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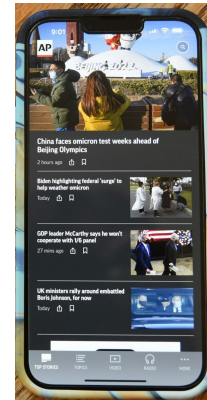
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# Connecting

January 19, 2022

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**BJ Reyes on Inauguration Day 2009 when Barack Obama became president. Photo by his Honolulu Star-Advertiser reporting colleague Rosemarie Bernardo.**

Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this Jan. 19, 2022,

Cancer came knocking at his door when he was just 13, but **BJ Reyes** was able to prevail and go on to graduate from journalism school, join the world's largest news organization, cover perhaps the most significant presidential inauguration in the nation's history for Hawaii's largest newspaper and impact hundreds of lives with his bravery and never-give-up attitude toward life.

He worked as a newsman for The Associated Press for just 10 years – and left the AP for a job in newspapering back in 2005 – 17 years ago.

Yet memories of this brave man who faced a multitude of health issues, starting at the age of 13 and continuing through the remainder of his life, remain vivid among those who worked with him in four AP bureaus. And they are shared in the wake of his death last Saturday morning at the age of 50.

We bring you BJ's story – and the memories from some of the many who knew him – as our lead in today's issue of Connecting.

"We're dealing with his physical absence as best we can," said his sister, **Michelle Hillmeyer**. "Sometimes smiling, sometimes crying, but always grateful for the time we

had with him. He faced down five forms of cancer (bone, thyroid, skin, colon, lung) AND HE WAS WINNING, plus diabetes, kidney failure, and finally heart failure. He celebrated his 50th birthday last November, then his and Lisa's 10th wedding anniversary in December. BJ knew every day was a gift. I know he wants all of us to remember that as well, and to make sure the important people in our lives know they are important."

If you would like to share a memory of BJ, please send it along...and if you'd like to send a note of condolence to his family, please drop me a note for an address.

Our condolences are extended to colleague **Malcolm Barr**, whose wife **Carol** died Tuesday after a long battle with cancer. She was 81.

Have a good day – be safe, stay healthy!

Paul

## BJ Reyes dies at 50: Remembered for his journalistic skills and courage



Eriberto "BJ" Reyes, admired for his journalistic skills and undaunted courage in multiple battles with cancer and diabetes by colleagues in the four bureaus where he worked during his 10 years with The Associated Press, has died at the age of 50.

Reyes, who died on Saturday (Jan. 15) at the Cleveland Clinic, was working as associate editor of The Penn Stater magazine at his alma mater, Penn State University, at the time of his death. He is survived by his wife of 10 years, Lisa.

"BJ was dealt more health challenges than anyone deserves," said his sister Michelle Hillmeyer in a Facebook post. "It started when he was 13 years old and diagnosed with bone cancer in his leg. The first of countless leg surgeries replaced the bones of his hip socket, femur, entire knee joint with metal and plastic, which was followed by chemo. In college he was diagnosed with type II diabetes. As a young adult he had numerous surgeries to both legs to repair or upgrade the embedded hardware, or tighten up the joints. But one of those past surgeries apparently introduced a staph infection into his body, which a major leg repair surgery in late 2013 seemed to kick into high gear, going after his heart.

"His kidneys failed a few years ago, putting him on dialysis. He was hoping to be a candidate for a kidney transplant, but another cancer reared its ugly head putting him back on chemo and radiation treatment. But the infections unfortunately weren't done with his heart...just after this new year, he was in the ER at home in State College then transferred to the Cleveland Clinic for further tests and diagnosis. Just after arriving he had a setback during a procedure - he recovered, but not enough. When it was determined there was nothing more that could be done, he started saying his goodbyes."



