

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

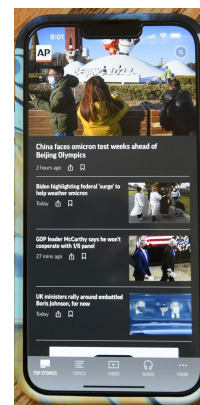
[View as Webpage](#)



Connecting

Dec. 19, 2023

Click [here](#) for sound of the Teletype



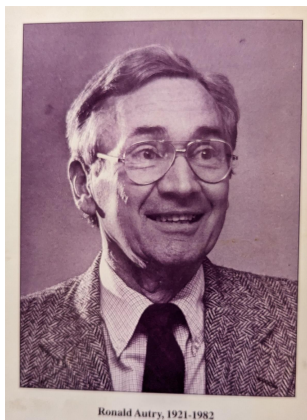
[Top AP News](#)
[Top AP Photos](#)
[AP Merchandise](#)

[Connecting Archive](#)
[AP Newsletters](#)
[AP Books](#)

Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning on this Dec. 19, 2023,

In Monday's Connecting, Jim Autry's delightful essay for USA Today, on "finally aging" at the age of 90, struck a chord with our colleague [Peggy Walsh](#). She explains:



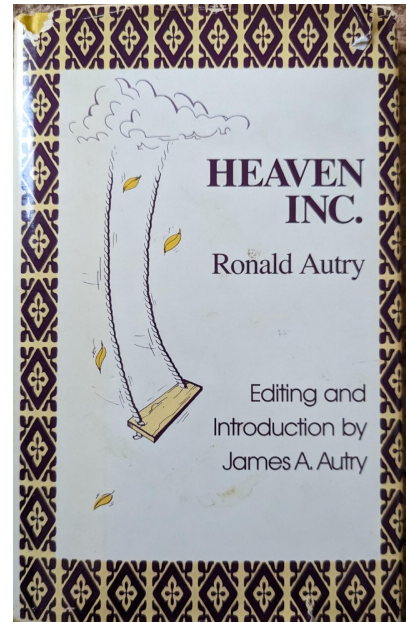
Ronald Autry, 1921-1982

*"I was stunned and thrilled to read the Final Word by **James Autry**. He is the younger brother of **Ron Autry**, who was my first bureau chief when I started with AP in Atlanta. Ron died in 1982 at age 60. He was widely respected, honored and loved by all who knew him.*

Ron was 12 years older than Jim. Their father and grandfather were Baptist ministers in Mississippi. Ron's faith was devout. He wrote a book "Heaven Inc." after being told he had not long to live from cancer. He defied the prognosis and actively pursued life for more than two years.

After Ron died, James edited and wrote an introduction for the book. When it was published in 1990, he and Ron's widow, Susie, were kind enough to send me a copy, pictured below. In "Heaven Inc." Ron wondered if, in this material world, the creator would be a CEO with accompanying underlings. The book is a tribute to his faith and humor and, as James describes in the intro, his intolerance for people who "just want to seem pious" using churches as "fancy hiding places."

The book is a treasure. I've reread it many times. It never fails to make me laugh, think and remember Ron.



Today's issue brings sad news of the deaths of two journalists widely known and respected by our colleagues - **John C. Van Gieson**, a journalist whose career covering Florida politics and the state Capitol and included work with the AP, and **Cragg Hines**, the colorful longtime Washington bureau chief of the Houston Chronicle.

Here's to a great day – be safe, stay healthy, live the day to your fullest.

Paul

On the death of Larry Knutson

Charlie Hanley – I'm among the many saddened to learn of Larry's passing. In the sometimes tense intra-AP relationship between the Washington buro and 50 Rock, Larry was one WX/WDC stalwart who was always a delight to work with. And when a visitor from the north, as I frequently was, dropped in, especially during his stint covering State, Larry was the perfect host and guide. A wonderful colleague.

-0-

Carl P. Leubsdorf - Dave Espo and I went to see Larry four days before he died. He was surrounded, in his room, by photographic mementos of his days as a prominent AP journalist— with presidents he covered and colleagues with whom he worked. He was still able to identify many, but he was clearly in great pain and talking was hard.

