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## Connecting

March 04, 2021

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Colleagues,

Good Thursday morning on this the 4<sup>th</sup> day of March 2021,

Today's Connecting brings you a profile of our colleague **Randy Picht**, who worked for AP from 1983 to 2012 and perhaps is best known for his efforts traveling around the country talking about stock tables (remember?).

He began his AP career in the Albany, N.Y., bureau, worked in Rochester, N.Y., St. Louis, Kansas City, as business editor in NYC, as director of an internet startup the AP bought in central Pennsylvania and several other assignments along the way. He left the AP to take a job at his alma mater in Columbia, Mo., which you'll read about below.



The Picht family gathered in May 2019 for Cathy's graduation from law school. From left: Olivia, Matthew, Cathy, Devin, Lindsay and Randy.

His wife, **Cathy**, took the opportunity of being in a college town and went to law school, graduating in 2019, and is now a staff attorney for the Missouri Administrative Hearing Commission. Two of their four children are in the media world: **Matthew** works at the online news outlet, Newsy, as a writer and producer; and **Olivia**, who works for a digital advertising agency as a social media strategist. **Devin**, their younger son, works for Farmers Insurance, making the world safe for golf carts, ATVs and motorcycles, and their youngest daughter, **Lindsay**, graduated with a fine arts degree from Truman State University in 2020 and is painting and drawing up a storm (it's not too soon to think about a nice watercolor of the grandkids for the best Christmas or Hanukkah present ever. Lindsay is available!)

At the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute, where Randy has been executive director for the past nine years, there have been a number of RJI fellows who have close AP connections. They are (In chronological order, starting with most recent): **Virginia Arrigucci, Jim MacMillan, Fergus Bell, Linda Austin (APME), Tad Bartimus, Connie Farrow, Bill Densmore**. All except Linda Austin were AP employees at one time and Virginia is a current employee.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy!

