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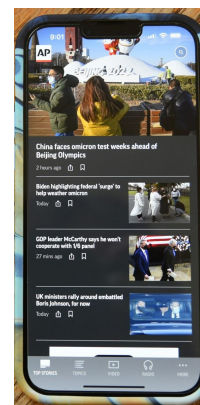
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Connecting

Dec. 27, 2023

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this Dec. 27, 2023,

Hope your holiday celebrations have been filled with love, happiness and, of course, good food. The latter applied in the Stevens household where our son from LA made it his mission to frequent all of his favorite culinary haunts with his Parental Unit in five days' time.

We lead today's issue with remembrances from two women who covered the Vietnam War for The Associated Press – **Tad Bartimus** and **Edie Lederer**.

Both were mentioned in last Friday's essay by **Peter Arnett** on how women who covered Vietnam were trailblazers who set the stage for the many women journalists involved in war coverage today. Arnett told me, by the way, that it was his beloved friend **George Esper** who years ago suggested he make occasional contributions to Connecting: "It was advice that has helped me revisit not only my years with the AP but also to remember some of the wondrous cast of journalism characters I worked with."

CRAGG HINES MEMORY – from [Chris Connell](#): :We were trudging glumly onto the press charter at dawn at Andrews AFB for a GHW Bush trip when someone asked Cragg how he'd slept. 'Like a baby. Woke up every five minutes and cried,' he wisecracked.

Here's to a great week ahead as we close out 2023. Be safe, stay healthy, live the day to your fullest.

Paul

Memories of Vietnam War coverage



Tad Bartimus - My most vivid memory centers on a street kid who started following me around several months after I arrived in Saigon. He hung out on the corner of the main street in front of the building where the AP had its office. At first, I just gave him money for food for him and his pals - all orphans, all living on the street, ages ranging from 6 or 7 to teenagers. They lived as a pack as there was safety (ha!) in numbers. This boy was one of the leaders of the pack... I guessed he was between 7 and 10 years old. I stopped giving him money and started giving him food (I bought credit at two corner restaurants where the Vietnamese owners VERY RELUCTANTLY agreed to feed him and three of his pals twice a day. I paid the head waiter directly at first until I realized he was pocketing the money and eating the food too.

Long story short, I took the kid home to my apartment, got him clean and took him to the doctor who got his infected and buggy insides clean of parasites. I turned one room in my apartment into a place for him to sleep and put my Vietnamese live-in housekeeper in charge of him. He said his name was Trung, his family was all dead and

he had lived on the streets for a long time... this story could go on and on but suffice to say Trung had remained on the fringes of my life until a few years ago.

Thanks to great American pilot friends flying the frantic baby lift flights as the Americans pulled out of Vietnam, I got him evacuated to California where another American who knew him kept him out of an orphanage and ultimately connected him to an upper middle class family with two other orphans put on the same evacuation flight. I have lost track of him, and this pains me greatly. But pray he was in a great family, went on to college and now has a happy family of his own. The adoptive family wanted me to break off my ties with Trung, thinking it was best for him. The stupidest thing I ever did was to very reluctantly agree. When I reached out to them much later to find him, all my letters were returned by them. I still miss him terribly but hold fast to the belief that he continues to be part of a loving family and hopefully has gone on to have a happy family of his own. He will live in my heart always.

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Edie Lederer - I was very lucky to be in Vietnam before, during and after the pullout of the last American combat troops on March 29, 1973, and to be part of the AP coverage of the impact of the announcement by Henry Kissinger, then president Richard Nixon's national security adviser, on Oct. 26, 1972, that "We believe that peace is at hand." That day, I interviewed an impoverished South Vietnamese woman who had lost three sons in the war. She said other families would be happy, but her sons wouldn't be coming home.

Soon after, I interviewed pilots and sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS America -- where I was locked in the isolation ward if prison sick bay overnight because I was the only woman among several thousand men. The pilots said they wanted to get the job done and end the war.

The cease-fire waiting game went on and the war did, too, with the pilots carrying out the most intensive U.S. bombing campaign of the war against North Vietnam,

targeting Hanoi and the nearby port of Haiphong. It began Dec. 18, 1972, and ended 11 days later – after the Vietnamese had signaled their willingness to return to the suspended Paris peace talks.