One picture had great meaning to me, as well as to Larry. It was a picture of the AP's Senate staff about 1971—Walter Mears, John Chadwick, Joe Hall, Sandy Schwartz and the two of us. Sadly, I'm the only one of the six who is still alive. We talked of the days a couple of years later when he covered the famous Senate Watergate Committee hearings, and I reminded him of the week in August 1974 when President Nixon resigned. The Capitol was rife with rumors all week and, of the five reporters on the staff, I then directed (Walter having become deputy bureau chief), Larry was the absolute best at chasing down those rumors and judging which were true. He had a

reputation as being sort of absent-minded because of the campaign planes and trains he missed but, when the chips were down, Larry produced. A terrific reporter and a great guy to be around. We will all miss him.

John Gieson, Florida newsman credited with bestowing famous nickname, dies at 84



By John Kennedy
Tallahassee Democrat

TALLAHASSEE – John C. Van Gieson, a journalist whose career covering Florida politics and the state Capitol spanned the 1970s into the 1990s, has died at age 84.

As a reporter for Associated Press, Van Gieson is credited with coining the name “Walkin’ Lawton,” for the then little-known state senator Lawton Chiles, who enhanced his profile with voters and sealed a place in Florida political lore with a 91-

day walk along the state's backroads and highways on his way to winning the U.S. Senate race in 1970.

Van Gieson went on to cover Chiles during the senator's return to Tallahassee as governor.

"He taught me most of what I learned about covering a beat," said David Powell, a retired Tallahassee lawyer, author and former AP newsman with Van Gieson, who was among scores of colleagues and friends who posted remembrances on Facebook.

"He made me better than I would have been otherwise," Powell added, pointing out that "despite his soft-spoken manner, John was a fierce competitor."



Read more [here](#).

A memory of John Van Gieson

Bill Kaczor - John Van Gieson was the first AP reporter I ever met. He came into the Pensacola News Journal's Fort Walton Beach bureau where I moonlighted while in the Air Force to file a story in the early 1970s. Ever since that first brief encounter, John was my role model of what a reporter should be, especially an AP reporter. If John wrote it, you knew it was the real deal. And it was written in a way that made you want to read it. We later worked side-by-side in Tallahassee at news conferences, legislative meetings and other capital events when I was with Gannett News Service and he was with the AP. It was later a role reversal. I joined the AP in Tallahassee in 1980 after he had left the cooperative for a series of newspaper jobs in Tallahassee. We were more cooperators than competitors. Most of all, John was a great person and great friend. He had a magnetic personality, if I am permitted to use a cliché. People were attracted to him. I know I certainly was. We were teammates on the Press Corps softball team and the "Cracker Sackers," a media flag football team that was hastily assembled for a single game against the governor's office. Bob Graham then was the governor and called his ticket the "Graham Crackers." The best part of our sporting life was the post-game gatherings for beer and pizza, bar-b-que or sandwiches. I and many others are better for having known John Van Gieson.

Cragg Hines – ‘He got his money’s worth, and his friends enjoyed being along for the ride’

Carl P. Leubsdorf - Cragg Hines, the colorful, erudite longtime Washington bureau chief of the Houston Chronicle, died Saturday at Virginia Hospital Center. He was 78

and had been hospitalized in recent weeks, suffering from hip and blood problems.

A native Texan, Cragg was born in Dallas on June 19, 1945, and graduated from the University of North Texas, where he edited *The Yucca*, the college yearbook, for three years.

For five years, he was a reporter, bureau manager and statehouse correspondent for United Press International in Dallas and Little Rock. He first came to Washington on a 1971-72 congressional fellowship by the American Political Science Association. He joined the *Chronicle's* Washington bureau in 1972 and became the bureau chief in 1983, a position he held until 2000. He covered the fall of the Berlin Wall, the 1991 Persian Gulf War and many presidential trips. He later became a columnist for the paper before retiring in 2007.



