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Connecting November 23, 2021

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Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning on this Nov. 23, 2021,

The Inbox for today's newsletter is brimming with contributions from your colleagues – which makes Ye Olde Connecting Editor smile and thankful.

They include memories of **Mercer Bailey**, longtime Kansas City assistant bureau chief who died last Saturday, and more of your thoughts on preparedness obituaries.

This is Thanksgiving week – and is a custom of Connecting, I ask your thoughts on what you are most thankful for in your work life, past or present. I hope you have to choose from many, many candidates.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy!

Paul

Remembering Mercer Bailey



Bidding farewell to Mercer Bailey (seated) when he moved in 1968 from the New York General Desk to St. Louis to become supervisory correspondent. From left: Sam Blackman, Ralph Rhoden, Mary Kelleher, unknown, Jack Cappon, unknown, Sam Mindell, unknown, Bill Ryan, Herb Barker, Chuck Welsh, Lou Boccardi, Ken Freed.

Karen Ball (Email) - The news about Mercer is sad. The first time I met him it was like something out of central casting for a crusty curmudgeon, but he was just a big softie. I heard him grouching once that the AP would put girls prep basketball scores on the wire "over my dead body!" One of the few lunches I had with bureau retirees in recent years I teased him about that and said my daughter was a pretty good three-point shooter for her high school. He agreed it was great that times had changed

He may not have thought girls basketball was as important as boys sports, but he always supported me and promoted my career. I remember days in the KC bureau where he would hand me a choice assignment like covering John Cougar Mellencamp at a Farm Aid rally. He could've easily assigned stories like that to veterans like Craig Horst or Jerry Nachtigal but he gave women like me a chance to prove ourselves.

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Cliff Schiappa (Email) - Mercer Bailey was the first person anyone would see as they entered the newsroom of the AP bureau on Pershing Road in Kansas City, Mo. His desk was situated so he could see the comings and goings as well as a view of the entire newsroom. That perspective is most fitting for the man who had a passion for protecting the news report from any bias, while making damn sure it was accurate and well written. His thick southern-accented gravelly voice could easily convince

someone to agree with his point of view, and it was always fun to hear him good-naturedly banter on a daily (if not hourly) basis with lead office assistant Mary Veach who sat next to him.

Anyone who worked with Mercer, including myself, became a better journalist by traveling in his orbit. He and his devotion to the mission of the AP will be missed.

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John Wylie (Email) – Mercer Bailey was a fixture around The Star building during my years there (and the bureau's), 1974-'84. He always had insights into the news, and he took care of members. One particular incident stands out--I was working in a newly created starting management position that included everything from the internship program to writing two badly needed training. It also included filling in for unexpected slots on the city desk caused by illness or other emergencies. My first was on a Saturday night preparing a Sunday paper that if miss-thrown by the carrier would rip a hole in a picket fence. We got an AP story filed from the third floor about a huge fire that had destroyed a historic northwest Missouri church. A key element was missing, it was a story most needed for the state edition, and there was nary a reporter available. So I called upstairs, Mercer answered, and I explained the problem. He simply said he'd get the information back to us quickly, and we had a new lede write-through inside 20 minutes more than covering the missing info. Not only did he get us the story in plenty of time, he even called down to make sure I knew the story was filed. It was teamwork by a pro at its best, and was always a fond memory when I saw him in later years at Laura Hockaday's Star reunions.

Your experiences with preparedness obituaries

Richard Carelli (Email) - When I began covering the U.S. Supreme Court for AP in 1976, William O. Douglas was one of the retired justices who maintained an office in the court building. He had retired the previous year after a debilitating stroke. If memory serves, his obit advancer was the first one I refreshed.

On Jan. 19, 1980, a Saturday, I arrived at my AP desk in the Supreme Court building early in the morning in hopes of putting the finishing touches on getting prepared for an expected busy Monday. My workspace was adjacent to an office used by the court's police, and I overheard a conversation between two officers I knew well.

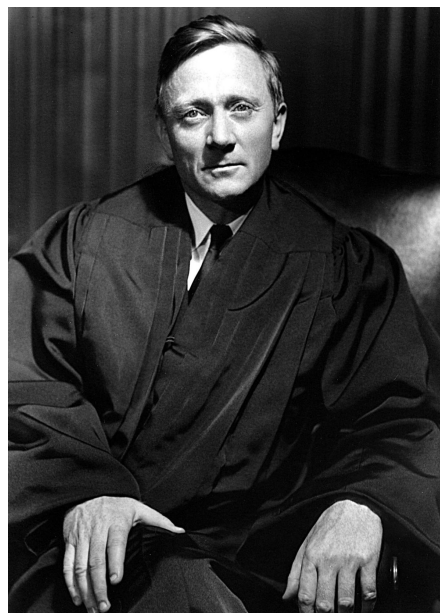
"He died this morning," one officer told the other. Stepping out into the hall, I inquired, "Who died?" It was more out of curiosity than any sense that their conversation might have been newsworthy, but when they told me it was Bill Douglas, I rushed to my telephone and called the

court's public information officer for confirmation.

