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Connecting November 22, 2021

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Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this Nov. 22, 2021,

I am sorry to report that our colleague and my friend **Mercer G. Bailey** – one of the most widely known names in The Associated Press during his 47-year career - has died at the age of 94.

Mercer was just 17 when he began his AP career in the Atlanta bureau. Over the next half century (with two years away for Army service), he climbed the ladder to be a statehouse reporter, sports writer, General Desk editor, supervisory correspondent and finally assistant chief of bureau in one of AP's largest bureaus. He died Saturday from complications of COVID-19.

Connecting, of late, has been sharing your stories of writing preparedness obituaries and when their father's health began failing a couple months ago, Mercer's daughters asked if I could help with putting together his obituary. I worked indirectly for Mercer when in St. Louis and Wichita, and we were a team when he was assistant chief of bureau in Kansas City and I came there as chief of bureau.

I hope you will take time to share a favorite story of working with Mercer. And if you'd like to drop a note to his family, you can do so through his daughter **Lynn Kruse** at – lkruise04@gmail.com

Today marks the 58th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas – and our colleague **Doug Tucker** ([Email](#)) shared this:

The Kennedy assassination was a defining and, I believe, unifying moment for all of us who were old enough on that day to know what happened.

For our parents' generation, it was Pearl Harbor. For our children's generation, it was 9/11.

It was President Kennedy's assassination for us. That is the moment we all can recall with startling clarity where we were, who we were with, what we were doing, how we felt and what we thought.

The whole thing has always fascinated me. Been to the Texas School Book Depository three times. I did a story on the 40th anniversary, interviewing prominent sports figures in the KC area. Just as I figured, everybody I talked to remembered the moment and the day as though it had happened that morning. And they all enjoyed telling me all about it.



Got a thought to share on what Doug had to say? Please send it along.

Here's to a great week ahead – be safe, stay healthy!

Paul

Mercer Bailey dies: A teacher and witness to history over 47-year AP career



Mercer G. Bailey, a journalist with The Associated Press for 47 years who helped develop the careers of many AP staffers and witnessed the movement of news from Morse Code and Teletype printers to the satellite and internet, died Saturday (Nov. 20, 2021) at the age of 94.

He died at Belton (Mo.) Regional Medical Center from complications of COVID-19, his family said.

He is survived by his wife Rosalee Ann Walker Bailey, whom he married in 1992; daughters Marcia Jeanne Bailey of Fairway, Kan., and Lynn Bailey Kruse (Kevin) of Overland Park, Kan.; grandchildren Alison Jeanne Kruse of Manhattan, N.Y., and Austin Joseph Kruse of Overland Park, Kan.; and stepchildren Steve Walker of Kansas City Mo., Leanne Barry (Jim) of Lake Winnebago, Mo., Mary Walker of Raymore, Mo., and grandchildren Jason Nickles, Lauren Walker and Katie Walker.

Bailey was preceded in death by his first wife Jeanne Hand Bailey, who died in 1987; his father Guy Hunter Bailey and mother Frances Corrine Bailey; sister Dorothy (Dot) Bailey Stanton; brother John Wesley Bailey, and stepson David Walker.

Mercer Guy Bailey was born Nov. 29, 1926, in West Palm Beach, Fla. He was 17 years old when he joined The Associated Press in its Atlanta bureau in May of

1943 and also worked in Mobile, Ala. After service with the U.S. Army in post-war Japan in 1945-47, he returned to AP as news editor in Montgomery, Ala., where in covering politics, he met a freshman state legislator named George Wallace.

He returned to Atlanta in 1948 and over the ensuing years was a regional sports writer, covering major events across the South including the Masters, college football bowl games and interviewing such figures as Bobby Jones, Arnold Palmer and Bear Bryant. It was while on assignment in Miami that Bailey met Jeanne Hand who he married in 1957.



He was promoted to the General Desk at AP Headquarters in New York City in 1963 and among top editors he worked with at 50 Rockefeller Plaza was Louis D. Boccardi, who later became president and chief executive of the AP, the world's largest and oldest news organization. Today, it delivers news to more than 15,000 news outlets around the globe.

At the time of Bailey's retirement, Boccardi said, "Mercer symbolizes some of the AP's finest traditions, a tough, demanding news instinct, unquenchable enthusiasm for his work, high standards and an affection bordering on love for AP and its place in the news stream."