In 2001, he was cited by *Washingtonian* magazine as one of the top 50 journalists in the capital and won a Texas Associated Press Managing Editors first place award.

He was elected to the Gridiron Club in 1990 and his booming voice and massive presence soon made him a fixture in the club's annual shows, often performing songs he wrote. He served as music chairman three times and was a skit producer 12 times, including eight as producer of the closer. Just last April, he impersonated New York Republican Rep. George Santos at the club's 138th anniversary dinner, singing "Pretend you're someone who's not you" to the tune of the Nat Cole classic "Pretend."

After retiring from the *Chronicle*, he became active in northern Virginia Democratic politics, becoming parliamentarian of the Arlington County Democratic Committee and serving as a Democratic National Convention delegate in 2016 and a Virginia Democratic elector in 2020. A world class gourmand and opera aficionado, retirement gave him more time to travel to the Santa Fe opera each summer, the theater and opera in London and Berlin in winter and his favorite restaurants here and abroad.

Gridiron Historian George Condon, a longtime friend and frequent companion on presidential trips, said, "I'm not sure I ever knew anybody who lived life more fully and with more joy. He never did anything halfway, from journalism to restaurants, from travel to politics. He got his money's worth and his friends enjoyed being along for the ride."

His longtime partner, Bruce Crane, said there will be "a memorial celebration of his extraordinary life" in the New Year.

Remembering Cragg Hines

[Linda Deutsch](#) - To talk about Cragg Hines in the past tense seems impossible. He was always so present that his life force must still be floating around us somehow. I like to think that with his fabulous voice he has already been recruited by a heavenly choir of angels to sing some Christmas carols.

When I think of Cragg I first remember him decked out in white tie and tails at the annual Gridiron Dinners in Washington. Fran Lewine often hosted Edie Lederer and me at this elite press gathering where reporters stage an elaborate show spoofing the current politicians including the prez. Cragg wrote musical numbers for the shows and, with his grand baritone voice, starred in all of the productions. Edie and I met him at the Gridiron and we became great friends. But it was during the pandemic when Edie set up a weekly Zoom cocktail party that we got to know him even better. The suggestion by fellow journalist Ed Epstein that he join our group was a gift to all of us. Cragg's wisdom, humor and insider knowledge of politics added richness to our conversations. I am grateful that he made a few trips to Los Angeles in recent years and was able to share meals with his west coast admirers. We felt like family.

I knew that Cragg was a much-honored journalist, White House correspondent for the Houston Chronicle and a music devotee. But I just learned that he actually had an unusual double major in college, music and journalism.

His life was as thrilling as the operas he traveled the world to attend. He anticipated more adventures when he was struck down by illness.

Enjoy the afterlife, Cragg. There must be a party waiting for you.

May his memory be a blessing.

Nonprofits worthy of support



Law Wheaton - The [Student Press Law Center](#) is a nonprofit that defends and celebrates the next generation of aspiring journalists and their advisers at the college and high school level. The SPLC provides legal support and advice when administrators threaten to shut down or censor student publications, demand prior review and/or try to remove student editors or their advisers.

SPLC lawyers were an enormous help to me when a new college administration, upset over what they saw as negative coverage, wanted to impose prior review of planned stories, and tried to remove me as adviser to The Torch, our award-winning student newspaper. Letters from SPLC lawyers citing New Jersey case law and constitutional protections made the administration back off.

SPLC is also behind [New Voices](#), a program promoting state legislation enshrining legal protection for student journalists. With SPLC help, 17 states now have laws on the books protecting student press freedom.

Unfortunate AP Sighting

New York Yankees Hall of Fame catcher Yogi Bear has died. He was 90.

A   0

By Associated Press September 23 at 2:40 AM

NEW YORK — New York Yankees Hall of Fame catcher Yogi Bear has died. He was 90.