"I was about to start calling reporters as soon as our statement was approved," I was told. My response: "Don't feel you have to hurry."

AP's bulletin series was way ahead of other news sources, prompting Washington Bureau Chief Jon Wolman to note, "Who knew that you do some of your best work on Saturdays?"

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Chris Carola ([Email](#)) - I wrote or contributed to many spot news obits during my time working the desk during a 31-year career at the AP bureau in Albany, N.Y. Prepared obits not so much, but there's one in particular that stands out because I'm still telling this person's story years after his passing.

Jack Wilpers, a bookie's son raised in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., played a key role in Hideki Tojo's arrest, which made global headlines in September 1945 after the former Japanese prime minister botched his suicide attempt inside his Tokyo home.

Wilpers, an Army veteran who spent the postwar years living in suburban Washington, D.C., while working for the CIA, pretty much avoided media scrutiny over the next 65 years, only ending his silence when, in February 2010, the Pentagon belatedly awarded him the Bronze Star Medal for Tojo's arrest. The Washington Post was the only major media outlet to do a story on the medal ceremony.

I had been trying for years to interview Wilpers, only to be rejected every time. Thanks to pure luck, my futility ended six months after he finally received his medal. While on vacation in Massachusetts, I happened to strike up a conversation with a man who was wearing the same Saratoga Race Course baseball cap I was wearing. That man turned out to be John Wilpers, Jack's eldest of five children, and he was vacationing with his family in the same beach town.

I told him I was an AP Albany reporter hoping to finally land an interview with his father. John, a former journalist-turned-media consultant, said he'd contact his father and let him know to expect a call.

It apparently worked, because when I called Jack Wilpers after getting back from vacation, he didn't hang up on me as he had done numerous times before. During phone interviews over the next two days, Wilpers went into detail about the day he kicked in Tojo's door just moments after the former warlord had shot himself in the chest. It was the longest Wilpers had talked to an AP reporter, or any journalist for that matter, since that day, Sept. 11, 1945.

My interview with Jack Wilpers moved on AP's national and international wires in time for the 65th anniversary of Tojo's arrest.

I kept in touch with John Wilpers, and at one point asked him for more info on his father for a prepared AP obit, given his father's prominent role in Tojo's arrest. After learning from John in February 2013 that his father was in hospice care, I completed the prepared obit on March 1, 2013. Unbeknownst to me, Jack Wilpers had died the previous night, Feb. 28. That following Monday, March 4, John sent me an email informing me of his father's passing.

Later that same day, my bylined Jack Wilpers obit moved on AP's national and international wires.

The Washington Post, Jack's hometown newspaper for the last 60-plus years of his life, initially ran my obit before publishing its own story. The New York Times did its own obit which included information and quotes from my 2010 interview with the veteran.

Since April 2017, I've been doing PowerPoint presentations for museums, historical groups and civic organizations on Jack Wilpers, using his wartime letters and photographs, along with info from my 2010 interview with him veteran and contemporary press coverage of the Tojo arrest, including AP's excellent on-the-scene reporting and photos.

My latest presentation was held this past Veterans Day, Nov. 11 (the 102nd anniversary of Jack Wilpers' birth) for the Saratoga Springs History Museum. John Wilpers made the trip over from the Boston area to attend.

After my talk, I opened the floor to questions. Before anyone could speak, John Wilpers stood up and announced to the audience that he had a presentation of his own. He then pulled a long object out of a FedEx shipping box. John explained that after talking with his four siblings and other family members, it was decided I should have the samurai sword Jack Wilpers brought home from his nearly two years in the Pacific, in appreciation for continuing to share his story with the public.

In the photo of us (above) holding the sword at the museum, we're both wearing the same Saratoga racetrack giveaway hats we wore that day we met by chance on the beach in Westport, Mass. That date: Sept. 2, 2010, the 65th anniversary of Japan's surrender ending WWII.

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Mike Graczyk (Email) - When Jimmy Hoffa disappeared in 1975 we didn't have a prepared obit on the former Teamster president, or if there was one it was badly outdated. I'd spent days with the media horde outside his suburban Detroit home following the disappearance and I got the obit assignment when I finally returned to the office. It was seven years later when a judge ruled Hoffa legally dead.

