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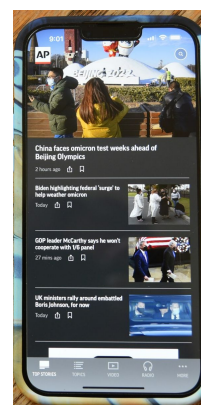
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Connecting

Sept. 28, 2022

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this Sept. 28, 2022,

Connecting extends congratulations to colleague **Michael Gracia**, who finished up his 40-year career with The Associated Press last Friday, retiring as AP Radio evening news supervisor in Washington.

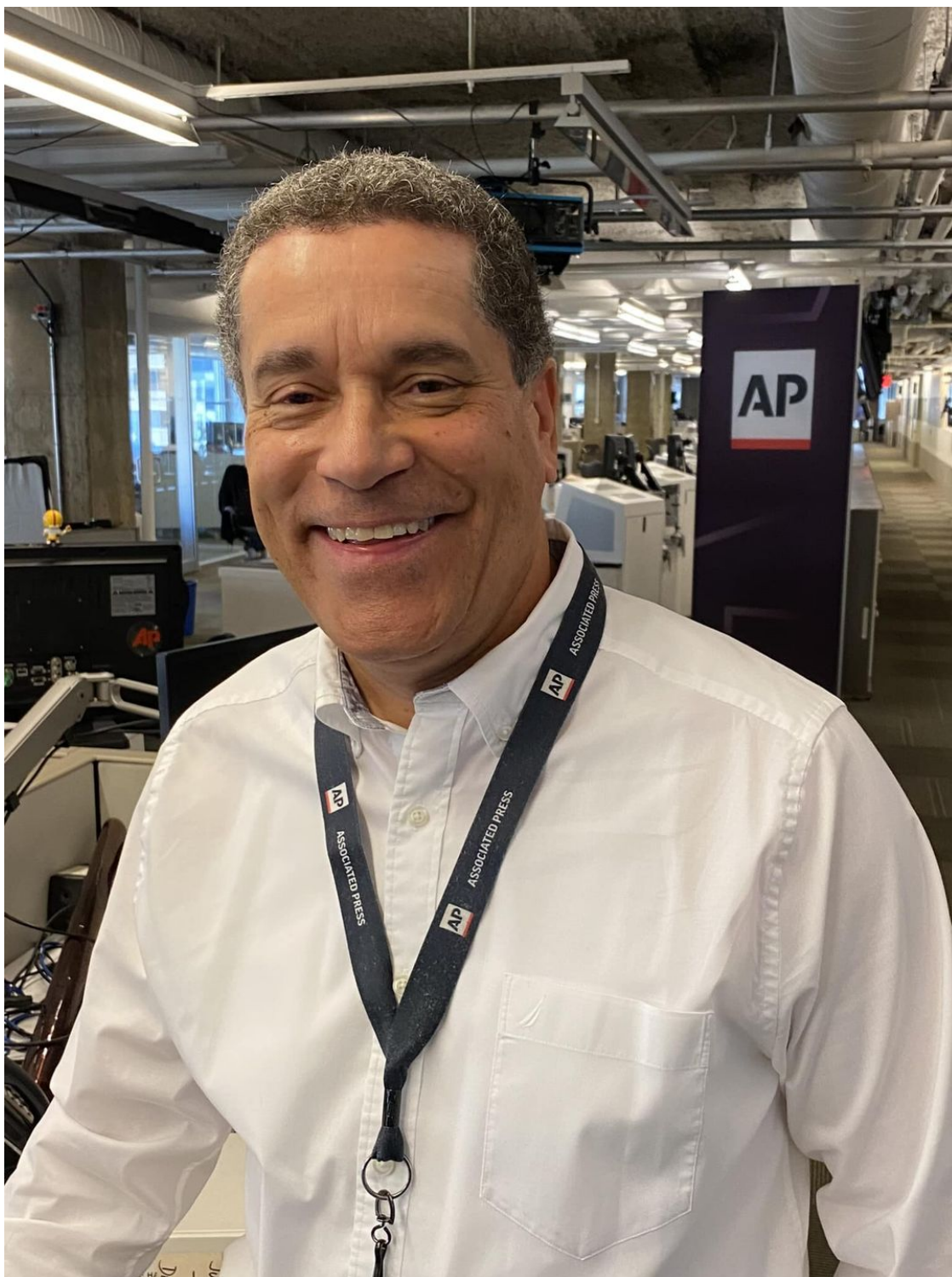
Nearly half of Mike's career focused on sports for AP Radio. As he writes in a profile for today's newsletter, the most notable assignment he ever had was the 1989 "earthquake" World Series. He wrote, "The quake struck a little less than a half hour before Game 3 at Candlestick Park in San Francisco. I was 'hooked up' wearing headphones and working on the lineups for an upcoming AP Radio sportscast when the quake hit."