Reyes joined the AP in Charleston, W. Va., in 1995 and transferred to Detroit a year later. He worked as a newsman there before being promoted to the General Desk in New York where he worked from 1998-2000. He was a newsman in the AP's Honolulu bureau from 2001 to 2005 before joining the Honolulu Star-Bulletin and then the Star-Advertiser, where he worked for the next 10 years, reporting on Hawaii state politics and government, and covering the inauguration of Hawaii-born Barack Obama.

Reyes was born in Baltimore on Nov. 30, 1971, and graduated from Penn State with a bachelor's degree in journalism in 1995.

BJ is survived by his wife Lisa; sister Michelle Hillmeyer and her spouse Pat Hillmeyer and their sons Patrick, Aidan and Ryan Hillmeyer; brother Emil Reyes; and his mother and father, Melanie and Eriberto Reyes.

Plans for a memorial will be announced at a later date.

### Here are thoughts about BJ shared by former AP (and a Star Bulletin) colleagues:

**Pete Mattiace (Email)** - B.J. had so much promise when he came to Charleston as a minority intern. He handled West Virginia news with ease. He worked all the desks and had earned his way to bigger places. Honolulu was his choice. When I tried to talk him out of it (!), he said, 'Com'on, Pete, I'm not like the people around here.'" Maybe, but his ability to so quickly to adapt and to master West Virginia news made him special.

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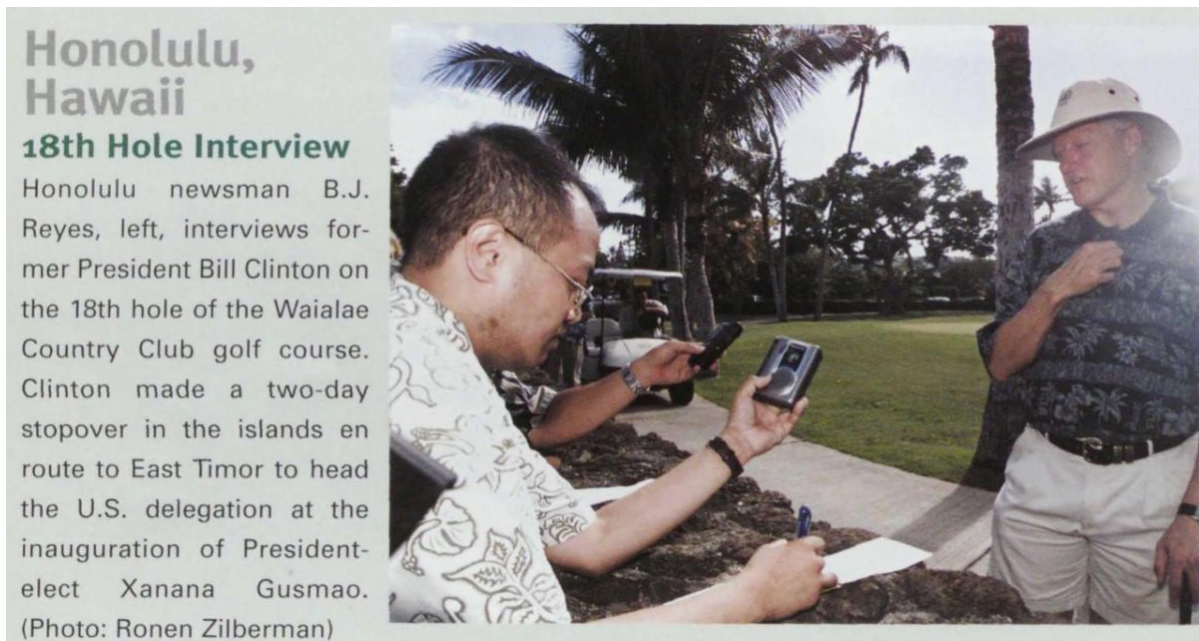
**Jim Suhr (Email)** - Being at a loss for words definitely doesn't happen often with me, but that's the case tonight with news of the passing of one of the most genuine people I was blessed to know. During our shared time in the Associated Press bureau in Detroit in the late 1990s, B.J. Reyes was a gift to us journo's at a time we were

