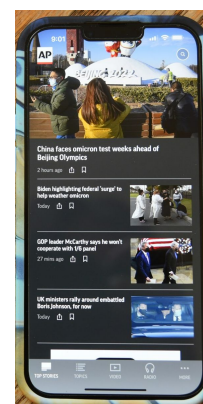


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# Connecting

Jan. 11, 2023

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this Jan. 11, 2023,

It's called the Vietnam Old Hacks Group and its members share a common bond: they covered the Vietnam War.

The group came into our radar this week when **Mike Tharp** died, and one of his Old Hacks comrades, **Ron Yates**, offered a wonderful remembrance in Tuesday's Connecting.

Connecting asked our colleague **Carl Robinson**, former AP writer and photographer and manager of the group, to provide us with background about the Vietnam Old Hacks and we lead with his story in today's issue. Among the 150 who are members of the worldwide group are a dozen AP journalists, Robinson estimates.

If you are a member of the group and would like to share thoughts on what it has meant to you, please send along your story.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy!

Paul

## ‘Vietnam Old Hacks Group’ unites those who covered Vietnam War



**In 2010, thanks to VOH and contacted by former Cambodian Army spokesman Chhang Song, who loved us old hacks, we organized the first and only ever reunion in Phnom Penh. This is group photo at the Royal Palace.**



**From 2015 Reunion in Saigon (always around 30 April fall/liberation of SVN) on steps of Reunification Palace, former South Vietnam Presidential Palace.**

[Carl Robinson](#) - That was very nice of Ron Yates to proudly mention his membership in the "Vietnam Old Hacks Group" in his tribute to Mike Tharp, also a member, of those who covered the Vietnam War.

Mostly by happenstance, I was put up as co-manager of the Google Group in mid-2009 following the death of former AP & UPI photographer Dutch-born and Hong Kong-based Hugh Van Es, famous for the photo of a helicopter on the roof as Saigon fell in 1975. The outpouring of "Reply All" emailed tributes to Hugh's war-time career and afterwards from around the world was absolutely massive -- and a "virtual reunion" of old colleagues not heard from for decades. Rather than see everyone disappear again, a mutual friend created and named our Google Group and, as we'd run the emails, signed me up as co-manager along with ex-CBS cameraman Derek Williams, me in Australia and him in Thailand.

Well, thanks a lot, I remember muttering to my Hong Kong friend Richard Jones, another now sadly gone. But considering my time in South Vietnam from 1964 to 1975, first as a civilian adviser and seven years with AP, I was actually in a great position to track down old colleagues. Even if I didn't know them personally, I knew many by name and organization, often reputation too. In little time and word of mouth (email), I was soon inviting literally dozens into the Group, even those (guess who) objecting to being called "hacks," clearly a self-deprecating wire-service expression. We also invited a smattering of former diplomats, official civilian and military, a few academics and modern-day journalists covering the region. We peaked at more than 200 members.

The Google Group format, which anyone can view but only members can file and comment upon, quickly turned into quite a forum for a wide variety of serious

conversations about the Vietnam War and its aftermath; recent articles and books; and, of course, today's Vietnam. Personal memories and people. And acrimony too, especially over ad hominem attacks, with my quickly earning the nickname of Cat Herder to rein in the chaos. I also objected to more general discussions beyond Vietnam, especially US politics in the Trump Era, and lost one Old Hack who accused me of "censorship." The Google Group was also the key to organizing five-yearly Old Hacks Reunions in Saigon (today's Ho Chi Minh City) in 2010 & 2015, Cambodia (2010), Southern California and Washington, DC (2011). And everyone loved my "Travels around Vietnam" stories and pictures on my regular returns to that country.

In Phnom Penh in 2010, we dedicated a memorial to foreign and Cambodian journalists who were killed there between 1970 and 1975. This later became a permanent memorial. A total of 37 journalists were killed in Cambodia, foreign and local.

