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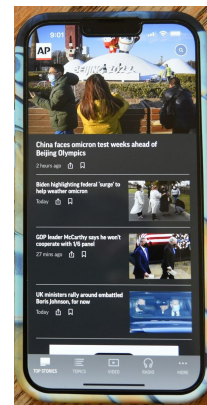
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Connecting

Sept. 5, 2023

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Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning on this Sept. 5, 2023,

Connecting has sadly lost one of its 90-plus members on Monday, just as our newsletter published the latest 80s/90s Club listing that included him.

Gene Lahammer, longtime political writer for the AP in Minnesota, died at the age of 90. It was old age that took him, according to his daughter **Mary Lahammer**, Twin Cities PBS anchor and political reporter.

I felt I knew Gene well through the many stories shared by a friend we had in common, longtime Topeka AP correspondent **Lew Ferguson**. (In photo at right, Lew is on left with Gene's wife Karen and Gene.) Lew and Gene worked together in Minnesota before Lew moved south to Kansas City and then to Topeka. Lew died in 2017.

This note Monday from our colleague **Larry Margasak** is appropriate to share at this point in today's newsletter:

At the beginning of each month, I am thrilled to see the growing lists of the Connecting 80s and 90s club. I'm sorry that with the recent passing of Fred Hoffman, we lost our only member of the 100s listing.

As a member of the 80s club since last March, I have a thought about the longevity of career AP folks. Could it be that years (48 for me) of AP deadline pressures helps us to cope with issues we encounter as seniors?



The ability to cope won't solve everything, because there are things we can't control. But I really believe that coping with all the AP pressure all those years really helps.

Congratulations to all my Connecting colleagues on the lists. Here's hoping that someone in the 90s list revives the 100s group that the great Fred Hoffman left.

Today's Connecting brings you some great memories of singer Jimmy Buffett – hope you will take time to read what they have to say.

This quote by Buffett in the third graf of **Ted Anthony's** wonderful AP wire essay on Buffett that we published Monday sticks with me – and may well for a long time:

“It's important to have as much fun as possible while we're here. It balances out the times when the minefield of life explodes.”

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy, live the day to your fullest.

Paul

Minnesota political reporter Gene Lahammer dies at 90



Gene Lahammer at time of his AP retirement.

BY JACK DURA
The Associated Press

Longtime Minnesota political reporter Gene Lahammer has died. He was 90.

Lahammer, who spent 34 years with The Associated Press, died Monday morning at his home in Minnetonka from old age, his daughter Mary Lahammer told the AP.

Lahammer was born and raised on a farm in Veblen, South Dakota, during the Great Depression.

His journalism career has roots in his high school paper, where he was editor. He graduated high school at age 16 and college at age 18, “a numerical genius” who recognized that his intellect “was a way out of poverty, and he grew up in destitute poverty,” his daughter said.

Her father read the entire library — even encyclopedias and dictionaries for fun — understood Latin, and he cultivated an immense vocabulary, she said.

After college, he taught a classroom of students of every age and grade simultaneously in a one-room schoolhouse in rural South Dakota.

Lahammer enlisted and served in the Army, where he advanced to intelligence officer. After leaving the Army, he turned down a Pentagon position. He intended to go to law school. But his passion for journalism and writing became his calling, his daughter said.

“I think it’s no accident that he ended up covering lawmaking, and he has a family of lawyers and reporters who cover lawmaking because he really instilled a love of law in all of us as well,” said Mary Lahammer, Twin Cities PBS anchor and political reporter, who worked with her dad her entire life.

Lahammer’s specialty at the AP was calling races on election night, which he did for 50 years, coming out of retirement.

“He never got a race wrong, and he did it all pretty much in his head. I’m not sure if he ever owned a calculator, and he knew every precinct and county and region of the state inside and out, and he would know when it was safe to call any race,” his daughter said.



Gene in bureau with colleague Mary Sandok.



Gene Lahammer (right) with his daughter Mary and former Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton, who said of Gene: "Gene Lahammer set the platinum standard for political

journalism in Minnesota. He was deeply knowledgeable and respectful of the political process, while understanding journalists' importance as guardians of its honesty and integrity. He fulfilled that role to its highest standard. He was fair, impartial, well-informed, and wonderfully informative. Best of all, he was just a terrific human being!"

Lahammer called several Minnesota Supreme Court justices friends. Republican Gov. Arne Carlson threw him a retirement party at the governor's mansion.