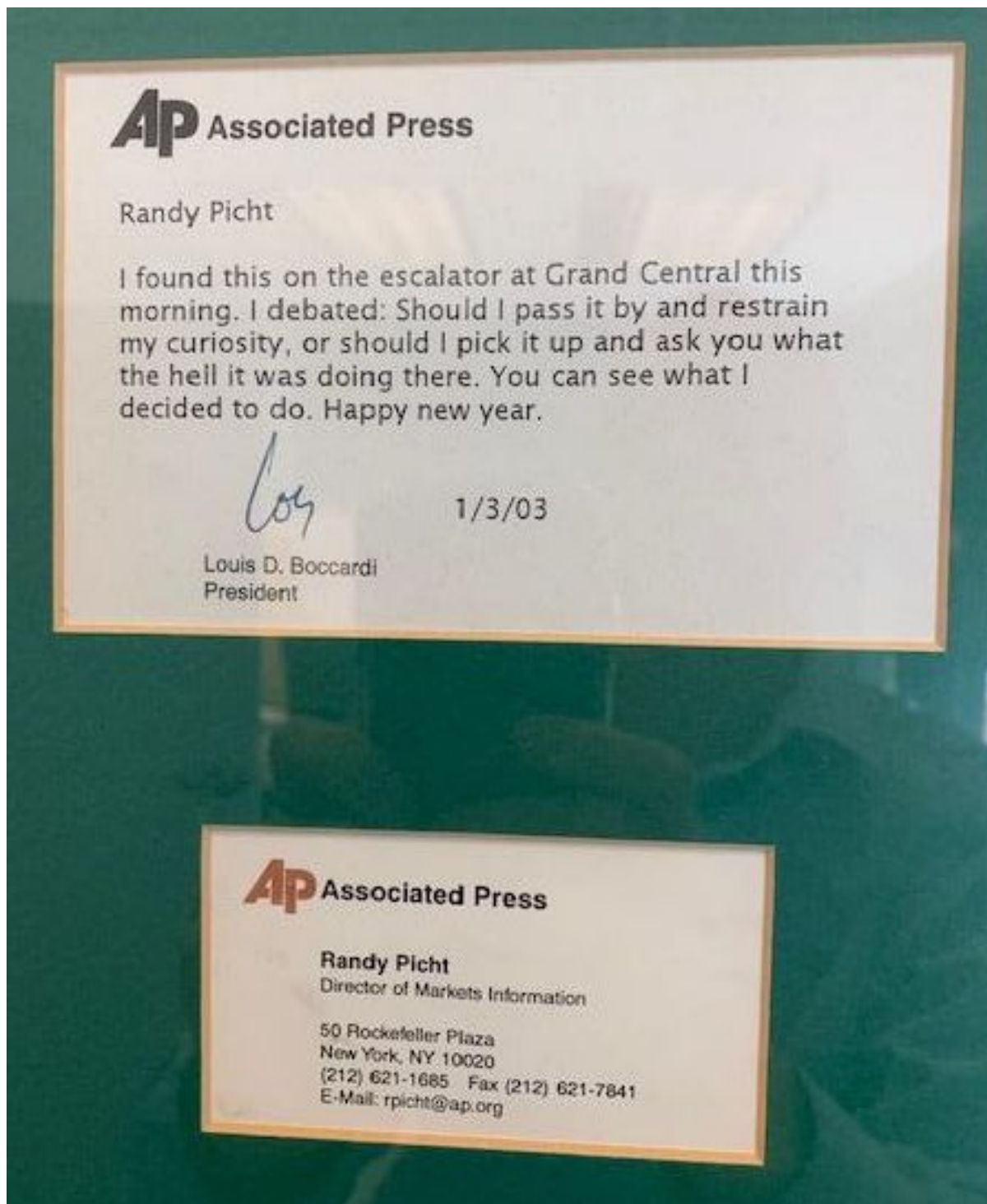
Paul

## Connecting Profile

# Randy Picht



**Randy Picht with Truman the Tiger.**



Randy notes the AP is still near and dear to his heart and he has this note from Lou Boccardi on his office wall to prove it. The background: "One day when I was fumbling to get my umbrella out of my briefcase I spilled a bunch of papers and business cards on a crowded escalator. I scrambled to pick them up and thought I had been successful but then the blue envelope showed up."

**RANDY PICTH** - It was great to see the wonderful comments about the retirement of the wonderful Mary Esch in Connecting last week. I enthusiastically support all of them. And it reminded me of the laughs we used to have working the night shift in the Albany bureau as we compared the odd, and oddly written, stories that would come in from all corners of the state.

It also reminded me that a) I had promised Paul I would write a Connecting profile about my new job and b) it's been almost nine years since I started that new job and c) that unlike Mary I had to leave the AP to get a job that kept me in one place for a long time.

I know this won't surprise many on the Connecting mailing list but my nearly nine years as executive director of the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism is my longest tenure in any one position. I never made it that long in one job in nearly 29 years at the AP.

Maybe that's partly because working at the institute is similar to working at the AP – there's always something going on and we're working to make journalism as good as it can be.

One of my favorite moments at RJJ is actually happening this week when we announce the newest group of RJJ Fellows. The fellowship program is a cornerstone for the institute and always attracts an array of journalists from across the country who have new ideas and terrific dedication to help journalism get better, stronger, faster.

This year's group of eight is a great example. You can get a quick [overview here](#). The fellowships are collaborations between RJJ and, primarily, folks in the industry. We like to focus on working with partners and getting things started.

Here are a few other examples:

--**Research:** We partnered with the National Association of Broadcasters and consulting firm Smith Geiger in December to quickly get some survey data to help newsrooms make decisions about covering the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. (My favorite datapoint: Of the respondents who said they thought the coronavirus was a "hoax", 60 percent planned to get the vaccine.)

--**Tools:** We worked with the School of Engineering on campus to create the JSafe mobile app that makes it easy for women journalists to capture and save to a central database tweets, posts and other threatening or offensive social media content. JSafe is available in the Apple store and the app is now being operated by The Coalition for Women in Journalism.

--**New journalism organizations:** RJJ has helped launch Trusting News, which uses engagement and transparency strategies to rebuild trust among news audiences; the Watchdog Writers Group, which provides fellowships to journalists who want to write books about a beat or issue they're covering; the Initiative for Better Gun Violence Reporting and, next out of the nest, Unpublishing the News, which is about the increasingly thorny issue of requests to remove content from a news web site.