If you have a favorite story of working with Mike, please send it along.

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

Paul

Connecting retirement profile **Michael Gracia**



Mike Gracia, in photo taken Sept. 21 by colleague Ed Donahue in the Washington bureau.

Michael Gracia – My plans for retirement? You started with the toughest question first! My "plans" for retirement are largely To Be Determined. Judging from the numerous invitations I have for lunches and dinner, it could be a struggle to keep additional pounds off over the next month or two.

I have a couple of out-of-town weddings to attend, the obligatory (always enjoyable) trip to Lambeau Field to see my beloved Green Bay Packers, a first-ever trip to Camp Randall to see the Wisconsin Badgers play in early November, another invitation to play golf at Pinehurst (I was just there at the start of September).

A return to Milwaukee for Marquette basketball is in the offing after missing the last couple of seasons due to the pandemic.

Otherwise, there is a home project -- painting -- that awaits once the cold weather arrives, and I can't go out and hit golf balls for a while.

I landed at AP in March of 1982 sort of unexpectedly. I had joined the staff of WKCW radio in Warrenton, Virginia in August 1981 to work for my RA (Resident Adviser) freshman year at Marquette University, Van Teskey.

After Marquette I had returned to KANA radio in Anaconda, Montana, where I first started working in January 1975 during my senior year in high school, but Van's timing was excellent, because I was planning on quitting KANA and moving back to Milwaukee to look for work.

Seven months later, the owner of WKCW fired Van and I quit the same day.

As luck would have it, someone from the AP's Richmond bureau had been in the station nine days earlier and heard me on the air doing a newscast. He stopped me when I came out of the studio, suggested I should consider going to work for AP Radio and gave me assistant general manager Bill McCloskey's card.

At the time, I had no intention of using it, but less than two weeks later, calling Bill was my only lifeline.

Fortunately, Bill agreed to meet with me, listened to my sob story, but more importantly to my demo tape and then took me in to meet Ed DeFontaine. After a few minutes of listening to my tape Ed asked if I could come back the next morning, which I did, then took the "AP test" in Ed's office and I was off and running!

Truth is, had anyone walked up to me that day and said "you'll be here for the next 40 years," I would have laughed in their face. But little did I know what good fortune I was experiencing and that I had stumbled into what would be the most enjoyable and rewarding career possible.

I was seeking work in Sports but there was no fulltime position available at that time, so I essentially split my time between Sports and cutting sound and doing voice work in News for the first several months.

I even got to go to the White House for a presidential departure about two months into the job, on the day President Ronald Reagan and first lady Nancy Reagan were flying to the president's alma mater, Eureka College, in Eureka, Illinois!

The staff at AP Radio was amazing, talented, mostly young and everyone knew what he or she was doing. I absorbed everything like a sponge.

My first road assignment for Sports came almost one year to the day after my hire, the light heavyweight title unification fight between Michael Spinks and Dwight Braxton in Atlantic City in March of 1983.

Next would come the 1984 Indianapolis 500, which became an annual event for me through the 1995 race, after which I asked off the beat because there had been a split with the creation of the IndyCar circuit, leaving most of the top drivers in the CART series, but out of the 500.

My first Olympics would be the Los Angeles Summer Games in 1984. That started a stretch of Olympics, summer and winter, that ran interrupted through the 2006 Winter Games in Torino, Italy. It ended up being six Summer Games and six Winter Games. The Torino Games I actually covered for News, because I had left the Sports department a year earlier.

