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Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this the 8th day of January 2021,

Look to the sky!

That is a theme of the life of our colleague **Amanda Barnett**, who is the subject of today's Monday Profile.

You'll learn that covering space launches is her favorite activity and that sky watching is her favorite hobby. After all, she says, "It's amazing to think about what might be out there waiting for us to discover."

You'll also find in today's issue a question from **Mark Mittelstadt** that resonates among many of us – how to cope with and organize all those digital photos we take - most of them on our mobile phones. Your thoughts will be valued.

And our colleague **Robert Meyers** tells how he looks forward to better things ahead – after covid impacted his life in the past year and took the life of his father.

Here's to a great week ahead – be safe, stay healthy (and oh yes, congratulations to you Tampa Bay Buccaneers fans.)

Paul

Connecting Profile

Amanda Barnett



Amanda Barnett with Curiosity Rover at JPL

What are you doing these days?

I'm a contract science writer for NASA's [Solar System Exploration](#) website. I'm also a [licensed professional counselor](#), and I write part-time for the [Telehealth Certification Institute](#).

How did you get your first job with the AP? Who hired you? What were your first days like?

I have former Dallas AP newsperson Bob Weiland to thank for my first AP job. I was working as news director for KERA-FM in Dallas, and I had been contributing stories to the AP state broadcast wire. Bob mentioned that the Texas AP Network (TAPN), AP's only state radio network, was hiring. I applied and I was hired by the late Brad Krohn in January 1986.

One of my most distinct early memories of my job was meeting Jim Ribble – who signed Texas AP Network on the air. I was so impressed that I later married him! I also became close friends with Dallas newspersons Diana Jensen Heidgerd and Sylvia Wingfield. We have been travel buddies for many years and stay in close touch.

I started work in Dallas just before the Challenger Disaster on Jan. 28, 1986. I remember talking with Brad Krohn in the TAPN control room about whether we should pipe NASA's launch feed out on the state network to our affiliates. He was explaining that the launches were "becoming routine" and he wasn't sure there would be much interest. Then, we heard the ominous announcement from Mission Control's Steve Nesbitt in Houston, "Obviously a major malfunction." Brad reached across me, hit the tones alerting affiliates to an announcement, and then joined NASA's feed. I went out to the main Dallas AP newsroom to watch the TV broadcast with other colleagues. I had covered the early years of the shuttle program for WMFE-FM near Orlando, Florida, so the Challenger explosion felt very personal. I will never forget that day.



Amanda at a shuttle launch.

What were your different past jobs in the AP, in order? Describe briefly what you did with each? And tell about your jobs post AP?

1. Newsperson | Texas AP Network, Dallas | Jan. 1986-Feb. 1996
Wrote, edited and anchored state radio network news, business, sports and ag reports. Promoted to state network supervisor, responsible for managing staff, programming of network clock. Also served as Sunbelt Correspondent for AP Radio. Covered breaking national news including hurricanes, earthquakes, trials, news conferences.
2. Newsperson | AP Radio | Broadcast News Center, D.C. | Dec. 1996-Feb. 1998
News, business anchor, and wire service writer. Filled in as shift supervisor as needed. Did a bit of street reporting and covered one of the Clinton inaugural balls.

What was the biggest story or stories you covered or handled?

I'll limit this to my AP career. Most of the links are to wire stories, not my radio content. I suspect my radio reports have been lost to the cosmos.

Aug. 1986: [Edmund Oklahoma Post Office Shooting](#)

Oct. 1987: [Toddler Jessica McClure Stuck in Midland Well](#)

Dec. 1987: [Atlanta Prison Uprising: Hostages Taken, Fires Set](#)

Sept. 1988: [Shuttle Return to Flight \(Covered from Houston\)](#) NOTE: This is a NASA link

Aug. 1989: [Crash of Delta Flight 1141](#) (this one has my byline)

Oct. 1989: [Loma Prieta \(Worlds Series\) Earthquake](#)

Who played the most significant role in your career and how?

My sister, Judith Barnett, and my former brother-in-law, Lee Taylor, get credit for launching my career. I was studying political science at the University of Central Florida and I thought I wanted to be a lawyer. Judith and Lee both worked at the student radio station, WUCF-FM (originally WFTU). Sis and Lee didn't really like the boyfriend I had at the time so they dragged me off my couch (literally, one grabbing a hand each) and took me to the station to meet some better guys. I fell in love with radio, and it led to an amazing journalism career. And, of course, later I did marry a radio guy. So, thanks Sis! Thanks Lee!

