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Connecting

May 1, 2023

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New York Times editors at work during the electrical blackout of the Northeast on Nov. 10, 1965. Credit...Pat Burns/The New York Times

Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this May 1, 2023,

Requiem for a Newsroom

Columnist Maureen Dowd of the New York Times struck a chord among many Connecting colleagues with **this Opinion piece** under the headline above that began:

WASHINGTON — I don't want this to be one of those pieces that bangs on about how things used to be better, and they'll never be as good again.

But, when it comes to newsrooms, it happens to be true.

"What would a newspaper movie look like today?" wondered my New York Times colleague Jim Rutenberg. "A bunch of individuals at their apartments, surrounded by sad houseplants, using Slack?"

Mike Isikoff, an investigative reporter at Yahoo who worked with me at The Washington Star back in the '70s, agreed: "Newsrooms were a crackling gaggle of gossip, jokes, anxiety and oddball hilarious characters. Now we sit at home alone staring at our computers. What a drag."

As my friend Mark Leibovich, a writer at The Atlantic, noted: "I can't think of a profession that relies more on osmosis, and just being around other people, than journalism. There's a reason they made all those newspaper movies, 'All the President's Men,' 'Spotlight,' 'The Paper.'

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I look forward to what you have to say about her story and your own newsroom experiences. But it would be especially great to hear from those who have experienced firsthand both the newsroom atmosphere of yesteryear with that of today. AP newsrooms are not totally gone, witness New York and Washington and London and others, but many have disappeared and staff is working remotely.



Connecting colleague and former AP Washington bureau chief <u>Ron Fournier</u> posted the following thoughts on Facebook, along with the photo above of legendary AP political reporter **Walter Mears** looking over his shoulder in the Washington bureau:

I didn't fall in love with journalism as much as fell in love with The Newsroom, where my friends and mentors and heroes in places like South Lyon, Mich., Hot Springs, Ark., Little Rock, Ark., Washington D.C. and Detroit, Michigan, were as much a part of the joy as the mission itself: Breaking news, telling stories, kicking up shit, and writing the first drafts of history. Together. In what other line of work does the Babe Ruth of your business (i.e. Walter Mears) pour you a drink, put a foot on your desk and dictate your lede? I don't miss the business and I truly love what I do now. And yet I'd give six months of my life for another seismic news day in an Associated Press newsroom.

Ron added, for Connecting: Not sure how I can elaborate beyond what I posted except to say the gift in journalism is all that you learn and much of what you learn as a young reporter comes from listening and watching to experienced reporters learn from their sources. I would not have lasted five years in journalism without a newsroom. And I wouldn't have most of the memories I cherish today.

(Thanks to those who shared the story including Hank Ackerman, Sibby Christensen, Richard Chady, Steve Hendren, John Brewer, Peggy Walsh, Len Iwanski. And if you are unable to open the Times story, you can find it on DNYUZ – click here. Shared by Paul Albright)

A Times story related to Dowd's piece is also worth a read: What Young Workers Miss Without the 'Power of Proximity'

In his Poynter column today, Tom Jones notes that "Dowd understands the appeal for many to work remotely, while also acknowledging that many reporters always work out in the field, including political reporters and, I would add, sportswriters, whose office is usually a press box.

"Some might read Dowd's column and roll their eyes at nothing more than an older person talking about how things were better in the good old days. And there's no question that remote work has worked out for many journalists, allowing them to produce outstanding reports and live a more fulfilling life. In addition, remote work has allowed news outlets to hire the best people without the restraints of requiring them to live in the city where the news outlet is based.

"But I'm on board with Dowd's sentiment. Bustling newsrooms provide spontaneous conversations that produce stories and support and camaraderie. A newsroom is where you can find mentors and inspiration and maybe even more — I, like many in journalism, met my future spouse in the newsroom.

"And, yes, there's a great romance to the old newsroom. Dowd quotes The Atlantic's Mark Leibovich, who says, 'I can't think of a profession that relies more on osmosis, and just being around other people, than journalism. There's a reason they made all those newspaper movies, 'All the President's Men,' 'Spotlight,' 'The Paper.'"

