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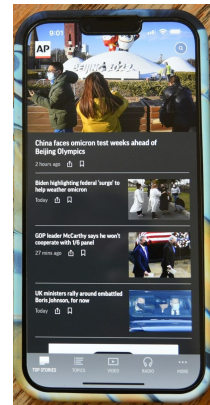
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Connecting

Feb. 6, 2023

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Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this Feb. 6, 2023,

Denne Freeman and **Joe Edwards** were among the very best in their fields. Their bylines were among the most familiar of any AP bylines that graced the wire.

Sadly, last Friday, Feb. 2, we lost them both.

Freeman, whose 32 years with the AP included covering all five Super Bowl championships won by the Dallas Cowboys and many golf majors out of the Dallas bureau, died after a series of health issues. He was 86.

Edwards, who chronicled country music and wrote a popular country music column out of his home base of the Nashville bureau, died after a lengthy illness. He was 75.

Connecting brings you the wire stories on the deaths of our two colleagues, and we invite you to share your favorite memories of working with them.

Today's issue brings more of your stories of subscribing to newspapers in print or online, or both, and why you do so. It's been a topic that has captured many great stories in the past few issues.

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

Paul

Former AP sports writer Denne H. Freeman dies at 86



FILE - Texas sports editor, Denne Freeman listens to University of Texas Safety Stanley Richard during a news conference in Irving, Texas, just before the Cotton Bowl in 1991. Freeman, whose 32 years with the AP included covering all five Super Bowl championships won by the Dallas Cowboys and many golf majors, has died, Friday, Feb. 3, 2023 after a series of health issues. He was 86. (AP Photo/Lee Baker)

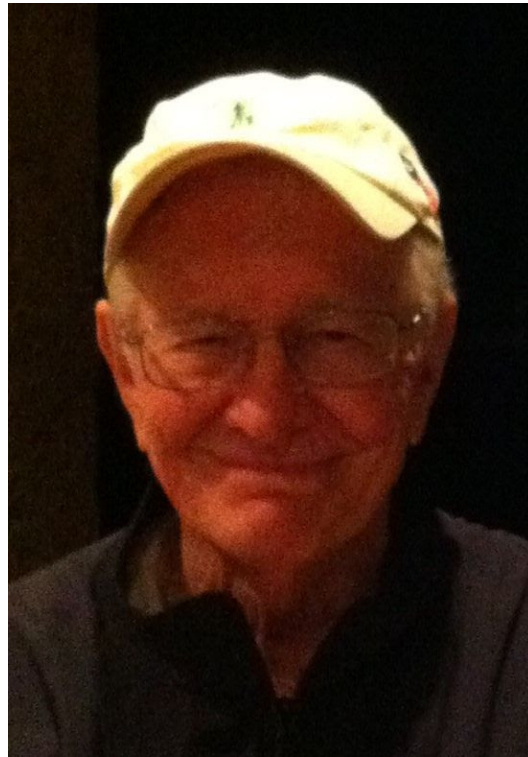
DALLAS (AP) — Retired longtime Associated Press sports writer Denne H. Freeman, whose 32 years with the AP included covering all five Super Bowl championships won by the Dallas Cowboys and many golf majors, has died after a series of health issues. He was 86.

Freeman's family said he died Friday night at a Plano hospital, where he was surrounded in his final hours by his wife, Judy, his son Danny and daughter-in-law, a granddaughter and his two great-grandsons.

The Dallas-based Freeman retired from the AP in the summer of 1999, ending a career in which he was also a golf writer who often traveled to the four majors: the Masters, U.S. Open, PGA Championship and British Open. After his retirement, it was determined that he had covered about 1,000 MLB games, 500 NBA games and 350 NFL games for the AP.

After joining the AP in 1967, he became the Texas Sports Editor a year later when Harold Ratliff retired. He went to the AP from UPI, where as a news reporter he was involved in the coverage of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas in 1963.

A 1959 graduate of Texas A&M, Freeman served in the U.S. Army before beginning his full-time journalism career.



The Cowboys were the only pro team in the Dallas-Fort Worth market when Freeman became the Texas Sports Editor, and they hadn't yet won a championship. By time he retired, they had been to eight Super Bowls and the Dallas area had added MLB, NBA and NHL teams.

Freeman covered the Cowboys' championship seasons in 1971 and 1977 with coach Tom Landry and quarterback Roger Staubach. There were also the three championships in four seasons (1992, 1993 and 1995) after Jerry Jones became their owner.

Freeman won a prestigious Headliner's Award for his coverage of Landry's firing by Jones after he bought the team in 1989. Freeman was the first person to interview Landry, then the franchise's only coach since its 1960 inaugural season.

"The glory of five Super Bowl seasons made covering the Cowboys the plum assignment of any sports writer in the country. They had become 'America's Team,' and Landry was 'America's Coach,'" Freeman wrote in the prologue of the 2001 book, "I Remember Tom Landry."