Would you do it all over again- or what would you change?

I have had an amazing career, and I have three wonderful jobs now. Journalism let me dabble in a bit of everything. I'm very happy with my career choices. No regrets.

What's your favorite hobby or activity?

My favorite activity is covering space launches. My favorite hobby is sky watching. It's amazing to think about what might be out there waiting for us to discover.



Amanda and husband Jim Ribble at Mount Lemmon in 2014.

What's the best vacation trip you've ever made?

In June 2014 my husband and I did a “tour of great telescopes.” We saw Mount Lemmon and Kitt Peak in Tucson, Arizona, and Lowell Observatory at Flagstaff. We also put in a stop at the Grand Canyon for a “star party.”

Of course, until COVID hit, I had been meeting up with AP buddies in NYC every February for the past decade or so. It's hard to beat hanging out with Diana Heidgerd, Sylvia Wingfield, Stephanie Nano, Marcia Dunn, and Chelsea Carter.

Names of your family members and what they do?

My husband is Jim Ribble. He's a retired radio news anchor, reporter, and manager. Among many other jobs, he worked at the Texas AP Network in Dallas. I currently have one fur baby, Kitty Sunspot. She adopted us a few years back. She mostly sleeps and pesters me for food.

Other journalism pitstops of note:

I worked in Public Radio for many years. In fact, I started my career signing WMFE-FM on the air three weeks out of college. I'm still proud that I stayed mostly calm while running the control room audio board, reading my self-written news cut-ins (on index cards – no computers yet), hitting the network gates – all with the station management and a few TV crews in the control room!

I also worked at WFSU-FM in Tallahassee, Florida, and KERA-FM in Dallas.

Sandwiched between my two stints at AP, I helped launch the nation's first all-news FM radio station – KEWS-FM in Dallas. We didn't last long – only 10 months – before being sold, but it was an amazing run. We got an APME citation, and more

importantly, I got to work with some of the best news anchors and editors in Dallas radio.

After KEWS was sold, Ed Tobias hired me back in my shortest job interview ever. It went something like this:

Me: "Ed, I'm calling because ..."

Ed interrupting: "Yeah, we heard. You want to come back?"

Sadly, I didn't get to stay in D.C. very long due to family matters. But I landed in a great place: CNN Radio. That led me to CNN.com, which was only about two years old when I talked my way in the door and landed a freelance job. I basically worked my radio gig, walked across the building and worked another few hours at the website as a writer. Eventually, CNN.com hired me fulltime. I held several jobs including U.S. Writer, U.S. Editor, Space and Science Editor, and Homepage Editor. I worked at CNN for a total of 20 years before I was let go in April 2018 in one of the company's annual rounds of layoffs.

Since my layoff, I have been very fortunate to work as a contract science writer and website producer for NASA's [Solar System Exploration](#) website.

I'm also a licensed professional counselor. I've had my own business for 12 years, and I write on the side for the [Telehealth Certification Institute](#).

Amanda Barnett's email - amandalynnbarrett@gmail.com

Home (digital) photos -- what to do with them?

Mark Mittelstadt (Email) - I'd be curious to know what the photographers (professional and otherwise) on Connecting do to save and organize their personal digital images.

While going through old newspapers and boxes of papers mentioned a couple weeks ago, I've come to realize just how scattered and unorganized our personal digital photos have become. It used to be we'd put prints in albums (or more likely shoe boxes). But with the advent of digital cameras and good quality built-in cameras on smartphones, our house photos of vacations, family get-togethers, Christmases, places we've visited, sunsets, even old work images have wound up as JPEGs stored all over the place: three laptops, portions of at least six external hard drives, thumb drives (located and yet to be found), even CDs and DVDs from back in the day I was trying to keep up with them.

I want to collect all files into one location with a system where we can find images of a relative or a location or an event, or even one of our past beloved family dogs. I'm

thinking this will be a high-capacity external drive but I'd also like redundancy -- at least a backup and perhaps the cloud.

What can our Connecting colleagues suggest? Any good consumer-level organizing and archiving programs (or sites)? Organization structure? Hardware? Online sites?

Living a life – and suffering a death – beneath the shadow of covid



Robert Meyers ([Email](#)) - 2020 was supposed to be the year my wife and I travelled around the world. It's been hard to plan more than a week ahead.

As the Super Bowl comes around, we have had one dose of the Pfizer vaccine and are scheduled for another. We hope that in a month or so we no longer have to worry about the virus and can see our older daughter who had been hunkered down in Berlin, working from home in a job that previously included frequent travel around the European Union. It's been more than a year since we saw her other than on video chat.

