and the Guild was required to keep it secret.

So Dick and I took the stacks of paper from the AP, went over to the George Washington University computer center and spent lots of hours on nights and weekends, punching the payroll data for every single Guild-covered employee across the country onto punch cards (yes, those things); writing the analysis programs; submitting the boxes of cards as an IBM mainframe computer job; and waiting hours for it to be processed.

The main point of the analysis was to figure out what a pay raise of \$X or X% would cost, so the Guild could negotiate with some means to weigh alternatives. The computer runs made that so much easier than older methods. It also gave some information about the costs of pensions, about which Dick was an expert.

Because the task was so labor-intensive, Dick and I had plenty of time to think about additional analyses. We looked at the data by bureau, by tenure, by job title, by age and by gender. I remember well our astonishment (at least my astonishment) at the pay gaps between male and female staffers. Of course, there were only a small

number of female staffers. But the pay differences were enormous. Even when we controlled by age, experience, length of service and anything else, the wage gap was still there. There were cases where men made 50% more than women in the same bureau, with the same number of years of service.

(Not to mention that there were women in the Washington bureau who had been hired during World War II, who were hired on a different pay scale (much lower) and had a different pension schedule (also lower). (Another amazing fact I learned from Dick.)

Obviously, this was not the kind of sophisticated analysis needed for a lawsuit, but the differences were stark. (There were so few minority AP staffers at the time that the analyses by race weren't useful.)

And we could not talk about any of this outside of the context of negotiations. Dick was the conduit to the Guild negotiating committee and I do not know what they were told.

It wasn't until the gender discrimination lawsuit was filed against the AP that I even told my girlfriend, soon-to-be-wife, Amy Sabrin, about the findings. Of course, the data covered her work on the Metro Desk in the Washington bureau and later at AP Radio. And yes, she received a substantial check from the settlement of that lawsuit.

Ironically, my work for the Guild on the GWU computer helped me with the first computer analyses of data that were the basis for many of my AP stories. Ah, the early days of "Precision Journalism."

More thoughts on Larry King

Dinesh Ramde ([Email](#)) - I've been reading these Larry King tributes with interest because I'm trying to understand why so many people thought so highly of his work. I mean no disrespect with this letter – it's just that to me, he was mostly a prop next to whichever guest was the real reason we were watching.

He never broke news or covered history. He didn't set journalistic standards or raise the bar. And as far as I can tell, his only legacy is longevity.

Look, I do believe he was a nice guy, a good listener who was easy to talk to. But so am I. I'm sure you are too. We all know dozens of people like that. Did he do anything in his interviews that you or I couldn't have done?

Sure, I get that his guests were an A list of the top newsmakers of the day. But of course they were – what newsmaker would pass up an opportunity for a fluff interview on national TV where he or she could take control of the narrative and face nothing but softballs?

Watching Larry King always frustrated me. I would think, "How is he letting that statement go unchallenged? Why is he not asking about X or Y?" And then I'd change the channel and think, "D*mn, what a wasted opportunity to make some real news."

The journalists who do impress me are those who deliver at a level that I only wish I could: Beat of the Week regulars; reporters like Linda Deutsch who delivered a career of magnificence while covering the biggest stories of the day; writers like Ted Anthony whose gift for lyrical writing is breathtaking; and journalists like Jon Stewart (even though he never called himself one) whose questions made clear that he had done his homework, and who, when he had to push back against fluffy non-substantive answers, did so with such elegance and professionalism that even his sparring partners couldn't help but respect him.

I hesitated to say any this because I know it comes across like sour grapes. And for that please forgive me – by no means am I trying to besmirch King or speak ill of the dead. Linda, your tribute was wonderful, and it was kind of him to show up at your event; as I said, I'm sure he was a wonderful person with a lot of fine qualities.

But to hear him consistently referred to as a giant of our industry ... I just don't get it. It makes me wonder if everyone else saw something that I must have been blind to.

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Dennis Conrad (Email) - I first got to know of Larry King and his great talent as a broadcaster because I was a soccer fanatic in the Florida of the late 1970s and 1980s. While a government reporter for the Gainesville Sun during the day, I would spend many of my nights making the 280-mile roundtrip to Tampa Stadium to watch my favorite team play. On the way back home, once it got past midnight, I would find the best place on the radio dial was Larry King's show on Mutual Broadcasting. And it was always easy to locate a station with Larry. But I don't think I had any idea what the guy looked like until when he briefly hosted a syndicated weekend TV show I could see on a Jacksonville station.