Freeman wrote that book with Jaime Aron, who worked with Freeman and succeeded him as the Texas Sports Editor. Freeman also authored "Hook 'Em Horns: A Story of Texas Football," that came out in the mid-1970s.

Aron was able to visit Freeman on Friday, when the two shared some laughs and memories. That included a discussion on Freeman's favorite golf courses – among them Augusta National, Pebble Beach and St. Andrews, the birthplace of golf. He smiled when recalling birdies he made on the 18th hole at Augusta and No. 7 at Pebble Beach.

An exclusive interview with famed golfer Ben Hogan in 1971 earned Freeman an AP National Award. He was chosen the Texas Sportswriter of the Year in 1980 and inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame last year.

He reported on Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan's seventh no-hitter and 5,000th career strikeout, both while with the Texas Rangers, the MLB franchise that moved from Washington, D.C., in 1972.

Freeman was part of the AP coverage of the Olympics in Montreal (1976) and Los Angeles (1984), and covered 31 Cotton Bowls while writing about Southwest Conference football and later the Big 12. He also wrote about horse racing and college basketball.

Click [here](#) for link to this story.

Longtime AP country music chronicler Joe Edwards dies at 75



In this undated photo, Nashville, Tenn., newsman Joe Edwards, who has been writing the "Nashville Sound" column for nine years and knows everyone in the country music industry, poses with friend, actor and singer Dolly Parton at an awards reception. Edwards, who chronicled Tennessee news for more than 40 years as a newsman for The Associated Press and helped "Rocky Top" become a state song, died Friday, Feb. 3, 2023. He was 75. (AP Photo/Mark Humphrey)

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Journalist Joe Edwards, who chronicled country music and helped “Rocky Top” become a Tennessee state song during his four-decade Associated Press career, has died. He was 75.

Longtime AP colleague Randall Dickerson said Edwards’ wife called him to share the news that her husband died Friday after a lengthy illness in Nashville.

Edwards documented the ascent of country music through interviews with stars ranging from Dolly Parton to Taylor Swift. He wrote the AP’s Nashville Sound country music column from 1975 to 1992 and did commentary for The Nashville Network cable TV station in the 1980s.

When Edwards retired in 2012, Reba McEntire said in a video tribute: “I’ll never forget the first time you interviewed me at the very beginning of my career, and I’ll never forget how sweet you were always to me.”

In 1982, a story Edwards wrote about the popularity of the song “Rocky Top” led the General Assembly to declare it a state song.

“He got the ball rolling,” Boudleaux Bryant, the song’s co-writer, said at the time.

He also covered sports and a variety of other topics during his AP career, which was spent entirely in Nashville. He worked most of the jobs in the Nashville bureau, including sports editor, broadcast editor and day and night supervisor.

Edwards was among those covering the death of Elvis Presley in 1977. He also reported about or edited stories from more than 20 Country Music Association awards shows.

He was nominated for several AP writing awards in the 1970s and 1980s.

“I just show up on time and do what I’m told,” he once said.

He wrote often about the syndicated TV show “Hee Haw,” and he once appeared on camera with its cast members.

Edwards began his AP career in 1970 after graduating from Eastern Kentucky University. Prior to that, he attended Vincennes University in Indiana.

While in college, he worked for the Cincinnati Enquirer and the Crawfordsville, Indiana, Journal-Review.

Shortly after taking the job in Nashville, he periodically played basketball with Al Gore, then a reporter for The Nashville Tennessean. Gore later became vice president.

“He was a pretty good rebounder,” Edwards recalled.

Country music stars he interviewed also included Garth Brooks, Willie Nelson, Kenny Rogers, Barbara Mandrell and Loretta Lynn. For several years, Edwards voted on nominees for the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

He specialized in writing obituaries, including those for music stars Johnny Cash, Porter Wagoner, Roy Orbison, Bill Monroe and Carl Perkins.

In 2010, he wrote extensively about the Nashville flooding that left much of the city submerged for several days. But he preferred reporting about more light-hearted topics, such as the taster at the Jack Daniel's distillery in Lynchburg, Tennessee.

Also, Edwards traditionally wrote a year-end story annually wrapping up Tennessee's offbeat happenings of the year.

"People call and ask if I'm going to do the weird story again," he said.

In the early 1970s, as bureau sports editor, Edwards spearheaded an effort to include girls high school basketball scores on the AP wire and to have a girls poll join the one for boys.

Click [here](#) for link to this story.

Remembering Wick Temple

[Chris Pederson](#) - The plaque and tribute to Wick Temple on the 20th anniversary of his passing is not only well deserved but, perhaps, the best tribute I can recall of this sort. Congratulations to all those who had a hand in it. Wick was a very good man and a strong leader (and my boss in NY for a time). He is, indeed, still missed.

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[Chris Sullivan](#) - After reading the abbreviated obit for Wick Temple that appeared in the New York Times 20 years ago under the "By The Associated Press" credit line, I went back to try to find the full story from the wire, for two reasons.

