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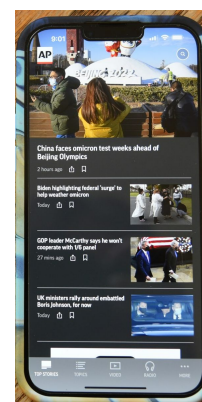
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Connecting

Nov. 29, 2022

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Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning on this Nov. 29, 2022,

Today's Connecting brings more thoughts on the AP's recent firing of national security reporter **James LaPorta**.

LaPorta was dismissed last week after being deemed primarily responsible for a Nov. 15 news bulletin that erroneously said Russian missiles had carried out a fatal strike that killed two people in Poland. See [this AP story](#) filed late last week on the issue.

Our colleague **Sheila Norman-Culp**, who recently retired after a 39-year AP career, shared her thoughts that include a belief that LaPorta was a scapegoat who should not have been fired and offers suggestions on how such a situation could be avoided in the future.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy!

Paul

Opinion: James LaPorta should not have been fired by AP

[Sheila Norman-Culp](#) – *retired AP senior editor, Europe-Africa desk, London* - A few comments on the James LaPorta firing:

While I do believe that AP was too hasty in sending his reporting as a news alert, I do not believe he should have been fired. I believe that AP management was looking for a scapegoat to wiggle out of a very embarrassing mistake and could use its anonymity rules as a handy excuse.

First, I would like to respond to those who say, “Why didn’t AP just call?” As someone who has been in the Russia-Ukraine Slack channel daily since before the war began in February, that idea is just wrong. During the Covid pandemic, the Slack texting channel has been absolutely vital to our reporting on a global phenomenon. It has enabled reporters across continents to share their knowledge, to spot trends and to dive deeper into reporting threads than ever was possible before we started using Slack. It does take a bit to get used to communicating this way, but it is the way modern stories are reported, and there is no use thinking about going back to older communications.

Maybe a phone call is good when you are reporting in the United States with its first-world communications infrastructure. It is not how you would communicate among three dozen people who are in WDC, NY, London, Paris, Warsaw, Tallinn, Moscow, Belgrade, Kyiv, Lviv and Kherson, where phone and internet infrastructure is severely compromised. You could possibly get a text out, not always a call, in Ukraine.

The daily process of trying to figure out what is actually happening in a brutal war where you cannot send journalists into many areas is simply chaotic. It has always been chaotic — we were trying to get the same information with much worse tools during the 1991 Gulf War, the war in Bosnia, the genocide in Rwanda, 9/11 and Iraq and Afghanistan. It may be shocking for the general public, or others who are not aware of how chaotic a wartime news flow really is, to see it in actual text. That said, we do need to take a breath before sending every news alert to ponder the consequences.

While AP management likes to think that its rules on anonymity are carved in stone, they have absolutely not been so for many years. The rules were tightened after the 2003 New York Times’ Jayson Blair affair, in which that reporter’s made-up quotes from anonymous fake sources infected dozens of AP stories —the corrective AP had to send after that fiasco surpassed 2,000 words.

But in the last 10 years, the AP has had a divergence in how it handled anonymous sources between its text and its video divisions. After a years-long campaign, video folks now get full names from the people they quote as opposed to just first names. But text stories for many years were stymied from using video quotes because of a

lack of full names or because we didn't ask why they would not give their full names, when in war situations the danger was just plain obvious. When I asked why text was being held to a higher standard, no one could give me a good answer, except for "it will become one over time."

In theory, having video interviews with actual people should always help AP guard against the Jayson Blair fake people issue. And that did help protect AP from anonymous sources in overseas reporting. But often the biggest problems from anonymous sources come from governments worldwide, especially including Washington.

In this particular case, LaPorta has only been with AP for what, two years? He may have honestly felt that once his boss approved a source, it was approved for all stories, not just one. And AP reporters in Europe have been under enormous pressure to send real time news alerts on big reporting shifts because that is the best way to alert members to a major development in Ukraine or elsewhere.