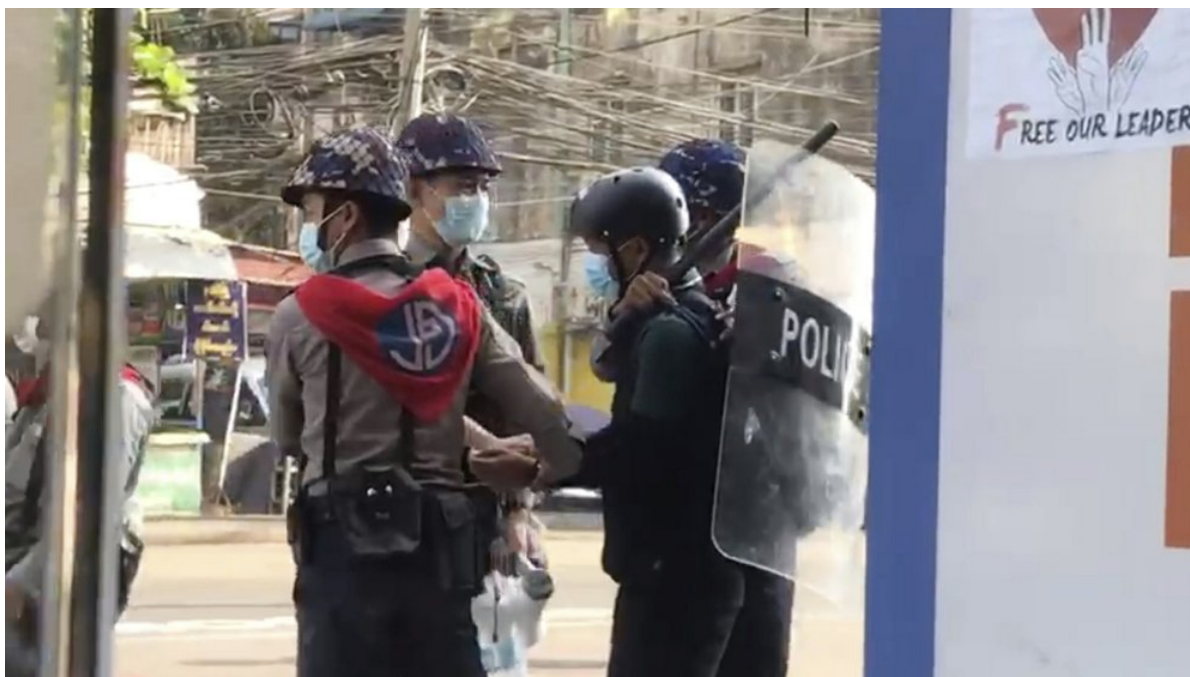
Anyway, I don't think I'll be in this job for as long as Mary was in the Albany bureau but so far, so good.

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Click [here](#) for information about applying for a Reynolds fellowship.

Randy Picht's email - [pichtr@rjionline.org](mailto:pichtr@rjionline.org)

## Video: Myanmar police hold AP journalist in chokehold



In this image made from video taken on Feb. 27, 2021, Associated Press journalist Thein Zaw is arrested by police in Yangon, Myanmar. Authorities in Myanmar have charged Thein Zaw and five other members of the media with violating a public order law that could see them imprisoned for up to three years. The six were arrested while covering protests against the Feb. 1 military coup in Myanmar that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. (AP Photo)

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — A video of the arrest of Associated Press journalist Thein Zaw as he was photographing Myanmar security forces charging at anti-coup protesters shows him being quickly surrounded and held in a chokehold as handcuffs are placed on him.

Authorities have charged Thein Zaw and five other members of the media with violating a public order law that could see them imprisoned for up to three years.

The video starts with Thein Zaw standing by the side of a road on Saturday photographing dozens of security forces as they run at a group of protesters in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city.

Several police run at him, and he tries to escape. At least seven surround him as he is placed in a chokehold. He is pushed and shoved and quickly handcuffed. A policeman with a bullhorn then uses the handcuffs to pull him away.

Many of the police are carrying truncheons, while some have what appear to be guns and automatic weapons.

“The Associated Press calls for the immediate release of AP journalist Thein Zaw, who has been charged with a crime in Myanmar for simply doing his job,” Ian Phillips, AP vice president for international news, said Wednesday. “Independent journalists must be allowed to freely and safely report the news without fear of retribution. AP condemns the charge against Thein Zaw and his arbitrary detention.”