First, I wanted to reread a hilarious quote that I remembered Wick got while covering the story of the skyjacker D.B. Cooper, who famously jumped from a jet plane and disappeared. An FBI agent speculated to Wick that Cooper was probably screwed into the ground "up to his elbows."

My second reason was because Wick had been the first person I ever met at AP, having agreed to take my cold call for an interview during a job-seeking visit to New York in 1980, because he repeatedly helped me in my AP career after helping get me hired, and because I remembered my sadness when arriving at work at 50 Rock that day in 2003 and learning that he'd died. I then sat down and wrote his obituary for the wire.

[Here](#) is the full obituary.

Impacting a game

[Richard Carelli](#) - Your query about a journalist's work impacting a game carried my mind back about a half century, when I was part of the AP bureau in Miami. In those

days, the NY Yankees held spring training in the Fort Lauderdale area, but game attendance was not close to what it is now.

Susan and I attended a game one dreary, drizzly night as spectators. The crowd was sparse, the play kind of sleepy. Roy White, a speedy centerfielder, led off the home half of a late inning with a base on balls. He showed no apparent interest in stealing second, but the pitcher threw to first a few times anyway.

As Roy stood flat-footed a few steps off first and the pitcher went into his stretch, I yelled out as loudly as I could, "There he goes." The pitcher balked, and a surely surprised White jogged to second base. At this point, fans and players alike looked around to identify the jokester. As I waved my arms and blew kisses, Susan tried to hide under her seat. Ah, glory days.

Print or online? How do you receive your newspaper?

Norm Abelson - What, are you kidding me? Give up my print subscriptions? No way. I certainly understand the reasoning of the Connecting colleagues who have dumped them. But giving up my print papers just wouldn't work for me. It's a life-long addiction, one it's way too late to abate.

I'd miss the bracing feeling, as the coffee is brewing, of the morning air as I go outside to gather the NYTimes and Maine's Portland Press Herald from the newspaper box mounted at the edge of my front yard. (God bless Brad Foss, my long-time delivery person who takes on the worst of Maine winters to bring them to me.)

Without my print editions, what the heck would I toss across the room when I read a story that outrages me – my computer? What could supplant the pleasure of solving the NYTimes crossword puzzle – in ink! How about all the curses and comments I scrawl across the stories I'm sure I could have written so much better?

Yes, I'd also miss snipping out clips I'm so sure I'm going to need in the future. I use a special pair of shears I've been wielding for a lot of years just for that pleasurable task. Don't ask me how many times I've ever used anything in the burgeoning pile.

Oh, the memories. I can still see my mom putting on her special ink-stained apron and white cotton gloves before picking up the Boston Globe each day. My dad would spread out the local Malden News on the kitchen table each evening after dinner, having sharp comments about some articles. My Grandpa Aaron, the union organizer and family "lefty", never missed a word in the Boston Post, the Hub's Democratic newspaper. And who can forget the glorious 16-page comics section of Boston's Sunday Advertiser?

Over the years, where ever I have lived and worked, I've always turned the pages of the local press as well as those reporting national and international news, such as the Times, the Herald-Tribune and Washington's Post and Star.

The truth is, reading newspapers in the form God meant them to be read in, is just baked into my bones.

Give up my print papers? Never going to happen.

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John Carland - The whole notion of reading news only online doesn't sit well with me. We subscribe to the Washington Post and have for all of the 39 years we have lived in Northern Virginia. True, its editorial policy is too liberal for me but its reporting is, for the most part, remarkably objective and all the better for it. We also get the weekend Wall Street Journal (which contains arguably the best review section in America, perhaps anywhere.) On our apartment house floor there are 15 apartments and only 2 subscribe to the Post, or any other newspaper as evidenced by the lack of newspapers in front of doors. Well, that's better than the 1 in 26 reported by one of your AP colleagues.

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Adolphe Bernotas - During our Florida winters we read the home-delivered Sun; in New Hampshire, the Concord Monitor and New Hampshire Union Leader. We read these papers even though there's little new news in them (other than what's on the editorial pages) because the previous night's TV news makes them as old as yesterday's news.

We subscribe to the online New York Times, which we read in Florida and New Hampshire; we read the online Monitor and UL while in Florida and the online Sun in New Hampshire.

When traveling I always buy the local papers and wonder, "what would they do without AP," and "where are the copy editors?" as I curse the outrageous and stupid grammar, even in some AP stories.

Additionally, I read several online and print Lithuanian newspapers and journals, some in English others in Lithuanian; and the bilingual online newsletter of the Lithuanian American Club in St. Petersburg, Florida, for the menus of occasional soul food at the club's Sunday after-Mass dinners.