All this reminds me of the classic television series The Office, when one of the lead characters, Andy Bernard, said, "I wish there was a way to know you're in the good old days before you've actually left them."

I look forward to hearing your thoughts – including those from journalists who believe the flexibility and ability to work at home are among factors that make them miss newsrooms not so much.

Here's to the new month of May – be safe, stay healthy and live each day to the fullest!

Paul

Death of Jerry Springer

Howard Goldberg - Obituaries for Jerry Springer reminded me of a favorite AP lead I wrote in 2000 as Ohio news editor. Springer was a broadcast journalist, lawyer and politician before he became infamous for hosting a raucous daytime talk show that featured at least one chair-throwing brawl. The AP story from my hometown of Cincinnati started something like this: "Democrats looking for a well-known candidate to challenge Republican Sen. Mike DeWine are hoping Jerry Springer will throw his chair into the ring." Throughout my 29 years with AP, I eschewed telling anyone how I voted, but I would admit that as a college student I voted for Springer for Cincinnati City Council in 1975, when he regained a seat he had given up the previous year after being caught paying prostitutes by personal check. Despite that questionable judgment, I thought Springer was an effective politician.

Irritating autoplay by AP phone app

<u>Lee Siegel</u> - Is anyone else bothered by the autoplay feature for AP Newsminute that was a recent update on the APNews cell phone app?

Despite two different screen locks on my Samsung Galaxy S10, the damn thing manages to open apps by itself in my pocket when I'm walking. And some apps also start making noise without me asking them to do so. I've had weather apps that I permanently deleted because of that and found a new weather app.

So now AP's phone app is launching AP Newsminute in my pocket when I don't want to hear it, and automatically launching it when I open the AP app to read, yes read, not listen to, some stories. I'm going to delete the AP app very soon if they don't make it so that the damn noise doesn't start without me asking it to do so.

Lee Siegel, grumpy retired science writer

Advancement of women in the AP

<u>Larry Blasko</u> - Looking at the AP annual report you shared, it hit me that 40 years ago in 1983 was when the AP settled the lawsuit charging discrimination against women. And now the AP Board chair and the AP CEO are women. Of the six senior vice presidents, four are women.

I don't have an AP directory, so I can't tell how many regional execs around the globe are women. It might make an interesting Connecting story.

We've come a long way from the day when Keith Fuller told the weekly exec meeting of a project and said, "I want you all to go balls out on this," only to hear Kelly Tunney say "That will be difficult for some of us!"

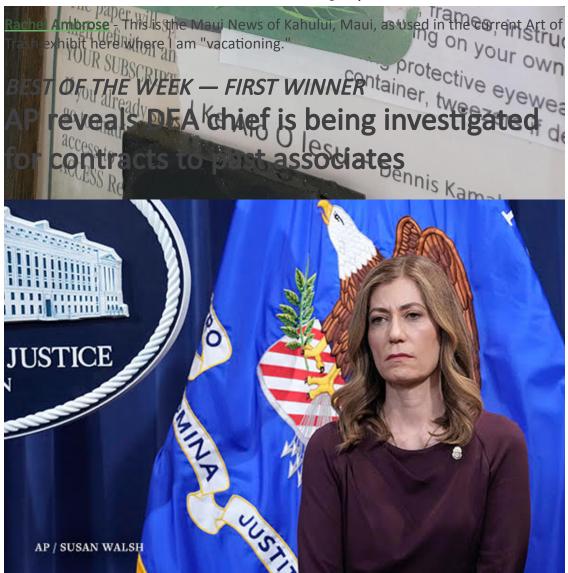
Oyster Bar Foreign Desk meet-up



Sheila Norman-Culp and Randy Hackley got a chance in April to chat with Louis Meixler, who was visiting from Israel, at New York City's delectable Oyster Bar. The trio, who first met on AP's Foreign Desk in 1990, have 73 years of AP service between them and have worked in the U.S., Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East, with stints in Asia. Randy and Louis also both worked for Bloomberg. There was plenty of catching up to do and a chance to meet Louis's wife Ornit and their son Alon. They can be reached at snormanculp@gmail.com, randallhackley@gmail.com and linearing-meixler@yahoo.com.