Sadly, not too long into its creation, the Group also became a place to remember colleagues who passed away, I'd say more than 50 Old Hacks over the past 14 years, many quite close like my Saigon mentor Richard Pyle, the legendary Horst Faas and good friends like Don Hirst and Tim Page. Many are not that widely known, but always remembered by us as Old Hacks and a very special band of people.

With such losses, our [Google Group Vietnam Old Hacks - Google Groups](#) has slowly dwindled away in recent times after peaking between 2010 and 2015. There are fewer postings and I get discouraged at the lack of response, although many members have always preferred just lurking from the sidelines. My biggest worry is of Old Hacks passing away and not hearing about it.

## Memory of Mike Tharp

[Barry Shlachter](#) - Like Ron Yates, I met Mike "Buck" Tharp in Tokyo. I had just joined The AP as a 25-year-old local hire and Mike worked out of the bureau as Wall Street Journal correspondents did in those days. Tall and lanky, he sported a bow tie that looked as if it was made of butterfly wings. He carried a laidback, non-conformist aura, shattering my preconception of a buttoned-down, career business journalist. At the time I was trying to figure out just who foreign correspondents were, and I was meeting a variety of characters, from AP's legendary China hand John Roderick and war-toughened pros like the ex-AP Saigon editor Edwin Q. White to assorted eccentrics like the Journal of Commerce correspondent A.E. Cullison who one night stabbed a CBS producer named Harris with a broken beer bottle in a drunken Press Club argument.

Together Mike and I went to Seoul to cover the 1976 Panmunjom hatchet murder of two U.S. Army officers by North Korean soldiers during a DMZ tree cutting assignment. Tensions rose and there was fear of conflict.

A few days into the crisis, Mike came down with a bad case of Montezuma's (Kim Il-Sung's?) Revenge and looked awful. I offered him something like Lomotil, but he didn't believe in taking anything medicinal but, to my amazement, said a massage would cure him.

The next morning, I asked how it went. Mike said he took a taxi, telling the driver he wanted a massage. He was taken to what the driver expected Westerners wanted, a place offering the "special" course of intimate physical therapy. "But I want a REAL massage," he told them. No one understood.

When I was leaving on my new posting in New Delhi, I didn't want a scrum of friends and colleagues crowding the Haneda Airport departure lounge as was the custom, so I kept my travel plans secret. I even had my wife stay home. Somehow, Buck found out and showed up to say goodbye. I was quite moved.

After his various career moves, Mike reunited with his college sweetheart Jeralyn Nickel, married and moved to North Texas, not far from me. We got together periodically. Mike kept writing for magazines and taught journalism at local county colleges. There were dinners and barbecues, and much retelling of war stories. He never wanted to stop working in journalism.

A singular personality. He'll be missed.

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**Dan Day** - Reading Connecting on Monday morning was a double jolt, learning of the deaths of Charlie Price and Mike Tharp.

Charlie was a wonderful colleague during the four years I was CoB in Seattle. There wasn't a problem that arose that he couldn't calmly assess and find a way to fix. I always thought that as much as journalism mattered at AP, our communications staff mattered equally if not more in cementing relationships with our members. Charlie was proof of that. He was a true friend, partner and, whenever I needed it, counselor.

Mike and I interacted almost daily during his years in Merced and mine as managing editor a short drive away in Modesto. Mike was a news guy to his core. While he had plenty of stories to tell from his well-traveled past, he was always eager to get after the next big story. He was a strong and encouraging mentor to many of the young journalists working at the Sun-Star.

May they both rest in peace.

## New-Member Profile: June Carolyn Erlick

**June Carolyn Erlick** is the Editor-in-Chief of ReVista, the Harvard Review of Latin America and Publications Director coordinating Faculty Voice podcasts.

She has lived and worked in Latin America and Germany as a foreign correspondent, mainly for the National Catholic Reporter, the Miami Herald and Time Magazine. She's covered such stories as the early years of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua, the life and death of Archbishop (now Saint) Oscar Romero, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. She got her start in journalism at the Jersey Journal in Jersey City, covering the Cuban community in the area and then at the Lakeland Ledger in Lakeland, Florida, then a New York Times-owned paper.