Bailey worked in New York for five years before his appointment in 1968 as St. Louis correspondent. He was promoted in 1970 to assistant chief of bureau in Kansas City, helping oversee AP news operations in Kansas and Missouri, and served in that position until his retirement in 1990.

His dedication was exemplified in 1981 when the skywalks at the Hyatt Hotel in Kansas City collapsed, killing and injuring more than 200 people, Bailey was hospitalized at the time for treatment of a painful arthritic condition but he climbed out of bed and hurried to the emergency room to interview survivors.

"What amazes me about Mercer is how he started in an era of Morse Code and Teletypes and yet stayed in the vanguard of all the technological advances that have made the AP what it is today - the world's news leader," said Paul Stevens, who was Kansas City chief of bureau during the last six years of Bailey's career. "He loved the AP, was highly protective of keeping the news report unbiased and strong, and advanced the careers of many, including mine."

Your experiences writing preparedness obituaries

Myron Belkind (Email) – Teaching the art of writing obituary preparedness profiles serves as one of my lectures each term in the News Writing and Reporting class I have taught at George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs since 2005, following my retirement from the AP.

After the lecture, we have a brainstorming session when the students select the subjects they will write about for the profile assignment, as per the following instructions:

Preparedness obituary: Gather information from published material (news clips or magazines and online sources) about a prominent person (celebrity, politician, educator, cultural figure or sports star) who is still alive. Write an advanced preparedness obituary, **including comments with some direct quotes the person has made and comments by others about the person.** The obituary should be 500-600 words long. Use past tense verbs, since the obituary will be used when the person dies, except when using direct quotes. At the start of the obituary, type in the following phrase at the top of page one:

ADVANCE OBITUARY PREPAREDNESS MATERIAL. DO NOT USE UNTIL THERE IS CONFIRMATION OF THE PERSON'S DEATH.

The advance obituary should be written so that when the person dies, all the newspaper has to do is write one or two paragraphs about the news of the death, the circumstances and the time element. Then the editors on duty would use your obituary preparedness from the second or third paragraph.

The purpose of this exercise is to concentrate on writing a feature profile obituary about the subject's life, not details of how he/she died. Use normal attribution to identify the sources of the material you use in the preparedness obituary. For instance, if quotes are taken from an interview the subject gave to *The GW Hatchet* or *The Washington Post*, attribute those quotes to the publication where they originally appeared.

Gather your material from at least two different sources and attribute them in your article.

Remember: As Deborah Howell, the late former ombudsman of The Washington Post, wrote in her 2006 column that I will distribute to the class: *"Good news obituaries make the dead come alive. Obituaries are short life stories."*

Or as obituary writer Patricia Sullivan was quoted in the same column: *"Once we get past the first paragraph, we are re-creating a life, not writing about a death."*

For the purpose of this exercise, you won't be writing the first paragraph that gives details of how someone died. Instead, your preparedness profile will in effect be written from the second or third paragraph, the starting point for re-creating someone's life.

Lastly, be sure to include the full birthdate of the subject of your preparedness.

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Dan Sewell ([Email](#)) - My most memorable obit prep experience was working on one for the 1960s segregationist Lester Maddox in Atlanta. There were some gaps in our files, so I arranged to interview him.

Sipping coffee in the parlor of his modest home, he answered a couple questions and then asked me one: "Mis-tuh Sewell, you're writing my obituary, aren't you?"

I stammered a bit about getting the history right for our files, and then we had a pleasant, long interview.

He was more complex than the caricature of the restaurant owner who chased away Black protesters with a pickaxe handle, later integrating some state positions as governor.

He said he kept in touch with the Rev. Hosea Williams, a Black civil rights leader who had become increasingly outspoken in later years.

We set up a joint interview at Atlanta's iconic Varsity Restaurant, which produced an AP story on these two throwbacks to a bitter past still around and active as Atlanta was trying to emphasize its "New South" image for the 1996 Olympic Games it would host.

Maddox died about seven years later.

My last “preparedness” before retiring in July was on Jerry Springer, the former Cincinnati mayor turned king of “trash TV.”

He’s only 11 years older than me, so we’ll see if I get to read it on the wire!