On January 27, 1973, the United States, North Vietnam, South Vietnam and the Viet Cong signed an agreement to end the war which included the release of all American prisoners of war and the withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel in 60 days.

This led to two very memorable stories for me. The night of the announcement I started on “Operation Bar Girl” to find out the reactions of Saigon’s many bar girls to the impending departure of their American GI boyfriends.

Many were in a 60-day race to cement a relationship and marry their boyfriends. But surprisingly to me, there was very little bitterness though there was widespread concern at how they would survive, especially those with half-American children. My story and AP photographer Neal Ulevich’s fabulous photo of a girl surrounded by GIs and blowing smoke rings in a dimly lit bar got smash play.

The most haunting day for me was on Feb. 12, 1973, when I spent more than 12 hours at Tan Son Nhut Airport waiting for the first helicopters with American GIs held by the Viet Cong to arrive from somewhere in the jungle in South Vietnam.

First, we saw the blinking red and yellow lights of six helicopters. When they landed, the first GI to emerge was on a stretcher. When the young blond man heard cheering and noise from the media and about 75 American servicemen on hand to greet the POWs, he sat up, first waving one hand and then two hands.

A bedraggled, emaciated group of men in baggy pants followed him off the choppers, each with a large nametag around his neck, many carrying black plastic bags with their few personal possessions from captivity. Some had been prisoners for eight years and were taking their first steps in freedom. Many of us were in tears watching them get on a U.S. medical evacuation plane.

It wasn’t until later that we learned the true extent of their torture and suffering at the hands of the Viet Cong, and I am sure the ordeal of their captivity haunted every one of them. I sometimes dream about that night -- and I hope that those soldiers were able to rebuild their lives and find some peace in their hearts.

When I went to Vietnam in 2000 to help report on the 25th anniversary of the end of the war, I chose to write about the impact of the war on women in North Vietnam and South Vietnam. I was determined to try to find a bar girl which was exceedingly difficult. They all had to go to reeducation camps after Saigon fell on April 30, 1975, and refused to talk about their past.

But through the relative of a secret source, I did get to interview one former bar girl. She was leading a very difficult, impoverished life selling noodles from a cart in old Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, and agreed to be photographed only from the back, wearing a traditional Vietnamese conical hat that totally blocked her identity.

Being Thankful

[Cliff Schiappa](#) - The Thursday edition of Connecting went above and beyond with the essays by Norm Abelson and Joyce Dehli. I believe the juxtaposition of the two was destiny.

I had the good fortune of meeting Joyce at a Poynter Institute management seminar just three weeks after 9/11 and we connected so nicely during the few days we were together in St. Petersburg. In her essay, although she would never admit it, Joyce was an unsung hero in the eyes of her friend Michael. In fact, in the '90s, it was the lesbian community that stepped forward and provided unselfish support to thousands of gay men who were debilitated by AIDS and abandoned by family. I'm so glad Joyce shared her very personal and poignant experiences.

Norm's essay about being thankful reminded me of a valuable lesson I and my chorus colleagues learned of the importance of graciously accepting thanks. In 2014, Heartland Men's Chorus had just finished their first performance of a newly commissioned work titled "I Am Harvey Milk."

In the audience was world-renowned choral conductor Timothy Seelig of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus and as is customary after the show, the singers gathered on the sidewalk to greet our audience members as they exited the Folly Theater in downtown Kansas City. Seelig was observing our interaction with our fans as they were effusive in their praise of our performance.

The next day prior to taking the stage, Seelig addressed the Chorus, and in a very determined manner he said, "You need to learn how to say Thank You!" He went on to recount listening to singers responding to the post-concert accolades with remarks like "oh, but the tenors missed their entrance," or "we started to go flat at the end of the third song." We were picking ourselves apart after being told how good we were.

Seelig reminded us that the audience paid good money to be there, and they were so appreciative of our skill and passion and they themselves were thankful for us making their lives a bit better that night. "When someone gives you a compliment, don't argue, just say Thank You!" It's a valued lesson that has traveled with me ever since.

