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## Connecting

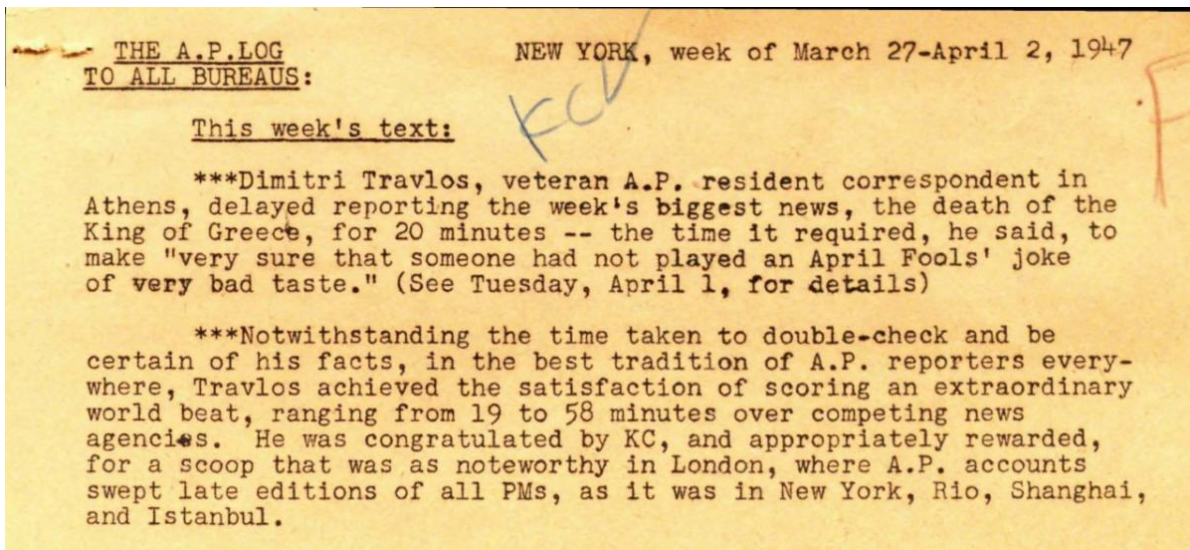
April 01, 2021

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TUESDAY, April 1--AP Correspondent Dimitri Travlos...April Fools Day...the death of a king...20 minutes...one of the great beats in AP history.

Dimitri Travlos, long regarded as one of the great reporters in the turbulent Balkans, listened to an excited voice when he picked up his phone in the Athens bureau this morning. "I was informed the King is dead", sputtered the voice which didn't identify itself. "I've been to the palace and have seen for myself. He's dead!" The caller hung up.

Travlos thought he recognized the voice as that of an old friend and colleague, now prominent in Greek politics. It was a beat! It was--and then the man with long AP experience and with many a beat to his credit thought again. He wasn't positive. It was April Fools' Day. Could someone be playing a cruel April Fool joke?

To his everlasting credit, Travlos held the bulletin. He began a search for the man he thought had phoned him. Minutes clicked by and he grew more frantic. Still he held the tremendous story of the unexpected death of King George II of Greece. Finally after 20 minutes that must have seemed a lifetime, he got confirmation of the death from the wife of a cabinet minister.

Travlos banged out the bulletin urgent to London which hustled it to New York. The relay time took another 19 minutes, exceptionally fast service, and despite all the delays Travlos and the AP had hung up a memorable beat. The one-line bulletin, timed off on the AAA wire at 9:19 a.m., was 19 to 58 minutes ahead of all agencies. Taking full advantage of the early start, the New York Foreign Desk rolled out leads, backgrounds and sidebars that gave AP members approximately 600 words, plus quick reaction from Washington, before domestic opposition had a line from Athens.

Illustrations courtesy AP Corporate Archives

Colleagues,

Good Thursday morning on this the first day of April 2021,

Being wary of being pranked on April Fool's Day is nothing new for AP journalists - all journalists, for that matter - around the world.

Our colleague **Francesca Pitaro** dug into the AP Archives and brings you these items from the AP past about wary reporters double-checking stories because it was April Fool's Day.

Congratulations to our colleague **Bill Sikes (Email)**, AP New England photo editor who will retire Friday from 46 years in journalism, including 22 with the AP. A retirement Zoom call was held in his honor Wednesday and an account is included in today's Connecting.