chasing Kevorkian, the Red Wings were winning titles, the nation’s biggest news stories came at us hard, fast and often, and our posse salved our post-shift stresses with refuge, cold Foster’s and free pretzels at Honest John’s with our newspaper cohorts. I still consider it my most-cherished time in my three decades of journalism because our office was family, and B.J. was our sweet brother. He was a guy who just made it all fun, never mind his health challenges. He joked about his steel hip and leg and, in ensuing years, confronted what would be his five cancer diagnoses with remarkable courage and grace to the end. Rest In peace, buddy. The world is a lesser place without you, but we’re all better having shared it with you for the time we did.

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In 2014, BJ Reyes – then with the Honolulu Star-Advertiser - was interviewed about the Hawaii U.S. Senate race by Rachel Maddow on MSNBC. That interview took place not quite five months after he had open heart surgery. His sister Michelle Hillmeyer noted, “He looks so handsome and healthy on TV, was so poised and intelligent answering Rachel’s questions, very natural.”



**Photo courtesy AP Corporate Archives**

**Charles Hill (Email)** - B.J. Reyes was an excellent journalist for the AP in the Detroit, still early in his career but a fast learner who quickly earned increasing responsibilities, becoming a trusted and strong desk supervisor in a very busy news environment. Before long, New York was calling and he was promoted to the General Desk.

He contributed way more than his very good journalistic talents and work ethic, though. B.J. was a wonderful person to have in the bureau, someone who very much added to the excellent chemistry and camaraderie of the team, with everyone pulling in the same direction, working hard but also having a sense of humor and perspective. He was quick to help others and make them better, and others very much wanted him to succeed. B.J. was a serious journalist, but knew how to enjoy life. He made the Michigan AP a better place because of his journalism and because of the kind of person he was.

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**Paula Froke (Email)** – The Detroit bureau in the 1990s was a pressure cooker of big, breaking stories challenging a group of journalists who excelled individually, but really stood out with their teamwork and camaraderie. The staff was like a family. BJ was the sibling whose smile, calmness and grace was ever-present no matter what crisis was breaking out. He was an incredibly hard worker and a terrific reporter and editor. But it was his strength in the face of adversity – always with good humor – that made the biggest difference. That seems to be the hallmark of his entire life. He was one of those shining spirits who stays with you, all these years later. That smile! A true gem of a person.

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**Randi Goldberg Berris (Email)** - I moved to Michigan sight unseen in 1997 for a job at the AP Detroit bureau. One of the first people I met was B.J. Reyes. We had a tightknit group of up-and-comers in that bureau, and we spent many hours together both working and playing. We spent many a night at Honest John's or Soup Kitchen ... Dee-Ann Durbin - I'm thinking of how we dragged BJ with us to opening night of "The Titanic" and how we all cried together. The late 90s was a time well before cell phone photos became a thing, and I wish I had more memories captured on film. Maybe Burt Herman can dig up more from that fancy camera he's holding? I am so saddened to hear of BJ's passing. He fought like hell through more cancer diagnoses than any one person should ever have to bear. I last saw BJ when he came through town for the 2006 Super Bowl. He was such a special person, and I feel blessed to have known him.

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**Marty Steinberg (Email)** - I'm so saddened about BJ's death on Saturday. I found out via Facebook posts of former colleagues. I was moved to tears by reading his sister Michelle's post. Given his health problems, which afflicted him for 37 of his 50 years – countless surgeries since he was diagnosed with bone cancer in a leg, according to

Michelle's post — it's not surprising that he's gone. But his passing cuts across the heart and leaves a huge void. When I worked with him on the General Desk, he never once complained about his health or his pain. In fact, he joked about his limp. He was the epitome of grace, dignity and courage. His passing is a huge loss for all of us. I wish his family strength and inspiration in their memories of BJ.

