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## Connecting

February 26, 2021

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Colleagues,

Good Friday morning on this the 26<sup>th</sup> day of February 2021,

One of our newest Connecting members is **Justin Myers**, who earlier this month was promoted to be AP's data editor – managing data journalists on the data team and overseeing the team's data-driven collaborations with reporters and editors across AP and its partner news organizations.

In his new-member profile in today's issue, Justin submitted a photo of him with his son **Clark**, who died of cancer in January 2020 at 10 months of age, along with a remarkable, touching **obituary** that commemorated his brief life. If you read nothing else in this issue, be sure to read this work of love.

Ever the data journalist, Justin followed with this update from him and his wife **Julia Haslanger** - that "Clark's sibling should be joining us in August!"

Welcome news in this age of the pandemic. And how we need more of that!

Have a great weekend – be safe, stay healthy.

Paul

## New-member profile: Justin Myers



A photo from late 2019 of Justin with his son [Clark](#), a few weeks before he died of cancer.

**Justin Myers** ([Email](#)) – I've been part of the AP's data journalism team for almost six years, and I just became a news editor earlier this month. There are more than a dozen of us spread across the country—including a few who report to Investigations, Polling, Top Stories and Health and Science but participate fully in our meetings, adopt our practices and contribute to our projects. I help review their work (both their math and their prose), plan out assignments (including helping other desks figure out what's feasible) and look for ways we can work with other journalists inside and outside the AP.

My background involves a lot of crossovers. I went to both engineering school and journalism school at the same time, and the program Mizzou called "newspaper journalism" when I started was known as "print and digital news" when I left. (I was in the track for aspiring page designers, right alongside Julia Haslanger, who I married a couple of years after we graduated!) After that, I went to DC: I was at the PBS NewsHour making interactive graphics for a couple of years and then did the same at The Chronicle of Higher Education for a couple more.

We moved to New York so my wife could go to CUNY for a master's degree, and I found my way over to the AP as the news automation editor—so the industry's rumblings a few years back about "robot journalism" and such were at least partly about what I was up to, including writing software to generate some stories about finance, agate for sports and results graphics for elections.

After a couple of years of focusing on that, I moved into more of a general data journalism role, sometimes working on investigative pieces and sometimes doing some research and development around new ways to report and tell stories. It's been a great group to work with, and I'm happy to be able to help out in a new way.

## Honor, pleasure to work with Mary Esch

**Chris Carola ([Email](#))** - I had the honor and pleasure of working alongside Mary Esch for my entire time with the AP in Albany, from April 1988 to late May 2019. I truly believe there wasn't a better writer/reporter covering the Adirondacks and environmental issues in New York state during her AP tenure. Her knowledge and expertise were second to none, especially when she was writing about the North Country and its various issues, challenges, quirks and characters. She walked, paddled, snowshoed and drove through every part of the Adirondack Park to get her stories, sometimes solo or accompanied by her husband Dave (and later, by her beloved and always photogenic dogs), and, unlike me, she's not afraid of snakes.

Mary's talents weren't just focused on the environment and outdoors. She handled any duties thrown her way (although she wasn't too keen on sports). And Mary shortchanges herself when she says she sometimes regrets not being part of the big stories. She was involved in some capacity so many of the biggest stories in upstate N.Y. during her career, and it was always reassuring to have Mary in the bureau when you had to call in details from the scene of breaking news. And it was equally reassuring during the years at the end of my AP career, when I opened the bureau and Mary was working the afternoon or night shift, to know that the day's report was being left in capable hands.

There are too many memories, etc., to mention, but the bureau repartee between sportswriter John Kekis and Mary was always entertaining (think "His Girl Friday" meets "Seinfeld").

Congrats to Mary on a stellar career. I look forward to seeing social media postings of photos of her and her pooch on their all-season Adirondack adventures.

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**Marc Humbert (Email)** - On Mary Esch's comment that she sometimes regrets not being part of the big stories, I am sure you can tell from her recollections that she was, in fact, the "big story." I had the honor of working with some wonderful writers while with the AP – i.e., Larry McShane and Jerry Schwartz in NYC come to mind - but Mary was our star in Albany. Yes, she was that good. She was not only a thorough reporter, but knew how to tell the story. A too rare combination. And, she is a lovely person to boot. Keep writing, Mary, and Happy Trails!