Bill has been New England photo editor since 2005 and earlier worked seven years in the Buffalo bureau. His newspaper resume includes The Kansas City Star, The Florida Times-Union, The Hartford Courant and Orlando Sentinel. His parting words to his colleagues:

*"For those who remain at AP or elsewhere in journalism, always remember that the people you cover and the people who are our customers are the reason we do all this. For their benefit, be rigorously skeptical, be rigorously honest, be rigorously thorough and be yourself."*

Have a great day – be wary, be safe, stay healthy!

Paul

## Musburger Fired? On April Fool's Day? Nah!

By RICHARD ROSENBLATT  
New York Sports

Brent Musburger fired?

Yeah, right.

I was ready for something like this. April Fool's Day wasn't going to make a fool of The Associated Press, at least not if I could help it.

As the national sports supervisor on April 1, I walked into the office on alert. For years, media have fallen prey to professional hoaxers, all of whom view April 1 as the high, holy day.

With that knowledge, I began compiling the sports digest. Within hours, the alarm sounded.

Ron Blum, the Sports on TV writer who this day was the rewrite man, took a call from Susan Kerr, CBS Sports spokeswoman. Ron has dealt with Ms. Kerr and believed it was she.

Ms. Kerr was calling from Denver, where the media had massed for the next day's NCAA basketball championship game between UNLV and Duke — on CBS.

She read a short statement that said Musburger's contract was not being renewed and his last assignment would be calling the title game.

Blum began writing an urgent while I called Denver to alert our sports crew to what might be happening.

Then the nagging questions: Brent fired? The day before a big event? With no warning? And why would Ms. Kerr call us in New York when hundreds of reporters were in the same hotel in Denver?

"Let's get back to her, get her to FAX the release," I said. "I want more confirmation. Get Brent on the phone. Get (CBS Sports president Neal) Pilson."

We got Ms. Kerr and again she confirmed the story. So did Robin Brendle, another CBS spokeswoman. "I swear, it's not an April Fool's joke. It's true," another CBS PR person said.

"FAX me the release," I said.

She did, and a bio, too.

At this point, Rick Warner, one of our reporters in Denver, was at CBS' hotel headquarters, trying to get Pilson.

Blum got through to Musburger's room and got someone who identified himself as "Tubbs." He said he'd take a message.

Tubbs called back, identifying himself as Jimmy Tubbs, Musburger's personal assistant. He read a

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### Musburger

Continued from Page 1

statement that said Brent was surprised at the news.

Blum called Brendle, who confirmed that Tubbs was Musburger's assistant.

Ms. Kerr called back: "I've got Pilson for you."

While Blum was talking to him, he signaled the story was "for real" and I moved the urgent.

It was 2:15 p.m., EDT, — 75 minutes after the first report of Musburger's dismissal.

This was no prank.

It was to almost everyone else.

First, radio stations called. From Los Angeles, St. Louis and Kansas City.

"This Brent story you guys have, it's true? It's April Fool's Day, you know," was the usual query.

"I know. It's true," I said.

Then WFAN, the all-sports radio station in New York, called:

"This isn't true about Brent, is it? You're being fooled."

"No, we're not. It's true," I said.

Then Bill Taaffe, TV writer for Sports Illustrated, called:

"That Brent story you have can't be true. I've known Brent for 20 years and I never heard of Tubbs," he said.

"Bill," I said, "we've got Pilson on the phone. He's confirmed it."

Then came the clincher.

CBS Sports in New York called:

"That's not true," said the CBS research assistant, who had gone to high school with Blum. "It's a joke. Why did you put that out? It's not real."

"Yes, it is," I said.

By 2:50 p.m., a writethru was on the wire, Warner was tracking down CBS executive producer Ted Shaker, Tubbs and other CBS executives.

The phone calls started slowing down.

### Media Mention

The Evening News, a Monday-through-Friday newspaper serving the Kansas City, Mo., metropolitan area, will begin May 14; it will be sold at newsstands, convenience stores and in newspaper racks but will have no home delivery...The Recorder in Amsterdam, N.Y., which publishes weekday afternoons and Saturday morning, will add a Sunday edition.