"That's the respect that he earned and engendered from both sides of the aisle," Mary Lahammer said.

He also worked 16 years with the Star Tribune.

His daughter said he was able to achieve several goals in his last year: to reach age 90, to see his youngest grandchild graduate from high school, and to walk his eldest daughter down the aisle.

A funeral is planned for Friday in Edina.

Click [here](#) for link to this story. Shared by Karren Mills, Martha Malan.

Using your journalism skills to help your community

Malcolm Barr Sr. - "Use Your Journalism Skills, Help Your Community" Henry Bradshaw's exhortation in the Labor Day edition of "Connecting" hit close to home since, pro bono, I've regularly contributed to my four (yes, four!) local news outlets since my 1996 retirement from Washington D.C. to the small civil war town of Front Royal in the Blue Ridge mountains of Virginia.

I note that Bradsher's piece immediately precedes the monthly list of "Connecting" members aged 80 and above and hope that those among us who haven't already used our retirement years to help along a fast deteriorating news business are spurred along to do so.

To me, it's been some 25 years of fun and a way to keep in touch with the goings-on in town and county while at the same time helping our several news outlets to bolster hard to come by experienced staff members.

(Editor's note: Barr began his journalism career in England at age 16 in the years following WWII; emigrated to British Columbia at age 22, progressing from local weeklies and dailies, up to the then country's largest morning newspaper, the Vancouver Daily Province, and so on to Honolulu where he joined the AP, from there to Washington D.C where his beat was the U.S. Department of Justice. Two parallel careers involved 21 years racing and breeding Thoroughbred horses, and 25 years in U.S. government public affairs. He turned 90 last March).

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Deb Halberstadt -The Asheville Watchdog is a tiny nonprofit in far western North Carolina, but its editorial meetings could double as a get-together of the Pulitzer alumni club. The project came together on the back deck of the house shared by retired Tribune Publishing Co. executive Bob Gremillion and his wife, investigative. Read it all [here](#).

Memories of Jimmy Buffett

Jim Carrier - I stopped thinking about Jimmy Buffett as a rum-in-the-sun boat bum after listening to Barometer Soup, (1995), the album based largely on the writings of others: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Carl Hiaasen, James Taylor. My favorite is "Remittance Man," based on Mark Twain's "Following the Equator," which awakened me to the story of second sons of British wealth who could not inherit the estate, but received a "remittance" - a trust fund. Around the American West, I found large ranches raising British breeds that were founded by remittance men.

In the end I feel Buffett let his fans down by not admitting, and warning of, the cost of his sun-filled lifestyle. Although his skin cancer, Merkel cell carcinoma, was a rare type, he had been treating it for four years. The Mayo clinic warns that "long-term sun exposure raises the risk of developing it..." The early obituaries, in fact, didn't mention a cause of death. I first saw it in the Wall Street Journal, and [this NPR sidebar](#).

As Parrotheads age, Buffett's cancer, not just his music, ought to be remembered too.

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Bob Ingle - My friend Paul, stationed at the Naval Air Station in Key West, invited me down to meet his friends.

There was this place, Captain Tony's Saloon, where regulars had their names on stools. Paul had his and his friend Jimmy, a musician unhappy with Nashville who moved to Key West, did too.

It would be immortalized in a song called "Last Mango in Paris":

"I went down to Captain Tony's
To get out of the heat" it begins.

We were introduced and I said I was AP in Birmingham. Jimmy said he was a journalism major in college, loved to write and knew Alabama because he grew up there.

After the AP moved me from Birmingham to Seattle, I heard on the radio THAT Jimmy from Key West. Something about "Come Monday" and a brown LA haze.

My journalism career turned out better than his. But he didn't seem to mind, those writing skills were put to good use.

Saw him in concert many times; he seemed the same Alabama fellow I met in the early '70s: friendly, funny, a regular dude. I was a Parrothead before we knew what that was.