In mid December, my mother caught Covid and passed it to dad, three sisters and two of their spouses. Mother, like her 90-year-old sister earlier in the year, recovered after 10 days of coughing. Dad had trouble breathing and went into the hospital on Christmas Day. My parents were only able to talk on the phone on their Dec. 27th

70th wedding anniversary. Applications were in for assisted living for the two of them but on Jan. 2, dad passed away; his heart had failed. Covid was listed as a contributing factor.

A few days later, I drove with my younger daughter through the snowy mountains of Pennsylvania and brought mother back to her home. We were taking calls from family, neighbors and friends as the apocalyptic mob rioted in the Capitol in surreal scenes played out on television with the volume muted. The funeral went off as long planned. I was surprised how many people came considering the pandemic. It was bitter cold as the Navy honor guard played taps and folded the flag. Back at the house, grandchildren had cleared enough room in the basement to open the ping pong table for the first time in years and we played rounds of doubles.

My father passed away two weeks after one of my younger brothers died of pancreatic cancer. An active outdoorsman, he was diagnosed in April aged 60. We had great family gatherings in locations he loved and celebrated his life as he grew frail and lost weight and slipped away far too young. In the parks and trails of southwestern Pennsylvania, the mountains of western North Carolina, the beaches of southeast Georgia and lakes in New York, a diverse group of nephews, nieces and siblings celebrated his life as he still lived it.

Mary Jane and I kayaked on the on Patuxent River tributaries, Mattawoman Creek and reservoirs from early March through Thanksgiving Day. I worked outside on our garden between paddling and cycling area trails. With swimming pools closed, people arranged rocks in the Anacostia River to cool off. We joined Black Lives Matter protests in D.C. and Hyattsville but were anxious as people got too close. In August, I worked for the U.S. Census. There was no answer at most doors, but I did complete the census for a diverse group of people from all over the world. Few were openly hostile, but one answered the door with a vicious dog barely leashed. One man told me April 1 was during his "incarceration vacation."



We were in Georgia before and after Election Day. Near my grandparents' graves in Brunswick, Ga., a Trump flag flew under the U.S. flag over a Korean War veterans grave. People talked about socialism, BLM and antifa violence and Biden's frailty. On the Saturday that Biden's victory was announced, there wasn't any public celebration we could find. It was the annual Georgia-Florida football game and Georgia lost so everybody was more depressed.

Like the Walshes, (Connecting Dec. 30, 2020), we began 2020 in a foreign country. Midnight we were sprayed with prosecco by a well-dressed group of young people near Arzachena, Sardinia, a few miles from where we were catsitting in a villa. A week later we took the overnight ferry for Livorno and visited Pisa, Bologna and Florence. Back in Maryland, we watched as the virus spread around the world and so the lockdown began. Our March 24 return flight to London was cancelled with the British Airways APP instructing us to “see gate agent.”

I watched Super Bowl LIV standing up. Kickoff was at 12:30 a.m. local time in Norwich, England, and I knew if I sat down, I would fall asleep. Kansas City came from behind to win. The BBC broadcast the game but with banal commentary instead of commercials. I am hoping for another competitive game.

Connecting mailbox

A cartoon highlighting a disappearing media function



Larry Blasko (Email) - The cartoon highlights an important part of our profession that has largely disappeared - the "Gatekeeper" function. When technology for delivering information was both very expensive and limited to the practical radius of a delivery truck or broadcast signal, journalists decided what was worth general public attention.

Now the public at large holds cheap send/receive widgets with potential worldwide reach and our business is moving rapidly from deciding what the public needs to know to delivering what the public wants to know. That has sparked some changes in our social compact and, as the cartoon suggests, not all of them are benign.

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A nice catch



Nick Ut ([Email](#)) - This weekend when in Huntington Beach, I shot this photo of an osprey with a nice catch.

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Sunrise in Texas



Bill Schiffmann ([Email](#)) - Been loving the pictures of beautiful skies. I took this from my front porch a while back of a glorious Texas sunrise over Austin to the west of my little town of Lago Vista.

Best of the Week

With sourcing, preparedness, AP breaks news on death of pioneering actress Cicely Tyson



AP Photo/Matt Sayles

New York national writer Hillel Italie took a call Thursday evening from a longtime source with an unexpected tip: Groundbreaking actress Cicely Tyson, known for her roles playing strong, fiercely dignified Black women, was dead. Despite her age, Tyson had just released a memoir and was doing promotional interviews, so the news was surprising. The source stressed that Tyson's representatives wanted the news broken by a reputable outlet, and so they chose The Associated Press, and Italie in particular.