She is the author of *Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Coping with Calamity* (Routledge 2021), translated as *Desastres Naturales en América Latina: Un Llamado a La Sobreviviencia de Cambio Climático*, Penguin Random House, February 2023, *Telenovelas in Pan-Latino Context* (Routledge, 2018), translated as *Telenovelas en el Mundo Latino* (Editorial Universidad del Pacífico, 2018), as well as *Disappeared: A Journalist Silenced, the Irma Flaquer Story* (Seal Press, 2004), translated as *Desaparecida* (Sophos, Guatemala, 2012) and *A Gringa in Bogotá: Living Colombia's Invisible War* (University of Texas Press, 2010) and *Una Gringa en Bogotá* (Santillana, 2007).



She teaches journalism at Harvard Extension and Summer Schools and coordinates the journalism capstone and internship programs there. Until recently, she was the chair of the board of the Maria Moor Cabot Prizes at Columbia University. She is currently a juror for the Overseas Press Club awards.

She holds a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University, New York. She received two Fulbright Fellowships, the first to Guatemala in 2000 and to Colombia in 2005-2006.

When she is not writing, teaching, doing podcasts or editing ReVista, she loves to walk (minimum of 10,000 steps daily) and play Scrabble.

(Photo credit to Martha Stewart.)

## Gary Gardiner photographs daily life in Westerville – every day

By Claire Miller  
City Scene, Columbus

Gary Gardiner has captured history for many years. Some of it has been an intentional effort, working in newspapers and for the Associated Press, and some has been by happenstance, such as a long-standing project which he stumbled into in retirement.

Both have value to Gardiner – and to the subjects he captures.

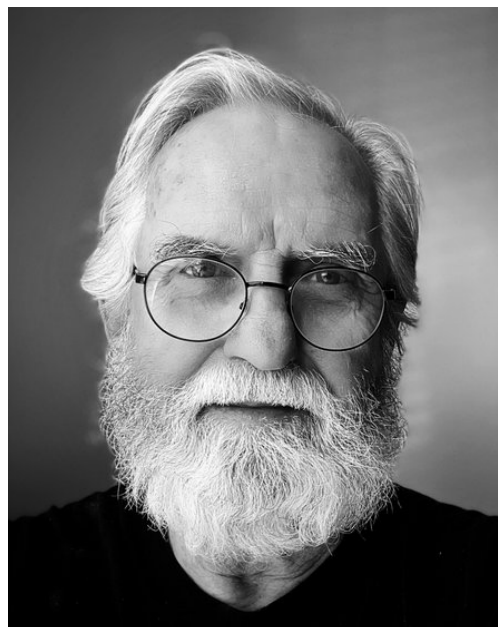
Gardiner, who moved to Westerville in 1982 for his job with the Columbus AP bureau, has become well-known around town. For his project My Final Photo, he's taken and posted a photo every day from within the three-to-five-mile radius of his home in

Westerville since Nov. 15, 2004, following his retirement. That's 19 years of photographs, or more than 6,700 images.

Following his retirement, Gardiner knew he had the time, energy and interest to continue his passion. So, My Final Photo was born.

"I've got a lot left in me," Gardiner says. "I'm going to take a picture every day for as long as I can, make it as journalistic as I can, and make it, in the true use of the word, awesome as I can."

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



## More tales of lost luggage

[Lelieu Browne](#) - After reading Henry Bradsher's article on Pakistan, I cannot help but want to contribute some experiences Malcolm and I had during our assignment there in 1971 – 1972.

It was during the time when the conflicts between Pakistan and India started up in defense of East Pakistan which was under control of West Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman, the leader of East Pakistan, sought to lead East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) into secession from West Pakistan. To punish his antagonist, the dictator of Pakistan, General Agha Mohammad Yalya sent his butcher, General Tikka Khan, viceroy of East Pakistan. The latter jailed Mujib and began killing and terrorizing thousands of the Bengalese.