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David Briscoe - One of the many joys of retiring in Hawaii is the surprising ability, for \$13 an issue, to get the hefty Sunday New York Times on my driveway before dawn on the day of publication. The six-hour time difference helps and the 7-day digital access is a bonus. Only out of loyalty to print journalism and friends in local media, I also get the 6-day-a-week Honolulu Star-Advertiser, which arrives on Sundays as a jumbled mess with scant, well-hidden journalism, and on weekdays as a few thin sheets of fish wrap. And, because of a lifelong interest in things formerly called Mormon, I pay for a digital subscription to The Salt Lake Tribune, which has the best all-around religion editor and reporter on the planet, Peggy Fletcher Stack. Other news I get mostly from The Week, best and most comprehensive print news magazine in the world, and AP White House reporter Jonathan Lemire, who now expertly hosts the 5 am EST news

show "Way too Early" on MSNBC. It comes on live at midnight in Hawaii and HULU saves it for me till morning, when it's often still the freshest, non-hyped news for starting another day in paradise.

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Carolyn Carlson - Since I retired to western North Carolina, I have tried to learn about the area by reading its publications. One thing I quickly discovered was that these local newspapers needed support.

So I now subscribe to five newspapers in the area, of which only two insist on mailing me actual print editions. Add to that the two national online dailies I subscribe to, I'm up to seven.

No, I don't read every edition all the way through but I do spend a few hours checking them out.

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Patricia Fergus - One of my favorite daily rituals since retiring six months ago is to spread out The Washington Post on the dining room table, pour myself a cup of coffee and spend as much time as I want paging through the entire paper. It's a welcome change from the frenzied pace of ever-breaking news in my former AP life, when I often couldn't find time to read an entire story.

Surprisingly, I don't mind reading yesterday's news. If I'm interested I can check for updates and video online. But I prefer reading news printed on paper, without constant pop-ups to distract me. With all the noise and activity swirling around us in the world, I cherish my quiet mornings with the newspaper. I'm glad I still have one to read.

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Mike Holmes - Count me among those still subscribing to a dead tree edition. I'm old school enough to prefer a hard copy to futzing with — I mean navigating — websites and apps. I also have enough friends still working at newspapers that this is my small way of helping keep them employed. (Full disclosure, however: On some sub-zero mornings, the e-edition via iPad is pretty nice.)



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Jim Hood - Like other AP retirees, I must confess to a severe case of newspaper addiction. We currently subscribe to home delivery of the NYT, WaPo and WSJ. We have online subscriptions to the LA Times, Guardian, Bloomberg and numerous magazines ranging from National Review to The Nation.

We have tried to curb our addictive behavior, at times trying alcohol and exercise but to no avail. Drugs may be next. We've already started sniffing antihistamines. Who knows what that may lead to?

Meanwhile, my long-suffering spouse Joan and I display Jack and Jill Sprat behavior: I read everything online, she reads everything on dead trees. I believe it's the years of staring at AP terminals that have led to my obsession with reading stuff on screens. Also, just try reading the Times with bifocals.

This can cause marital strife. Stories often appear online days before they show up in the print edition, leading to exchanges like this: "The Times has a good story on composting." "Yes, I read it a few days ago." "No, it's in today's paper." "Yes, but ..."

Opinions, we have a few. Despite the millions of words consumed annually, there is way too much DC thumb-sucking and not nearly enough local news. The U.S. is becoming a news desert if you ask me. Oddly, The Guardian has more local news than most U.S. papers. Every day I find great local stories – like New Mexico considering adopting an official state smell – that never appear in U.S. papers. I have a lot more to say on this topic but will abstain in order to hang onto the few friendly acquaintances that remain.

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Bill Kaczor - Like many other "Connectors," I still read newspapers along with visits to AP, Google, Bing and Yahoo internet news sites. An old habit is hard to break. Also, I prefer the paper to lugging my laptop to the bathroom. Growing up in Chicago, we always had the Daily News and/or Sun-Times. My late parents moved to the Tribune with Mike Royko after I departed for Florida. We now get the Sunday New York Times and the almost-daily Gannett-owned Pensacola News Journal. As with most Gannett papers, it seems, the News Journal stopped printing on Saturdays shortly after deciding opinions should be offered only on Sundays. It hardly matters because most of the news is at least two days old and often more than that. Some stories advance events that already have happened. All sports results from the previous day, no matter how early, are labeled "late." I look at it as a weekly paper that happens to appear six times a week.

The news is so old because the paper is printed in Gainesville, a five-hour drive, yet it still is distributed in the middle of the night. When the News Journal initially stopped printing locally, it was outsourced to Mobile, Alabama, only an hour away. Then it moved to Jackson, Mississippi, and then Panama City before those plants also were closed. The News Journal's former building, where my little AP office was located, took up a full city block. It was sold and demolished to make way for a high-end residential and retail complex.