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

## You're invited to bid on AP NFT



**Dwayne Desaulniers** ([Email](#)) – Wednesday, AP put up its very first NFT for auction. An NFT (non-fungible token) is a unique piece of art just like an original painting, but it's digital. The artwork is cryptographically documented as an original from AP and a 1:1 which give it its unique value.

(The artwork is referred to as a 'token' and because it cannot be replicated or altered, it is seen as non-fungible – hence the rather ugly term 'non-fungible token'.)

Buyers bid with cryptocurrency that is then converted to dollars.

Our first NFT commemorates AP's historic use of the blockchain in November to publish our race calls. The artwork was created by an outside artist using AP's presidential election data and depicts the outcome of the 2020 election in a rather creative way.

The artwork is up for auction at a site called OpenSea, a marketplace for digital art. [Here](#) is the link.

The auction ends in seven days and we'll see how much a digital collector is willing to pay for this historic piece of AP history. I invite all Connecting members to bid!

## Connecting mailbox

### *Loved posts by Jim Reindl, Gene Herrick*

**Brent Kallestad** ([Email](#)) - Absolutely loved Jim Reindl's Wednesday "Connecting" contribution. So clever and so right on! Not to mention the ageless wonder's (Gene Herrick) effort earlier this week. We are so fortunate to have had careers shared with so many people of such substance at every stop. So thankful.

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### *Remembering Fred Waters*

**Tom Cohen** ([Email](#)) - Seeing the tributes to Fred Waters brought back memories of my first day as a full-time AP staffer, in St. Louis in 1984. It also was the day of Fred's retirement party in the St. Louis bureau, with Wick Temple flying in from New York to honor one of the all-time greats. What a way to start out, experiencing that kind of tribute. Fred was one of a kind — professional in every way, a great shooter, extremely helpful, and full of stories from his colorful past. Many of those stories involved fistfights he was in as a war photographer and afterward. The late Nate Polowetzky once said Fred had the fastest hands he ever saw.

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### *More of your most disliked jargon*

Has anyone mentioned "Lock step"? "I expect everyone to be in lock step on this project." When I left the AP to work at George Washington University, I entered an absolute sea of office jargon. I was certain that my bosses had taken classes on being pretentious. Having the bandwidth has already been mentioned, but the first time I was asked if I had the bandwidth to complete a task I thought I'd missed out on some computer program I was supposed to already know about. I guess I just wasn't in lock step. (Dave Lubeski)

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If you worked with Bill Ahearn: "We're going to drive with the top down." (Mark Mittelstadt)

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Marc Humbert's consternation at the oft-used "you'll be the first to know" --- reminded me of the all-purpose PR response (at least in government): "I don't have anything for you on that now."



I've been on both the delivering and receiving end of that line during my time as an AP reporter and, later, government media relations specialist.

It is remarkable for its ambiguity and versatility. It does not necessarily mean "I don't know." It could mean that, but it could also mean, "I'm not saying."

And, it has a variety of meanings depending on which word is emphasized.

Emphasis on "I" could mean --- "Somebody else in my organization might have something on that."

"I don't have anything for YOU ..." could mean, "but I just gave the story to your competitor."

"I don't have anything for you on THAT ..." could mean "I have something on something else for you if you ask the right question."

Emphasis on "NOW" could mean --- "but call me back in an hour."

Now, in retirement and in COVID semi-confinement, I have no one to use the line on except my wife Marsha. And she is wise to it. (Dave Skidmore)

## AP Membership Department in 2002



Connecting recently featured Dan Day in a profile – and his fellow colleague in New York Newspaper Membership in 2002, Hank Ackerman, shares this photo of members of the department that was headed by Vice President Wick Temple.

The photo shows, from left: David Liu, Rosana Robustelli, Robert LaMarca, Pam Weisz, Vanessa Palmer-Walker, Anne Kennedy, Wick Temple, Dan Day, Rick Spratling and Paula Sterling-Thomas.

## Stories of interest

### ***Three female journalists killed by gunmen in Afghanistan in latest wave of violence*** (Reuters, CNN)

Story by Reuters and CNN staff

Three female media workers were shot dead in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad on Tuesday, government officials said, amid a wave of killings that is spreading fear among professional workers in urban centers.

Zalmai Latifi, head of local broadcaster Enikas TV, said the three women were recent high school graduates aged between 18 and 20 who worked in the station's dubbing department.