How to solve this problem, and dodge big mistakes in the future? 1) Europe should not be sending an alert from WDC. WDC needs to vet and send its own alerts. 2) There should be a manager on tap in a Slack channel as vital as Russia-Ukraine to be called on immediately. Most managers are already in the channel but not looking at it on a minute-by-minute basis. Perhaps they need to give an OK for an alert. 3) If there is a question about an anonymous source, managers should retreat to a locked Slack channel and debate the value there — and if that discussion is leaked, it will be from among 5-6 AP names, not the more than 500 people who are in the Russia-Ukraine channel now.

None of us wants our reporting to damage the AP's reputation. But if that happens, it behooves us and AP to bravely look at why it did and fix the structure that allowed it to happen. Blaming this on one reporter is not the way to move confidently into the future.

Hearing alarms

[Sibby Christensen](#) - Congratulations to Bill Sikes, "from an earlier generation," for having such great hearing that he prefers a phone call to a text message as an emergency alert (see Monday's Connecting). A low estimate of around 20 percent of us, including me, are hearing impaired. The house would burn down before we knew what was happening.

Connecting Reconnection

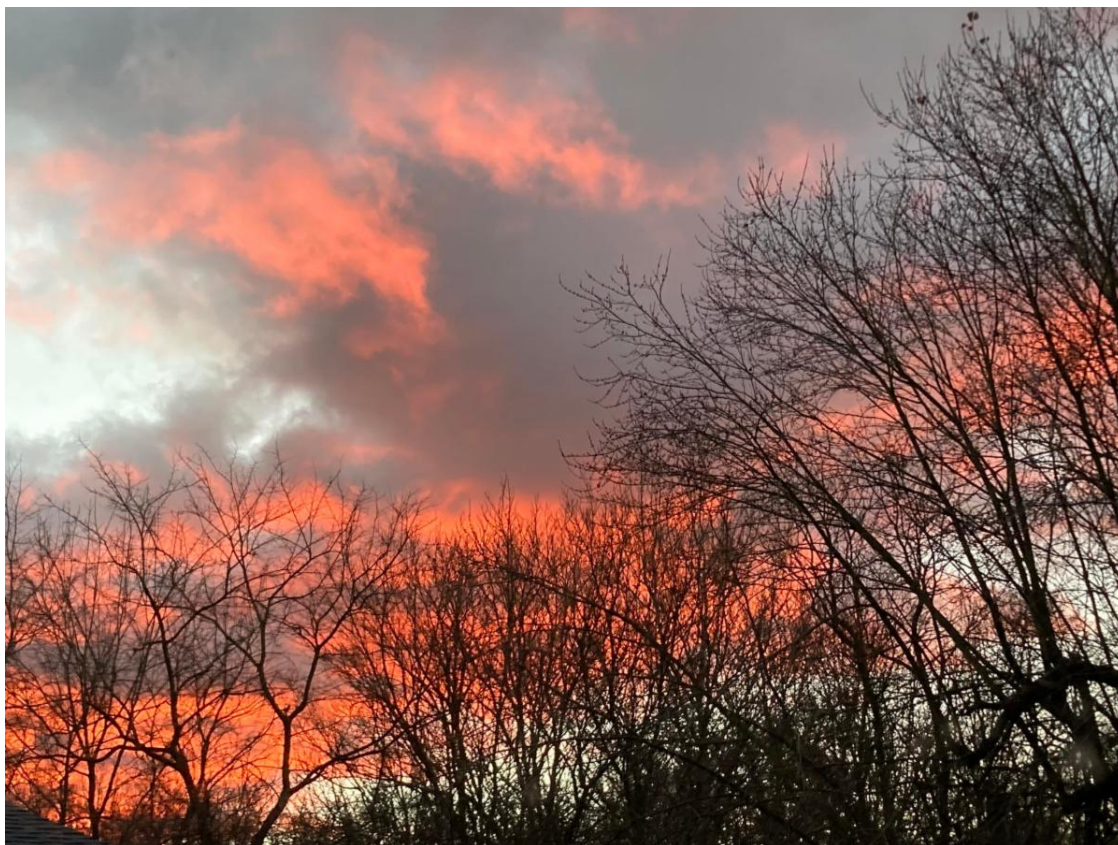
[Bill Kaczor](#) - Thanks to Connecting, I had a round-about reconnection with an old friend. I had noted in a Connecting contribution that I attended Eastern Illinois University. A Connecting member passed that on to a friend of his who was a former track coach at EIU. Their friendship was the result of a shared interest in barbershop quartet singing. It turned out the ex-coach began his tenure at Eastern while I was a student. I recalled his name, and in exchanging information I noted that I usually visited a couple people from my student days who were still at Eastern at least once a

