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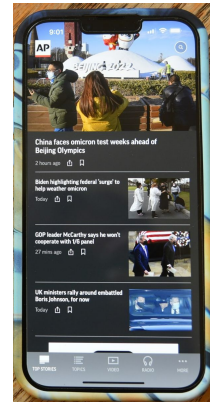
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Connecting

March 16, 2023

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Colleagues,

Good Thursday morning on this March 16, 2023,

Happy 92nd birthday to our colleague **Norm Abelson**, one of Connecting's best and most loyal of contributors, on the celebration of his 92nd trip around the sun.

One of 17 in our Connecting 90s Club, Norm shares with us some lessons learned along his life's journey, a journey we hope will continue for many years to come.

Today's issue brings you more stories from colleagues worked in dangerous situations.



And on the lighter side, we bring you more stories of favorite hats.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy!

Paul

Thoughts on a 92nd birthday

[Norm Abelson](#) - March 16, 1931, dawned windy and overcast in the working-class community of Malden, several miles outside of Boston. Alternately it snowed large flakes and spit icy rain. Sophia Abelson lay in her hospital maternity ward bed, awaiting her first child. I know this because my mom related the time of my birth to me a number of years later.

Since those dark winter hours when I inched my way down the birth canal and into the world, I've awakened to more than 33,000 new days. Some whizzed by at warp speed, others waddled along, one halting step at a time. From them come these random thoughts:

While working to adjust to ever-faster, confusing, and sometimes frightening change, I have tried – not always successfully - to hold close those truths that I was taught are essential to a life well lived.

I have experienced incandescent times of sheer joy, suffered lingering bouts of deep depression, have celebrated times of sweet success, felt crushed in moments of abject failure.

I have been blessed with new and lasting love and friendship, and have also mourned deep loss within my circle of life. I have at times properly cared for and about those closest to me, while at others, sadly, I have failed them, broken promises that they have kept.

I have taken the easy way out on more than one occasion, have hurt people with mean and thoughtless words and have remained silent at times when I should have spoken out. Through those occurrences, I have found that feeling guilt alone mitigates nothing, while honest efforts to change and grow can lead to forgiveness and renewal.

Over the decades I have dived into vastly differing lines of endeavor, precluding any normal sense of career, but catering nicely to my endless curiosity. Fortunately, and importantly, I have been guided, over and over, by words that have stuck with me – the enriching ones I have read, the wise ones I have listened to. They opened the doors to all that I have written. Without writing, my life would have been a glass only half filled, its thoughts unexplored.



As to my advanced age, it is said in the song: “the days whittle down to a precious few....” Thus, each new promising moment becomes something to hold dear, to relish, to keep true in friendship and in love. And to continue to stay the course. For while it may be late in my afternoon, with the sun setting, it is not yet darkness.

Robert Blake – and his omission from Oscars' ‘In Memoriam’

[Linda Deutsch](#) - When I learned last week that actor Robert Blake had died at 89, I knew it would be big news. I had written an advance obituary for him before I retired from the AP and it ran on the wire with my byline. I was pleased that the world remembered him and to a lesser extent me, the reporter who got to know him better than anyone else covering his case when he was charged with the murder of his wife, Bonny Bakley.

But I didn't know how misunderstood the outcome still remained 18 years after I covered the trial.

When I mentioned to a friend that Blake had just died, she said, “Oh, did he die in jail?”

“No,” I said. “He was acquitted. The only time he was in jail was when he was awaiting trial. He was never convicted.”

Three days later, while watching the Oscars, I was stunned to hear Jimmy Kimmel joking about Blake's death.

"Everybody please get out your phones, even at home, it's time to vote," Kimmel told the audience. "If you think Robert Blake should be part of the In Memoriam montage, text 'GIMME-A-Blake' to the number on your screen, or to any number. Text that to your mother if you like. Message and data rates may apply."