AP Log, April 2, 1990

## Of April Fools and leprechauns

Mark Mittelstadt ([Email](#)) - April 1 was not the only date on which journalists needed to be on the lookout for pranks.

Every March 17 Iowa AP broadcast editor Steve Daugherty would caution colleagues in the Des Moines bureau about member news contributions from radio station KEMB in Emmetsburg. The town, in far northern Iowa, was settled by immigrants during the Great Famine of Ireland between 1845 and 1852 and retained a strong Irish

background. It was named after the Dublin-born Irish nationalist Robert Emmet, who was executed at 25 for leading an 1803 rebellion against the British.

Every St. Patrick's Day, it seemed, leprechauns would take over the KEMB studio and attempt to create mischief on the AP wire. We'd get stories like a worldwide shortage of green dye for beer or wildlife officials mystified why nearby Five Island Lake suddenly had changed color (green). Daugherty usually would take the contribution with a glint in his eye and, from time to time, share it with a wee bit of Irish humor.

## Bill Sikes honored on AP retirement with Zoom call of friends, colleagues

**Cliff Schiappa** ([Email](#)) - For a moment I was wondering if I had returned to work at AP... two Zoom calls in two days! The first, on Tuesday, was the discussion of Hal Buell's book about Nick Ut "From Hell to Hollywood," which has been recounted very nicely in Wednesday's Connecting. The second call was a retirement celebration for longtime friend (since 1978), AP's New England Photo Editor Bill Sikes.

With about 100 colleagues on the call, those who spoke talked about Sikes making their jobs easier or their work better. But more notable was their thankfulness of his concern for their well-being during challenging and dangerous times. Some spoke of his deep faith, others spoke of his wise counsel, while others mentioned his strong work ethic. Naturally there was some good-natured ribbing about his driving habits or ability to use 50 words when five would suffice. But it was obvious he is beloved by many and will be missed going forward.

The call was moderated by East Region Deputy Director for Storytelling Peter Morgan and included Director of Photography J. David Ake, Deputy Director of Photography Denis Paquin, New England News Editor Bill Kole and many colleagues from around the country.

Sikes, ever the southern gentleman (his newspaper career started at his hometown Tuscaloosa News), would recount a story about each person who spoke about him on the call. He rounded out the hour by thanking a handful of deceased mentors who had a profound impact upon his 46-year career (22 at AP), including 7th Grade Teacher Mrs. Dixon, AP Atlanta Staff Photographer Joe Holloway Jr., University of Missouri Photojournalism Professor Angus MacDougall, and Florida Times-Union Director of Photography Ken Paik.

## Kate Butler joins Adweek – and reunites with two other AP alums

**Kate Butler** ([Email](#)) - I've joined Adweek as Head of Editorial Product & Engagement. It's a new job that works across the Editorial and Product teams at Adweek, working closely with the Chief Content Officer and Chief Product Officer. I get to reunite with a

couple other AP alums – Dave Saabye, who is CPO, and Jeff Litvack, who is Adweek CEO.

I love that I get to work with the editorial team on stories and content strategy and still work with Products on product and customer engagement ideas. A lot of my focus at the moment is Adweek newsletters, growing the business, and a mentoring group we've started.

A fun next act after leaving AP as Vice President – Engagement. It was great working with Nancy Nussbaum and Bridget Forrester to create the new customer engagement program.