Italie, who handles many of the AP Entertainment celebrity obits, set off to get the news on the wire quickly, while also alerting colleagues so that photo and video could get started on their content.

Read more [here](#).

Best of the States

AP months ahead of New York state in identifying undercount of nursing home deaths



A patient is wheeled out of Cobble Hill Health Center by emergency medical workers in the Brooklyn borough of New York, April 17, 2020. A report released by the New York state attorney general affirmed AP's earlier reporting that the state vastly understated the number of nursing home-related deaths in 2020. The state had not included nursing home residents who died after being transferred to hospitals. AP PHOTO / JOHN MINCHILLO

When AP flagged New York state's undercount of nursing home deaths during the pandemic, the governor slammed the story. Six months later, the state's own investigation has vindicated AP's reporting.

An exclusive AP investigation last August — reporting that New York state was undercounting its nursing home death toll by thousands — was emphatically affirmed this past week with a report from the state attorney general that reached an almost identical conclusion.

AP's initial story by Bernard Condon, New York investigative reporter; Matt Sedensky, New York national writer; and Meghan Hoyer, Washington data editor, had been ripped by Gov. Andrew Cuomo who called it part of a politically motivated "blame game." But notably, the state's own investigation was led by Attorney General Letitia James, a fellow Democrat whom Cuomo has previously endorsed.

Read more [here](#).

Stories of interest

Egypt releases Al-Jazeera journalist detained since 2016 (AP)



This undated photo provided by Al-Jazeera shows journalist Mahmoud Hussein in Cairo, Egypt. Hussein walked free from a police station Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021, a few days after a court ordered his conditional release pending investigations into the charges. Hussein, an Egyptian working for the Qatar-based satellite network, was detained at the Cairo airport in December 2016, when he arrived on a family vacation from Doha. (Al-Jazeera via AP, File)

CAIRO (AP) — Egyptian authorities on Saturday freed an Al-Jazeera journalist after more than four years in detention, his family lawyer said.

Mahmoud Hussein walked free from a police station Saturday afternoon, a few days after a court ordered his conditional release pending investigations into charges of publishing false information and belonging to a banned group, lawyer Gamal Eid said.

The lawyer said Hussein will have to report to a nearby police station twice a week.

The journalist's daughter, el-Zahraa Hussein, confirmed the news in a Facebook post, saying her father had arrived home. Al-Jazeera also reported his release.

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

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Marty Baron Considers His Time at the Washington Post (New Yorker)

By Isaac Chotiner

On January 26th, Marty Baron, the executive editor of the Washington Post, announced that he will step down at the end of February. In a memo to the staff, Baron wrote, “From the moment I arrived at The Post, I have sought to make an enduring contribution while giving back to a profession that has meant so much to me and that serves to safeguard democracy.” Baron, who is sixty-six, came to the Post in 2013 after an already storied career in journalism that included stints running the Miami Herald and the Boston Globe. At the Globe, he oversaw the publication of groundbreaking reporting into sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. (In the movie “Spotlight,” based on the story of the Globe’s investigation, Baron is played by Liev Schreiber.)

Less than a year after Baron arrived at the Post, it was bought by the Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, who invested significant resources in the paper. Under Baron, the Post broke numerous stories on malfeasance in the Trump Administration, and published the Afghanistan Papers. Baron has occasionally clashed with staff, especially with regard to their use of social media. The reporter Wesley Lowery left the paper after Baron warned him that his tweets about race, politics, and other subjects violated the company’s social-media policy; the reporter Felicia Sonmez was suspended—but later reinstated—for tweeting a story about sexual-assault allegations against Kobe Bryant right after his death.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Larry Blasko.

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‘Intimidation measure’: Louisiana AG criticized for suing reporter over records request (Washington Post)

By Hannah Knowles

At first, Andrea Gallo’s quest for sexual harassment complaints against a top state justice official seemed like a typical public records battle. The investigative reporter heard a common refrain from agencies withholding information: There was an “ongoing investigation.”

“The records should be ready and released to you by early next week,” officials eventually told Gallo on Jan. 22, a few days after she reported the criminal division head of the Louisiana Attorney General’s office had his pay docked for participating in “inappropriate” conversations.

Then the attorney general's office came back with new arguments — and a lawsuit.