## 25 years since the siege of Sarajevo ended



Bosnian fighters run towards one of their positions after a battle erupted near the city center for control of a strategic hill, Friday, June 12, 1992 in Sarajevo. Serbian forces continue to besiege this city. Serbs on Friday announced a cease fire in Bosnia-Herzegovina beginning next week offering their fullest cooperation yet to U.N. monitors in the republic. (AP Photo/Santiago Lyon)

### AP Images Blog

On February 29, 1996, the Bosnian government declared the siege of Sarajevo officially over after nearly four years of death and privation in the capital.

The following text is from an AP story released on April 6, 1996, written by AP reporter Samir Krilic.

### Four Years After Sarajevo's War Began its People Remember

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) - On Vrbanja Bridge, flowers and a new plaque mark the spring day four years ago when a sniper fire on a peace rally against the nascent Bosnian war and claimed a 21-year-old woman as the first of the war's 200,000 victims.

Although the bridge in central Sarajevo became better known for the young Muslim-Serb couple who died together there a few months later, the city renamed it in honor of the first victim, medical student Suada Dilberovic.

A sniper's bullet killed Dilberovic on April 5, 1992, singling her out among the thousands who'd gathered there to support Bosnia's new independence from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Francesca Pitaro.

## Connecting mailbox

### *Congrats to AP Productions*

**Mark Mittelstadt (Email)** - Thank you for filling us in on AP Productions (see Wednesday's Connecting); congratulations to the group on scoring its first widespread release. We will look forward to watching "Fauci: The Virus Hunter" next month.

Creation of the "proper" group (not quite sure why it's a "proper group") seems a huge step forward for the cooperative in expanding its video and research capabilities and pursuing wider distribution of AP-branded content. The people associated with the APP effort on Dr. Fauci are some of the company's best.

I am confident AP will bring its solid editorial credentials to the Fauci documentary. Fauci has a long and mostly exemplary record advising seven U.S. presidents on how to deal with the world's worst diseases. He has been largely successful. As the AP release notes, he has become a household name.

In the current COVID-19 crisis of the past year, that hasn't always been a positive. An already polarized American public seems to have become divided about Fauci as a result of his frequent appearances discussing the current coronavirus and steps the country should take. Fauci seems to have been consistently inconsistent at times: no masks, wear masks (wear 2? 3?); walk around freely, lock down; use hydroxychloroquine with zinc to fight coronaviruses, hydroxychloroquine is dangerous; flatten the curve in months, "normalcy" may not return until 2023, or later. His conflicting and changing statements and advice have fed skepticism among a segment of the population towards anything the government says or does in the battle against SARS-CoV-2.

The release of "Fauci: The Virus Hunter" is an exciting move for AP. We will be eager to see the success of future offerings.

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## ***'Baseball Bugs' at 75: How a Looney Tunes classic wham-bammed America's pastime***