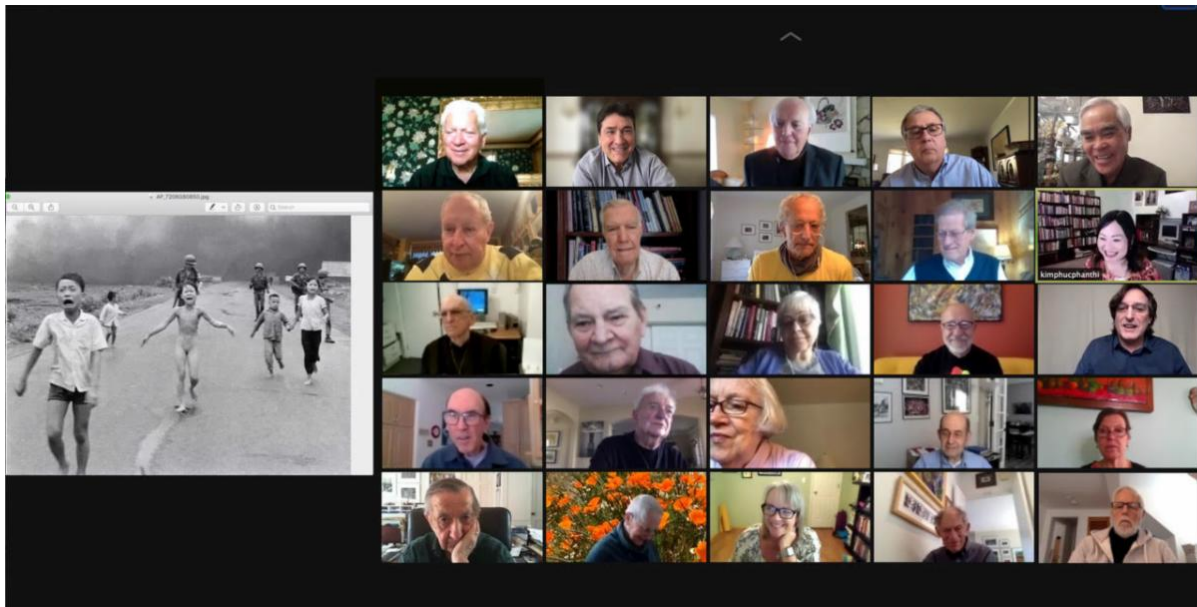
I was lucky as VP Membership to follow in the steps of some great journalists and stewards of AP, including Wick Temple and Sue Cross. And I had such wonderful colleagues! We had so many great experiences dealing with the cast of characters that are AP's members. (Though I left to others dealing with that demanding VP-News at MediaNews Dave Butler!)

Too many great memories to pick a favorite, although I recall the time in LA Anthony Marquez and I were driving back from a visit. A huge truck swerved toward us and Anthony deftly but only barely avoided a horrible crash.

Anthony had a wicked sense of humor. As we gathered ourselves, he said he was motivated by fear of figuring out which was worse -- having to tell Don Deibler he'd wrecked an AP vehicle or tell Sue Cross he'd totaled both a vehicle and a VP Membership. Thankfully, the car and both of us made it safely back to the bureau. I had joined AP as ACOB in LA, and Anthony was my first AP boss. He was wonderful and I still miss him.



## More on Nick Ut book Zoom call



**Rob Kozloff (Email)** - Thanks so much for helping make this happen. Really a great afternoon and wonderful to see everyone too. With apologies...meant to send this Tuesday with note. Can't get everyone in, but this is as Kim joined the call, what a wonderful surprise.

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**Marcus Eliason (Email)** - Thanks for the marvelous Zoom session. It was great to be online with the giants of my AP past. I haven't fully mastered Zoom so I couldn't contribute, but for me, the faces and voices I saw yesterday reminded me how fortunate I was to work for AP, and for such wonderful newsfolks.

The event reminded me of an anecdote which I shared with Chris Sullivan. He suggested I offer it to Connecting:

Horst Faas was not just a photo guy through and through; he was also a stickler for the AP's interests, especially when it came to keeping costs down.

You'll recall that in 1986 Reagan bombed Libya. This led the Libyan ruler, Col. Khadafy, to do something unheard of -- he let in the foreign media to expose the evils of America. The scribes were even allowed to set up a 24/7 live phone line from Tripoli into the London bureau's radio studio.

The circus dragged on for a while, and inevitably the press started wandering out to the countryside to look into matters which Kadafy considered did not serve his purposes, and soon enough he expelled the reporters.

As the exodus began, I arrived for work in the London bureau where I found Horst, chief of photos, rolling up the Tripoli wire. I expected to hear of the cruel expulsion of the world media, but Horst was elated. "Thank God!" he growled to me. "That bloody phone line was costing us a fortune!"

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**Lynne Harris (Email)** - Just wanted to add my thank you for sponsoring the Zoom panel on Tuesday for Hal's book. It was fascinating and informative...what a great way to spend an afternoon.

## More on use of the word 'crisis'

**Henry Bradsher (Email)** - The recent discussion of using the word "crisis" raises interesting questions about what the word is supposed to mean.