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Marc Wilson ([Email](#)) - Martha Mitchell, the outspoken wife of Attorney General John Mitchell whose criticism of President Nixon contributed to his demise, was buried in her hometown of Pine Bluff, Ark., in June 1976.

AP staffer Bill Simmons covered her internment and called in notes to me on the rewrite desk in the Little Rock bureau. As I recall the lead to the A-Wire story, under Bill’s byline read:

“PINE BLUFF, Ark. -- Martha Mitchell was buried today in her hometown under towering elms and next to a wreath of white chrysanthemums that said ‘Martha was right.’”

As I recall, the story got great play.

Connecting mailbox

Time zone story good for my mental health

Bruce Handler ([Email](#)) - What a delight to read the time zone story (Nov. 19)!

I’m getting old. Too much Bannon, McCarthy, reconciliation, gas prices, murder trials, sinking island nations, CRT, Myanmar, lucha libre on airplanes and such is not good for my mental health.

Yeah, yeah, that stuff is important, but I’m looking forward to more time zone-like stories in Connecting!

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A note from Bob Thomas’ daughter

Janet Thomas ([Email](#)) - *daughter of Bob Thomas* - I enjoyed seeing the mention of my late father Bob Thomas and the obituaries which he contributed to before his passing. I’m admittedly slightly biased but I thought my father was #1 interviewer and Hollywood historian!

It is always such a delight to hear my father's words come alive in the written word of an obituary! I can hear my father's voice in my head as I read his words about the lives of Harry Dean Stanton, Ed Asner, Alex Trebek, Debbie Reynolds, and countless others. He always had a knack of getting to the essence of their personalities and talents.



I just wish that a credit be given to my late father Bob Thomas for his personal stories about Hollywood personalities which appear in obituaries. It's sad to me when I read in our local paper ("The Times Colonist" out of Victoria, British Columbia) and see a whole page spread with photos and wonderful quotes written by my father. But there is no credit given. Is there any way to change that?

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On taxpayer funding of news media

Mike Rouse ([Email](#)) - Praise for Arlon Southall and Ed McCullough for sharing their opposition to taxpayer funding of news media (Connecting, Nov. 19). I hope the AP's refusal to comment isn't an indication that it is considering participation.

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All the News that's Fit to Parse

Ed McCullough ([Email](#)) - Re "Jury finds Rittenhouse not guilty in Kenosha shootings": How would AP's story last Friday have looked if race, politics, selective use of one-sided context or comparisons with unrelated cases had been edited out, tempered or better explained?

Rittenhouse was acquitted not because he pleaded self-defense but because the jury believed him - or at least believed that the prosecution had failed to prove its case.

Any "flashpoint" in the national "debate" might have included self-defense. Guns, vigilantism and racial injustice were not on trial except perhaps in the courts of "woke" public opinion and advocacy journalism.

Rittenhouse is white, the jury "overwhelmingly" white, the victims white. Jacob Blake is Black, Wisconsin's lieutenant governor is Black. If race truly were essential to point out, why was that tag not on every person in the story?

Former Republican Gov. Scott Walker is identified as "on the right," whatever that may mean unexplained; while no intention-signaling classifier is applied to Democratic

Gov. Tony Evers who also commented.

"Civil rights activists" are given space to allege racial justice "double standards," no specific relationship to the Rittenhouse verdict provided. Lt. Gov. Mandala Barnes is quoted as questioning the jury's verdict and claiming that the judge "virtually demanded" acquittal, which he had not.