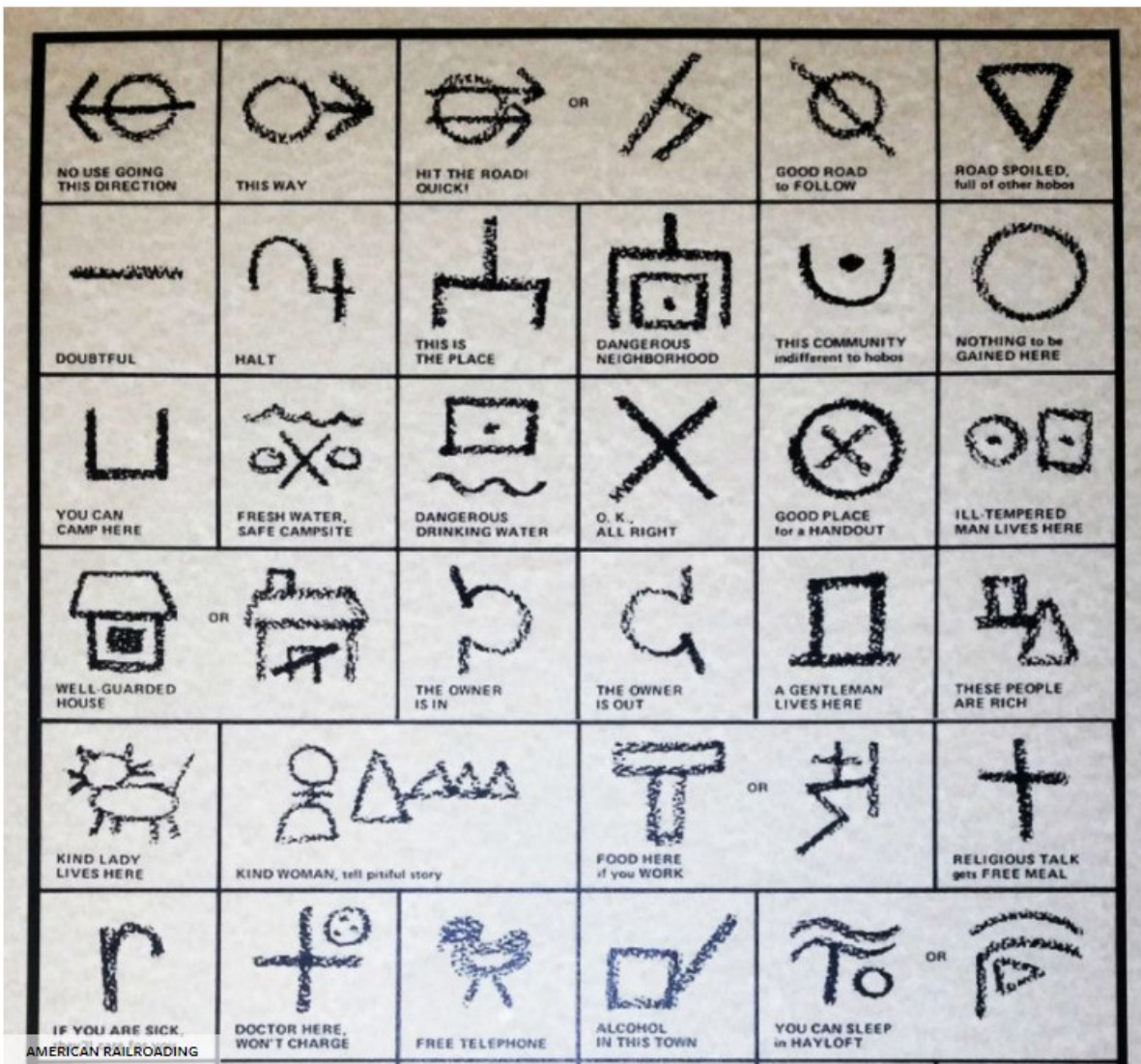


**Fred Frommer ([Email](#))** - Since leaving AP five years ago for PR, I still try to write a freelance piece every few months or so, and given my passion for baseball history, I look for anniversaries that would make good news pegs. A couple of years ago, after hearing the term “Bugs Bunny changeup” for probably the thousandth time, I thought it would be fun to write about the great cartoon that inspired the term. I looked up “Baseball Bugs” online and saw it came out in 1946 – 73 years ago at the time. So I made a mental note to try to get a story placed in 2021 for the 75th anniversary. It was a blast to research this story. I watched the cartoon over and over again and picked up little details I had never noticed, such as Bugs eating a carrot inside a hot dog bun. And I interviewed the former MLB player who had coined the term a half-century after the cartoon came out, along with an animator at Warner Brothers who is director of a “Looney Tunes Cartoon” HBO Max, and a historian at the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Click [here](#) to read.