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

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Column: Some newspapers are deleting old crime stories to give people fresh starts. Is that wise? (Los Angeles Times)

By NICHOLAS GOLDBERG

About 10 years ago, a woman called me from the San Fernando Valley with a request I could not accommodate.

She had been arrested many years earlier for prostitution, when she was barely out of her teens. Her name and the charges against her had been published in The Times and now, in the internet era, the article was one of the first things that popped up when you googled her name.

She began to cry on the phone. She'd done something wrong a long, long time ago, she said, and now she couldn't escape it. Potential employers had seen the story. She was worried her daughter would stumble across it.

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

Today in History - Feb. 8, 2021



By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Feb. 8, the 39th day of 2021. There are 326 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Feb. 8, 1952, Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed her accession to the British throne following the death of her father, King George VI.

On this date:

In 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in England after she was implicated in a plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

In 1693, a charter was granted for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in the Virginia Colony.

In 1831, Rebecca Lee Crumpler, the first Black woman to earn a medical degree in the United States, was born in Delaware.

In 1910, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated.

In 1922, President Warren G. Harding had a radio installed in the White House.

In 1924, the first execution by gas in the United States took place at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City as Gee Jon, a Chinese immigrant convicted of murder, was put to death.

In 1960, work began on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, located on Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street in Los Angeles.

In 1971, NASDAQ, the world's first electronic stock exchange, held its first trading day.

In 1973, Senate leaders named seven members of a select committee to investigate the Watergate scandal, including its chairman, Sen. Sam J. Ervin, D-N.C.

In 1989, 144 people were killed when an American-chartered Boeing 707 filled with Italian tourists slammed into a fog-covered mountain in the Azores.

In 2007, model, actor and tabloid sensation Anna Nicole Smith died in Hollywood, Florida, at age 39 of an accidental drug overdose.

In 2010, Michael Jackson's personal physician, Dr. Conrad Murray, pleaded not guilty to involuntary manslaughter in the death of the pop superstar in Los Angeles Superior Court. (Murray was convicted in 2011 and served two years in prison.)

Ten years ago: Wael Ghonim (WY'-uhl goh-NEEM'), a 30-year-old Google executive who'd helped ignite Egypt's uprising, appeared before protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square for the first time after being released from detention; he told them, "We won't give up."

Five years ago: President Barack Obama asked Congress for more than \$1.8 billion in emergency funding to fight the Zika virus and the mosquitoes that were spreading it in the United States and abroad, but said "there shouldn't be a panic on this." Villanova was No. 1 in The Associated Press men's college basketball poll for the first time.

One year ago: The U.S. Embassy in Beijing said a 60-year-old U.S. citizen who'd been diagnosed with the coronavirus had died on Feb. 5 in Wuhan; it was apparently the first American fatality from the virus. A soldier who was angry about a land dispute began a 16-hour shooting rampage in northeastern Thailand, killing at least 29 people and wounding dozens more before being shot and killed by police and soldiers at a shopping mall.

Today's Birthdays: Composer-conductor John Williams is 89. Broadcast journalist Ted Koppel is 81. Actor Nick Nolte is 80. Comedian Robert Klein is 79. Actor-rock musician Creed Bratton is 78. Singer Ron Tyson is 73. Actor Brooke Adams is 72. Actor Mary Steenburgen is 68. Author John Grisham is 66. Retired NBA All-Star and College Basketball Hall of Famer Marques Johnson is 65. Actor Henry Czerny is 62. The former president of the Philippines, Benigno Aquino III, is 61. Rock singer Vince Neil (Motley Crue) is 60. Former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa P. Jackson is 59. Movie producer Toby Emmerich is 58. Actor Missy Yager is 53. Actor Mary McCormack is 52. Basketball Hall of Famer Alonzo Mourning is 51. Actor Susan Misner is 50. Dance musician Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (Daft Punk) is 47. Actor Seth Green is 47. Actor Joshua Morrow is 47. Rock musician Phoenix (Linkin Park) is 44. Actor William Jackson Harper is 41. Actor Jim Parrack is 40. Folk singer-musician Joey Ryan (Milk Carton Kids) is 39. Actor-comedian Cecily Strong is 37. Rock musician Jeremy Davis is 36. Hip-hop artist Anderson.Paak is 35. Actor Ryan Pinkston is 33. NBA star Klay Thompson is 31. Professional surfer Bethany Hamilton is 31. Actor Karle Warren is 29.

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.

Paul Stevens

Editor, Connecting newsletter

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