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(TD5-APRIL 4)--GOV. GRAHAM IN BUFFETT VIDEO--This is a file photo of Florida Governor Bob Graham, right, dressed in Jimmy Buffett's outfit and Buffett in Gov. Graham's during the 1984 Press Corps Skits. The Governor has a role in one of Buffett's latest videos dressed in similar garb.(AP LASERPHOTO)(mf51400str/Jerry Blankenship)1985.
Slug: AM-Graham Video

Bill Kaczor - Jimmy Buffett's death brought back one of my fondest AP memories. It was 1984 at the "Sometimes Annual Capital Press Corps Skits" (That's a title I thought up during my tenure in Tallahassee due to the fact some years had been skipped for reasons that none of us at the time knew of, and it's one of the many things I probably will never be remembered for.) I was among the skit participants who were upstaged by then-Gov. Bob Graham, who did it to us all the time, and Jimmy Buffett and his Coral Reefer Band. Graham could not let our spoofing of him and other politicians go unanswered so we humored him and gave him and the Legislature a few minutes each at the end of the skits to let the Empire Strike Back.

So onto the stage comes Buffett dressed in Graham's trademark blue pin-striped suit and red "Florida" tie and Graham wearing a Buffett-correct flowered shirt, white slacks, shades and straw hat. They sang a self-deprecating song about Graham's

budget request for \$100,000 to help add a sun porch to the Governor's Mansion to the tune of "Margaritaville."

The lyrics included, "So, put down your axes. It's time to raise some taxes. And then that sun porch will be all mine." I do not recall what I did in the skits that year, but I usually played bit parts as my singing ability was nil, but AP alum David Powell, then with the Florida Times-Union, had a starring role as Walter Mondale, then the vice president and soon-to-be presidential nominee. It doesn't really matter because all anyone remembered was the Buffett-Graham duet.

I was a Jimmy Buffett fan even before then, although not to Parrothead level, but I never saw him again. There was a near miss when he came to Pensacola Beach with then-Gov. Charlie Crist to survey damage from the BP oil spill in 2010. I was elsewhere on the beach with U.S. Sen. George LeMieux while Pensacola Correspondent Melissa Nelson was with Buffett and Crist. I also got stuck covering Jeb Bush and the Oak Ridge Boys during his 1988 campaign for governor while Buffett accompanied his Democratic opponent, Buddy MacKay.

One of my oddest memories, which for some reason I cannot forget, was that I was listening to "Margaritaville" on the car radio while driving to DeFuniak Springs in the Florida Panhandle little more than a year after the Buffett skit appearance to interview Graham's aunt, Ina Thompson. It was for a profile I wrote on her having been the first woman to head a Florida state agency as motor vehicles commissioner 30 years earlier. The news link was that Graham had just appointed the first woman to the Florida Supreme Court,

So, Jimmy you may be gone but you are not forgotten in this retired AP brain.

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Stephen Smith - I transferred from Idaho to Miami in 1979. I was something of a musical rube and had never heard of Jimmy Buffett. One day on my way to the bureau, I heard Migration and the rest is history. I quickly migrated myself into Parrothead life, and ultimately attended concerts in Miami, Key West, New Orleans, Seattle, and finally for the last time in Boise. Jimmy's death really saddens me. I guess it shows all of us are getting older, and some of our musical icons are sadly gone.

I was privileged to actually be a parrot heady. I loved his music, and get a few laughs on the way including his attempt to kick a field goal on the blue Turf of Boise State.

"A Caribbean soul I can barely control..." Migration from the album A1A

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Cliff Schiappa - Thank you for including a photo and mention of Fran Mears in the lead of Monday's Connecting. When I heard of Jimmy Buffet's passing, my thought immediately turned to Fran as being the only Parrothead I knew.

So it was a sweet delight to see her smiling face which brought back memories of our first meeting when you named her ACoB in Kansas City. At the end of her very first day on the job, she and I did an afterwork happy hour at Californo's in Westport where we

downed two bottles of wine and some appetizers, spending almost three hours getting to know each other. A friendship was formed that included dinners at my house, and later getting to know Walter socially as well. Heck, I and some motorcycling buds even had lunch at their place in Virginia during a cross-country ride!

As I write this, I'm two days shy of my 66th birthday, so the age of her passing is quite sobering, and I am all the more thankful for my continued good health. Fran was indeed one of the good ones who was generous with her time and talents.

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Jim Spehar - Not a died-in-the-feathers Parrothead but I appreciated Ted Anthony's piece on the death of Jimmy Buffett. For 40-years or so, this lyric, done by a former AP colleague in Dallas who was learning calligraphy, has hung on my home office wall. Fittingly askew, perhaps, behind the matting. And I didn't have the heart to tell her she'd misspelled his last name.