Probably because of that, I knew when I was in his presence on March 15, 1983. I had traveled from Florida to make my annual visit to my father's grave in Arlington National Cemetery. I stayed at a nearby hotel in Crystal City, and, late at night, I ventured to a Roy Rogers restaurant to get a burger, fries and Coke. As I paid the cashier, I turned to focus on where I would sit. There was not another customer in the entire place - except for Larry King, looking down at a newspaper with a cup of Roy Rogers coffee by his side. I thought it amazing that this big star of radio was eating in the same place as I was ...and all by himself. Then I recalled that Mutual was supposed to be located somewhere in Crystal City, so I figured that Larry must be near his studio and getting ready to go on air.

Initially, I thought I better not bother him but in the end I couldn't resist the chance to say hello. I told him I enjoyed his radio show and liked his TV program. He smiled,

thanked me and went back to reading his paper. I recall two years later, when CNN's Ted Turner hired him for the job that would make him internationally famous, I was at a party where some of the folks spoke with disappointment about losing the lady host King was replacing. I can't recall her name. No wonder. Larry King replaced her.

Connecting mailbox

Moved by story on Joe Morton and wife Letty

Bob Seavey (Email) - Thank you for submitting that moving story on Joe Morton and his wife Letty (in Tuesday's Connecting). I'm thankful that even now, 75 years after the fact, there are organizations and writers like Marc Lancaster that continue to cover the bravery and sacrifice of that war and the AP's role.

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Tom Brokaw - 'bifurcated' between Montana, Manhattan

Michael Weinfeld (Email) - Tom Brokaw has said he'll spend his retirement writing books and articles and, if what he told me in 1999 holds true, he'll spend a lot of time at his ranch in Livingston, Montana, which he said, "I adore." He feels "grounded and rooted there" and "it never fails to give me a rush."

Brokaw said when he travels to Montana from New York City and sees the valley in Wolf Point "where there are no homes, just mountains and grass and critters," it has "an electrifying effect" on him.



At the same time, he said, when he returns to New York and drives across (what was then known as) the Triborough Bridge after dark and looks at the skyline of Manhattan, "I get another kind of a rush."

He said he's "bifurcated" and will never give up one or the other.

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Altering newspaper archives is wrong

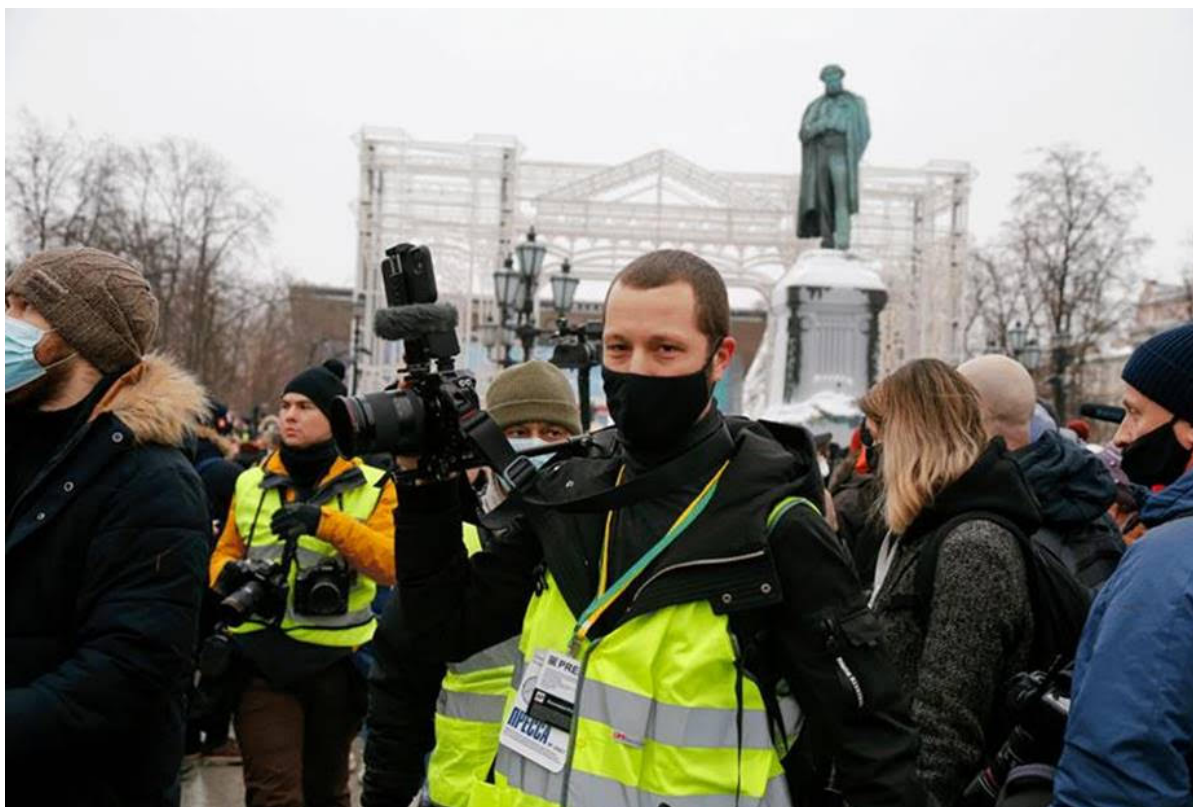
Mike Rouse (Email) - Newspapers should expunge or correct inaccurate information, of course. But altering the archives, as some are doing today, is wrong.