The audience seemed puzzled. There were a few uncomfortable laughs. But a short time later, Blake's name was purposely omitted from the annual “In Memoriam” tribute to actors and others in the movie business who died during the year. I was offended and so were many others who began texting me during the show. Blake may have been tried for the murder of his wife but more significantly he had an amazing career in movies and TV that spanned some 80 years. As a child he was one of the “Li'l Rascals” in “Our Gang” comedies. He appeared with Humphrey Bogart in “Treasure of the Sierra Madre” playing a boy who sells the star a lottery ticket. He made several movies, most notably “In Cold Blood” and “Electra Glide in Blue” for which he received an Oscar nomination. He transitioned into TV with the hit series, “Baretta” and won both Golden Globe and Emmy awards for his work.

Blake was not the only one snubbed. They also left out Anne Heche, Paul Sorvino, Leslie Jordan and others. But in Blake's case it was clear that in the Academy's judgment a three-month trial had wiped out all respect for a lifelong career., This

played into my long-held belief that any celebrity charged with a crime is guilty in the public mind whether or not they are exonerated. Do I have to say O.J. Simpson?

Blake's actor son, Noah, said it best afterward:

"People are entitled to their opinions about my father or anybody else, but your opinion about someone personally really should be independent from the work that they do. I know it's not always easy to separate that, I just thought it was handled badly."

Cops and reporters



Team USA in World University Games, 1977

David Minthorn - If you worked for AP in Central Europe during the Cold War, occasional reporting trips to the Soviet bloc were part of the job. AP had full-time correspondents in most East European countries, but large events required extra staffing. Reporters were closely monitored and occasional brushes with communist police were an occupational reality.

For the World University Games in August 1977 in Sofia, Bulgaria, I came from Bonn, West Germany, to join reporters and photographers from AP bureaus in Europe and from New York. A lot of national prestige was on the line at the Universiade, particularly in basketball. Team USA was loaded with collegiate talent, including Larry Bird and Calvin Natt, to face state athletes from the Soviet Union and their allies.

Tension ran high for the US-Cuba game I covered. With the score tied 46-46 in the second half, a floor scuffle broke out in front of the American bench. The Cuban bench a few feet away erupted. Several Cubans smashed glass water bottles and attacked American players with jagged shards, cutting several in the melee. Blood flowed. When Bulgarian authorities intervened to stop the fight, I ran out of the court to the

arena's front lobby to a pay phone to call a bulletin to the AP desk at the nearby press center. Suddenly, I was confronted by a uniformed policeman. He pushed me against the wall and stuck a large revolver into my belly. He didn't say a word as we stood there, my hands raised. No one else was around. The only sound was a muffled roar from inside the court.

Why was I detained? Perhaps the policeman suspected I was calling for reinforcements. He never spoke, just stared at me, gun in hand. After about two minutes when no one appeared, he lowered the revolver and let me go. I ran back into the arena to watch the U.S. win 94-78, en route to the gold medal. I collected post-game quotes from the Americans, left the building by a side door and returned to the press center to file the story. I told colleagues about my run-in. The next day, after a meeting with officials from both teams and the international basketball federation, the Cuban team issued an apology for attacking the Americans and was allowed to play on. When I returned to the arena to cover another basketball game, the same policeman was on duty in the lobby. He waved at me and smiled as if greeting a friend. I walked away without reacting.