The paper has three or four experienced reporters, but the rest are newbies who constantly make rookie mistakes. Copy editing seems nonexistent and the paper is full of typos and outright errors such as "busses" for buses and "duel" for dual. I've come to call it the "Food Truck & Taco Stand News" because no restaurant opening or closing is too small not to merit major coverage. One of the top stories recently was about Waffle House replacing its old building in Gulf Breeze (where I live) with a new one. Missing, though, are stories that require more effort. Pensacola is a Navy town, but local military stories are few and far between. Ditto for local pandemic stories. There's only one full-time sportswriter so you might get an overwritten story about one local prep game and little or nothing about others. Local minor league baseball

and hockey are covered, if at all, by team press releases written by a "retired" News Journal reporter who took a buyout in fear of being laid off. Another sportswriter quit after a local editor nixed his transfer to a bigger Gannett paper. He got a better non-Gannett job out of state.

On the plus side, the dearth of real local news leaves plenty of space for national and international AP stories. The negative is that we rarely see an in-state AP story primarily because there are so few written these days. An outfit called News Service of Florida has picked up the slack with a steady stream of the kind of reporting AP used to do in Tallahassee. Gannett's appetite for expansion also means the local paper benefits from Gannett reporting across Florida including a couple top-notch capital reporters. If you cannot wait for any of this to get to your driveway, there's the online edition that comes along with your print subscription. An interesting and often useful feature is the ability to access the e-editions of other Gannett papers, both current and recent. There are, unfortunately, no Washington Posts, New York Times or even Chicago Tribunes among them.

I am among about 13,000 print subscribers. That's down from 64,000 in 2002. Gannett makes subscribing as difficult as possible even for those of us who are willing to put up with its inferior product. First, there was a series of rate increases. I responded to each with a phone call to complain (I think my calls were answered in the Philippines) and usually got a lower rate. Next came "premium editions," two per month for an additional price of \$6 each. These are often tied to holidays and loaded with filler and pictures. I usually don't bother to even look at them. The \$6 Thanksgiving edition is nothing but advertising inserts. I called to say I wanted to skip delivery on "premium edition" days. For two or three months, Gannett agreed to remove the charge but delivered the special edition papers anyway. The last time I tried this, I was told I couldn't skip the special editions. but due to my complaining I was given a lower base rate of \$24.72. Then, Gannett added a \$5 charge for paying by mail. With sales tax and an \$11 "transportation fee" my monthly bill now totals \$55.64, and I always add a \$5 tip for the carrier, who does a good job. Besides habit, I keep paying because I can afford it and partly out of loyalty. I once worked for the News Journal (1970's), I know many of the employees and it has been a loyal AP member. Mostly, though, I do it because the alternatives are not encouraging. I doubt if the News Journal could survive on internet subscriptions alone (it has even fewer internet-only customers) and local news coverage on TV and radio is mostly superficial at best. Pensacola has a feisty and free weekly, but its coverage is very limited.

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[Dave Lubeski](#) - I get the local paper delivered, although my carrier is unreliable. Sometimes I find it in the gutter, or the neighbor's yard or in the street. Sometimes when it rains, the paper is soaking wet because the single wrapper is inadequate. I've complained. No response. Occasionally it doesn't come at all. When I call to report it, I only get a recording that tells me they "weren't able to deliver my paper today." I read the online version on Saturdays out of necessity, because there is no Saturday delivery.

I know of only two other paper deliveries on my street, including my next-door neighbor.

In last Thursday's Connecting, Bill Hancock's account of why he's cancelling his home delivery of the Kansas City Star because "the paper has little timely hard news because of its 3 p.m. deadline" hit a familiar note regarding the Capital Journal. Some game stories in the sports section are two days late.

Gannett bought the paper not long ago and its cost-saving moves have affected the quality of its news content. What used to be a "special" feature section on Wednesdays has turned into an ad section.

Most of the stories about shootings or other violence are nothing more than reprints of police reports. No who, what, where, when, why.

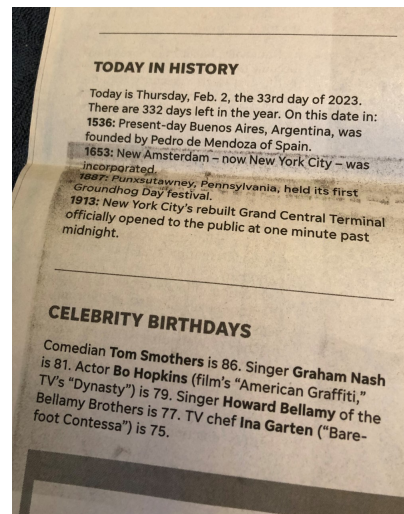
I've complained about poor editing that often is missing the first reference of a person's name and once in a Sunday edition I read a story about a woman's search for her daughter, which apparently ran out of space, because it ended abruptly just before the results of her search were revealed.

The AP's Today in History also gets shortchanged in the paper (note the photo)

I'm probably labeled as a crackpot subscriber because of my complaints. I write directly to the publisher, but no longer get a reply.

So, yes, I can get everything I need online, but it's the same look and stories as the version that sometimes actually hits my driveway.