I'm also recalling abrupt needle scratching across vinyl as I was introducing my fairly new in-laws to Jimmy when the chorus of one of his more notable musical contributions, "Why Don't We Get Drunk (and S***W)" began.

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Marty Thompson - Two personal favors of the Thompsons were walking along Front Street in Lahaina to turn for lunch or an early dinner at Jimmy Buffet's Cheeseburgers in Paradise - where a good burger was enhanced by an ocean view.

Both are gone now.

Remembering Tulsa's Jenk Jones Jr.

Lindel Hutson – *former AP Oklahoma City bureau chief* - Jenk Jones Jr., who died last month at age 87, was a longtime friend of the AP as was his family newspaper, the Tulsa Tribune. Jenk participated in many APME activities along with other journalism endeavors, including serving twice as a Pulitzer Prize juror.

He was the last person to hold the titles of publisher and editor of the Tribune, which had been in the Jones family since 1919. The paper published until 1992 when the morning Tulsa World did not renew their joint operating agreement.

The Tribune, under the direction of Jones and the late Windsor Ridenour, Tribune executive editor, was a consistent winner in the AP/ONE (Oklahoma News Executives) contests. The paper did some remarkable investigative and in-depth reporting. Arguably the best in the state. Tribune management also was noted for promoting females to positions of responsibility.

Jones and Ridenour had a knack for finding talent. They brought some terrific young journalists to the Tribune. After the paper folded, some Tribune alums were hired by the World and others scattered to other journalism jobs around the country. One was

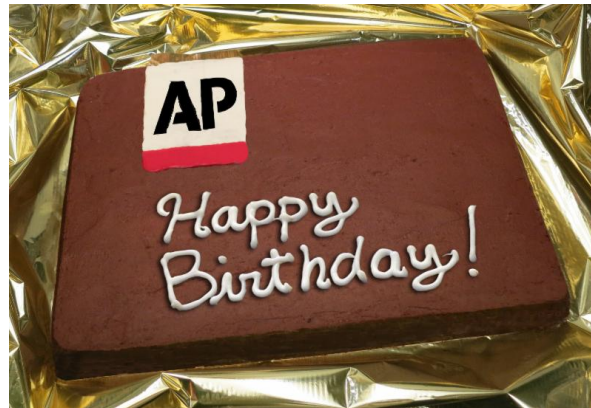
Kelly Kurt, a fabulous young reporter who I hired and who later became Tulsa's AP correspondent.

It is unfortunate the Tribune also is often remembered as a contributing factor in the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921. A story in the May 31, 1921, edition of the Tribune included an inflammatory front-page story about an encounter between a White female elevator operator and a Black male teenager. And yet in later years, the Tribune opposed the organization of the Ku Klux Klan.

Jenk Jones was a living encyclopedia of Oklahoma history. Jenk could turn an hour membership visit into an all-afternoon entertaining history lesson. He also was a world traveler and would regale me with his globetrotting adventures. I don't recall the number of countries he visited but it's safe to say there are few places on the planet he missed.

I last saw him a year ago at an Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame gathering in Tulsa. He would have been 86 at the time and looked in remarkably good condition. Jenk was a journalism giant, and he will be missed.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Tad Bartimus](#)

[Jim McElroy](#)

[Mark Woolsey](#)

Stories of interest

Can Mark Thompson revive CNN's struggling fortunes? (Guardian)

By Adam Gabbatt

In late summer, CNN found itself in crisis. Under the disastrous tenure of chief executive Chris Licht, the news channel had seen top anchors leave and ratings plunge.

Behind the scenes, CNN staff were grumbling about an apparent attempt to move the network's political coverage to a rapidly disappearing center – an effort typified by the widely criticized decision to host a town hall with Donald Trump in May.

Licht had left in June, and bosses were desperate to find someone who could steady the ship.

Enter, two months later, Mark Thompson, the British former BBC director general and former chief executive of the New York Times.

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

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Canon and Reuters Develop New Photo Authentication Technology (PetaPixel)

By JEREMY GRAY

Media conglomerate Thomson Reuters and Canon Inc. have announced a new proof of concept pilot program to certify digital images, addressing concerns about content's legitimacy.

Alongside Starling Lab, an academic research lab based at Stanford University and the University of Southern California, Thomson Reuters and Canon have developed an end-to-end method for embedding information into an image at the time of capture that is preserved through the entire editing and publication process.