Taking a walk along the DMZ that extended too far

[Malcolm Barr Sr.](#) - Mine is a much shorter story of (possibly) being shot during my dawn ramblings around the DMZ, the line dividing the Koreas in the early 1960s. I was in the Far East on a military-related assignment I cannot now remember and had sought the advice of a source within the 25th Infantry Division then (and still?) based in Hawaii. As a result, the Army gave me a space on a military aircraft bound for Tokyo. Once in South Korea, the joint military operation there (U.S.- South Korea) permitted me a trip to the DMZ headquarters, and gave me a bed for couple of nights. A chronic insomniac (I still am!) I was wide awake just before dawn, dressed and decided to take a walk that extended too far. There I was, wandering around what turned out to be North Korean territory, guarded by both sides with armed soldiers in what the American forces called "ice cream parlors," 20- to 30-foot towers which, I understand, are now much farther apart than in the "old days." Almost coincidentally - my hearing the unmistakable clicks of firearms, and warning yells from behind me - a group of RoK marines were yelling me to turn back (they were using their own language, but I immediately realized the yells were a warning) and I fortunately was able to hot-foot it back to safety. Game over, but not quite. I recall a rollicking from a 2-star shortly thereafter! I didn't include this episode in my assigned story, at the time feeling like a bit of an idiot. At almost 60 years after the fact, I was prompted by "Connecting"...and in retrospect, still feel like a bit of an idiot. Maybe I was?!

Your favorite caps



Hal Bock - I have dozens of caps but the only one I wear -- and I mean daily -- is the one I got from my grandchildren, Michael, a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Virginia Tech and now an engineer with Lockheed Martin, and Sara, a skilled clarinetist who has colleges bidding for her. It reads Greatest Grandpa and it is the title I am of which I am proudest.

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Lynne Harris – Mark Mittelstadt's comments about hats in Tuesday's Connecting sent me to my closet to see what exactly I had there in hats. Since I rarely wear a hat, I had no idea what I would find. Turns out I had nine hats, one for the NY Mets and all the others were from AP. And since you requested that we model the hat(s), here is my collection and the one that ended up on my head.



Dave Lubeski - Hats? Yes, I have hats. Over the years, maybe a hundred or more.

Here's a photo of what I call my "active" ballcaps hanging on the door to the garage. These are caps I actually wear. I might pick one on my way out the door, although I don't always wear one every time I leave the house.

The second photo is ballcaps of the Major League teams from every place I've lived. They hang over the bar in my rec room.

I have a secret stash of caps that might be called collectors' items that I keep in a safe storage place. Those caps are from teams like the Washington Bullets and other team names or events that no longer exist.

When I moved from Virginia to Kansas, I donated a box of caps to a nearby thrift shop.

When settling my mother-in-law's estate a few years ago, I had another large box of a dozen or two up for grabs at a yard sale. One neighborhood collector was fascinated with my box of hats and asked how I came to own them all. I explained that I traveled

to sporting events as part of my job. He wanted to know the story behind every one of them. I was happy to oblige and instead of haggling over the price for each one, I told him he could have the entire box of caps for five dollars. As he reached for his wallet, I told him to forget it, he could just take the box, no charge. He was thrilled to get them. I was glad they were going to a good home.

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Neal Ulevich - I'm no cap collector - rarely wear a hat - but my favorite is a blue one with the words Happy Butt, a gift from the owner of Happy Butt airfield. The 2,000-foot dirt strip is on a small farm 26 miles southeast of Denver International. It's a private strip owned by a veteran commercial pilot. In the midst of some aviation writing - I returned to the left seat alone at age 70 after a half century hiatus - I saw Happy Butt on the official FAA aeronautical chart. I went to visit.



The owner said he plowed the short strip for a classic Aeronca he keeps in a large hangar (salvaged from an airport closing down). Why name the field Happy Butt? He said the term was a nickname he and his siblings gave their mother long ago.

At the end of our talk, I gave him a book I published. And he gave me the official Happy Butt aviator's cap.

AP Sighting



[Bill McCloskey](#) - All-Purpose Riverfront restaurant. Navy Yard District, Washington, D.C.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Steve Hindy](#)

[Colleen Newvine Tebeau](#)

[Julie Pace](#)

Stories of interest

Fox's Hall talks survival after nearly dying in Ukraine

(AP)



Fox News reporter Benjamin Hall appears during a segment of "Fox and Friends" in New York on March 10. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

By DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — A year after nearly being killed by Russian bombs while covering the war in Ukraine, Fox News' Benjamin Hall credits a relentless optimism -- and what he describes as an unexplained miracle -- for getting him through.