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**Richard Borreca** ([Email](#)) - *retired Honolulu Star-Advertiser columnist and state Capitol bureau chief*. I worked with BJ while he was at the state Capitol. He was just what you wanted on a story, in-depth, breaking or new trend pieces. He was the complete journalist and a good friend. His courage was unmatched and he preferred that it be mostly unsaid.

During one of his operations he had his old artificial knee removed and in typical BJ style he insisted on keeping the pieces to show off.

BJ worked for the now defunct Honolulu Star-Bulletin starting in March 2006.

After working with the AP, BJ joined the Honolulu Star-Bulletin and then the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, helping to cover the state Capitol.

BJ covered the 2008 GOP National convention in St. Paul, Minn. The next year BJ and fellow Star-Advertiser reporter Rosemarie Bernardo traveled to Washington, D.C., to cover the inauguration of Hawaii-born president Barack Obama.

BJ's many ailments never stopped him from being the dependable and courageous newsman who ignored his own pain to complete the assignment.

While covering the presidential inauguration, BJ, who bought a tux for the event, started to develop stomach pains, which he just put aside.

On the 10-hour flight home from Washington, BJ's "stomachache" turned out to be a seriously ruptured appendix requiring emergency surgery upon landing.

Along the way BJ also dealt with serious diabetes, a condition that BJ all but dismissed because he loved to bake and was top notch. Staff parties were not complete without custom BJ creations. And he never spared the frosting!

I have to believe that when journalism's roll call is called, BJ would be the one saying "Who me? Don't bother me, I'm on deadline."

## **Carol Barr, wife of colleague Malcolm Barr, dies at 81**





Carol flanked by husband Malcolm and their son Malcolm Jr. in 2017.

**Malcolm Barr** ([Email](#)) - Carol Barr, wife of Malcolm Barr (AP Honolulu and AP Washington during the 1960s), died Tuesday (Jan. 18) after a 12-year battle against lung cancer. She was 81.

Carol served the U.S. government for 37 years, the last 20 at the then U.S. Customs Service. Earlier, she and Barr served together at the Justice Department (Law Enforcement Assistance Administration) public information office where Barr headed a team, including his future wife, that launched McGruff, the nationally known crime dog.

At Customs, Carol became one of the first women to gain an executive level position rising through the years from a lowly GS-4 stenographer post to a GS-14 management level post in the Office of the Commissioner.

## Celebrating two anniversaries: his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, 50<sup>th</sup> beard-day

**Arnold Zeitlin** ([Email](#)) - I am astonished, Paul, at completing my 90th year (last Thursday), a goal I never thought I would reach. I now can join your list of 90-plus

individuals, all Giants, including those I've had the pleasure and privilege of working with, Henry Bradsher, Joe McGowan, Sal Vader and Hal Buell. It was not only my 90th birthday, it was my 50th beard-day, the 50th anniversary of my growing a beard in 1972 when I was the chief of a one-man AP bureau in Pakistan, where beards are considered a sign of piety. The first time he saw my beard, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, then the Pakistan president, asked, "Have you become a sufi?" Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh, first saw my beard at a reception in Dhaka in his honor. He came behind me, poked me in the ribs and growled, "You have grown a beard but you have not changed your complexion." In other words, just another white guy.



## A collector of newspaper coffee mugs



**Solange De Santis (Email)** - The AP's production of 175th anniversary coffee mugs, among other merch, caused me to look anew at my collection of "newspaper coffee mugs," as I call them, gathered over several decades in journalism. Most of the publications are AP members, of course.

I can't remember what inspired me to start collecting mugs with newspaper logos, front pages and headlines, nor

which one was the first. I think part of it was the enchantingly inane marketing slogans of some publications: “Covers Prince Edward Island Like the Dew” (The Journal Pioneer, Canada), or “Let Us Be There In Your Morning” (Rutland Herald, Vermont) or, in a more sophisticated vein, “Je pense donc je lis” (“I think therefore I read,” a variation by Montreal’s La Presse on Descartes’ “I think therefore I am.”)