East Pakistan is something like 900 miles from West Pakistan. To avoid crossing Indian air defense, all Pakistan planes had to make a long detour. We were forced to cover both sides during our time in Pakistan.

As the guerilla war began in full swing, war between Pakistan and India became closer and closer. We spent more time in Dacca and it very much reminded me of Vietnam war. One day, Malcolm managed to contact someone who, after several days of waiting, had signaled to Malcolm to expect a person to come that evening. He spent several days with the underground guerillas. Getting back safely, he decided to file the stories outside East Pakistan. We flew to Bangkok and panned to stay for two days.

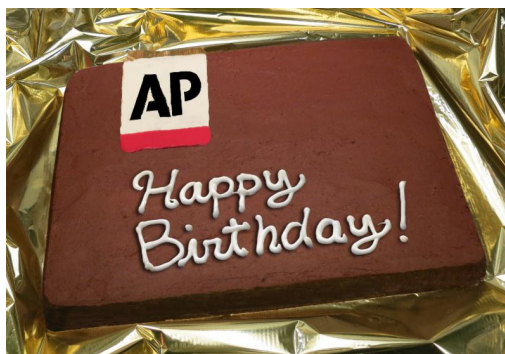
We booked Pakistan airline the evening of the second day to go back to Dacca. As planned, we went through the Thai checkpoint and walked out to the Pakistan airline parked on the runway. All the passengers' luggage was placed next to the plane, waiting for us to designate our suitcases before they were loaded into the plane and before we went through the body search.

Malcom's suitcase was there and mine was missing. I panicked and Malcolm walked toward the control officer and demanded the explanation. Of course, we only got the shrugs of the shoulders. Malcolm face became red with anger. He took his suitcase and told me that we stayed overnight to make sure that the airline had to provide the proper answer.

We woke up the next day to hear on the Thai television that the Indian troops had entered East Pakistan and the war had started. There was no plane permitted to land in Dacca. We were lucky to be able to catch some plane flying directly to Karachi. We covered the whole war on West Pakistan while Syd Schanberg and other New York Times correspondents covered the news on the East.

All the things I lost were unimportant except my Cannon camera. We suspected that the Pakistani secret service might be the thieves.

## Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Brian Horton](#)

[Bill Sikes](#)

## Welcome to Connecting





## Judith Russo

# Stories of interest

## ***How Finland Is Teaching a Generation to Spot Misinformation*** (New York Times)

By Jenny Gross

A typical lesson that Saara Martikka, a teacher in Hameenlinna, Finland, gives her students goes like this: She presents her eighth graders with news articles. Together, they discuss: What's the purpose of the article? How and when was it written? What are the author's central claims?

"Just because it's a good thing or it's a nice thing doesn't mean it's true or it's valid," she said. In a class last month, she showed students three TikTok videos, and they discussed the creators' motivations and the effect that the videos had on them.

Her goal, like that of teachers around Finland, is to help students learn to identify false information.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Michael Rubin.

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## ***'STRIKING DOES WORK': FORT WORTH JOURNALISTS WIN ONLY NEWSPAPER UNION CONTRACT IN TEXAS*** (Texas Observer)