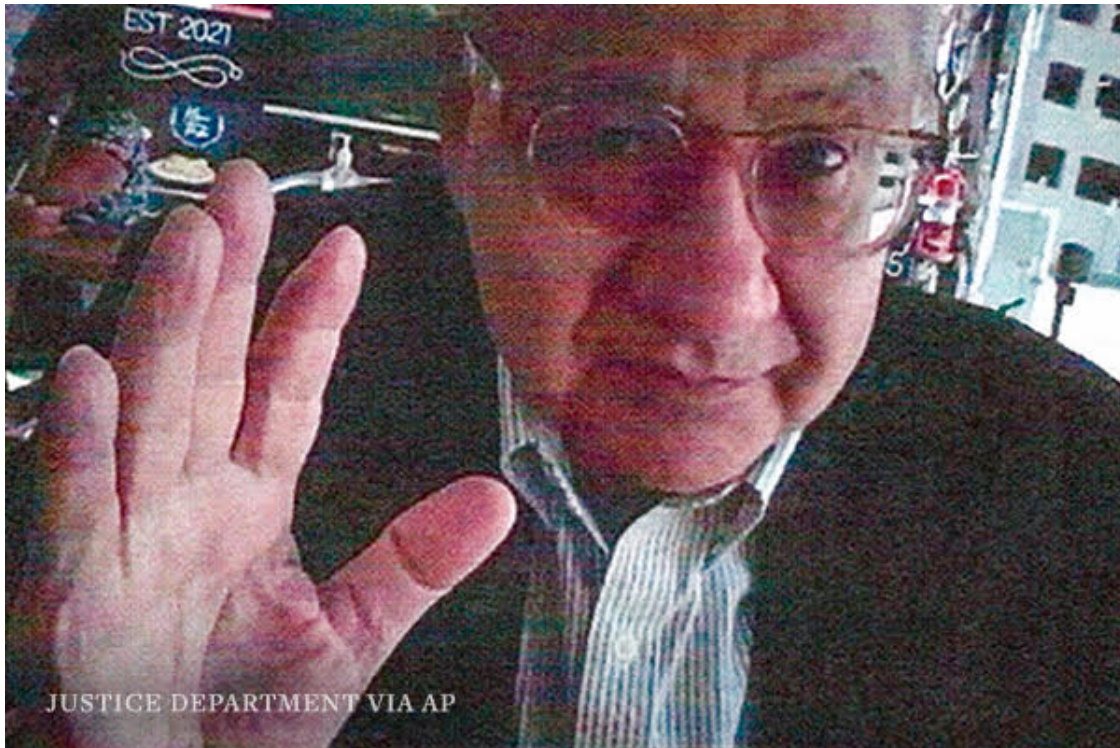
Copyright 2015 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.



[Michael Weinfeld](#) - Good news, bad news about the Yogi Berra documentary [“It Ain’t Over.”](#) The good news is that it’s beyond terrific. The bad news is the doc ends with the AP’s gaffe on his obit when they called him Yogi Bear. This, after his family spent much of the doc saying how much they hated that his life and career had been boiled down to a cartoon image. Fast forward through that part. It comes at 1:28:45. The doc is on Netflix. BTW, it ain’t over when the credits start to roll. Make sure you watch all the way through.

BEST OF THE WEEK — FIRST WINNER

Former career US diplomat charged with secretly spying for Cuban intelligence for decades



Relying on relentless source work and their joint years of experience, Joshua Goodman and Eric Tucker landed twin scoops on the arrest and indictment of a former career American diplomat charged with being a secret agent for communist Cuba for decades.

Manuel Rocha, who was formerly ambassador to Bolivia, was accused of engaging in “clandestine activity” on Cuba’s behalf since at least 1981, the year he joined the U.S. foreign service. While the case was short on specifics of how Rocha may have assisted the island nation, it provided a vivid case study of how Cuba and its sophisticated intelligence services seek to target, and flip, U.S. officials.

First word came to Latin America correspondent Goodman from a trusted source who called on a Friday evening to say the FBI had arrested Rocha earlier that day at his home in Miami but details were under seal.

Goodman had interviewed Rocha years before and turned quickly to reporting out Rocha’s 25-year State Department career. He enlisted Washington-based Tucker to see if his national security sources could help shake anything loose about the case.

Read more [here](#).