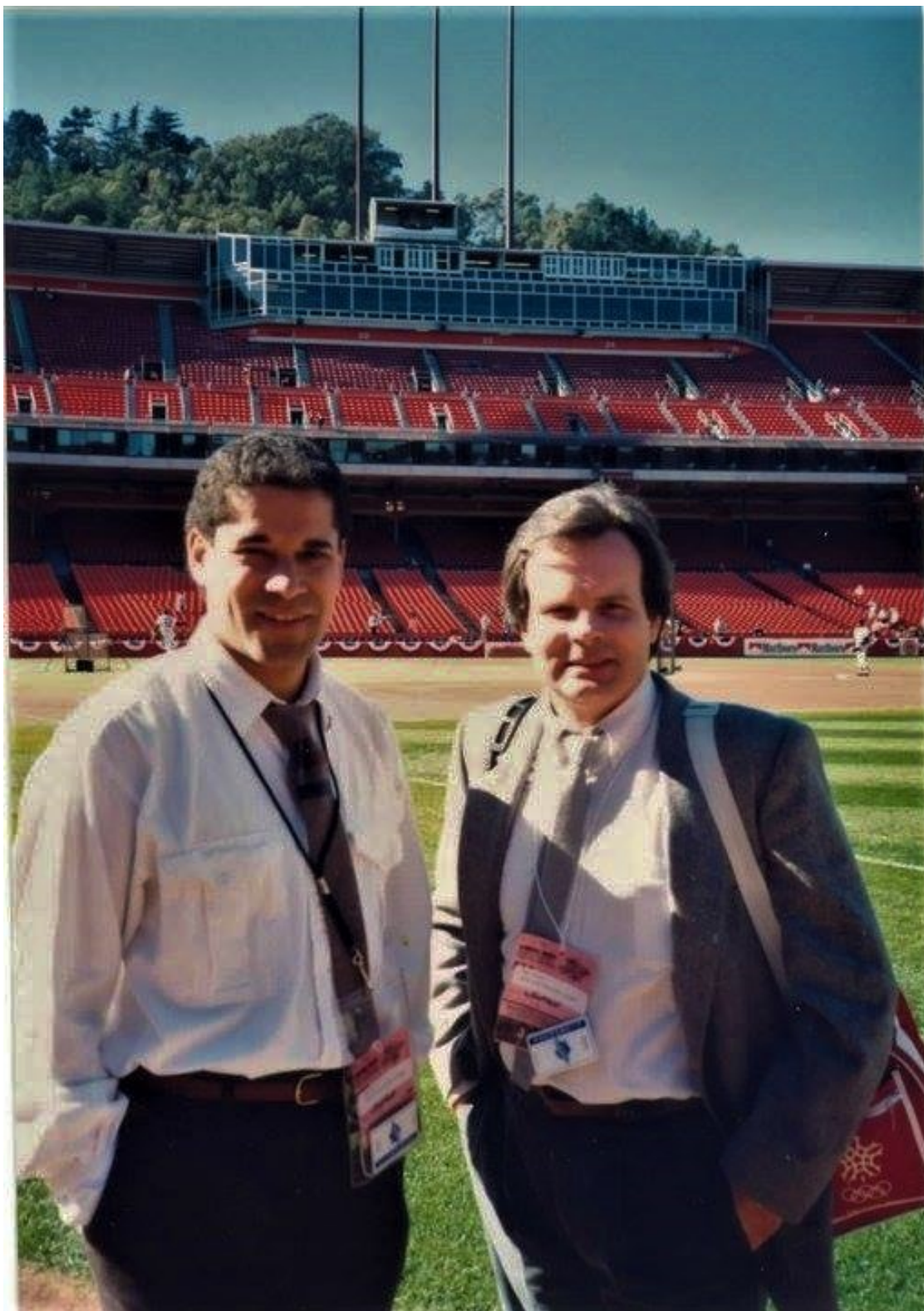


With AP legends Hal Bock and the late Bert Rosenthal (foreground), covering track and field at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul.

I covered nine Super Bowls beginning with the Redskins-Broncos in San Diego in January of '88.

My first postseason baseball was the 1986 American League Championship Series, beginning an amalgam of ALCS, NLCS and World Series assignments that ran up to the 2001 post-911 attacks ALCS between the Yankees and the Mariners.

The most notable of the baseball assignments - or any assignment for that matter -- was without a doubt, the 1989 "earthquake" World Series. The quake struck a little less than a half hour before Game 3 at Candlestick Park in San Francisco. I was 'hooked up' wearing headphones and working on the lineups for an upcoming AP Radio sportscast when the quake hit.



With AP Radio Sports Director Dave Lubeski (right) at Candlestick Park during the 1989 World Series.

I think I was the last one trying to get out of the press box because it took me so long to untangle myself but that proved fortuitous because when the quake stopped, I was only about three quarters of the way up the stairs and that meant, I was closest of anyone to my phone.