Truth is, it was probably several miracles that enabled Hall to sit in a cafe at Fox's New York headquarters recently to discuss the book he'd written about his ordeal.

There was the Ukrainian special forces officer driving by after the bombing who saw Hall's wave and put him in a car, the lucky train ride from Kyiv to Poland, the 30 — and counting — surgeries he's endured as he heals from the March 14, 2022, incident.

No story compares with the voice he heard when the second of three bombs left him torn apart and blacked out. He swears it was his daughter, Honor, then at home in London with her mother and sisters Iris and Hero.

The voice was insistent: "Daddy, you've got to get out of the car." Hall obeyed, just before the third bomb hit, setting him afire.

Read more [here](#).

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Why counting bylines is important (Columbia Journalism Review)

By **ANDREA GRIMES**

Two years ago, I launched the Texas Writers Byline Scan, an independent, annual demographic survey of writers and bylines at Texas-based quarterly, bimonthly, and monthly print magazines. In looking at writers' racial identities, gender identities, and locations, I hoped to answer a deceptively simple question: Who tells stories for and about Texas and Texans?

Byline tracking has been a consistently inconsistent practice among the advocacy groups, academics, writers, and (less frequently) news outlets themselves who've turned the reporting lens around to examine newsroom and publication diversity – or more often, a lack thereof. The longest-running byline trackers are with American Society of News Editors, now the News Leaders Association, which began looking at race and gender diversity in US newsrooms in 1978, briefly suspended their survey in 2019 due to low buy-in from news outlets, and picked back up again last year despite “crushing resistance” to the project from industry leaders. Others who have periodically surveyed demographics in newsrooms and bylines – usually gender, but sometimes also race, and rarely location – include the OpEd Project, the VIDA Count, and the Science Byline Counting Project, which looked at science beat bylines in 2016, inspired by Pulitzer winner Deborah Blum's presentation on the dearth of women in science journalism to the 2013 National Association of Science Writers. Today, the Women's Media Center tracks gender and race representation in print, broadcast, and online, in biannual-ish reports it began issuing in 2013.

Read more [here](#).

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The Messenger, a Media Start-Up, Aims to Build a Newsroom Fast (New York Times)

By **Benjamin Mullin**

Jimmy Finkelstein's winding career in publishing has included running and being a part-owner of The Hollywood Reporter and The Hill, a middle-market chronicler of Washington politics. In 2021, he sold The Hill to the broadcast giant Nexstar for \$130 million.

But neither of those journalistic ventures was nearly as big as what Mr. Finkelstein, 74, is envisioning for what he's calling his last major act in the media industry.

In May, he plans to introduce The Messenger, a news site that will cover politics, business, entertainment and sports. Financed with \$50 million in investor money, the

site will start with at least 175 journalists stationed in New York, Washington and Los Angeles, executives say. But in a year, Mr. Finkelstein said, he plans to have around 550 journalists, about as many as The Los Angeles Times.

The goal, Mr. Finkelstein said in his first extended interview about the new business, is creating an alternative to a national news media that he says has come under the sway of partisan influences. The site will be free and supported by advertising, with an events business to follow.

Read more [here](#).

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It's Time for the Media to Stop Mincing Words | Opinion

DAN PERRY

Journalists covering global events face a constant buzzing in the ear: what words to use when there's a narrative dispute. The issue is ever more acute in our frenzied era of societal polarization, entitled grievance politics, and never-ending spin—like efforts to brand an invasion of Ukraine as a "special military operation."

When you cannot please everyone, should you try to please no one—or just make a call? What if that looks like you're taking a side? Must one always be impartial? After all, one reporter's fairness is a reader's false equivalence.