I traveled on assignment a fair bit and at some point would go to the newspaper office of whatever city I was in. Some papers, such as the Toronto Star (“Toronto’s Most-Read Newspaper”) and Chicago Tribune, had impressive souvenir shops right in the lobby and I could buy a mug then and there.



Usually, papers weren’t that savvy and I’d head to the circulation department, a reliable source of promo swag. “Hi. I’m a journalist in town to cover a story and I have an unusual hobby. You see, I collect coffee mugs with newspaper names on them and I’m wondering if I could buy such a thing here,” I’d say. Often, along with an odd look, I’d get a response along the lines of, “Yeah, sure. Here, just take this one.” A couple of times, they came straight from someone’s desk with a bit of old coffee still in the cup. Pure treasure.

Since my career took me to Canada for a while, I will take anyone’s bet that they do not have mugs from wonderfully titled newspapers such as the Kingston Whig-Standard (“Your Community, Your Paper,” Ontario) and the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix (Saskatchewan).

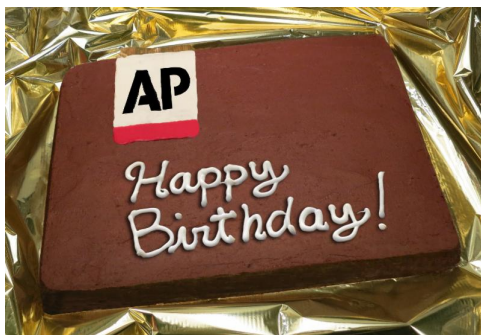
Some papers put significant headlines or reproductions of the front page on their mugs: “Welcome Newfoundland,” from the Montreal Gazette on the day Newfoundland joined Canada, “It’s Atlanta!” from the Atlanta Journal commemorating the day that city was chosen for the 1996 Olympics, or the one dear to my heart, “YES!” from the New York Daily News on the day the New York Mets won the 1986 World Series.

I even wrote for some of the papers: the Palm Beach Post (“Nixon Resigns, Ford to Take Oath Today,”), and Canada’s Financial Post.

As the years past, and the newspaper world changes, my collection (about 30 by now) seems to gain the weight of history. Such souvenirs may be rare now in the days of tight budgets. A couple of years ago, I knew a reporter at the Brattleboro Reformer (Vermont) and asked if the paper had a coffee mug I could add to the collection. No, he said, as the newsroom had shrunk, there was no money to produce such things.

Well, I still get a sense of joy, choosing a different newspaper and town every morning.

## Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Matt Barba](#)

[Denis Gray](#)

[Patty Woodrow](#)

## Stories of interest

### *Former New York Post editor alleges harassment, retaliation* (AP)

By DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York Post editor whose departure was announced Tuesday alleged she was fired two months after revealing to an executive that former editor Col Allan had sexually harassed her.

The Post said any suggestion of wrongdoing related to Editor-in-Chief Keith Poole's announcement of Michelle Gottself's exit was meritless.

Poole, who Gottself said fired her in November after more than two decades at the Post, is a defendant in a lawsuit she filed Tuesday, along with Allan, the newspaper's publishing company and corporate owner News Corp.

Gottself said Allan's harassment of her "peaked" in fall 2015 when she was the newspaper's metro editor. The two were having drinks after an editors' dinner meeting when Allan said that "we should sleep together," she said in the lawsuit.

Read more [here](#).

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## ***Mandatory Chinese Olympics app has 'devastating' encryption flaw: analyst*** (AFP)

An app all attendees of the upcoming Beijing Olympics must use has encryption flaws that could allow personal information to leak, a cyber security watchdog said Tuesday.

The "simple but devastating flaw" in the encryption of the MY2022 app, which is used to monitor Covid and is mandatory for athletes, journalists and other attendees of the games in China's capital, could allow health information, voice messages and other data to leak, warned Jeffrey Knockel, author of the report for Citizen Lab.

The International Olympic Committee responded to the report by saying users can disable the app's access to parts of their phones and that assessments from two unnamed cyber security organizations "confirmed that there are no critical vulnerabilities."