Government sources said the women were killed on their way home from work, and witnesses said gunmen shot the women in the head before fleeing. A fourth woman was injured, and a hospital spokesman said she had been admitted to hospital and was fighting for her life.

Provincial police chief Juma Gul Hemat said that the suspected lead attacker had been arrested and that he was connected to the insurgent Taliban.

A Taliban spokesman denied the group had any involvement in the attack.

Read more [here](#).

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### ***'Reading the story today makes me cringe': Female stars and the media machine of the early 2000s***

(Washington Post)

By Jessica M. Goldstein

On July 2, 2004, Lindsay Lohan turned 18. It was a date obsessed over by men who were much older than 18, who flocked to early Internet forums and shock-jock radio shows to mouth-breathe about how they couldn't wait until it would be legal to do what they were obviously already doing: fantasize about having sex with a teenager who first found fame as a child in Disney's remake of "The Parent Trap."

Less than a week after Lohan's birthday, Rolling Stone contributing editor Mark Binelli met the "Mean Girls" star to profile her for the cover of the magazine's "Hot List"

issue. His article begins with Lohan's assurance that her breasts are real; he writes that he discerned as much through "reporting" that consisted of "discreet visual fact checking" and "a goodbye hug." In the life of any girl who begins her career under Mickey Mouse ears, he writes, there comes a point at which she is as appealing to adults as she is to children, and that for Lohan — "or, more accurately, for Lindsay Lohan's breasts" — that moment had arrived. "It became socially acceptable to note that the redheaded child actress was hot."

In 2021, these sentences are objectively disgusting. But they fit right in with the media of that moment. As Binelli remembered via email to The Washington Post, news coverage of Lohan in the months leading up to his interview "had fixated on the teenager's breasts to such a crazy degree that she brought the topic up, wholly unprompted, during our interview."

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

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## ***One Year Into the Pandemic, How Are Health Reporters Doing?*** (Nieman Reports)

By CHELSEA CIRRUZZO

For many health reporters, reporting on the coronavirus started long before most Americans realized the devastating impact it would have on their daily lives. Declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, Covid-19 has killed more than half a million U.S. citizens and infected more than 28 million.

For Lena H. Sun, a national health reporter for The Washington Post, reporting on the virus began on January 8, 2020. "An outbreak of an unidentified and possibly new viral disease in central China is prompting officials across Asia to take heightened precautions ahead of the busy Lunar New Year travel season," she wrote in a co-bylined piece with Washington Post China correspondent Gerry Shih. Now, more than a year later, she is still on the story, sometimes writing several stories a day to cover all the new developments.

Sun, a longtime health care reporter, can rattle off an impressive list of massive health events she's covered: fungal meningitis, Ebola, Zika, you name it. But the Covid-19 pandemic has eclipsed it all, she says: "There's been a lot of public health issues but, obviously, nothing like this pandemic."

Read more [here](#)

## **Today in History - March 4, 2021**



## By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, March 4, the 63rd day of 2021. There are 302 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt took office as America's 32nd president.

### On this date:

In 1789, the Constitution of the United States went into effect as the first Federal Congress met in New York. (The lawmakers then adjourned for lack of a quorum.)

In 1797, John Adams was inaugurated the second president of the United States.

In 1863, the Idaho Territory was created.

In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated for a second term of office; with the end of the Civil War in sight, Lincoln declared: "With malice toward none, with charity for all."

In 1964, Teamsters president James Hoffa and three co-defendants were found guilty by a federal court in Chattanooga, Tennessee, of jury tampering.

In 1974, the first issue of People magazine, then called People Weekly, was published by Time-Life Inc.; on the cover was actor Mia Farrow.

In 1981, a jury in Salt Lake City convicted Joseph Paul Franklin, an avowed racist and serial killer, of violating the civil rights of two Black men, Ted Fields and David Martin, who'd been shot to death. (Franklin received two life sentences for this crime; he was executed in 2013 for the 1977 murder of a Jewish man, Gerald Gordon.)

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan addressed the nation on the Iran-Contra affair, acknowledging that his overtures to Iran had "deteriorated" into an arms-for-hostages deal.

In 1994, in New York, four extremists were convicted of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six people and injured more than a thousand. Actor-comedian John Candy died in Durango, Mexico, at age 43.

In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that sexual harassment at work can be illegal even when the offender and victim are of the same gender.