For a journalist these days, it seems someone somewhere—a Twitter mob, a mafiotic government, a raging community of exiles—is always waiting to pounce on a single word choice.

The conundrum begins with as simple a matter as titles. Is Vladimir Putin—like Azerbaijan's Ilham Aliyev, Syria's Bashar al-Assad and countless others in history, from Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe to Cuba's Fidel Castro—to be called dictator or president? The former term seems more real, the latter accords illegitimate despots the same legitimacy as Emanuel Macron.

Read more [here](#).

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A storied Texas Panhandle newspaper halts publication after 130 years (Texas Tribune)

By Nic Garcia

CANADIAN — Thursday arrived as usual in the Texas Panhandle. But a new edition of The Canadian Record, this gritty town's definitive source of local news for more than

130 years, did not come with it.

The green flag that told the townspeople that there was a new edition of the newspaper, usually 28 pages long and full of the words and photos of their neighbors and their neighbors' kids, did not fly outside the weekly's Main Street office.

The Record, owned by Laurie Ezzell Brown's family since 1948, suspended its print edition March 2. The final front-page photograph captured billowing smoke. The banner headline yelled, "WILDLAND FIRE BLAZES PATH INTO OKLAHOMA." Brown wrote the accompanying news article. Next to it was a brief about another fire that killed a local woman. There was a feature about the upcoming beef expo and a notice about the upcoming school board election. The school page featured a one-act play at the high school. And the community page had a local woman's blueberry scone recipe. Brown had requested the scones be featured after tasting them.

Read more [here](#).

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Fla. reporter fired after calling news release on DeSantis event 'propaganda' (Washington Post)

By Dan Rosenzweig-Ziff and Sonia Rao

An Axios reporter in Tampa said he was fired this week after he responded to a Florida Department of Education email about an event featuring Gov. Ron DeSantis (R), calling the news release "propaganda."

Ben Montgomery said he received a call on Monday evening from Jamie Stockwell, executive editor of Axios Local, who asked Montgomery to confirm he sent the email before saying the reporter's "reputation in the Tampa Bay area" had been "irreparably tarnished."

The news release sent Monday afternoon said DeSantis, a potential 2024 GOP presidential candidate, had hosted a roundtable "exposing the diversity equity and inclusion scam in higher education." It also called for prohibiting state funds from being used to support DEI efforts.

"We will expose the scams they are trying to push onto students across the country," DeSantis said in the statement.

Trump spurred 'existential crisis' at Fox News, lawsuit exhibits show

Montgomery, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, replied to the email three minutes after getting it. "This is propaganda, not a press release," he wrote to the Department of Education press office.

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

Today in History - March 16, 2023



Today is Thursday, March 16, the 75th day of 2023. There are 290 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history:

On March 16, 1968, the My Lai (mee ly) massacre took place during the Vietnam War as U.S. Army soldiers hunting for Viet Cong fighters and sympathizers killed unarmed villagers in two hamlets of Son My (suhn mee) village; estimates of the death toll vary from 347 to 504.

On this date:

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew reached the Philippines, where Magellan was killed during a battle with natives the following month.

In 1802, President Thomas Jefferson signed a measure authorizing the establishment of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

In 1935, Adolf Hitler decided to break the military terms set by the Treaty of Versailles by ordering the rearming of Germany.

In 1945, during World War II, American forces declared they had secured Iwo Jima, although pockets of Japanese resistance remained.

In 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy of New York announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In 1972, in a nationally broadcast address, President Richard Nixon called for a moratorium on court-ordered school busing to achieve racial desegregation.

In 1984, William Buckley, the CIA station chief in Beirut, was kidnapped by Hezbollah militants (he was tortured by his captors and killed in 1985).

In 1994, figure skater Tonya Harding pleaded guilty in Portland, Oregon, to conspiracy to hinder prosecution for covering up an attack on rival Nancy Kerrigan, avoiding jail but drawing a \$100,000 fine.