Many of us make mistakes when we are young—I certainly did!—and we shouldn't be judged by them in later years. But to be a party to the pretense that they didn't happen, uh uh.

Years ago I was the legislative chairman for the state press association. I recall sitting in a committee room dissuading the Honorables from passing a law allowing public records to be expunged of youthful crimes. Maybe I should have been making the case to newspaper people.

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Covering the world - Moscow protest



Video journalist Mstyslav Chernov, center, and assistant camera operator Sergei Fedotov, standing behind him, work during a protest against the jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Pushkin Square in Moscow, Jan. 23, 2021. (AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko)

Stories of interest

Washington Post's Marty Baron says he's retiring next month (AP)



FILE - Washington Post Executive Editor Marty Baron appears in the newsroom after winning two Pulitzer Prizes in Washington on April 16, 2018. Baron, executive editor of The Washington Post and one of the nation's top journalists, says he will retire at the end of February. He took over the Post's newsroom in 2012 after editing the Boston Globe and Miami Herald before that. He was portrayed in the 2015 movie "Spotlight" about the Globe's investigation of the Catholic Church. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, File)

By DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — Washington Post Executive Editor Marty Baron, who has led the resurgent newspaper as it nearly doubled its staff in eight years, said Tuesday that he will retire at the end of February.

One of the nation's top journalism executives, Baron led the Post through a digital transformation and drove it through intense competition with The New York Times, another news organization that thrived through the Trump era.

Baron was the top editor at the Boston Globe and Miami Herald before taking over at the Post. Many outside journalism know him through actor Liev Schreiber's portrayal in the 2015 movie "Spotlight" about the Globe's investigation of the Catholic Church.

It was one of many “epic” news stories during his 45 years in journalism that Baron recalled working on in a note sent to Post staff members on Tuesday.

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

Click [here](#) for The Washington Post story. Shared by Dennis Conrad.

Click [here](#) for Marty Baron's memo to staff.

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An Idaho newspaper editor struggled to get Excel access for staff. After tweeting about it, she was fired. (Washington Post)

By Teo Armus

Before she was appointed the top editor at the Idaho Statesman, Christina Lords was known for going to bat for her staff.

So when McClatchy, the Boise newspaper’s parent company, initially denied a new reporter’s request for access to Microsoft Excel, Lords took up the matter herself, she said. Faced with resistance to get a basic software program, the 34-year-old editor lamented the struggle on Twitter last week.

“Support your local newspapers, people. Get a digital subscription,” she wrote in a since-deleted tweet. “This is genuinely what we are up against.”

On Monday, McClatchy dismissed her for violating its social media policy, Lords told The Washington Post. The paper’s union publicly slammed the decision hours later, advocating not for one of its members but for the newsroom’s top manager in an unusual move.

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

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Latin American Newspapers Bet On Digital Subscriptions (International Business Times)

By Jean Luis Arce with AFP bureaus in Latin America

Facing a major slump in printed newspaper sales and advertising revenue, Latin America's press is fighting for survival -- and increasingly betting on paid digital subscriptions as readers turn to the internet.

The decline in advertising dollars has been exacerbated by the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, as well as its impact on potential readers' salaries and their ability to pay for content.

As a result, dailies have been pitched into a battle with social networks for clicks, shares and likes that some experts say has put credibility at stake.