Newspapers in art





Josh Goodman and Jim Mustian reported exclusively that a federal watchdog is investigating whether the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration under chief Anne Milgram improperly used millions of dollars in no-bid contracts to flout normal governing hiring procedures and bring in her past associates at a very high cost.

The two got their break when they followed up on a previous scoop about the arrest of former DEA agent Jose Irizarry, who confessed to laundering money for Colombian drug cartels and skimming millions of dollars from asset seizures and informants.

After an external review of the DEA's foreign operations was slammed for underplaying its scandals, Latin America reporter Goodman and investigative reporter Mustian began asking questions.

What they found was that a Washington law firm that was hired as part of a no-bid contract did the review and that its author was the former right-hand man to one of Milgram's closest friends, former Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara. That led to more reporting, more questions and more sources talking about how the DEA used other no-bid contracts to hire Milgram's past associates.

Read more **here**.

Intimate reporting and a personal essay show third graders struggling to read after pandemic



AP journalists built remarkable relationships with a class of third graders and used a poignant first-person essay to show what's at stake in helping America's kids recover from the pandemic.

The stories are part of a school-year-long narrative project, edited by Ted Anthony, on the race to teach third graders to read; no other news organization has launched anything like it. Research shows children who can't read fluently by the end of third grade are left far behind and less likely to complete high school.

Kansas City-based Heather Hollingsworth knew firsthand how important this particular year is for children: Her third-grade son has dyslexia and struggles to read. Current third graders are, Hollingsworth would say, "the most pandemic-disrupted class." They were in kindergarten when the pandemic hit. Some missed all of first grade — the foundational year for reading — and had significant quarantine disruption in second grade. Test scores show they've lost more ground in reading than older grades and have been slower to catch up.

The team started with Atlanta, one of the rare cities in the country to respond to the pandemic by adding class time to each school day. Boston-based Bianca Vázquez Toness and Atlanta-based Sharon Johnson built remarkable relationships with

students in one third-grade class and conducted candid interviews with their teacher. They also spent time at a housing project where many of the kids lived.

Read more **here**.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



Nancy Benac

Welcome to Connecting



Louis Meixler

Stories of interest

Judge in Catholic bankruptcy recuses over church donations (AP)

By JIM MUSTIAN

A federal judge overseeing the New Orleans Roman Catholic bankruptcy recused himself in a late-night reversal that came a week after an Associated Press report

showed he donated tens of thousands of dollars to the archdiocese and consistently ruled in favor of the church in the case involving nearly 500 clergy sex abuse victims.

U.S. District Judge Greg Guidry initially announced hours after the AP report that he would stay on the case, citing the opinion of fellow federal judges that no "reasonable person" could question his impartiality. But amid mounting pressure and persistent questions, he changed course late Friday in a terse, one-page filing.

"I have decided to recuse myself from this matter in order to avoid any possible appearance of personal bias or prejudice," Guidry wrote.

READ THE FULL AP INVESTIGATION:

Judge stays on Catholic bankruptcy despite church donations

The 62-year-old jurist has overseen the 3-year-old bankruptcy in an appellate role, and his recusal is likely to throw the case into disarray and trigger new hearings and appeals of every consequential ruling he's made.

Read more **here**.

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Illinois Democrats denounce as 'deceitful' a pipeline used in last year's elections to right-wing local news sites (Chicago Tribune)

Rick Pearson, Chicago Tribune

A publisher of far-right websites and mailings designed to look like newspapers created a special online portal for top Illinois GOP candidates and activists to directly seek favorable coverage during last year's elections, according to a newspaper report that prompted state Democrats to denounce the actions as "deceitful" to voters.

The Washington Post reported Thursday that Brian Timpone, an ally and business partner of right-wing radio talk show host Dan Proft, used a password-protected portal that allowed Republicans to pitch stories, provide questions for interviews, place campaign announcements and run "verbatim" op-eds on websites and mailings that are published by the Local Government Information Services organization.