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

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## ***Chicago sportscaster Les Grobstein, who recorded famous Lee Elia rant, dies at 69*** (USA Today)

**Steve Gardner**  
USA TODAY

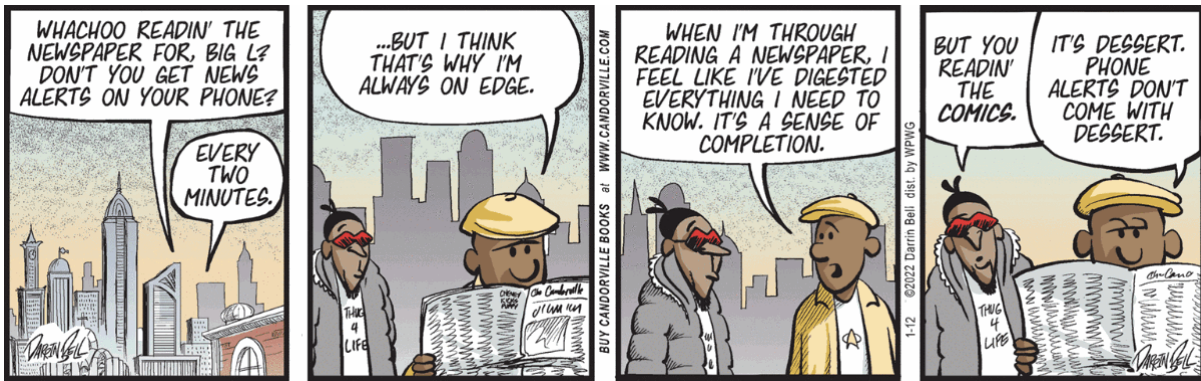
Chicago radio icon Les Grobstein, whose career in broadcasting spanned over 50 years, has died at the age of 69.

Grobstein was the overnight host on WSCR radio, and he served for a decade as the station's sports director. However, he was best known as the person who captured the legendary profanity-laden rant by Cubs manager Lee Elia on his tape recorder after a difficult loss in 1983.

"What the (expletive) am I supposed to do," Elia said, "go out there and let my (expletive) players get destroyed every day and be quiet about it? For the (expletive) nickel-dime people who turn up? The (expletive) don't even work. That's why they're out at the (expletive) game. They oughta go out and get a (expletive) job and find out what it's like to go out and earn a (expletive) living. Eighty-five percent of the (expletive) world is working. The other fifteen percent come out here."

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

## **The Final Word**



Shared by Linda Deutsch.

# Today in History - Jan. 19, 2022



By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 19, the 19th day of 2022. There are 346 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 19, 1981, the United States and Iran signed an accord paving the way for the release of 52 Americans held hostage for more than 14 months.

### On this date:

In 1853, Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Il Trovatore" premiered in Rome.

In 1861, Georgia became the fifth state to secede from the Union.

In 1915, Germany carried out its first air raid on Britain during World War I as a pair of Zeppelins dropped bombs onto Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn in England.

In 1942, during World War II, Japanese forces captured the British protectorate of North Borneo. A German submarine sank the Canadian liner RMS Lady Hawkins off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, killing 251 people; 71 survived.

In 1944, the federal government relinquished control of the nation's railroads to their owners following settlement of a wage dispute.

In 1953, CBS-TV aired the widely watched episode of "I Love Lucy" in which Lucy Ricardo, played by Lucille Ball, gave birth to Little Ricky. (By coincidence, Ball gave birth the same day to her son, Desi Arnaz Jr.)

In 1966, Indira Gandhi was chosen to be prime minister of India by the National Congress party.

In 1987, Guy Hunt became Alabama's first Republican governor since 1874 as he was sworn into office, succeeding George C. Wallace.

In 2005, the American Cancer Society reported that cancer had passed heart disease as the top killer of Americans age 85 and younger.

In 2006, Vice President Dick Cheney defended the administration's domestic surveillance program, calling it an essential tool in monitoring al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.