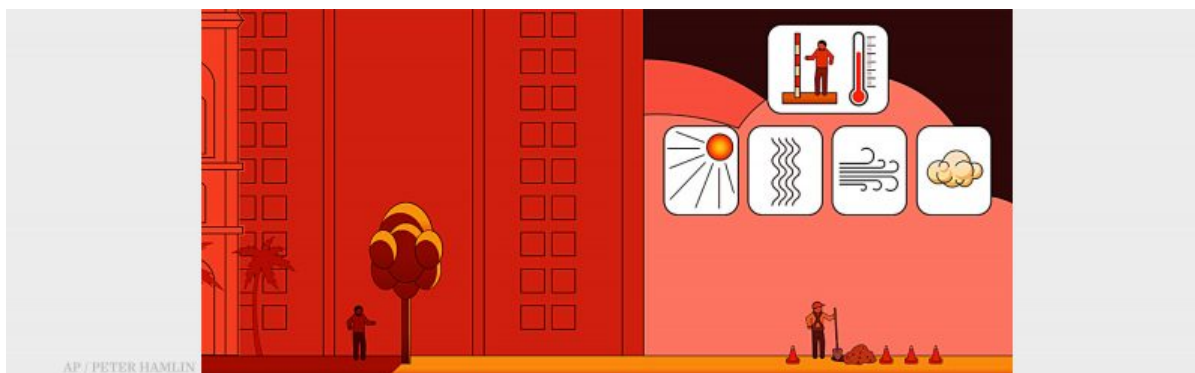
Gov. Evers ordered 500 National Guard members "to stand ready in case of trouble after the verdict." The story never explained where unrest was expected to come from. Presumably not the citizens of Kenosha, the government, nor supporters of the Second Amendment, Rittenhouse, or citizens' right to self-defense. Context also was absent as to why Evers this time would call out the National Guard to forestall possible demonstrations when in the summer of 2020 actual "demonstrators" (read: "arsonists") were allowed to burn down parts of Kenosha.

Compare the Rittenhouse story to AP coverage of violent protests on Friday in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. No reference to race, politics, one-sided context nor comparisons with unrelated cases. Just facts about what happened in a volatile scenario where citizens violently disagreed about a public issue (in the Rotterdam case, that government's Covid restrictions).

Shouldn't objective, non-partisan and even-handed news media have similar standards of coverage for similar events?

Best of the Week

At the intersection of population growth and extreme heat, AP interactive brings global climate data to life



Data journalist Nicky Forster and science writer Drew Costley worked for months producing an immersive interactive that takes readers on a tour of the globe, visualizing how and where exposure to extreme heat is escalating and its impact on population centers.

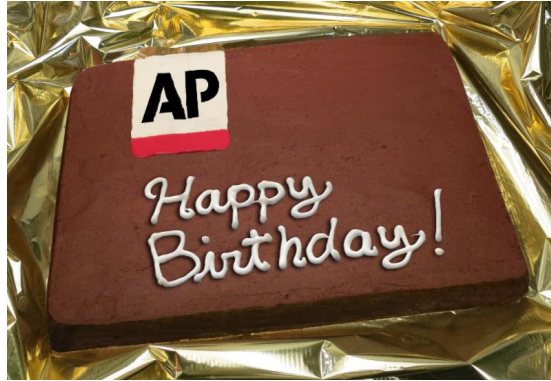
The project got underway after Forster secured early access to historical data from Columbia University, the European Union and the University of California, Santa Barbara, tracking both population growth and a metric — wet-bulb globe temperature

— that gauges the impact of extreme heat on human health by taking into account factors such as wind speed and cloud cover.

The AP analysis found that between 1983 and 2016, exposure to dangerous heat tripled and now affects about a quarter of the world's population. The most affected region, by far, was southern Asia, where India alone accounted for 37% of the population living in areas with an increasing extreme heat trend.

Read more [here](#).

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



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Stories of interest

Fox says it did not pay for Rittenhouse film and interview (AP)

By DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — A Fox News executive said Saturday the network did not pay Kyle Rittenhouse's family for any special access during Rittenhouse's murder trial or after his acquittal, after it was announced that he would speak to Tucker Carlson for an interview to air on Monday.

The comment came after Rittenhouse's trial attorney, Mark Richards, said that a Fox documentary crew was embedded with Rittenhouse's team against his wishes. Richards told The Associated Press on Saturday that he didn't think the filming was appropriate and that he had tossed the crew out of meetings several times.

“It was not approved by me, but I’m not always in control,” he told the AP. “I think it detracted from what we were trying to do, and that was obviously to get Kyle found not guilty.”

Richards, to the AP and in similar remarks to CNN on Friday night, said it was arranged by those who were raising money for Rittenhouse, though he did not say that Fox paid Rittenhouse.

Read more [here](#).

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Two Fox News Contributors Quit in Protest of Tucker Carlson’s Jan. 6 Special (New York Times)

By Ben Smith

The trailer for Tucker Carlson’s special about the Jan. 6 mob at the Capitol landed online on Oct. 27, and that night Jonah Goldberg sent a text to his business partner, Stephen Hayes: “I’m tempted just to quit Fox over this.”