One example the Post cited in the use of the portal-to-publish network was by the campaign of GOP governor candidate Darren Bailey in his unsuccessful bid against Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker last fall.

Read more **here**. Shared by Peg Coughlin.

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Sinclair Broadcast Cuts Entire Newsrooms at 2 Stations to 'Ensure Long-Term Success' (The Wrap)

By Joshua Vinson

Sinclair Broadcast Group plans to shutdown two newsrooms in small markets "to ensure our long-term success," leaving people with fewer options to receive local news.

This week, the broadcast giant announced it was shutting down news operations at WNWO-TV, NBC 24 Toledo, Ohio, by mid May.

"NBC 24 is changing the way we produce news in Toledo to ensure our long-term success," the statement read on the station's website. "Beginning May 15, The National Desk, which provides real-time national and regional news from Sinclair's television stations across the U.S., will air during our regularly scheduled news time periods."

Across the country, KTVL-TV, the Southern Oregon and Northern California TV station plans to lay off the entire news staff, according to employees at the station. Instead of local news, the station will air "nationally syndicated programming," similar to what will happened to WNWO-TV.

Read more **here**. Shared by Doug Pizac.

Upcoming events

Your last chance to register for May 19-21 AP Connecting reunion in the Dallas area.

Notes:

- n Registration deadline is today, May 1!
- n Add Saturday! Some of you are planning on only attending the Friday night, May 19, BBQ group dinner. Please consider also joining us for the Saturday night, May 20, Tex-Mex group dinner, with a special remembrances & recognition program, including: Introductions. Quiz: How Much Do You Know about AP Staff, Stories & History? Remembrances of late/great AP journalists Mike Cochran & Denne Freeman. Recognition of AP staffers who've retired since the September 2021 Connecting reunion in Texas.
- n **New:** Several tickets have now become available for the AP group baseball game, Texas Rangers vs. Colorado Rockies, at 1:35 p.m. on Sunday, May 21. Tickets are \$15 each. Join us!

Reunion co-hosts are Mike Holmes of Omaha and Diana Heidgerd of Dallas. If you've mentioned to Mike or Diana that you'd like to attend, and your name is not on the list

of attendees (below) you still need to formally register: heidgerd@flash.net

Two group meals are planned, Friday night May 19 (\$25 per person) and Saturday night May 20 (\$40 per person). Attend either or both! Please pay your own way to all events (casual attire). Details on paying (check, cash or via Zelle) will be emailed to you after close of registration.

SCHEDULE:

- n Friday afternoon, May 19: Reunion check-in, with your co-hosts, in the lobby of group hotel: Residence Inn DFW Airport North/Grapevine. Note: The hotel bar is open 4:30 p.m.-10 p.m. The hotel restaurant has a full menu.
- n **Friday night, May 19**: BBQ dinner (\$25 per person) at Meat-U-Anywhere in Trophy Club, operated by former AP journalist David Sedeno & his family. *Time: 6 p.m.-7 p.m. Happy Hour, then 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m. dinner.* Socializing & meal.
- n Saturday night, May 20: Tex-Mex dinner (\$40 per person) at Residence Inn DFW Airport North/Grapevine. *Time: 6 p.m.-8 p.m.* Socializing, meal plus remembrances & recognition program, including: Introductions. Quiz: How Much Do You Know about AP Staff, Stories & History? Remembrances of late/great AP journalists Mike Cochran & Denne Freeman. Recognition of AP staffers who've retired since the September 2021 Connecting reunion in Texas. Additional remarks & group photo. Note: The hotel bar is open 4:30 p.m.-10 p.m. The hotel restaurant has a full menu.
- n New more baseball game tickets available! Sunday afternoon, May 21: Texas Rangers vs. Colorado Rockies game at Globe Life Field in Arlington. 1:35 p.m. start time. Several group tickets still left at \$15 each. Contact Diana Heidgerd: heidgerd@flash.net

REUNION REGISTRATION (deadline today, May 1):