In 2004, China declared victory in its fight against bird flu, saying it had “stamped out” all its known cases.

In 2014, Crimeans voted to leave Ukraine and join Russia, overwhelmingly approving a referendum that sought to unite the strategically important Black Sea region with the country it was part of for some 250 years.

In 2016, President Barack Obama nominated Merrick Garland to take the seat of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who had died the previous month. (Republicans who controlled the Senate would stick to their pledge to leave the seat empty until after the presidential election; they confirmed Trump nominee Neil Gorsuch in April 2017.)

In 2020, global stocks plunged again amid coronavirus concerns, with Wall Street seeing a 12% decline, its worst in more than 30 years; the S&P 500 was down 30% from its record set less than a month earlier. Ohio called off its presidential primary just hours before polls were to open, but Arizona, Florida and Illinois went ahead with their plans.

Ten years ago: Thousands of activists gathered for the Conservative Political Action Conference outside Washington gave Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul a narrow victory over Florida Sen. Marco Rubio in their unscientific presidential preference poll (Paul had 25 percent of the vote and Rubio 23 percent; former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum was third with 8 percent). South Korea’s Yuna Kim, back at the World Figure Skating Championships after a two-year absence, won the women’s title in London, Ontario, Canada. British actor Frank Thornton, 92, best known as Captain Peacock in the long-running television comedy “Are You Being Served?,” died in London.

Five years ago: Singer Aretha Franklin canceled two upcoming concerts, saying a doctor had told her to stay off the road and rest completely for at least two months. (Franklin died five months later from pancreatic cancer.) Airstrikes in Syria killed more than 100 people as civilians fled besieged areas for a second straight day.

One year ago: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy summoned the memory of Pearl Harbor and the Sept. 11 terror attacks in an impassioned video plea to the U.S. Congress to send more help for Ukraine’s fight against Russia. President Joe Biden announced the U.S. was sending more anti-aircraft, anti-armor weapons and drones, and declared Russian President Vladimir Putin a war criminal. The Federal Reserve launched a high-risk effort to tame the worst inflation since the 1970s, raising its benchmark short-term interest rate. A powerful 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Fukushima in northern Japan.

Today’s Birthdays: Country singer Ray Walker (The Jordanares) is 89. Game show host Chuck Woolery is 82. Country singer Robin Williams is 76. Actor Erik Estrada is 74. Actor Victor Garber is 74. Country singer Ray Benson (Asleep at the Wheel) is 72. Bluegrass musician Tim O’Brien (Hot Rize; Earls of Leicester) is 69. Rock singer-musician Nancy Wilson (Heart) is 69. World Golf Hall of Famer Hollis Stacy is 69. Actor

Clifton Powell is 67. Rapper-actor Flavor Flav is 64. Rock musician Jimmy DeGrasso is 60. Actor Jerome Flynn is 60. Folk singer Patty Griffin is 59. Movie director Gore Verbinski is 59. Country singer Tracy Bonham is 56. Actor Lauren Graham is 56. Actor Judah Friedlander is 54. Actor Alan Tudyk is 52. Actor Tim Kang is 50. R&B singer Blu Cantrell is 47. Actor Brooke Burns is 45. Actor Kimrie Lewis is 41. Actor Brett Davern is 40. Actor Alexandra Daddario is 37. R&B singer Jhené Aiko is 35. Rock musician Wolfgang Van Halen is 32. Toronto Blue Jays baseball star Vladimir Guerrero Jr. 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.

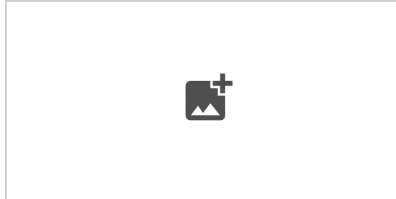
- **First job** - How did you get your first job in journalism?

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

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