BEST OF THE WEEK — SECOND WINNER

Recordings show how the Mormon church protects itself from child sex abuse claims



Using audio records, a trove of legal documents, email exchanges and a series of interviews, Mike Rezendes and Jason Dearen revealed how a senior official in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints helped keep quiet the case of a former bishop who was accused by his daughter of sexually abusing her. The text story was rich with detail and accompanied by audio clips, and the reporters also worked with Reveal to produce a public radio show/podcast.

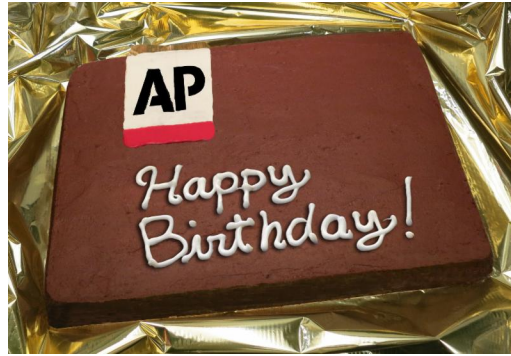
Last year, Rezendes and Dearen wrote a series of stories revealing the legal playbook used by the Mormon church to keep child sex abuse secret.

In the aftermath of those stories, sources approached the reporters with allegations that the head of the church's Risk Management Division, Paul Rytting, was personally involved in a series of meetings that resulted in the cover-up of yet another abuse case. Rezendes and Dearen knew that, if true, it was an important story.

Indeed, the reporters showed that Rytting and the church helped keep quiet the case of John Goodrich, who was accused by his daughter, Chelsea, of sexually abusing her. The church's actions helped derail the prosecution of Goodrich and culminated in a \$300,000 payment to Chelsea and her mother, Lorraine, in exchange for a promise that they would not sue the church. Today, the father remains a free man.

Read more [here](#).

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Sibby Christensen](#)

Stories of interest

As More Media Layoffs Ring in the New Year, Americans Face Prospect of 'News Deserts' | Analysis (The Wrap)

By Natalie Korach

The media industry has been rocked this holiday season by news of newsroom layoffs as outlets downsize to combat volatility in advertising, after an already-brutal year of job cuts.

In the last month alone, Condé Nast, G/O Media, Vice Media and Vox Media have all cut staff, most of whom already had layoffs earlier this year. (Vice filed for bankruptcy in June.)

Broadcast, print and digital outlets collectively saw 2,681 journalism job cuts in 2023, up 48% from 1,808 in 2022 and 77% from 1,511 in 2021, according to a report from employment firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

With a collapsing advertising-revenue model and more media companies experimenting with artificial intelligence to create content, the outlook for journalism is dimming, media analysts told TheWrap. The decline underscores the need for the public and even governments to fund news gathering if it is to survive in its current form and avoid widespread "news deserts," they said.

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

-0-

Footage Shows Israel Border Police Beating Photographer (PetaPixel)

By **MATT GROWCOOT**

Shocking footage filmed on Friday shows a press photographer being beaten by Israel Border Police in East Jerusalem.

Mostafa Alkharouf who works for the Anadolu news agency was accosted by several police officers after covering a prayer protest.

The footage shows Alkharouf, who is apparently a well-known photojournalist in the area, being punched in the head by a police officer. Afterward, one of the officers points a gun at him before using the weapon's barrel as a blunt object to hit the photographer over the head with.

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

-0-

That's a wrap: Bryant Gumbel and HBO's 'Real Sports' air their last episode after 29 years (AP)

By **DAVID BAUDER**

NEW YORK (AP) — For the last few years of its life, HBO's "Real Sports" taped its episodes on the same Manhattan block where CBS' "60 Minutes" resides. They shared a sensibility along with a neighborhood.

But while "60 Minutes" rolls along in its sixth decade, the monthly sports magazine helmed by Bryant Gumbel is calling it quits in its 29th year. The final, 90-minute episode premieres Tuesday at 10 p.m. Eastern.

Sports was a lens through which the magazine looked at all manner of issues, winning awards for pieces on corruption at the International Olympic Committee, labor abuses as Qatar prepared for the World Cup, concussions in sports and children forced to be jockeys for camel races in the Middle East.