The phone line was dead, but I knew there was a bank of phones along the back of the press box so I raced up as everyone else was racing down. The first phone I tried was dead, as was the second but the third phone worked! I ended up on that phone for almost two hours doing updates for the AP Radio newscasts and sportscasts until they kicked me out.

The next morning, I was told to go to the Presidio for a FEMA news conference and after I filed from there, they wanted me to get over to Oakland to the site of the Nimitz Freeway collapse where I stayed on the scene, on and off, until Friday afternoon.

There would also be the U.S. Open and Wimbledon in tennis beginning with Wimbledon in 1989 and the U.S. Open in 1990.

The last of each for me were Wimbledon in 2001 and the 2002 Open.

I also covered each of the golf majors on multiple occasions beginning with the 1984 PGA Championship and ending with the 2005 U.S. Open.

Perhaps the most personally rewarding assignment was the 1991 Pan Am Games in Havana. Both of my parents were born and raised in Havana and while I had spoken to relatives over the phone over the years, the only relative outside of my mom, dad and two younger sisters who I had met was a great uncle who lived in New York City who would come visit us in Montana and sometimes went on vacation with us.

Havana was incredible.

My aunt Maria Cristina was able to get me into the houses where each of my parents grew, and at my dad's place, in the area of Havana called Lawton, amazingly, three of the neighbors he grew up with were still there! They immediately recognized me as my father's son, which stunned myself, AP Radio Sports Director Dave Lubeski and AP College Basketball Writer Jim O'Connell as we watched them approach our car!

In June of 2005, the week following the U.S. Open, I transitioned to News where I would anchor the one-minute updates for three years before moving to the desk to become the evening supervisor.

It was a great run, seeing much of the country and a good chunk of the world on the AP's dime, I even bought a house while at the 2000 Sydney Games (the house was in Virginia not Australia) and then took an amazing two-week vacation in Australia after the Games.

My sister Lourdes Johnson works in banking in Salt Lake City where she lives with her husband Stan.

Lourdes has three adult children, Stan Jr. who is head basketball coach at Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles, Destin who lives and works in Salt Lake City and Vanessa who is married and living with her family outside of New York City.

Aging Can Be a Pain

Gene Herrick - For someone who has lived a dangerous but exciting life, I now find myself well into the aging process, and the penalties that go with it.

Falling at age 96 is not something one should consider.

One doesn't fall at this age, get up, fluff one's wings like a chicken, and continue the journey. No sir, this chicken is not fluffing.

I ended up for about a week's stay in the hospital, and we all know that is no picnic. The hospital staff were wonderful, but...

One evening I could not get anyone to answer my call-button – even though my call light was on, and staff constantly passed by, so I threw my facial tissue box out into the hallway. Quick response.

It seems that over the years, whenever I have had to be hospitalized, the staff use my room to hide out and relate funny patient stories. They come in, lean against the wall, and giggle. Some fun.

Rappahannock's dark sky protectors worry as development marches west



The Milky Way, as seen from the Rappahannock County Park, 2014. By Joyce Harman.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Connecting colleague and retired AP Washington journalist [Chris Connell](#) is engaged by local journalism foundations in Rappahannock and Fauquier counties to tackle in-depth stories for their small-staffed weeklies. Here is a recent story.)

By Christopher Connell — for Foothills Forum

On a moonless night in late August a cluster of people moved gingerly in the Rappahannock County Park shadows to take turns peering at the starry sky through amateur astronomers' telescopes.

The sun had slipped below the horizon an hour earlier. Dusk fell during a lecture and slide show in the picnic pavilion and the stars emerged, faintly at first, then as bright as a planetarium show. No telescopes were needed to see the Big Dipper and Milky Way, but the instruments brought into focus the rings of Saturn, the Ring Nebula, the M13 star cluster and distant galaxies.

Nights like this explain why many in Rappahannock are passionate about keeping skies dark and why some now are worried about the potential glow from a huge housing and commercial project being built almost on the county's doorstep at Clevenger's Corner that could intrude upon the stargazing.

"Wow!" a woman from a Washington, D.C., suburb exclaimed as she looked through Nathan Harness's 10-inch Orion XT telescope. No sooner had she finished then she'd go to the back of the line again.

"She was visibly moved," said Harness, an electrical engineer from Luray and Northern Virginia Astronomy Club member. "It was her birthday and she said this was her best birthday present."