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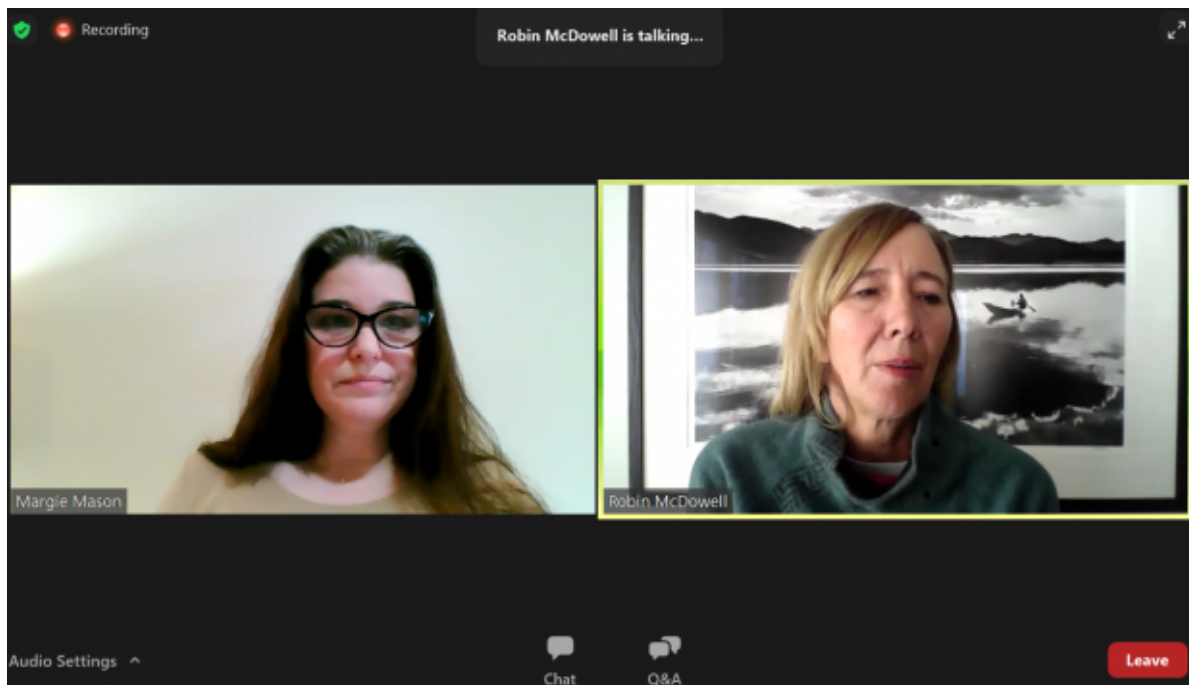
***AP Sighting...and hobo signs***



**Francesca Pitaro (Email)** - I enjoyed Wendy Beard’s family history. I recently read “The Cold Millions” by Jess Walter, about hobos, anarchists, Wobblies and free speech advocates on the West Coast in the early 1900s. The book’s itinerant characters use

hobo signs like the ones that were left outside Wendy's grandmother's house. Curiosity (and Google) led me to [this article](#).

## AP reporters receive Selden Ring Award for 'searing exposé' of palm oil industry



Investigative reporters Margie Mason, left, and Robin McDowell speak during a virtual ceremony for the Selden Ring Award for Investigative Reporting, Feb. 24, 2021. (AP Photo/Corporate Communications)

AP investigative reporters Margie Mason and Robin McDowell on Tuesday received the 2021 Selden Ring Award for Investigative Reporting for a series of stories that revealed widespread abuse in the lucrative palm oil industry.

During a virtual ceremony at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the pair of veteran journalists accepted the \$50,000 prize.

From debt bondage to outright slavery, they uncovered exploitation of an invisible workforce of millions of men, women and children from some of the poorest corners of Asia.

Gordon Stables, director of the USC Annenberg School of Journalism, described the AP investigation as a "searing exposé."

"You ensured the palm oil industry's army of invisible workers had a voice and you made a significant difference by exposing those who were profiting from their suffering," he said.

Read more [here](#).



# AP video journalist wins Royal Television Society Award

AP's Renata Brito was named Young Talent of the Year at the Royal Television Society's 2021 Television Journalism Awards on Wednesday.