Utilizing the latest cryptographic methods and decentralized web protocols, Reuters, Canon, and Starling Lab suggest that the pilot program can “ease concerns about content's legitimacy.”

The proof-of-concept technology demonstrates the preservation of an image's metadata throughout the chain. Reuters successfully integrated Starling Lab's authentication framework into its picture desk workflow.

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

Today in History - Sept. 5, 2023



By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Sept. 5, the 248th day of 2023. There are 117 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 5, 1774, the first Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia.

On this date:

In 1698, Russia's Peter the Great imposed a tax on beards.

In 1864, voters in Louisiana approved a new state constitution abolishing slavery.

In 1939, four days after war had broken out in Europe, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a proclamation declaring U.S. neutrality in the conflict.

In 1960, at the Rome Olympics, American boxer Cassius Clay (later Muhammad Ali) defeated Zbigniew Pietrzykowski (zuh-BIG'-nee-ehf pee-eht-chah-KAHF'-skee) of Poland to win the light-heavyweight gold medal; Wilma Rudolph of the United States won the second of her three gold medals with the 200-meter sprint.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed legislation making aircraft hijackings a federal crime.

In 1972, the Palestinian group Black September attacked the Israeli Olympic delegation at the Munich Games, killing 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team and a police officer. German forces killed five of the gunmen.

In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford escaped an attempt on his life by Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a disciple of Charles Manson, in Sacramento, California.

In 1986, four hijackers who had seized a Pan Am jumbo jet on the ground in Karachi, Pakistan, opened fire when the lights inside the plane failed; a total of 20 people were killed before Pakistani commandos stormed the jetliner.

In 1991, the 35th annual Naval Aviation Symposium held by the Tailhook Association opened in Las Vegas; during the four-day gathering, there were reports that dozens of people, most of them women, were sexually assaulted or otherwise harassed. (The episode triggered the resignation of Navy Secretary H. Lawrence.)

In 1997, Mother Teresa died in Calcutta, India, at age 87.

In 2016, Hugh O'Brian, the actor who shot to fame as Sheriff Wyatt Earp in what was hailed as television's first adult Western, died in Beverly Hills, California, at age 91.

In 2012, Barack Obama was nominated to run for a second term at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

In 2018, the New York Times published an opinion piece from an anonymous senior administration official claiming to be part of an internal "resistance" working to thwart President Donald Trump's "worst inclinations;" Trump responded that if such a "gutless" person exists, "the Times must, for National Security purposes, turn him/her over to the government at once!"

Today's Birthdays: Comedian-actor Bob Newhart is 94. Actor-singer Carol Lawrence is 91. Actor Lucille Soong is 88. Former NFL All-Pro quarterback and college football Hall of Famer Billy Kilmer is 84. Actor William Devane is 84. Actor George Lazenby is 84. Movie director Werner Herzog is 81. Singer Al Stewart is 78. Actor-director Dennis Dugan is 77. College Football Hall of Famer Jerry LeVias is 77. Singer Loudon Wainwright III is 77. Soul/rock musician Mel Collins is 76. "Cathy" cartoonist Cathy Guisewite (GYZ'-wyt) is 73. Actor Michael Keaton is 72. Actor Debbie Turner (Marta in "The Sound of Music") is 67. Actor Kristian Alfonso is 60. R&B singer Terry Ellis is 60. Rock musician Brad Wilk is 55. TV personality Dweezil Zappa is 54. Actor Rose McGowan is 50. Actor Carice Van Houten is 47. Rock musician Kyle O'Quin (Portugal. The Man) is 38. Olympic gold medal figure skater Yuna Kim is 33. Actor Skandar Keynes is 32.

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 Central Region 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.

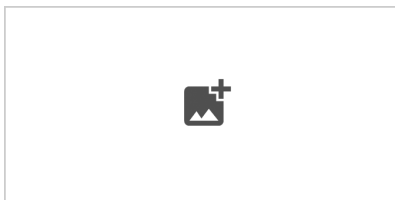
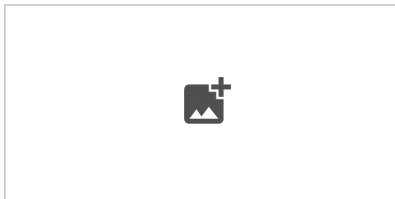
- **Volunteering** - benefit your colleagues by sharing volunteer stories - with ideas on such work they can do themselves.

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

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



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