“I’m game,” Mr. Hayes replied. “Totally outrageous. It will lead to violence. Not sure how we can stay.”

The full special, “Patriot Purge,” appeared on Fox’s online subscription streaming service days later. And last week, the two men, both paid Fox News contributors, finalized their resignations from the network.

In some ways, their departures should not be surprising: It’s simply part of the new right’s mopping up operation in the corners of conservative institutions that still house pockets of resistance to Donald J. Trump’s control of the Republican Party. Mr. Goldberg, a former National Review writer, and Mr. Hayes, a former Weekly Standard writer, were stars of the pre-Trump conservative movement. They clearly staked out their positions in 2019 when they founded The Dispatch, an online publication that they described as “a place that thoughtful readers can come for conservative, fact-based news and commentary.” It now has nearly 30,000 paying subscribers.

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

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On Guard in Asheville (the Assembly)

By Jim Morrill

The view from the deck stretches past a wall of changing trees to the jagged ridge of the Blue Ridge mountains. On a rainy afternoon in October, the sun had just begun teasing its way through the clouds.

Tucked in the hills of north Asheville, the deck is at the home of Sally Kestin and her husband, Bob Gremillion. They were joined that day by three other retired journalists, transforming the deck into a sort of newsroom for a digital venture that's not only filling gaps in western North Carolina journalism, but trying to become a model in the state's rapidly changing media environment.

Kestin and Gremillion started the Asheville Watchdog in early 2020. It focuses on in-depth news stories and investigative journalism. But what separates it from other media startups is its staff. Most are in their 60s and 70s. All retired to the area, most met randomly, and all work for free. And like a gray-haired Justice League, they each bring their own special skills and accomplishments.

Between them they've won three Pulitzer Prizes and were finalists for another three. One reporter was editor of the Miami Herald. One worked for The New York Times. Another for NPR and London's Financial Times. Gremillion was a top Tribune Company executive and publisher of two of its papers. Kestin was an investigative reporter in south Florida. She calls the staff "this mighty band of volunteers."

"We're all journalists," she says. "It's in our blood."

Read more [here](#). Shared by Richard Chady.

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Sony Electronics Becomes Camera Provider for USA TODAY NETWORK (Fstoppers)

by Jason Vinson

Sony has become one of the most popular brands amongst professionals and now one of the largest news organizations in the world will exclusively equip their video and photojournalists with Sony cameras. Gannet Co. Inc., operator of the US TODAY NETWORK, has recently sealed a deal with Sony Electronics. For those unfamiliar, Gannet is an award-winning news organization with more than 250 national and local media outlets. Their work alone reaches more than 150 million people per day and they cover more than 10,000 events each year.

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



Celebrating AP's 175th

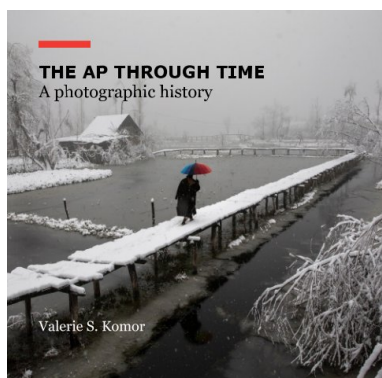
AP store for 175th, vintage merchandise



The AP has created a store with 175th anniversary merchandise available for purchase, as well as items branded with some of AP's most historic logos.

Click [Here](#).

AP Through Time: A Photographic History



AP Through Time: A Photographic History" - created by Director of Corporate Archives, Valerie Komor, is a keepsake commemorating AP's 175th year. Small in size (6 ¾ x 6 ¾ in.), it is organized chronologically in eight segments that trace the broad outlines of AP's development from 1846 to the present: Beginnings, Evolution, New Century, Modernity, Expansion, One World, Speed, and Transformation. Click [here](#) to view and make an order.

Today in History - Nov. 22, 2021



By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Nov. 22, the 326th day of 2021. There are 39 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 22, 1963, John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, was shot to death during a motorcade in Dallas; Texas Gov. John B. Connally, riding in the same car as Kennedy, was seriously wounded. Suspected gunman Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as president.

On this date:

In 1718, English pirate Edward Teach — better known as “Blackbeard” — was killed during a battle off present-day North Carolina.