Now days, as decided by AP, it means something different than its first recorded meaning in 1543 AD, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. That says the point of recovery or death from disease, or a sudden turning point in a disease. In 1603 it was also used for a conjunction of planets that determined the issue of a disease or a critical point in the course of events (any interesting planetary conjunctions seen over the Mexican border immigration problem?).

Then in 1607 crisis was first used for a vitally important or decisive stage in the progress of anything. Ah, Ha! That seems to be the current implication, important if not decisive.

The varied meanings have stuck in my mind since a panel of history professors at the University of Missouri gave me a hard time about it in 1952. To achieve distinction in history for my bachelor of arts degree (earned separately in addition to my bachelor of journalism degree), I had researched and written a 308-page thesis on "The Ethiopian Crisis, 1934 – 1936," about the failed attempt of the League of Nations to halt Mussolini's seizure of Ethiopia.

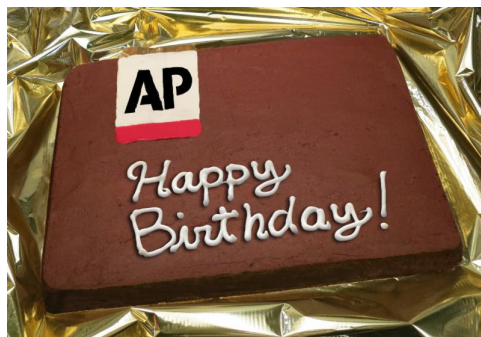
Was that a crisis?, the professors asked. Was it a turning point? Well, I contended, it was for the League, a failure to act effectively that presaged its inability to halt Hitler's drift to war. Anyway, they accepted my thesis, crisis or not.

## AP sighting



Shared by Hank Ackerman

## Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



Patrick Casey - [patrick.casey@live.com](mailto:patrick.casey@live.com)

Marcus Eliason - [lordcopper@gmail.com](mailto:lordcopper@gmail.com)

## Stories of interest



## ***An unwelcome prank: Volkswagen purposely hoodwinks reporters*** (AP)

By DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — Journalists are used to being wary about odd pranksters pulling April Fool's Day hoaxes at this time of year. Few expect it from a multi-billion dollar corporation.

Volkswagen admitted Tuesday that it had put out a false news release saying that it had changed the name of its U.S. subsidiary to "Volkswagen of America" in an attempt to be funny and promote a new electric utility vehicle.

Several news organizations, including The Associated Press, USA Today, CNBC and The Washington Post, had reported the original press release as real news, some after being assured specifically that it was no joke.

The deception even briefly lifted stock prices for the company, according to The Wall Street Journal, which first revealed the deception by reaching an official at the company headquarters in Germany.

"The Associated Press was repeatedly assured by Volkswagen that its U.S. subsidiary planned a name change, and reported that information, which we now know to be false," company spokeswoman Lauren Easton said. "We have corrected our story and published a new one based on the company's admission. This and any deliberate release of false information hurts accurate journalism and the public good."

The story emerged Monday after a news release was briefly posted on a company website and then disappeared, but not before catching some eyes. CNBC, which declined comment on the hoax, is believed to be the first major news organization to report it as legitimate news.

Read more [here](#).

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## ***E&P's 25 Under 35 2021: The Next Gen of News Professionals***

Nu Yang and Evelyn Mateos

The news industry encountered some dark times last year as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our newsrooms profoundly. Yet for many news professionals, their resilience never swayed. In particular, our young leaders are now more motivated than ever to press forward and continue the important mission of preserving the success and future of journalism.

This year's list of 25 Under 35 features men and women who all believe in that same mission. As you learn about them, be confident that the future of our industry is in

good hands.

(in alphabetical order by last name)

Read more [here](#).

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## ***Diversifying newsrooms requires buy-in and commitment to goals*** (Quill)

By Rod Hicks

A goal of American newspaper editors to achieve newsroom diversity that matched the racial and ethnic diversity of the country was considered so ambitious they set the deadline more than two decades out.

Twenty years after the deadline, the goal still hasn't been met, but the urgent need to do so remains, highlighted by the recent Atlanta-area killings of eight people, six of them women of Asian descent.

To best cover the story, news organizations needed staffers familiar with Korean and Chinese customs and culture who could speak the languages and were aware that hate incidents against Asian Americans, including verbal abuse, violence and online harassment, soared during the past year.