I'm just one of the dinosaurs that still likes to read the paper on paper.



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Lee Mitgang - A quick plug for the unsung heroes behind print newspapers: the unsung saints who get up at 4 a.m. to deliver them. One of the blessings of our move to Maine seven years ago has been waking up each day to the excellent Portland Press-Herald on our front porch. For sure, I admire the writers and editors. But my hat's really off to those who brave Maine winters to deliver the print edition before sun-up -- and we tip accordingly. (Note to old friend Hal Bock: please be nice to your Newsday delivery person. I delivered that paper once upon a time!)

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Sheila Norman-Culp - Apparently I am a contrarian in the whole print newspaper debate.

After spending 16+ years overseas, I cannot now imagine reading US news on a printed page. Just seeing in the meantime what Gannett, McClatchy and other chains have done to once proud city papers is beyond depressing, and many are filled with AP stories anyway.

I do pick up a weekly North County flier to read hyper local news.

But I believe that climate change is the premier challenge of our age, so I want to keep those trees in the ground, not pulp them up for newspapers!

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Dan Sewell - On the print issue, I was luncheon speaker for a local Rotary Club a couple weeks ago. I mainly told them my AP war stories with photos, but when it was opened up to questions, most were about the print edition future of The Cincinnati Enquirer (I contribute columns to The Enquirer).

I didn't have much hope to offer them. The Enquirer, like many dailies, cut out Saturday print.

Deadlines are early, so much of the print content is old news if you read online.

This was an older audience — most older than me! — but I was struck by how attached they are to the print edition. These are loyal, daily newspaper readers and I just wonder if Gannett, et al, are showing them appreciation by continually cutting their favorite product.

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Ed Tobias - Here in Punta Gorda, FL we have the Charlotte County Sun. I read the NYT, WPO and WSJ on-line using their apps (plus AP, of course) and I used to read the print edition of the Sun. But a year or so ago the Sun stopped delivering to the front door of our condo apartment. Instead, the paper is dropped on a bench on the ground floor, near the elevator. Not the nearest elevator, mind you, near the elevator on the opposite end of our building. Customer Service, difficult to reach in itself, says "nothing we can do, it's up to the delivery person."

The Sun's app isn't a solution to my need for local news, either. It's horribly designed. So, Sun...nevermore.

Perhaps Tony Winton can open a Southwest Florida edition of his informative Key Biscayne Independent.

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Robert Wielaard - I used to buy The NYT at my hometown train station near Brussels at a price of \$5,43 a day. Then COVID showed up in Europe and I became a digital subscriber paying \$12 or \$14/month.

When I let that lapse accidentally, a NYT agent offered me a new deal: I now pay under \$10 a month! Online subscriptions are not about the quality of content but the quantity of email addresses they yield for marketing types.

BEST OF THE WEEK — FIRST WINNER

AP scores exclusive interview with Pope Francis, making news worldwide with a papal call to decriminalize homosexuality



AP Photo/Andrew Medichini

AP's Chief Italy and Vatican Correspondent Nicole Winfield's tenacious reporting has already delivered numerous exclusives over a two-decade career covering three popes. Yet an on-camera, sit-down interview with a pontiff had eluded the AP.

After years of lobbying, the pope finally agreed to an interview with Winfield, whom Francis has for years called the "prima della classe," or "first in class," as a sign of respect for her tough but fair reporting on his pontificate. In fact, during the interview, he mentioned how Winfield's questions about sex abuse during a 2018 airborne press conference led to his own "conversion" moment when he realized that Chilean bishops had been covering up cases for decades.

For weeks, Winfield prepared the interview with Rome Senior Producer Maria Grazia Murru, who for decades has led the Vatican video operations. They coordinated every detail and prepared the right questions and approach for the interview. Murru designed the video coverage plan and spearheaded the production of social media promotion material. And together, they wrote letters in the most formal Italian to Francis' private secretaries, until a date was finally arranged — for late January, a time that seemed ripe to make news. It was one week ahead of his planned trip to Africa and just over a month ahead of the 10th anniversary of his pontificate.

During the planning, no one knew that Benedict XVI, Francis' predecessor, who had cast a long shadow as pope emeritus, would die on the last day of 2022. After Benedict's funeral, work continued to ensure that the interview would proceed as planned.

Video's Paolo Santalucia and Photos' Domenico Stinellis planned the lighting at the venue and sorted out technical details to make sure that on the day of the interview, all the focus was on the questions.

Read more [here](#).

BEST OF THE WEEK — SECOND WINNER

Sensitivity, teamwork and planning shape reporting on Tyre Nichols



Protesters gather Jan. 27, 2023, in Memphis, Tenn., as authorities are set to release police video depicting five Memphis officers beating Tyre Nichols, whose death resulted in murder charges and provoked outrage at the country's latest instance of police brutality. AP PHOTO/GERALD HERBERT

The vicious beating death of Tyre Nichols was a monumental story that required extensive teamwork, coordination and sensitivity to accomplish successful coverage for the AP in a highly competitive news landscape as the officers were fired and charged with murder and the video was released to the public.