In 2009, Russia and Ukraine signed a deal restoring natural gas shipments to Ukraine and paving the way for an end to the nearly two-week cutoff of most Russian gas to a freezing Europe.

In 2020, health officials in central China reported that 17 more people had been diagnosed with the new coronavirus, which had killed two patients and placed other countries on alert.

Ten years ago: Six U.S. Marines were killed in a helicopter crash in southern Afghanistan. Texas Gov. Rick Perry abruptly quit the Republican presidential race. One of the world's most popular file-sharing sites, Megaupload.com, was shut down as its founder and several company officials were accused of facilitating millions of illegal downloads of films, music and other content. Rupert Murdoch's media empire apologized and agreed to cash payouts to 37 people who'd been harassed and phone-hacked by its tabloid press.

Five years ago: With fireworks heralding his big moment, Donald Trump swept into Washington on the eve of his presidential inauguration and pledged to unify a nation sorely divided and clamoring for change. Actor Miguel Ferrer died at his Los Angeles home at age 61.

One year ago: On President Donald Trump's last full day in office, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell placed blame on Trump for the riot at the Capitol on Jan. 6; McConnell said the mob had been "fed lies," and that Trump and others "provoked" those who were intent on overturning Democrat Joe Biden's election. Twelve National Guard members were removed from the security operation for Biden's inauguration after vetting by the FBI, including two who had made extremist statements in posts or texts about the event. The U.S. death toll from the coronavirus eclipsed 400,000 in Trump's waning hours in office. Just before midnight, Trump signed a flurry of pardons and commutations for more than 140 people, including his former chief strategist,

Steve Bannon, as well as rap performers and ex-members of Congress. Don Sutton, a Hall of Fame pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers, died at 75.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Tippi Hedren is 92. Former PBS newsman Robert MacNeil is 91. Movie director Richard Lester is 90. Actor-singer Michael Crawford is 80. Actor Shelley Fabares (fab-RAY') is 78. Country singer Dolly Parton is 76. Former ABC newswoman Ann Compton is 75. TV chef Paula Deen is 75. Rock singer Martha Davis is 71. Singer Dewey Bunnell (America) is 70. Actor Desi Arnaz Jr. is 69. Actor Katey Sagal is 68. Comedian Paul Rodriguez is 67. Conductor Sir Simon Rattle is 67. Rock musician Jeff Pilson (Foreigner) is 64. Actor Paul McCrane is 61. Actor William Ragsdale is 61. Basketball coach and commentator Jeff Van Gundy is 60. International Tennis Hall of Famer Stefan Edberg is 56. Rock singer Whitfield Crane (Ugly Kid Joe) is 54. Singer Trey Lorenz is 53. Actor Shawn Wayans is 51. Rock singer-musician John Wozniak (Marcy Playground) is 51. Actor Drea (DRAY-uh') de Matteo is 50. Comedian-impressionist Frank Caliendo is 48. Actor Drew Powell is 46. Actor Marsha Thomason is 46. Actor Bitsie Tulloch is 41. Actor Jodie Sweetin is 40. U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg is 40. Movie director Damien Chazelle is 37. Actor Shaunette Renee Wilson is 32. Actor Briana Henry is 30. Actor Logan Lerman is 30. Olympic gold medal gymnast Shawn Johnson is 30. Rapper Taylor Bennett is 26. Actor Lidya Jewett is 15.

## Got a story or photos to share?

Connecting is a daily newsletter published Monday through Friday that focuses on retired and former Associated Press employees, present-day employees, and news industry and journalism school colleagues. It began in 2013 and past issues can be found by clicking Connecting Archive in the masthead. Its author, Paul Stevens, retired from the AP in 2009 after a 36-year career in Albany, St. Louis, Wichita, Albuquerque, Indianapolis and Kansas City.

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:

- **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.

- **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?
  
- **Most unusual place a story assignment took you.**

**Paul Stevens**  
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