I don't believe the obit I wrote ever saw the light of day. Kind of like Jimmy since July 30, 1975.

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Mike Holmes (Email) - My best preparedness obit appeared in print years before the subject died.

Sometime in the mid-1980s, while I was Austin correspondent, the Texas staff started a push to complete preparedness obits on something like 50 or 100 prominent Texans. Although she was born in Houston, Barbara Jordan had moved to Austin after leaving Congress and taught at the LBJ School of Public Affairs.

She was on our list.

I'd long admired her work in the Watergate impeachment hearings, and had interviewed her a number of times. I really worked hard on that obit and was darn proud of it. Into the computer files it went.

Then on July 31, 1988, Jordan nearly drowned in her backyard swimming pool while doing physical therapy for her multiple sclerosis. She was revived and rushed to a hospital. That was a Sunday, and the Austin bureau wasn't staffed. A Dallas editor handled the story, as I recall, writing a short lead that was grafted onto all 800 words of my preparedness obit.

Jordan lived another decade. And while I've always thought no story written couldn't be improved by a little rewriting, I confess that my second preparedness obit on Barbara Jordan didn't come close to the first.

Connecting mailbox

Saddened by death of Paul Webster

Ken Fields (Email) - I was saddened to hear of Paul Webster's passing. I reported to Paul when I moved to Chicago in 1989. Paul oversaw the maintenance of the Chicago DEC electronic darkroom and also wirephoto quality control for the 18 Midwestern states that were my new responsibilities. I worked closely with Paul, troubleshooting wirephoto network troubles and keeping the electronic darkroom calibrated and running properly. I learned a lot during that time, working with vendors to solve problems with the network or the electronic darkroom. Paul was always directly to the point and never raised his voice, but he really didn't have to, since he had that deep booming voice that commanded attention. He was a great mentor and gave me valuable insights into my new job.

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First Amendment rights 'restored' after decades in news business

Adolphe Bernotas (Email) - Dan Sewell and Cliff Schiappa underscore how the brightest benefit of my retirement has been restored First Amendment rights, ironically suspended during 41 years in the newsbiz.

I read three "hometown" newspapers daily – two in New Hampshire and one in Florida – and occasionally the one in Connecticut I delivered mornings in my Waterbury immigrant neighborhood soon after my family landed in America.

From time to time I contribute Op-Ed pieces to these papers, usually about pensions and retiree health care as a CWA retiree officer; immigration; extolling certain politicians; bicycling safety; and history. One of these papers has been sending me \$25 per published piece.

Like Cliff, I write letters to the editor, trying to keep them no longer than three sentences. One of these papers solicits from its readers 17-syllable haikus on current events. Those are the most challenging and the most fun.

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On anniversary of JFK's death, memories...

Ray Newton (Email) - Do I ever remember Nov. 22! I was in the newsroom at the Santa Fe New Mexican. Tony Hillerman, the editor and my boss, heard the bells. He went to the TTS. He looked at the wire copy and exclaimed, "Kennedy's been killed. Do you realize who that makes president?"

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Dennis Conrad (Email) - I was in Mrs. Dorothy Thomsson's 5th-grade class at Pacheco Elementary School in Novato, California, when our principal, Mr. Carter, came into our room on Nov. 22, 1963, to tell us President Kennedy had been shot and killed. For the remaining days through his burial at Arlington National Cemetery, I was glued to network television coverage and studied the detailed reports of the events in the San Francisco Chronicle. For 58 years, I have held on to the front page of the Chronicle delivered to our home at 591A Crescent Drive, Hamilton Air Force Base, where a year earlier I had helped my father fill sandbags during the Cuban Missile Crisis. And I still have a plate with JFK's portrait and a souvenir booklet about his assassination that I bought in December 1963 at Woolworth's in San Francisco. I also have a bowl of Kennedy half dollars that my mother always used to put aside whenever she got one in her change. And I still have a memory as a 7-year-old boy being with my 24-year-old Polish-born half-brother and putting up homemade "Kennedy for President" signs on Hamilton. The first political book I would read as a child would be Teddy White's "Making of a President 1960." My final family memory of JFK came on Nov. 22, 2013, on the 50th anniversary of his assassination, when I visited his gravesite at Arlington on the same day I paid my respects there to my father, uncle and their nephew.