year until the pandemic curtailed my travels from my Florida home. One of them was a fellow student who went on to become Eastern's sports information director before getting promoted within the Athletics Department. The ex-coach knew him well and shared our email exchange with my old friend. He then reconnected with me after a nearly three-year pause. I won't go into detail, but he had some significant news to pass along. So, thank you, Paul and Connecting for the reconnection.

Redundancies

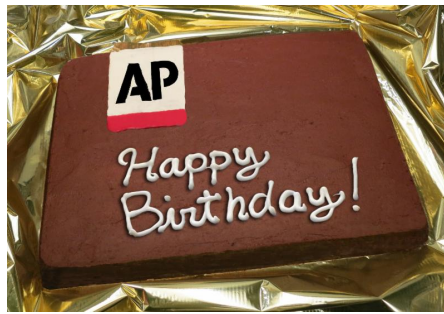
Molly Gordy - When I worked on the AP foreign desk decades ago, we were forbidden from using the phrase "shot dead." It was "shot to death," unless the bullets had entered a corpse.

Connecting sky shot – Maryland



Norma Parker Wilson - Taken in North Potomac, Md., backyard of my younger daughter and her family, borders on Muddy Branch trail and county wildlife area. We regularly see deer, foxes, turtles, squirrels including a few black ones, owls, pileated woodpeckers, and other birds.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Jim Sterling](#)

Stories of interest

Changing Newsrooms 2022: media leaders embrace hybrid work despite challenges (Reuters Institute)

Federica Cherubini

The COVID-19 pandemic showed us that some of the assumptions we had about work were wrong. Across many industries, work had a dedicated place: the office. But lockdowns and enforced remote working made many realise that another way was possible, accelerating a quest by employees for flexibility and increased autonomy. In 2021, senior news industry leaders told us that they – and their organisations – were on board with the shift to hybrid and flexible working (Cherubini et al. 2021).

One year on, have newsrooms really transformed as a result of the shift initiated during the pandemic? Has the news industry truly embraced flexible and hybrid working? This report, which is based on a survey of 136 senior industry leaders from 39 countries and a series of in-depth interviews, tries to answer these questions and take stock of the status of the newsroom as a workplace and its future.

Among other things, we find that:

News organisations have embraced the shift, with 61% of the survey respondents saying that their organisation has largely implemented hybrid and flexible working with new rules in place for staff. The majority of leaders who participated in the survey (57%) think their organisations are doing a good job with it. Even so, 20% of survey respondents report that while their organisations are making some changes, they largely want to return to a pre-pandemic working model.

Read more [here](#).

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Major News Outlets Urge U.S. to Drop Its Charges Against Assange (New York Times)

By Charlie Savage

WASHINGTON — The New York Times and four European news organizations called on the United States government on Monday to drop its charges against Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks founder, for obtaining and publishing classified diplomatic and military secrets.