- n Email the name(s) of those attending & a contact phone number to Diana Heidgerd: heidgerd@flash.net
- n How many for group dinner Friday night, May 19 (\$25 per person) at Meat-U-Anywhere in Trophy Club, 91 Trophy Club Drive, Trophy Club, TX 76262. Includes BBQ meal, soft drink or tea, plus dessert. Restaurant is BYOB, no alcohol sold on the premises. Convenience stores are nearby. Please coordinate with Mike Holmes if you wish to donate funds/beverages for a 6 p.m.-7 p.m. happy hour imikeholmes@cox.net Dinner 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Note: We have to confirm the number of paid meals, so if you commit to attending BBQ dinner please be prepared to pay for your spot. You can reserve a spot but cancel no later than today, at no cost to you.
- n How many for group dinner Saturday night, May 20 (\$40 per person), from 6 p.m.-8 p.m. at the **Residence Inn DFW Airport North/Grapevine.** Includes Tex-Mex buffet, iced tea, plus dessert. Beer, wine & mixed drinks available for sale at hotel bar. Note: We have to confirm the number of paid meals, so if you commit to attending Tex-Mex dinner please be prepared to pay for your spot. You can reserve a spot but cancel no later than today, at no cost to you.

GROUP HOTEL/RESERVE A ROOM by today, May 1:
Residence Inn DFW Airport North/Grapevine
2020 State Highway 26
Grapevine, TX 76051
972-539-8989 (call this hotel number to request the free airport shuttle)

- n Use this link to book (by May 1) at the AP Reunion rate: <u>Book your group rate for AP Reunion</u> Would you like an accessible/special needs room? Call the hotel directly & ask for the "AP Reunion" rate, 972-539-8989.
- n Residence Inn DFW Airport North/Grapevine has free parking, free DFW airport shuttle (plus shuttle service within 5 miles of hotel) and free breakfast. This hotel also has a bar, restaurant and outdoor pool.

Reminder: please register by today, May 1: heidgerd@flash.net

List of registered attendees: (will be updated)

......

- -- Amanda Barnett
- -- Barry & Patty Bedlan
- -- Maud Beelman
- -- Betsy Blaney
- -- Sondra Cochran
- -- Pam & Frank Collins
- -- Schuyler Dixon
- -- Katie Fairbank & Andy Herrmann
- -- Judy Freeman
- -- Mike Graczyk
- -- Steve Graham
- -- Stephen & Andrea Hawkins
- -- Susana Hayward
- -- Ron & Sue Heflin
- -- Diana & Paul Heidgerd
- -- Mike Holmes
- -- Dave & Darlene Koenig
- -- Stefani Kopenec
- -- Mark Lambert
- -- Dale & Linda Leach
- -- Dawn Leonard
- -- Terry Leonard
- -- John & Eileen Lumpkin
- -- John McFarland
- -- Michelle Mittelstadt
- -- Betty (Mrs. Burl) Osborne
- -- Charles & Barbara Richards
- -- Linda & Ed Sargent
- -- David & Ellen Sedeno
- -- Jaime & Denise Serdan
- -- Ed & Barbara Staats
- -- Jamie Stengle
- -- Paul Stevens
- -- Terry Wallace
- -- Melissa Williams Finn
- -- Sylvia & Will Wingfield
- -- David Woo

Today in History - May 1, 2023



Today is Monday, May 1, the 121st day of 2023. There are 244 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 1, 2011, President Barack Obama announced the death of Osama bin Laden during a U.S. commando operation. (Because of the time difference, it was early May 2 in Pakistan, where the al-Qaida leader met his end.)

On this date:

In 1707, the Kingdom of Great Britain was created as a treaty merging England and Scotland took effect.

In 1866, three days of race-related rioting erupted in Memphis, Tennessee, as white mobs targeted Blacks, 46 of whom were killed, along with two whites. (The violence spurred passage of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution defining American citizenship and equal protection under the law.)

In 1960, the Soviet Union shot down an American U-2 reconnaissance plane over Sverdlovsk and captured its pilot, Francis Gary Powers.