In 2015, the Justice Department cleared Darren Wilson, a white former Ferguson, Missouri, police officer, in the fatal shooting of Michael Brown, a Black 18-year-old, but also issued a scathing report calling for sweeping changes in city law enforcement practices.

In 2018, former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter were found unconscious on a bench in the southwestern English city of Salisbury; both survived what British authorities said was a murder attempt using a nerve agent.

Ten years ago: Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi's regime struck back at its opponents with a powerful attack on Zawiya (ZOW'-ee-yuh), the closest opposition-held city to Tripoli, and a barrage of tear gas and live ammunition to smother new protests in the capital. NASA launched its Glory satellite from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on what was supposed to have been a three-year mission to analyze how airborne particles affect Earth's climate; however, the rocket carrying Glory plummeted into the southern Pacific several minutes after liftoff.

Five years ago: The U.S. Supreme Court blocked enforcement of a Louisiana clinic regulation law placing new restrictions on abortion. Bud Collins, the tennis historian and American voice of the sport in print and on TV for decades, died in Brookline, Massachusetts, at age 86. Pat Conroy, author of "The Great Santini" and "The Prince of Tides," died in Beaufort, South Carolina, at age 70.

One year ago: The House easily passed an \$8.3 billion measure aimed at speeding the development of coronavirus vaccines, paying for containment operations and beefing up preparedness. Federal health officials investigated a suburban Seattle nursing home at the center of a coronavirus outbreak. Italy closed all schools and universities and barred fans from sporting events. The Dow Jones Industrial Average soared more than 1,100 points as governments and central banks around the globe took more aggressive measures to deal with the virus and its effects on the economy. After spending more than \$500 million of his own fortune in a bid for the presidency, former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg dropped out of the Democratic race, but pledged to keep spending in an effort to defeat President Donald Trump. Javier Perez de Cuellar, the United Nations secretary-general who brokered a historic cease-fire between Iran and Iraq in 1988, died at the age of 100.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Paula Prentiss is 83. Movie director Adrian Lyne is 80. Singer Shakin' Stevens is 73. Author James Ellroy is 73. Former Energy Secretary Rick Perry is 71. Singer Chris Rea is 70. Actor/rock singer-musician Ronn Moss is 69. Actor Kay Lenz is 68. Musician Emilio Estefan is 68. Movie director Scott Hicks is 68. Actor Catherine O'Hara is 67. Actor Mykelti (MY'-kul-tee) Williamson is 64. Actor Patricia Heaton is 63. Sen. Tina Smith, D-Minn., is 63. Actor Steven Weber is 60. Rock musician Jason Newsted is 58. Actor Stacy Edwards is 56. Rapper Grand Puba is 55. Rock singer Evan Dando (Lemonheads) is 54. Actor Patsy Kensit is 53. Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., is

53. Gay rights activist Chaz Bono is 52. Actor Andrea Bendewald is 51. Actor Nick Stabile (stah-BEEL') is 51. Country singer Jason Sellers is 50. Jazz musician Jason Marsalis is 44. Actor Jessica Heap is 38. Actor Scott Michael Foster is 36. TV personality Whitney Port is 36. Actor Audrey Esparza is 35. Actor Margo Harshman is 35. Actor Josh Bowman is 33. Actor Andrea Bowen is 31. Actor Jenna Boyd is 28.

## Got a story or photos to share?

Got a story to share? A favorite memory of your AP days? Don't keep them to yourself. Share with your colleagues by sending to Ye Olde Connecting Editor. And don't forget to include photos!

Here are some suggestions:

- **Second chapters** - You finished a great career. Now tell us about your second (and third and fourth?) chapters of life.
- **Spousal support** - How your spouse helped in supporting your work during your AP career.
- **My most unusual story** - tell us about an unusual, off the wall story that you covered.
- **"A silly mistake that you make"** - a chance to 'fess up with a memorable mistake in your journalistic career.
- **Multigenerational AP families** - profiles of families whose service spanned two or more generations.
- **Volunteering** - benefit your colleagues by sharing volunteer stories - with ideas on such work they can do themselves.
- **First job** - How did you get your first job in journalism?
- **Connecting "selfies"** - a word and photo self-profile of you and your career, and what you are doing today. Both for new members and those who have been with us a while.
- **Most unusual** place a story assignment took you.



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