By Lauren Ban | U. Pittsburgh School of Law, US

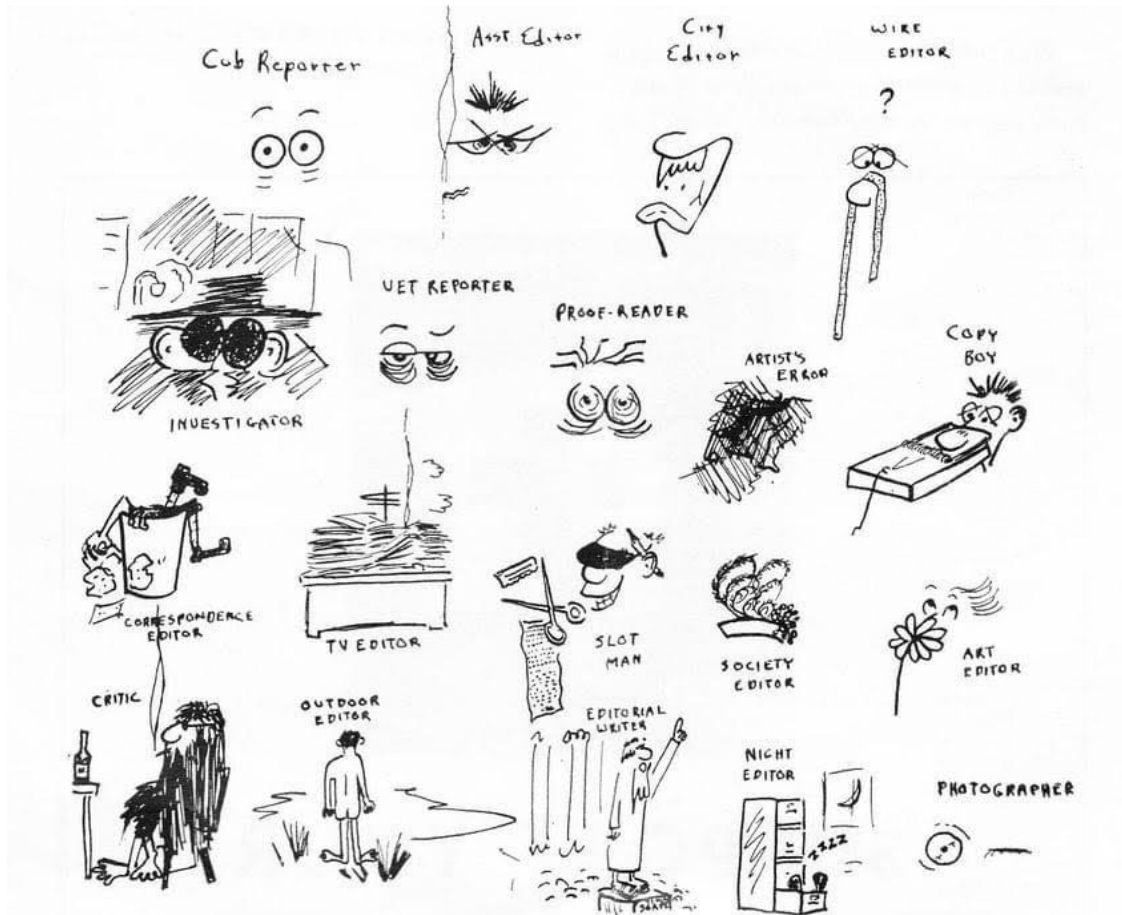
Twitter Monday upheld the suspension of VOA Chief National Correspondent and JURIST Journalist in Residence Steve Herman’s Twitter account. Twitter first suspended Herman’s account, along with those of other journalists, on December 15. Twitter continues to claim that Herman’s tweets, containing reference to accounts that track public flight data of Twitter owner Elon Musk, violate Twitter’s new rules against “posting private information.”

Herman posted the response to his appeal of Twitter’s decision to ban his account on his Mastodon account Monday. Twitter’s response to Herman’s appeal read, in part, “Our support team has determined that a violation did take place, and therefore we will not overturn our decision.” Twitter also told Herman that he would be unable to access Twitter unless he removed the content that had been flagged.

Herman told JURIST he was disappointed with Twitter’s decision saying: “As before, I do not intend to remove the tweets as that would be an admission that I did something wrong and would set a precedent for arbitrary and capricious censorship.”

Read more [here](#).

# The Final Word



*FRESH POINT: After he'd been a Memphis Press-Scimitar cub a month, Jim Long devoted part of a lunch hour to sketching his impressions of certain fixtures. Here are the results, as published in the Scripps-Howard News.*

Shared by Steve Graham

## Today in History - Jan. 11, 2023



Today is Wednesday, Jan. 11, the 11th day of 2023. There are 354 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 11, 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed the Grand Canyon National Monument (it became a national park in 1919).