The coverage was a textbook example of how the AP can work together seamlessly across newsgathering, production and standards, with complete integration text, photos, audio and video.

Memphis correspondent Adrian Sainz, whose deep sourcing and knowledge of the city set the table for distinctive, all-formats coverage, anchored the reporting. Sainz secured an all-formats interview with the police chief on the day the video was released to the public. He was on top of every news conference, criminal charge and officer being put on administrative leave. He smartly anticipated next steps in the case

and stayed connected with the Nichols family. He even helped coordinate the shipment of protective gear for staffers in case of civil unrest.

With the AP firmly established on the story because of Sainz, text reporters, video journalists and photographers across several teams were able to deliver smart takes on all aspects of yet another harrowing attack of a Black man at the hands of police.

Read more [here](#).

Traveling through Vietnam



Nick Ut - I am taking a train to Dong Ha and Khe Sánh. Quang Trị former DMZ Vietnam . I am traveling throughout Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for three months.

Welcome to Connecting



Steve Futterman

Stories of interest

Gannett ends online comments for a majority of its news sites (Poynter)

By: Angela Fu

Gannett ended online commenting for most of its news sites Wednesday, citing difficulties in dedicating staff to moderate comment sections.

Some of Gannett's larger outlets including the Detroit Free Press, The Arizona Republic, and The Cincinnati Enquirer will retain online comments. However, the vast majority of the company's roughly 200 dailies will no longer allow readers to post comments directly to their websites.

Earlier in the week, several outlets ran versions of a statement announcing the change. They explained that online comment spaces often "quickly devolve" when left unmonitored, leading to off-topic discussions and verbal abuse. In the past, Gannett has asked its journalists to help moderate these spaces, but that will no longer be possible due to "changes in staffing."

"While we continue to believe in the importance of comments, we had to make the hard choice to move away from the space due to changes in staffing and the time investment necessary to bring you a safe, moderated and productive discussion space," the statement reads.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Lindel Hutson.

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Gazette's spy balloon photos play role in White House's response to China (Billings Gazette)

The president of the United States knew about the presence of the Chinese spy balloon for several days before it was spotted drifting over Montana.

But, the White House wanted to keep it secret fearing news of the surveillance balloon would sabotage Secretary of State Antony Blinken's planned diplomatic trip to China, the first such visit in five years, Bloomberg News has reported. Blinken was to go to China on Friday.

That changed when on Wednesday Billings Gazette photographer Larry Mayer, responding to vague reports that the airspace around Billings had been closed, photographed an odd glowing orb high in the sky.

Using a large telephoto lens, Mayer discovered it was a high-altitude balloon powered by a large solar array. The balloon was also photographed by Billings videographer and former Gazette online editor Chase Doak.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Len Iwanski.

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House GOP embraces mainstream media after years of bashing 'fake news' (Washington Post)

Story by Paul Kane

Awakening from a traditional media hibernation, House Republicans have begun to blitz the airwaves they previously shunned with brushoffs about the "lamestream media."

On any given day now, the new GOP majority posts a half-dozen or more members on CNN and MSNBC — two networks that increasingly became no-go zones for conservative lawmakers in the Trumpian era of "fake news" attacks. Republicans have appeared on streaming network news shows online and done interviews on those nightly news shows for cable.

Take last Sunday, when 2.5 million viewers of NBC's "Meet the Press" saw the first appearance in almost four years by the archconservative Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio). Viewers to ABC's "This Week" and "Fox News Sunday" heard from a pair of prominent House Republicans, Reps. Michael R. Turner (Ohio) and Michael McCaul (Tex.). And on CBS's "Face the Nation," House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) laid out his expectations for Wednesday's meeting with President Biden — making his first traditional Sunday appearance in almost two years, according to a Washington Post review of these talk show transcripts.

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

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Joyce Dopkeen, Barrier-Breaking News Photographer, Dies at 80 (New York Times)

By Sam Roberts

Joyce Dopkeen, who in 1973 became the first woman to be hired by The New York Times as a full-time staff photographer, beginning a 35-year career with the newspaper, died on Tuesday in Rockville, Md. She was 80.

Her death, in a hospital, was caused by heart failure, her brother, Jonathan Dopkeen, said.

Ms. Dopkeen roamed widely with her camera for The Times, whether capturing Muhammad Ali squaring off against Joe Frazier, female prison inmates training puppies to be service dogs, exuberant children enjoying summers in urban parks, or the aerialist Philippe Petit pausing during an eight-and-a-half minute tiptoe across the Great Falls gorge in Paterson, N.J., before 30,000 gaping spectators.

“The pix were always a still version of the story itself,” Nancy Lee, a former picture editor at The Times, wrote of Ms. Dopkeen in an email. “She knew how to capture the perfect moment.”