Read more [here](#).

Today in History - Dec. 19, 2023



Today is Tuesday, Dec. 19, the 353rd day of 2023. There are 12 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 19, 1998, President Bill Clinton was impeached by the Republican-controlled House for perjury and obstruction of justice. (Clinton was subsequently acquitted by the Senate.)

On this date:

In 1777, during the American Revolutionary War, Gen. George Washington led his army of about 11,000 men to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, to camp for the winter.

In 1907, 239 workers died in a coal mine explosion in Jacobs Creek, Pennsylvania.

In 1946, war broke out in Indochina as troops under Ho Chi Minh launched widespread attacks against the French.

In 1950, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower was named commander of the military forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In 1960, fire broke out on the hangar deck of the nearly completed aircraft carrier USS Constellation at the New York Naval Shipyard; 50 civilian workers were killed.

In 1972, Apollo 17 splashed down in the Pacific, winding up the Apollo program of manned lunar landings.

In 2001, the fires that had burned beneath the ruins of the World Trade Center in New York City for the previous three months were declared extinguished except for a few scattered hot spots.

In 2003, design plans were unveiled for the signature skyscraper — a 1,776-foot glass tower — at the site of the World Trade Center in New York City.

In 2008, citing imminent danger to the national economy, President George W. Bush ordered an emergency bailout of the U.S. auto industry.

In 2011, North Korea announced the death two days earlier of leader Kim Jong Il; North Koreans marched by the thousands to mourn their “Dear Leader” while state media proclaimed his youngest son, Kim Jong Un, a “Great Successor.”

In 2016, a truck rammed into a crowded Christmas market in central Berlin, killing 12 people in an attack claimed by Islamic State. (The suspected attacker was killed in a police shootout four days later.)

In 2022, the House Jan. 6 committee urged the Justice Department to bring criminal charges against former President Donald Trump for the violent 2021 Capitol insurrection, calling for accountability for the former president and “a time of reflection and reckoning.”

Today’s Birthdays: Actor Elaine Joyce is 80. Actor Tim Reid is 79. Musician John McEuen is 78. Singer Janie Fricke is 76. Jazz musician Lenny White is 74. Actor Mike Lookinland is 63. Actor Scott Cohen is 62. Actor Jennifer Beals is 60. Actor Robert MacNaughton is 57. Magician Criss Angel is 56. Rock musician Klaus Eichstadt (Ugly Kid Joe) is 56. Actor Ken Marino is 55. Actor Elvis Nolasco is 55. Actor Kristy Swanson is 54. Model Tyson Beckford is 53. Actor Amy Locane is 52. Pro Football Hall of Famer Warren Sapp is 51. Actor Rosa Blasi is 51. Actor Alyssa Milano is 51. Actor Tara Summers is 44. Actor Jake Gyllenhaal (JIH’-lihn-hahl) is 43. Actor Marla Sokoloff is 43. Rapper Lady Sovereign is 38. Journalist Ronan Farrow is 36. Actor Nik Dodani is 30.

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!

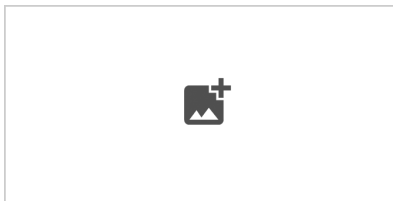
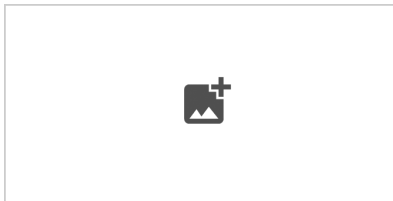
Here are some suggestions:

- **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.

Paul Stevens
Editor, Connecting newsletter
paulstevens46@gmail.com



Connecting newsletter | 14719 W 79th Ter, Lenexa, KS 66215

[Unsubscribe stevenspl@live.com](mailto:stevenspl@live.com)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by paulstevens46@gmail.com powered by



Try email marketing for free today!