The Asian American Journalists Association pulled together guidance for journalists covering the story that included a caution to avoid words and expressions that could "fuel the hypersexualization of Asian women." It later produced a video on how to pronounce the Chinese- and Korean-language names of the victims.

Read more [here](#).

## **Today in History - April 1, 2021**



## By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, April 1, the 91st day of 2021. There are 274 days left in the year. This is April Fool's Day.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On April 1, 1954, the United States Air Force Academy was established by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

### On this date:

In 1789, the U.S. House of Representatives held its first full meeting in New York; Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania was elected the first House speaker.

In 1933, Nazi Germany staged a daylong national boycott of Jewish-owned businesses.

In 1945, American forces launched the amphibious invasion of Okinawa during World War II. (U.S. forces succeeded in capturing the Japanese island on June 22.)

In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon signed a measure banning cigarette advertising on radio and television, to take effect after Jan. 1, 1971.

In 1972, the first Major League Baseball players' strike began; it lasted 12 days.

In 1975, with Khmer Rouge guerrillas closing in, Cambodian President Lon Nol resigned and fled into exile, spending the rest of his life in the United States.

In 1976, Apple Computer was founded by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne.

In 1977, the U.S. Senate followed the example of the House of Representatives by adopting, 86-9, a stringent code of ethics requiring full financial disclosure and limits on outside income.

In 1984, Marvin Gaye was shot to death by his father, Marvin Gay (correct), Sr. in Los Angeles, the day before the recording star's 45th birthday. (The elder Gay pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and received probation.)

In 1987, in his first speech on the AIDS epidemic, President Ronald Reagan told doctors in Philadelphia, "We've declared AIDS public health enemy no. 1."

In 1992, the National Hockey League Players' Association went on its first-ever strike, which lasted 10 days.

In 2003, American troops entered a hospital in Nasiriyah (nah-sih-REE'-uh), Iraq, and rescued Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who had been held prisoner since her unit was ambushed on March 23.

Ten years ago: Afghans angry over the burning of a Quran at a small Florida church stormed a U.N. compound in northern Afghanistan, killing seven foreigners, including

four Nepalese guards.

Five years ago: World leaders ended a nuclear security summit in Washington by declaring progress in safeguarding nuclear materials sought by terrorists and wayward nations, even as President Barack Obama acknowledged the task was far from finished.

One year ago: President Donald Trump acknowledged that the federal stockpile of personal protective equipment used by doctors and nurses was nearly depleted, and he warned of some “horrific” days ahead for the country. Resisting calls to issue a national stay-at-home order, Trump said he wanted to give governors “flexibility” to respond to the coronavirus. Under growing pressure, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis joined his counterparts in more than 30 states in issuing a stay-at-home order. Navy officials struggling to quarantine crew members in the face of an outbreak on a U.S. aircraft carrier said nearly 3,000 sailors would be taken off of the USS Theodore Roosevelt in Guam. Grand Canyon National Park joined some other national parks in shutting down indefinitely in an effort to prevent the spread of the virus. England’s Wimbledon tennis tournament was canceled for the first time since World War II.

Today’s Birthdays: Actor Jane Powell is 92. Actor Don Hastings is 87. Actor Ali MacGraw is 82. R&B singer Rudolph Isley is 82. Reggae singer Jimmy Cliff is 73. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito is 71. Rock musician Billy Currie (Ultravox) is 71. Actor Annette O’Toole is 69. Movie director Barry Sonnenfeld is 68. Singer Susan Boyle is 60. Actor Jose Zuniga is 59. Country singer Woody Lee is 53. Actor Jessica Collins is 50. Rapper-actor Method Man is 50. Movie directors Albert and Allen Hughes are 49. Political commentator Rachel Maddow is 48. Former tennis player Magdalena Maleeva is 46. Actor David Oyelowo (oh-YEHLOH’-oh) is 45. Actor JJ Field is 43. Singer Bijou Phillips is 41. Actor Sam Huntington is 39. Comedian-actor Taran Killam is 39. Actor Matt Lanter is 38. Actor Josh Zuckerman is 36. Country singer Hillary Scott (Lady A) is 35. Rock drummer Arejay Hale (Halestorm) is 34. Actor Asa Butterfield is 24. Actor Tyler Wladis is 11.

## 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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