In 1906, the “S-O-S” distress signal was adopted at the International Radio Telegraphic Convention in Berlin.

In 1914, the First Battle of Ypres (EE'-pruh) during World War I ended with an Allied victory against Germany.

In 1935, a flying boat, the China Clipper, took off from Alameda, California, carrying more than 100,000 pieces of mail on the first trans-Pacific airmail flight.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek (chang ky-shehk) met in Cairo to discuss measures for defeating Japan.

In 1967, the U.N. Security Council approved Resolution 242, which called for Israel to withdraw from territories it had captured the previous June, and implicitly called on adversaries to recognize Israel's right to exist.

In 1977, regular passenger service between New York and Europe on the supersonic Concorde began on a trial basis.

In 1990, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, having failed to win reelection to the Conservative Party leadership on the first ballot, announced she would resign.

In 1995, acting swiftly to boost the Balkan peace accord, the U.N. Security Council suspended economic sanctions against Serbia and eased the arms embargo against the states of the former Yugoslavia.

In 2005, Angela Merkel (AHN'-geh-lah MEHR'-kuhl) took power as Germany's first female chancellor.

In 2010, thousands of people stampeded during a festival in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, leaving some 350 dead and hundreds injured in what the prime minister called the country's biggest tragedy since the 1970s reign of terror by the Khmer Rouge.

In 2014, a 12-year-old Black boy, Tamir (tuh-MEER') Rice, was shot and mortally wounded by police outside a Cleveland recreation center after brandishing what turned out to be a pellet gun. (A grand jury declined to indict either the patrolman who fired the fatal shot or a training officer.)

Ten years ago: Baseball players and owners signed an agreement for a new labor contract, a deal making baseball the first North American professional major league to start blood tests for human growth hormone and expanding the playoffs to 10 teams by 2013. Ryan Braun was voted the NL MVP after helping the Milwaukee Brewers win their first division title in nearly 30 years.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama awarded the nation's highest civilian honor to 21 groundbreaking actors, musicians, athletes and others; among those receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom were Tom Hanks, Robert De Niro, Robert Redford, Michael Jordan, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Bruce Springsteen, Diana Ross, Bill and Melinda Gates, Ellen DeGeneres and broadcaster Vin Scully.

One year ago: President Donald Trump appealed a federal judge's dismissal of his campaign's effort to block the certification of votes in Pennsylvania; the judge had rejected claims of widespread irregularities with mail-in ballots. Michigan's House speaker said Trump did not ask Michigan Republican lawmakers to "break the law" or "interfere" with the election when he met with seven GOP state legislators at the White House two days earlier. Taylor Swift won her third consecutive artist of the year prize at the American Music Awards.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Michael Callan is 86. Animator and movie director Terry Gilliam is 81. Actor Tom Conti is 80. Singer Jesse Colin Young is 80. Astronaut Guion (GEYE'-uhn) Bluford is 79. International Tennis Hall of Famer Billie Jean King is 78. Rock musician-actor Steve Van Zandt (a.k.a. Little Steven) is 71. Rock musician Tina Weymouth (The Heads; Talking Heads; The Tom Tom Club) is 71. Retired MLB All-Star Greg Luzinski is 71. Rock musician Lawrence Gowan is 65. Actor Richard Kind is 65. Actor Jamie Lee Curtis is 63. Alt-country singer Jason Ringenberg (Jason & the Scorchers) is 63. Actor Mariel Hemingway is 60. Actor Winsor Harmon is 58. Actor-turned-producer Brian Robbins is 58. Actor Stephen Geoffreys is 57. Rock musician Charlie Colin is 55. Actor Nicholas Rowe is 55. Actor Mark Ruffalo is 54. International Tennis Hall of Famer Boris Becker is 54. Actor Sidse (SIH'-sa) Babett Knudsen is 53.

Country musician Chris Fryar (Zac Brown Band) is 51. Actor Josh Cooke is 42. Actor-singer Tyler Hilton is 38. Actor Scarlett Johansson is 37. Actor Jamie Campbell Bower is 33. Singer Candice Glover (TV: "American Idol") is 32. Actor Alden Ehrenreich is 32. Actor Dacre Montgomery is 27. Actor Mackenzie Lintz is 25.

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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