"Saturn is the best crowd-pleaser there is," said Milt Roney, an astronomy buff and National Air and Space Museum volunteer who gave a talk about how astronomers gauge the temperatures of stars by their colors.

Read more [here](#).

Some news organizations have hundreds of obituaries ready to publish

By: Angela Fu
Poynter.org

On Sept. 8 at 6:30 p.m. in London, the royal family announced that Queen Elizabeth II had died. Less than two hours later, the Guardian published a 7,000-word obituary.

That obituary was 10 years in the making.

“The Guardian — I suspect like other newspapers as the queen grew pretty old — decided that they better have an obituary ready for the day when it actually came to pass,” said Stephen Bates, the freelance journalist who wrote the obituary. “It’s taken longer than I think we expected at that stage.”

Many news organizations keep prewritten obituaries, known as “advance obituaries,” of influential figures on hand, ready to publish at a moment’s notice. The Washington Post, which has roughly 900 of these stories on file, updated their obituary on the queen when news broke that she was under medical supervision. By the time the royal family confirmed her death, the Post was ready. The obituary was published just one minute after the official announcement.

Newspapers didn’t always take this approach to obituaries, said Washington Post obituary editor Adam Bernstein. When he arrived at the desk in 1999, the Post treated many obituaries as daily stories, written after the subject had died. There was also a greater focus on local news with only very occasional stories about national or international deaths.

Regarding the AP...

There’s no formula for choosing people, said Hillel Italie, who oversees the Associated Press’ entertainment obituaries, which number around 300 to 400. Sometimes, it’s just “common sense” who gets one, he said, naming actor Sidney Poitier as an example. People with known health problems, like singer Olivia Newton-John, are also obvious candidates.

Despite their best efforts, outlets are sometimes caught off guard. Generally, this happens when someone dies unexpectedly at a young age, Italie said, like actors Heath Ledger and Chadwick Boseman or NBA player Kobe Bryant.

Read more [here](#).

The Reporting Life

[Norm Abelson](#) - I don't care what anyone says, being a news reporter was a hell of an interesting, fulfilling, and, at times exciting (if underpaid and under-appreciated) way to make a living. And it's the unusual, the unexpected, that make it so.

So O.K., reporting does have its times of the usual, the run-of-the-mill, even the boring. But, oh, those other times.

I'm sure my memories hardly measure up to those of the foreign and war correspondents and big city reporters. But they do make the point. Anyway, here's an example of the unexpected, going back some 70 years, from my first AP writing post in Augusta, Maine.

I might well have been at my typewriter, tapping out something as mundane as the weekly report on how many animals had come down with vesicular exanthema (a cow and pig disease). It must have seemed a long way from being in any way involved in

the week's big news – the death of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. But only until my editor, Bob Crocker, tells me there's a community of czarist White Russian ex-patriots living in a tiny farm village up north. “Get a photographer, and drive right up there to get their reactions.” Fortunately, a couple of them speak fluent English, so we get a good - and well played - story, and a great picture of the group standing in front of a barn, setting fire to a large photo of Stalin on the front page of the Boston Globe.

Here are a few other such moments: (I've told some of these at greater length before on Connecting. I go back to them now only in regard to the unexpected, unusual or surprising aspects.)

International TV star Arthur Godfrey, is hospitalized in Boston for a new – and potentially dangerous – hip and knee surgery. Since the word was there will be no interviews with Godfrey, I, as an AP copyboy, am assigned to pick up a daily handout at the hospital. One morning it is unexpectedly announced that Godfrey will hold a news conference immediately.. I call the day editor who says that all his reporters are out, and that I will have to cover the event. Joining a group of experienced news-people, I do my extremely nervous best. (After all, it is the first story I have ever covered. Talk about working above one's job title!) With some sharp editing at the bureau, the story is a well-played major A-wire piece, and probably gives me a step up for promotion to reporter.

The phone rings at my house, waking me at about three or four A.M. It's the city editor of the local daily – an AP paper - who tips me the cops have arrested a man who had just murdered his entire family, and we have it alone. I dress and speed to the jail. The result is a one-on-one exclusive interview with the strangely calm but talkative young man who tells me how, just hours earlier, he lays in ambush with a rifle, and shoots to death his parents and both siblings.

Hanging in the wind is whether President Eisenhower – after suffering a major heart attack - will seek a second term. A first step will be whether he passively allows his name to be entered in New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation presidential primary. I get a promise from a friendly local Republican source for a head-start on that decision. On the opening day of the filing period, I get an early confirmation that a GOP agent will file Ike's name – and it results in a short beat on that part of the story.