In a joint open letter, The Times, The Guardian, Le Monde, Der Spiegel and El País said the prosecution of Mr. Assange under the Espionage Act “sets a dangerous precedent” that threatened to undermine the First Amendment and the freedom of the press.

“Obtaining and disclosing sensitive information when necessary in the public interest is a core part of the daily work of journalists,” the letter said. “If that work is criminalized, our public discourse and our democracies are made significantly weaker.”

Mr. Assange, who has been fighting extradition from Britain since his arrest there in 2019, is also accused of participating in a hacking-related conspiracy. The letter notably did not urge the Justice Department to drop that aspect of the case, though it said that “some of us are concerned” about it, too.

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

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Reporting on prisons: Stories of life inside (Editor and Publisher)

Bob Sillick | for Editor & Publisher

Punishing or imprisoning fellow humans for moral or legal transgressions has been a seemingly necessary practice for thousands of years. Today, people are still incarcerated (and executed) for their crimes. Today’s prisons are much more institutionalized, with a burdensome bureaucracy that makes reporting on the system in the United States challenging and often frustrating for even the most respected publications and seasoned journalists. Approaching it like any other beat will invariably lead to dead ends, convoluted and unevenly applied policies and formidable barriers to uncovering the facts and revealing the truth of life inside.

The good news is that organizations are gathering the information and penetrating the confusing, dense veil of prison policies and prison life. They’re supporting prisoners who dare to write as incarcerated journalists and sharing tips with editors and journalists on the outside who want to report on prisons.

The backgrounder

Understanding the U.S. prison system requires the standard “backgrounder.” First, there is no “U.S. prison system” but a series of sub-systems: federal prisons and jails,

local jails, state prisons, territorial prisons, Native American prisons, military prisons, juvenile and immigration detention facilities and psychiatric hospitals/institutions.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative (PPI) — a reliable data source for journalists, policymakers, incarcerated people and their families and grassroots advocates — 1.9 million people are being held in more than 6,000 correctional facilities. A better indication of how many people were in U.S. prisons during 2021 was a per capita incarceration rate of 664 per 100,000 residents, much more than all other countries — even those with more than double the U.S. murder rate.

Read more [here](#).

Today in History – Nov. 29, 2022



Today is Tuesday, Nov. 29, the 333rd day of 2022. There are 32 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 29, 1947, the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the partitioning of Palestine between Arabs and Jews; 33 members, including the United States, voted in favor of the resolution, 13 voted against while 10 abstained. (The plan, rejected by the Arabs, was never implemented.)

On this date:

In 1864, a Colorado militia killed at least 150 peaceful Cheyenne Indians in the Sand Creek Massacre.

In 1910, British explorer Robert F. Scott's ship Terra Nova set sail from New Zealand, carrying Scott's expedition on its ultimately futile — as well as fatal — race to reach the South Pole first.

In 1924, Italian composer Giacomo Puccini died in Brussels before he could complete his opera "Turandot." (It was finished by Franco Alfano.)

In 1929, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Richard E. Byrd, pilot Bernt Balchen, radio operator Harold Gatty and photographer Ashley McKinney made the first airplane flight over the South Pole.

In 1961, Enos the chimp was launched from Cape Canaveral aboard the Mercury-Atlas 5 spacecraft, which orbited earth twice before returning.

In 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson named a commission headed by Earl Warren to investigate the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In 1981, film star Natalie Wood drowned in a boating accident off Santa Catalina Island, California, at age 43.

In 1986, actor Cary Grant died in Davenport, Iowa, at age 82.

In 1987, a Korean Air 707 jetliner en route from Abu Dhabi to Bangkok was destroyed by a bomb planted by North Korean agents with the loss of all 115 people aboard.

In 2001, former Beatle George Harrison died in Los Angeles following a battle with cancer; he was 58.

In 2008, Indian commandos killed the last remaining gunmen holed up at a luxury Mumbai hotel, ending a 60-hour rampage through India's financial capital by suspected Pakistani-based militants that killed 166 people.