"Renata's a brilliant eyewitness video journalist," said Derl McCrudden, AP deputy managing editor for visual and digital journalism. "From the intensive care wards in Spain, to remote villages in the Amazon documenting how COVID-19 took hold there, she has put herself in the middle of unfolding news while putting those affected at the heart of the stories she tells."

He added: "This award is so richly deserved as Renata is brave, versatile and creative, but tells her stories with remarkable compassion. We're thrilled the RTS has recognized Renata's talent."



Brito accepted the award virtually, thanking her colleagues for their support.

Read more [here](#).

## Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



*On Saturday to...*

Eric Carvin - [ecarvin@ap.org](mailto:ecarvin@ap.org)

Doug Crews - [rdcrews@socket.net](mailto:rdcrews@socket.net)

Sam Heiman - [samindobbs@gmail.com](mailto:samindobbs@gmail.com)

Dave Tschantz - [dtschantz@ap.org](mailto:dtschantz@ap.org)

# Stories of interest

## ***Where state and local coverage are actually expanding*** (Poynter)

By ANGELA FU

The States Newsroom — an expanding network of outlets focused on statehouse coverage — is launching a free syndication service that will allow other news organizations to republish coverage from the network's 20 newsrooms.

Called "Capital Connections," the service aims to make it easier for readers to access state-level coverage, which director and founder Chris Fitzsimon says has shrunk significantly in recent decades. States Newsroom will also launch five new outlets this year, starting with Idaho and New Hampshire in the spring and New Jersey, Oregon and New Mexico by the end of the summer.

"State and local is really the place where we need to, I think, emphasize new models and new ways to make sure we're not just holding politicians accountable ... but also explaining to people the impact of the decisions that they make in the legislature about voting, the environment, civil rights, health care, all the issues that affect our lives every day," Fitzsimon said.

Fitzsimon started the nonprofit network in 2017, and the first three outlets launched in Nevada, Florida and Virginia. In the years since, States Newsroom has expanded rapidly and has 17 affiliate news sites — outlets created by the network — and three partner newsrooms — independent sites the network supports with grants. It most recently launched the Daily Montanan last month.

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

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## ***Some journalists are debating when it's okay to use the n-word. But this one should be easy.*** (Washington Post)

By Margaret Sullivan  
Media columnist

A lot of problems facing the media industry have no easy solutions: Rampant disinformation. The hemorrhaging of ad revenue that is destroying local newspapers. Cable news shows that offer little more than fodder for outrage.

So I'm a little surprised that our profession has been grappling lately with an issue that should be a no-brainer.

In recent weeks, two prominent journalists have been disciplined, largely because of uttering, or defending, the use of the worst racial slur in the English language.

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

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## ***The New York Times paints a grim picture of its own workplace culture*** (CNN)

By Kerry Flynn

New York (CNN Business) The New York Times (NYT) is admitting its own workplace issues, particularly around the treatment of Black and Latino employees, in a report released Wednesday. Included with the analysis is a four-point plan to improve conditions that the report's authors say will require "commitment from company leadership" as well as employees.

In a note signed by Times Publisher A.G. Sulzberger, CEO Meredith Kopit Levien and Executive Editor Dean Baquet, Times leadership said the result of an eight-month investigation of its own workplace "calls for us to transform our culture." They likened that plan to the company's shifts to being digital-first and subscription-first — efforts that have proven to be quite successful.

Three Times senior leaders — Amber Guild, Carolyn Ryan and Anand Venkatesan — were tasked with leading the review of the company's culture. Ryan, a deputy managing editor who has worked at The Times since 2007, told CNN Business that the effort began last summer with the goal of not looking at diversity "in terms of numbers" but rather "in more depth at our culture."

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

## **Today in History - Feb. 26, 2021**



By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Feb. 26, the 57th day of 2021. There are 308 days left in the year.

### **Today's Highlight in History:**

On Feb. 26, 1993, a truck bomb built by Islamic extremists exploded in the parking garage of the North Tower of New York's World Trade Center, killing six people and injuring more than 1,000 others. (The bomb failed to topple the North Tower into the South Tower, as the terrorists had hoped; both structures were destroyed in the 9/11 attack eight years later.)