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

The Final Word

Piglet: What will 2021 bring us?

Pooh: 365 opportunities to touch a heart, to wipe a tear, to say "I love you", to pray for someone, to make a difference.

Piglet: May 2021 be our year of opportunity.



Shared by Ed Williams

Today in History - Jan. 27, 2021



By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 27, the 27th day of 2021. There are 338 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 27, 1756, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria.

On this date:

In 1880, Thomas Edison received a patent for his electric incandescent lamp.

In 1901, opera composer Giuseppe Verdi died in Milan, Italy, at age 87.

In 1944, during World War II, the Soviet Union announced the complete end of the deadly German siege of Leningrad, which had lasted for more than two years.

In 1945, during World War II, Soviet troops liberated the Nazi concentration camps Auschwitz and Birkenau in Poland.

In 1967, astronauts Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom, Edward H. White and Roger B. Chaffee died in a flash fire during a test aboard their Apollo spacecraft.

In 1972, "Queen of Gospel" Mahalia Jackson, 60, died in Evergreen Park, Ill.

In 1973, the Vietnam peace accords were signed in Paris.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy, greeted the 52 former American hostages released by Iran at the White House.

In 1984, singer Michael Jackson suffered serious burns to his scalp when pyrotechnics set his hair on fire during the filming of a Pepsi-Cola TV commercial at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

In 1998, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, on NBC's "Today" show, charged the sexual misconduct allegations against her husband, President Bill Clinton, were the work of a "vast right-wing conspiracy."

In 2006, Western Union delivered its last telegram.

In 2010, Apple CEO Steve Jobs unveiled the iPad tablet computer during a presentation in San Francisco. J.D. Salinger, the reclusive author of "The Catcher in the Rye," died in Cornish, New Hampshire, at age 91.

Ten years ago: Tens of thousands of Yemenis demanded their president step down; taking inspiration from Tunisians' revolt, they vowed to continue until their U.S.-backed government fell. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano announced that color-coded terror alerts would be phased out by late April 2011.

Five years ago: The Ferguson, Missouri, Police Department agreed to overhaul its policies, training and practices as part of a sweeping deal with the Justice Department following the 2014 fatal police shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown. As he honored four people for risking their lives to protect Jews, President Barack Obama warned during a visit to the Israeli Embassy in Washington that anti-Semitism was on the rise; he said an attack on any faith was an attack on all faiths.

One year ago: China confirmed more than 2,700 cases of the new coronavirus with more than 80 deaths in that country; authorities postponed the end of the Lunar New Year holiday to keep the public at home. U.S. health officials said they believed the risk to Americans remained low and that they had no evidence that the new virus was spreading in the United States; they advised Americans to avoid non-essential travel to any part of China. Stocks fell for a fifth straight day as investors worried that the virus outbreak could hurt the global economy. Senators faced increasing pressure to summon former national security adviser John Bolton to testify at President Donald Trump's impeachment trial, after a draft of Bolton's forthcoming book said Trump had wanted to withhold military aid from Ukraine until it helped investigate Democrat Joe Biden; Trump denied having said that to Bolton.

Today's Birthdays: Actor James Cromwell is 81. Rock musician Nick Mason (Pink Floyd) is 77. R&B singer Nedra Talley (The Ronettes) is 75. Ballet star Mikhail Baryshnikov is 73. Latin singer-songwriter Djavan is 72. Chief U.S. Justice John Roberts is 66. Country singer Cheryl White is 66. Country singer-musician Richard Young (The Kentucky Headhunters) is 66. Actor Mimi Rogers is 65. Rock musician Janick Gers (Iron Maiden) is 64. Actor Susanna Thompson is 63. Political and sports commentator Keith

Olbermann is 62. Rock singer Margo Timmins (Cowboy Junkies) is 60. Rock musician Gillian Gilbert is 60. Actor Tamlyn Tomita is 58. Actor Bridget Fonda is 57. Actor Alan Cumming is 56. Country singer Tracy Lawrence is 53. Rock singer Mike Patton is 53. Rapper Tricky is 53. Rock musician Michael Kulas (James) is 52. Actor-comedian Patton Oswalt is 52. Actor Josh Randall is 49. Country singer Kevin Denney is 43. Tennis player Marat Safin is 41. Rock musician Matt Sanchez (American Authors) is 35. Actor Braeden Lemasters is 25.

Got a story or photos to share? (And oh yes, Go Chiefs!)

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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