In 1963, James W. Whittaker became the first American to conquer Mount Everest as he and Sherpa guide Nawang Gombu reached the summit.

In 1964, the computer programming language BASIC (Beginner's All-Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code) was created by Dartmouth College professors John G. Kemeny and Thomas F. Kurtz.

In 1971, the intercity passenger rail service Amtrak went into operation.

In 1991, Nolan Ryan of the Texas Rangers threw his seventh no-hitter at age 44, shutting out the Toronto Blue Jays 3-0.

In 1992, on the third day of the Los Angeles riots, a visibly shaken Rodney King appeared in public to appeal for calm, pleading, "Can we all get along?"

In 2009, Supreme Court Justice David Souter announced his retirement effective at the end of the court's term in late June. (President Barack Obama chose federal judge Sonia Sotomayor to succeed him.)

In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI beatified Pope John Paul II, moving his predecessor a step closer to sainthood in a Vatican Mass attended by some 1.5 million pilgrims.

In 2015, Baltimore's top prosecutor charged six police officers with felonies ranging from assault to murder in the death of Freddie Gray, a Black man who'd suffered a spinal injury while riding in a police van. (None of the officers would be convicted.)

In 2020, U.S. regulators allowed emergency use of remdesivir, the first drug that appeared to help some COVID-19 patients recover faster.

Ten years ago: Workers around the world united in anger during May Day rallies — from fury in Europe over austerity measures that cut wages, reduced benefits and eliminated many jobs altogether, to rage in Asia over relentlessly low pay, the rising cost of living and hideous working conditions. Portland Trail Blazers point guard Damian Lillard was a unanimous choice as the NBA's Rookie of the Year. Chris Kelly, 34, half of the 1990s kid rap duo Kris Kross, died in Atlanta.

Five years ago: Entering the State Department headquarters for the first time as America's top diplomat, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo vowed to reinvigorate American diplomacy and help the United States get "back our swagger." Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein lashed out at Republican allies of President Donald Trump who had drafted articles of impeachment against Rosenstein, saying the Justice Department would not give in to threats.

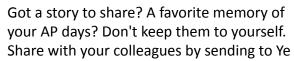
One year ago: A long-awaited effort to evacuate people from a sprawling steel plant in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol began. The United Nations said the operation was being carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross and in coordination with Ukrainian and Russian officials. A top-level U.S. congressional delegation led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi made a surprise visit to Ukraine undertaken in extraordinary secrecy, holding a three-hour meeting in Kyiv with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at which Pelosi vowed the U.S. would stand with him "until the fight is done." Jacky Hunt-Broersma, A South African amputee athlete, set a new world record for the number of daily consecutive marathons by running her 104th in a row. A woman was rescued from the rubble of a building in central China more than 50 hours after it collapsed, leaving dozens trapped or missing.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Judy Collins is 84. Actor Stephen Macht is 81. Singer Rita Coolidge is 78. Pop singer Nick Fortuna (The Buckinghams) is 77. Actor-director Douglas Barr is 74. Actor Dann Florek is 72. Singer-songwriter Ray Parker Jr. is 69. Actor Byron Stewart is 67. Hall of Fame jockey Steve Cauthen is 63. Actor Maia Morgenstern is 61. Actor Scott Coffey is 59. Country singer Wayne Hancock is 58. Actor Charlie Schlatter is 57. Country singer Tim McGraw is 56. Rock musician Johnny Colt is 55. Rock musician D'Arcy Wretzky is 55. Movie director Wes Anderson is 54. Actor Julie Benz is 51. Actor Bailey Chase is 51. Country singer Cory Morrow is 51.

Gospel/R&B singer Tina Campbell (Mary Mary) is 49. Actor Darius McCrary is 47. Actor Jamie Dornan is 41. Actor Kerry Bishe is 39. TV personality Abby Huntsman is 37. Actor Lizzy Greene is 20.

Got a story or photos to share?

Connecting is a daily newsletter published Monday through Friday that reaches more than 1,800 retired and former Associated Press employees, present-day employees, and news industry and journalism school colleagues. It began in 2013. 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.



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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