New Hampshire's rather off-beat governor has called the press in one afternoon to outline a major state government reorganization, to be officially announced the next day. Suddenly, he leaves his desk, walks to a window in his office, looks out and quite softly says, “I want this administration to be known as the administration of divine guidance” He then walks back to his desk, making no further mention of the words. Those of us in attendance, including the AP, UP, New York Times, meet together later in the hall. We unanimously agree not to use the quote, deciding that the gov, with the background of once being a back-country evangelical preacher traveling the southwest, was just thinking aloud.

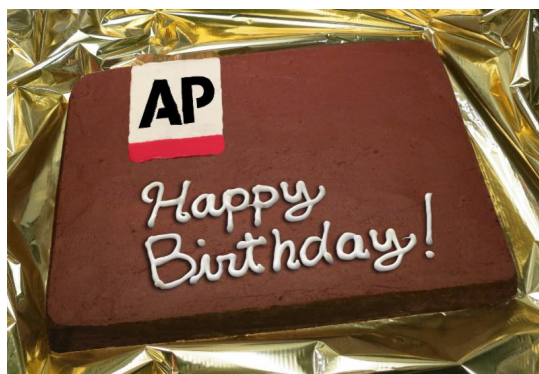
I'm covering the grand opening of a major American art center at Dartmouth College. New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, a Dartmouth alum, is to be the featured speaker. My normal level of nerves moves to the top of the chart when a call comes for me from AP New York: A big story is circulating in France that the recently re-married Rocky is having an affair with movie queen Joan Crawford. I am told to ask him if it's

true. I ask. He grumbles a few unintelligible words. His body man pushes me aside. It never becomes clear if the story is true.

President Eisenhower is making a trip to New Hampshire for the gala observance of the 175th anniversary of the discovery of state's trademark, the Old Man of the Mountains. Of course, The AP has some of its stars accompany him. Only recently promoted from copy boy to reporter, and low man in the Concord office, I hardly expect to be any part of the coverage. But it doesn't quite work out that way. After some concerns about the length of the main runway at the tiny Concord Airport, I decide to land there anyway. Suddenly, I am given an assignment: Stand inside a telephone booth that has a clear view of the runway, with an open line to AP New York, and report on the landing – either safe or (horrors!) otherwise. I happily report that all went well.

I call a man observing his 100th birthday, and, for the story, ask to what he attributes his longevity. I expect the usual run of home-spun philosophy, but this, in its entirety, is what he replies: “Young man, I just keep breathin.”

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Jeff Barnard](#)

[Linda Sargent](#)

Stories of interest

Media company hacked, racist push notifications sent to Apple iPhones (Washington Post)

By Joseph Menn

Hackers breached internal systems at Fast Company magazine Tuesday evening, defacing the company's main news site and sending racist push notifications through Apple News to iPhone users.

The two-sentence push notifications were attributed to Fast Company and contained the n-word and graphic language, prompting shocked users to post screenshots on Twitter.

While breaches at media companies are not unheard of, the notification was one of the biggest violations of Apple's "walled garden" in memory. There was nothing to indicate that user security was compromised beyond the upsetting wording.

"Fast Company's Apple News account was hacked on Tuesday evening. Two obscene and racist push notifications were sent about a minute apart," the magazine said by email. "The messages are vile and are not in line with the content of Fast Company. We are investigating the situation and have suspended the feed and shut down FastCompany.com until we are certain the situation has been resolved."

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

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The White House plays hardball

By MAX TANI and ALEX THOMPSON

It had been over 25 years since the Atlanta Braves won the World Series. But as the team took the right of passage that is the White House visit to celebrate the honor, the Biden administration left the team's hometown paper feeling high and dry.

Multiple people familiar with the incident said that several journalists from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, including the storied Georgia paper's Washington correspondent and a photographer, were denied credentials to attend Monday's celebration of the Braves' 2021 victory. The White House did issue a credential for the AJC's baseball beat writer, who is in town to cover the Braves' three-game series against the Washington Nationals.

The White House has on multiple occasions told certain media outlets that they can only have one reporter at East Room events due to space constraints. But a member of the White House press corps told West Wing Playbook on Monday that some reporters without specific credentials for Monday's event were able to attend. And, according to this person, there was "plenty of space in the East Room" at the Atlanta Braves' celebration. Plus, larger outlets often get at least one additional credential for their camera crew.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Paul Albright.