In 2020, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that New York City would reopen its school system to in-person learning, and increase the number of days a week many children attend class, even as the coronavirus pandemic intensified in the city.

Ten years ago: The United Nations voted overwhelmingly to recognize a Palestinian state, a vote that came exactly 65 years after the General Assembly adopted a plan to divide Palestine into separate states for Jews and Arabs. (The vote was 138 in favor; nine members, including the United States, voted against and 41 abstained.) President Barack Obama had lunch with defeated Republican nominee Mitt Romney in the White House's private dining room; the White House says they discussed America's leadership in the world.

Five years ago: North Korea launched its most powerful weapon yet, claiming a new type of intercontinental ballistic missile that some observers believed could put the entire U.S. East Coast within range. "Today" host Matt Lauer was fired for what NBC called "inappropriate sexual behavior" with a colleague; a published report accused him of crude and habitual misconduct with women around the office. Garrison Keillor, who'd entertained public radio listeners for 40 years on "A Prairie Home Companion," was fired by Minnesota Public Radio following allegations of inappropriate workplace behavior.

One year ago: A federal judge blocked the Biden administration from enforcing a coronavirus vaccine mandate on thousands of health care workers in 10 states that had brought the first legal challenge against the requirement. Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey stepped down as CEO of the social media platform; he was succeeded by Twitter's chief technology officer, Parag Agrawal. LSU hired Brian Kelly away from

Notre Dame, a stunning move by one of the most accomplished coaches in college football jumping from the sport's most storied program to a Southeastern Conference powerhouse. Arlene Dahl, a 1950s movie star who later remained prominent in television, died in New York at 96. Merriam-Webster chose "vaccine" as its 2021 word of the year.

Today's Birthdays: Blues singer-musician John Mayall is 89. Actor Diane Ladd is 87. Songwriter Mark James is 82. Composer-musician Chuck Mangione is 82. Pop singer-musician Felix Cavaliere (The Rascals) is 80. Former Olympic skier Suzy Chaffee is 76. Actor Jeff Fahey is 70. Movie director Joel Coen is 68. Actor-comedian-celebrity judge Howie Mandel is 67. Former Homeland Security Director Janet Napolitano (neh-pahl-ih-TAN'-oh) is 65. Former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel is 63. Actor Cathy Moriarty is 62. Actor Kim Delaney is 61. Actor Tom Sizemore is 61. Actor Andrew McCarthy is 60. Actor Don Cheadle is 58. Actor-producer Neill Barry is 57. Pop singer Jonathan Knight (New Kids on the Block) is 54. Rock musician Martin Carr (Boo Radleys) is 54. Actor Jennifer Elise Cox is 53. Baseball Hall of Famer Mariano Rivera is 53. Actor Larry Joe Campbell is 52. Rock musician Frank Delgado (Deftones) is 52. Actor Paola Turbay is 52. Contemporary Christian singer Crowder is 51. Actor Gena Lee Nolin is 51. Actor Brian Baumgartner is 50. Actor Julian Ovenden is 47. Actor Anna (AH'-nuh) Faris is 46. Gospel singer James Fortune is 45. Actor Lauren German is 44. Rapper The Game is 43. Actor Janina Gavankar is 42. Rock musician Ringo Garza is 41. Actor-comedian John Milhiser is 41. Actor Lucas Black is 40. NFL quarterback Russell Wilson is 34. Actor Diego Boneta is 32. Actor Lovie Simone (TV: "Greenleaf") is 24.

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!

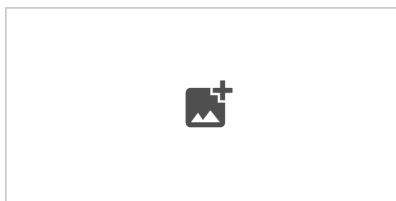


Here are some suggestions:

- **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.

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