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John Wylie (Email) – Hard to believe it was 58 years ago today. I was in 5th grade that Friday afternoon and my best friend was sitting nearby in Mrs. Hazel Packer's classroom at Pem-Day planning for the weekend. It was after 2 p.m. when one of the Lower School administrators came in with the news. Sebastian and I were both in shock, and it was a strange to see a roomful of normally active 9-11 year-old boys obviously fighting back tears. My friend was a huge fan of Kennedy both because he made the Presidency and because he like Kennedy was a proud Roman Catholic. I also greatly admired Kennedy and though I joined Sebastian in eating fish on Fridays, I was the son of a High Church Episcopalian and a northern plains Baptist being raised Presbyterian on Sundays and attending morning chapel conducted with Episcopal liturgy including the Knox v. papal wording changes in the Lord's prayer. Before we left school, a TV was on in the room--tuned, I think to Huntley and Brinkley on NBC. That was where I remained glued all weekend, seeing Jack Ruby's stunning fatal attack on Oswald live and repeated scenes of LBJ taking the oath of office. It was a searing experience for my friend and I and the entire class. When I awoke and remembers that this was the 58th anniversary, all those memories came flooding back. I remember being amazed to get home to a slightly delayed Kansas City Star which had a very detailed account (already having figured out that a half hour of TV filled just a page of the paper and I recall being stunned at the amount of coverage The Star had in the very few hours before ours was printed and delivered). Somehow we all knew that the world would never be the same. What stunned Sebastian and me as we discussed via computers how we're seeing the same hatred today that plagued the nation 58 years ago that at 68--hardly ancient--we're part of the group whose 5-year younger kin likely have no real memory of Nov. 22 and those any younger than that almost certainly have none. Ten years younger and they weren't even born. It struck us how short sighted are those who believe time spent on history instead of STEM is time wasted. That's one reason the growing loss of institutional memory in our profession is so dangerous. It is hard to put a Wall Street value on the cost of hiring

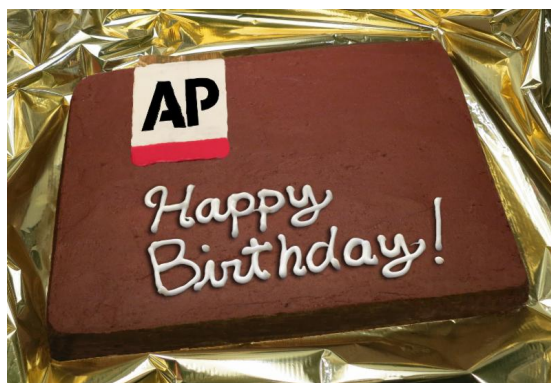
newer, lower-paid, lesser experienced journalists to push out those with the depth of understanding that comes only with time spent doing great journalism. Amazingly, we now have one target audience whose response to a comment about 9-11 is, "Why should we care about a phone number?"

Cotton fields in SW Texas



Daryl Beall ([Email](#)) – Spotted en route to Tucson.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



Sally Stapleton - sallystapleton@gmail.com

John Willis - jmwillis32@aol.com

Stories of interest

Hedge fund Alden in hunt for another big newspaper chain (AP)

By TALI ARBEL

Hedge fund Alden Global Capital, one of the country's largest newspaper owners with a reputation for intense cost cuts and layoffs, has offered to buy the local newspaper chain Lee Enterprises for about \$141 million.

In a news release Monday, Alden said it sent Lee's board a letter with the offer. It already owns 6% of Lee's stock and is proposing to buy the rest for \$24 a share. Alden says it does not foresee regulatory issues that could complicate a deal.

Lee stock jumped 22% to \$22.59 Monday. The Iowa company's spokesperson did not immediately reply to a request for comment. Lee's papers include the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Buffalo News, along with dozens of smaller papers in more than two dozen states. The company had more than 5,000 full-time employees as of September 2020.

Alden scooped up the Tribune papers earlier this year in a deal that was bitterly contested by the Tribune company's own journalists and community leaders in Tribune's markets, who sought, ultimately without success, to find local buyers for papers including the Baltimore Sun and Chicago Tribune. Alden also owns the Denver Post, Orange County Register and Boston Herald.

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

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A Robot Wrote This Book Review (New York Times)

By Kevin Roose

The Age of AI and Our Human Future

By Henry A. Kissinger, Eric Schmidt and Daniel Huttenlocher

One of the great promises of technology is that it can do the work that humans find too boring or arduous.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, factory machines relieved us of repetitive manual labor and backbreaking farm work. In this century, artificial intelligence has taken care

of a few more tasks — curating Spotify playlists, selecting the next YouTube video, vacuuming the floor and so on — but many more mind-numbing activities remain ripe for the picking. The experts promise us that someday, all of our least favorite chores — including complex cognitive ones, like interviewing job candidates or managing global supply chains — will be outsourced to machines.