### On this date:

In 1913, the first enclosed sedan-type automobile, a Hudson, went on display at the 13th National Automobile Show in New York.

In 1927, the creation of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was proposed during a dinner of Hollywood luminaries at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles.

In 1935, aviator Amelia Earhart began an 18-hour trip from Honolulu to Oakland, California, that made her the first person to fly solo across any part of the Pacific Ocean.

In 1943, the United States and Britain signed treaties relinquishing extraterritorial rights in China.

In 1963, the Beatles' single "Please Please Me" (B side "Ask Me Why") was released in Britain by Parlophone.

In 1964, U.S. Surgeon General Luther Terry issued "Smoking and Health," a report that concluded that "cigarette smoking contributes substantially to mortality from certain specific diseases and to the overall death rate."

In 1978, two Soviet cosmonauts aboard the Soyuz 27 capsule linked up with the Salyut 6 orbiting space station, where the Soyuz 26 capsule was already docked.

In 1989, nine days before leaving the White House, President Ronald Reagan bade the nation farewell in a prime-time address, saying of his eight years in office: "We meant to change a nation and instead we changed a world."

In 2003, calling the death penalty process "arbitrary and capricious, and therefore immoral," Illinois Gov. George Ryan commuted the sentences of 167 condemned inmates, clearing his state's death row two days before leaving office.

In 2010, Mark McGwire admitted to The Associated Press that he'd used steroids and human growth hormone when he broke baseball's home run record in 1998.

In 2020, health authorities in the central Chinese city of Wuhan reported the first death from what had been identified as a new type of coronavirus; the patient was a 61-year-old man who'd been a frequent customer at a food market linked to the majority of cases there.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama and Afghan President Hamid Karzai met at the White House, where they agreed to speed up slightly the schedule for moving Afghanistan's security forces into the lead across the country. The government assured the public that Boeing's new 787 "Dreamliner" was safe to fly, even as it launched a review to find out what caused a fire, a fuel leak and other recent incidents. Italian actress Mariangela Melato ("Swept Away"), 71, died in Rome.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump was quoted as having used bluntly vulgar language during an Oval Office meeting with lawmakers while asking why the U.S. would accept more immigrants from Haiti and African countries rather than places like Norway. Edgar Ray Killen, a 1960s Klan leader who was convicted decades later in the slayings of three civil rights workers, died in prison at the age of 92.

One year ago: Speaking in Atlanta, President Joe Biden called on senators to "stand against voter suppression" by changing Senate rules to pass voting rights legislation that Republicans were blocking from debate and votes. (The legislation failed after two Democrats refused to join others in their party in changing the rules to overcome a Republican filibuster.) Just days after the one-year anniversary of the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, the Justice Department's top national security official told lawmakers that the department was establishing a specialized unit focused on domestic terrorism.

Today's birthdays: Former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (zhahn kray-tee-EHN') is 89. Movie director Joel Zwick is 81. World Golf Hall of Famer Ben Crenshaw is 71. Singer Robert Earl Keen is 61. Actor Phyllis Logan is 67. Musician Vicki Peterson (The Bangles) is 65. Actor Kim Coles is 60. Actor Jason Connery is 60. Former child actor Dawn Lyn (TV: "My Three Sons") is 60. Rock musician Tom Dumont (No Doubt) is 55. Movie director Malcolm D. Lee is 53. Singer Mary J. Blige is 52. Musician Tom Rowlands (The Chemical Brothers) is 52. Actor Marc Blucas is 51. Actor Amanda Peet is 51. Actor Rockmond Dunbar is 50. Actor Aja Naomi King is 38. Actor Kristolyn Lloyd is 38. Reality TV star Jason Wahler is 36. Pop singer Cody Simpson is 26.

# 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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