### **On this date:**

In 1904, the United States and Panama proclaimed a treaty under which the U.S. agreed to undertake efforts to build a ship canal across the Panama isthmus.

In 1940, the United States Air Defense Command was created.

In 1942, "How Green Was My Valley" won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1941, beating out nine other films, including "The Maltese Falcon" and "Citizen Kane."

In 1945, authorities ordered a midnight curfew at nightclubs, bars and other places of entertainment across the nation.

In 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that Britain had developed its own atomic bomb.

In 1966, South Korean troops sent to fight in the Vietnam War massacred at least 380 civilians in Go Dai hamlet.

In 1984, the last U.S. Marines deployed to Beirut as part of an international peacekeeping force withdrew from the Lebanese capital.

In 1994, a jury in San Antonio acquitted 11 followers of David Koresh of murder, rejecting claims they had ambushed federal agents; five were convicted of voluntary manslaughter.

In 1998, a jury in Amarillo, Texas, rejected an \$11 million lawsuit brought by Texas cattlemen who blamed Oprah Winfrey's talk show for a price fall after a segment on food safety that included a discussion about mad cow disease.

In 2014, Republican Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer vetoed a bill pushed by social conservatives that would have allowed people with sincerely held religious beliefs to refuse to serve gays.

In 2017, at the 89th Academy Awards, "Moonlight," an LGBT coming of age drama, won three Oscars, including best picture of 2016 (in a startling gaffe, the musical "La La Land" was mistakenly announced as the best picture winner before the error was corrected).

In 2019, after making his way from Pyongyang in an armored train, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived in Vietnam's capital ahead of a summit with President Donald Trump, who arrived later in the day aboard Air Force One.

Ten years ago: In a statement, President Barack Obama said Moammar Gadhafi had lost his legitimacy to rule and urged the Libyan leader to leave power immediately. Space shuttle Discovery arrived at the International Space Station, making its final visit before being parked at a museum.

Five years ago: New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie stunned the Republican establishment by endorsing Donald Trump for president.

One year ago: President Donald Trump declared that the U.S. was "very, very ready" for whatever threat the coronavirus would bring; he put Vice President Mike Pence in charge of overseeing the country's response. The World Health Organization reported that the number of new coronavirus cases outside China had exceeded the number of new infections in China for the first time. Brazil's government confirmed the first case of the coronavirus in Latin America; a 61-year-old man who had traveled to Italy had tested positive. Facebook said it was banning ads that made false claims about products tied to the coronavirus. As Christians around the world marked the start of Lent with Ash Wednesday, worshipers found churches closed and rituals changed by virus fears. An employee at a Wisconsin brewery opened fire on co-workers, killing five of them before taking his own life. Maria Sharapova retired from professional tennis at the age of 32, after a career that included five Grand Slam titles.

Today's Birthdays: Country-rock musician Paul Cotton (Poco) is 78. Actor-director Bill Duke is 78. Singer Mitch Ryder is 76. Actor Marta Kristen (TV: "Lost in Space") is 76. Rock musician Jonathan Cain (Journey) is 71. Singer Michael Bolton is 68. The president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (REH'-jehp TY'-ihp UR'-doh-wahn), is 67. Actor Greg Germann is 63. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., is 63. Bandleader John McDaniel is 60. Actor-martial artist Mark Dacascos is 57. Actor Jennifer Grant is 55. Rock musician Tim Commerford (Audioslave) is 53. Singer Erykah Badu (EHR'-ih-kah bah-DOO') is 50. Actor Maz Jobrani (TV: "Superior Donuts") is 49. R&B singer Rico Wade (Society of Soul) is 49. Olympic gold medal swimmer Jenny Thompson is 48. R&B singer Kyle Norman (Jagged Edge) is 46. Actor Greg Kinnear is 44. Rock musician Chris Culos (O.A.R.) is 42. R&B singer Corinne Bailey Rae is 42. Pop singer Nate Ruess (roos) (fun.) is 39. Tennis player Li Na is 39. Latin singer Natalia Lafourcade is 37. Actor Teresa Palmer is 35.

## 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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