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

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National Enquirer, caught in ‘catch-and-kill’ scandal, sold (AP)

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN

The National Enquirer, the scandal-plagued tabloid that engaged in “catch-and-kill” practices to bury stories about Donald Trump during his presidential campaign, has been sold.

VVIP is buying the National Examiner and another tabloid, the Globe, from magazine publisher a360 Media in an all-cash deal, though exact financial terms were not disclosed.

In December 2018 the parent company of publications including the National Enquirer, Us Weekly and In Touch admitted to engaging in a journalistically dubious practice known as “catch-and-kill” in order to help Donald Trump become president.

Federal prosecutors revealed at the time that they had agreed not to prosecute American Media Inc. for secretly assisting Trump’s campaign by paying \$150,000 to Playboy model Karen McDougal for the rights to her story about an alleged affair with Trump. The company then intentionally suppressed McDougal’s story until after the election.

Read more [here](#).

The Final Word



Shared by Linda Deutsch.

Today in History - Feb. 6, 2023



Today is Monday, Feb. 6, the 37th day of 2023. There are 334 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 6, 1952, Britain's King George VI, 56, died at Sandringham House in Norfolk, England; he was succeeded as monarch by his 25-year-old elder daughter, who became Queen Elizabeth II.

On this date:

In 1778, during the American Revolutionary War, the United States won official recognition and military support from France with the signing of a Treaty of Alliance in Paris.

In 1788, Massachusetts became the sixth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1815, the state of New Jersey issued the first American railroad charter to John Stevens, who proposed a rail link between Trenton and New Brunswick. (The line, however, was never built.)

In 1862, during the Civil War, Fort Henry in Tennessee fell to Union forces.

In 1899, a peace treaty between the United States and Spain was ratified by the U.S. Senate.

In 1911, Ronald Wilson Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, was born in Tampico, Illinois.

In 1922, Cardinal Archille Ratti was elected pope; he took the name Pius XI.

In 1933, the 20th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the so-called "lame duck" amendment, was proclaimed in effect by Secretary of State Henry Stimson.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton signed a bill changing the name of Washington National Airport to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. Carl Wilson, a founding member of The Beach Boys, died in Los Angeles at age 51.

In 2000, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton launched her successful candidacy for the U.S. Senate.

In 2008, the Bush White House defended the use of the interrogation technique known as waterboarding, saying it was legal — not torture as critics argued — and had saved American lives.

Ten years ago: The U.S. Postal Service proposed eliminating Saturday mail delivery, an announcement that immediately drew protests from some lawmakers. At least nine people were killed by a tsunami that smashed into villages in the Solomon Islands, flattening dozens of homes in the South Pacific island chain. Toy maker Hasbro Inc. announced that Monopoly fans had voted online to add a cat token to the board game, replacing the iron.

Five years ago: Casino mogul Steve Wynn resigned as chairman and CEO of Wynn Resorts amid sexual misconduct allegations. SpaceX's big new rocket blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center on its first test flight, carrying a red sports car on a route that would take it to the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. Poland's president signed legislation making it a crime to blame Poland for Holocaust crimes committed by Nazi Germany.

One year ago: Queen Elizabeth II celebrated the 70th anniversary of her ascendance to the British throne, an unprecedented reign that made her a symbol of stability as the United Kingdom navigated an age of uncertainty. (She would die seven months later at age 96, and her son became King Charles III.)

Today's birthdays: Actor Mamie Van Doren is 92. Actor Mike Farrell is 84. Former NBC News anchorman Tom Brokaw is 83. Singer Fabian is 80. Actor Gayle Hunnicutt is 80. Actor Michael Tucker is 78. Producer-director-writer Jim Sheridan is 74. Actor Jon Walmsley is 67. Actor Kathy Najimy is 66. Rock musician Simon Phillips (Toto) is 66. Actor-director Robert Townsend is 66. Actor Barry Miller is 65. Actor Megan Gallagher is 63. Rock singer Axl Rose (Guns N' Roses) is 61. Country singer Richie McDonald is 61. Singer Rick Astley is 57. Rock musician Tim Brown (Boo Radleys) is 54. Former ABC News anchor Amy Robach is 50. Actor Josh Stewart is 46. Actor Ben Lawson is 43. Actor Brandon Hammond is 39. Actor Crystal Reed (TV: "Teen Wolf") is 38. Actor Alice Greczyn (GREH'-chihn) is 37. Actor Anna Diop is 35. R&B singer/actor Tinashe 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.

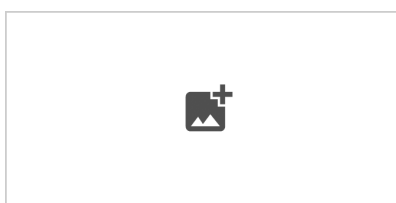
- **First job** - How did you get your first job in journalism?

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

Paul Stevens

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