But that day has not yet arrived. Or has it?

After finishing “The Age of AI,” a new book about artificial intelligence by Henry A. Kissinger, Eric Schmidt and Daniel Huttenlocher, I found myself unmoved by the prospect of reviewing it. I’ve read dozens of books about A.I., and while the conceit of this one was intriguing — bringing together a 98-year-old diplomat, a former Google chief executive and an M.I.T. professor — the book itself was a fairly forgettable entry in the genre.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Marty Steinberg.

The Final Word

Why I am Not a Journalist: A True Story (Pressthink.org)

By JAY ROSEN

Discovering journalism in college saved me. At the time (1976) I was on a track that would have led to an assistant manager’s job at an Applebees. Seriously: I was a business management major at SUNY Buffalo, living at my mother’s house to save money, working nights and weekends at a banquet hall as a busboy, and without any passions other than playing pick-up basketball in four different gyms four nights a week, despite the fact that I wasn’t even good enough to make my high school team. I had no ambition because I didn’t know how to have an ambition. I wasn’t excited about learning and didn’t know what I was good at.

But then I walked into the college newspaper with a good story, and the editor who happened to be there, Brett Kline, said, “why don’t you write about it?” So I did. My piece was published, I got bitten by the journalism bug, and within six months I was special features editor of The Spectrum, then managing editor. In the spring of 1978 I was elected editor-in-chief for the following academic year. I was also a columnist. I rarely went to class. I was learning too much to stop and do that.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Charlie Hanley.



Celebrating AP's 175th

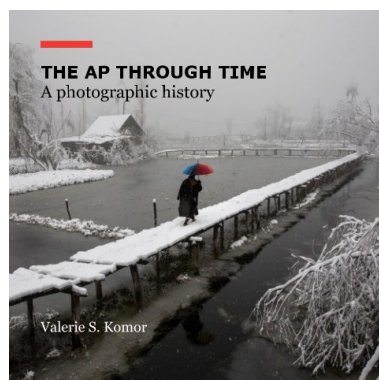
AP store for 175th, vintage merchandise



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. 23, 2021



By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 23, the 327th day of 2021. There are 38 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 23, 1971, the People's Republic of China was seated in the U.N. Security Council.

On this date:

In 1889, the first jukebox made its debut in San Francisco, at the Palais Royale Saloon. (The coin-operated device consisted of four listening tubes attached to an Edison phonograph.)

In 1903, Enrico Caruso made his American debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, appearing in "Rigoletto."

In 1914, the seven-month U.S. military occupation of Veracruz, Mexico, ended.

In 1936, Life, the photojournalism magazine created by Henry R. Luce (loos), was first published.

In 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson proclaimed Nov. 25 a day of national mourning following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In 1980, some 2,600 people were killed by a series of earthquakes that devastated southern Italy.

In 1992, country music star Roy Acuff died in Nashville, Tennessee, at age 89.

In 1996, a commandeered Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 767 crashed into the water off the Comoros Islands, killing 125 of the 175 people on board, including all three hijackers.

In 2000, in a setback for Al Gore, the Florida Supreme Court refused to order Miami-Dade County officials to resume hand-counting its election-day ballots. Meanwhile, Gore's lawyers argued in a brief filed with the U.S. Supreme Court that the high court should stay out of the Florida election controversy.

In 2003, five U.S. soldiers were killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan. Eduard Shevardnadze (sheh-vahrd-NAHD'-zeh) resigned as president of Georgia in the face of protests.

In 2006, former KGB spy Alexander Litvinenko (leet-vee-NYEN'-koh) died in London from radiation poisoning after making a deathbed statement blaming Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In 2008, the government unveiled a bold plan to rescue Citigroup, injecting a fresh \$20 billion into the troubled firm as well as guaranteeing hundreds of billions of dollars in risky assets.

Ten years ago: Yemen's authoritarian President Ali Abdullah Saleh (AH'-lee ahb-DUH'-luh sah-LEH') agreed to step down amid a fierce uprising to oust him after 33 years in power.

Five years ago: President-elect Donald Trump selected two Republican women who'd had unflattering things to say about him during the campaign: South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley to serve as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and charter school advocate Betsy DeVos to lead the Department of Education. Two juveniles set a fire in Great Smoky Mountains National Park; the fire spread into the Gatlinburg, Tennessee, area, merging with others, contributing to 14 deaths and up to \$2 billion of damage. Ralph Branca, the Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher who gave up Bobby Thomson's famed "Shot Heard 'Round the World" in 1951, died in Rye Brook, New York, at age 90.

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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