Today in History – Sept. 28, 2022



Today is Wednesday, Sept. 28, the 271st day of 2022. There are 94 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 28, 1928, Scottish medical researcher Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, the first effective antibiotic.

On this date:

In 1781, American forces in the Revolutionary War, backed by a French fleet, began their successful siege of Yorktown, Virginia.

In 1841, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow completed his poem "Excelsior."

In 1850, flogging was abolished as a form of punishment in the U.S. Navy.

In 1920, eight members of the Chicago White Sox were indicted for allegedly throwing the 1919 World Series against the Cincinnati Reds. (All were acquitted at trial, but all eight were banned from the game for life.)

In 1924, three U.S. Army planes landed in Seattle, having completed the first round-the-world trip by air in 175 days.

In 1939, during World War II, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed a treaty calling for the partitioning of Poland, which the two countries had invaded.

In 1958, voters in the African country of Guinea overwhelmingly favored independence from France.

In 1962, a federal appeals court found Mississippi Gov. Ross Barnett in civil contempt for blocking the admission of James Meredith, a Black student, to the University of Mississippi. (Federal marshals escorted Meredith onto the campus two days later.)

In 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat signed an accord at the White House ending Israel's military occupation of West Bank cities and laying the foundation for a Palestinian state.

In 2000, capping a 12-year battle, the government approved use of the abortion pill RU-486.

In 2019, voters in Afghanistan went to the polls to elect a president for the fourth time since a U.S.-led coalition ousted the Taliban regime in 2001; the vote was marred by violence, Taliban threats and widespread allegations of mismanagement. (After a series of delays, the country's independent election commission announced months later that Ashraf Ghani had won a second term as president.)

In 2020, the worldwide death toll from the coronavirus pandemic topped 1 million, according to a count by Johns Hopkins University.

Ten years ago: Citing national security risks, President Barack Obama blocked a Chinese company from owning four wind farm projects in northern Oregon near a Navy base where the U.S. military flew unmanned drones and electronic-warfare planes on training missions.

Five years ago: The Trump administration said its relief efforts in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria were succeeding, though people on the island said help was scarce and disorganized. House Majority Whip Steve Scalise returned to the House chamber for the first time since he was wounded three months earlier by a gunman who opened fire at a Republican baseball practice.

One year ago: Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called the 20-year war in Afghanistan a "strategic failure," and said he had favored keeping several thousand troops in the country to prevent a collapse of the U.S.-backed government and a rapid takeover by the Taliban. Barack and Michelle Obama dug shovels into the ground during a celebratory groundbreaking for the Obama Presidential Center along Lake Michigan in Chicago, near the Obama family home. A man who shot and killed five people at a newspaper in Maryland in 2018 was sentenced to more than five life sentences without the possibility of parole.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Brigitte Bardot is 88. Actor Joel Higgins is 79. Singer Helen Shapiro is 76. Actor Vernee Watson is 73. Movie writer-director-actor John Sayles is 72. Rock musician George Lynch is 68. Zydeco singer-musician C.J. Chenier (sheh-NEER') is 65. Actor Steve Hytner is 63. Actor-comedian Janeane Garofalo (juh-NEEN' guh-RAH'-fuh-loh) is 58. Country singer Matt King is 56. Actor Mira Sorvino is 55. TV personality/singer Moon Zappa is 55. Actor-model Carre Otis is 54. Actor Naomi Watts is 54. Country singer Karen Fairchild (Little Big Town) is 53. Singer/songwriter A.J. Croce is 51. Country singer Mandy Barnett is 47. Rapper Young Jeezy is 45. World Golf Hall of Famer Se Ri Pak is 45. Actor Peter Cambor is 44. Writer-producer-director-actor Bam Margera is 43. Actor Melissa Claire Egan is 41. Actor Jerrika Hinton is 41. Neo-soul musician Luke Mossman (Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats) is 41. Pop-rock singer St. Vincent is 40. Comedian/actor Phoebe Robinson is 38. Rock musician Daniel Platzman (Imagine Dragons) is 36. Actor Hilary Duff is 35. Actor Keir Gilchrist is 30.

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 as a newsman in Albany and St. Louis, correspondent in Wichita, chief of bureau in Albuquerque, Indianapolis and Kansas City, and Midwest vice president based in 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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