Contributing to journalism nonprofits

[The Athens County \(Ohio\) Independent](#)

[Doug Daniel](#) - Not only should Ohio University grads be aware of it, anyone interested in nonprofit local journalism should know about the Athens County Independent. Local journalists and investors created the online paper, locally owned and operated, in response to the lack of nonpartisan news in the area.

The Independent, a 501 (c) (3) entity, seeks subscribers and financial supporters to continue its focus on local news and information and its commitment to in-depth journalism. Subscriptions are free. The Indy puts out two weekly newsletters. One features a round-up of local information and events; the other features independent

reporting from a staff of local journalists. It also maintains a website that features stories.

One of the Independent's board members is Tom Hodson, an OU grad who taught media law and investigative reporting at the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism before becoming its director for several years. He wrote an article for Crain's Cleveland Business to explain the need for nonprofit local news:

[Opinion: Nonprofit journalism one solution to increase information accuracy](#)

The Little Tree That Could

[Sibby Christensen](#) - If you've ever lived in a tiny apartment starting out, you probably coped with dragging a live Christmas tree up the stairs (no elevator) and back down, along with the mess after the holiday. The next time you decide to get an artificial tree, but that took up precious space. Finally, one year, I got out the sewing machine and stitched up this 8-inch tall fabric tree - meant only as a side decoration. Age and disability have given it new importance: I'll never again be without a Christmas tree.



So, celebrate your holiday with my good wishes.

Deftly handling of a touchy situation

PETE ROWE is a freelance writer for the San Diego Union-Tribune. He contributed this to a nightly communique edited by former Tribune editor Jack Reber:

This time of year, I recall a story told by the late U-T reporter Bruce V. Bigelow.

In the early 1980s, Bruce and his then-wife, Lynn O'Shaughnessy, were journalists in Kansas City. When the L.A. Times offered Lynn a job, Bruce managed to join the staff of the Associated Press Los Angeles bureau.

A recent hire, Bruce was in the office on Christmas Eve when the phone rang.

A member news organization had heard that Jimmy Stewart had died. Could the A.P. confirm this?

The bureau maintained a list of celebrities' contact info, so Bruce found the Stewarts number and dialed.

Then he began to panic. What if a grieving family member picked up? What to say? "Did Jimmy just die?" Or, almost as bad, "Is Jimmy alive?"

Bruce was fumbling for the right words when a woman picked up.

"This is Bruce Bigelow, a reporter with the AP," he began -- and in a flash knew exactly what to say:

"We were wondering if the star of that classic holiday film, 'It's A Wonderful Life,' has a Christmas message for the world."

"How sweet!" said the woman, who turned out to be Gloria Stewart, the actor's wife. "Jimmy's at the supermarket. Shall I have him call you when he returns?"

Jimmy Stewart did call back. He was gracious, funny and very much alive. As for the AP, it had a feel-good story, thanks to a quick-witted journalist.

Jimmy Stewart died years later, in 1997 at the age of 89. His movies live on, of course, and every December my wife --also named Lynn -- insists that we watch "Wonderful Life." A tad schmaltzy, sure, but still a great film, one that always summons great memories of a wonderful friend and colleague.

(Shared by Dan Berger)

A wish and a hope for a Connecting family

Norm Abelson –

This holiday season comes but once a year,
and while it is so very near
may I wish you, and all of yours,
a holiday that cheers and soars.

During the coming, unknown, new year
let us hold each other close and dear;
while on good times we thankfully reflect -
and, with God's help, continue to Connect.

Newspapers in art



Reed Saxon - Christmas will be in the rear-view mirror before you could use it, but I do like the reindeer and wine glasses.



[Kevin Walsh](#) – spotted in Marseille, France: "Intérieur d'atelier," Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseille. Joseph Garibaldi, 1889.

It's a White Christmas in Colorado



Shared by [Don Cooper](#).

BEST OF THE WEEK — FIRST WINNER
**Team shines spotlight on underage
Rohingya girls forced into abusive
marriages**



Underage Rohingya girls are forced into abusive marriages in Malaysia so their families in Bangladesh can eat. In safehouses, AP met with child brides who managed to get unlocked from their bedrooms to share their plights.

Human rights workers warned it would be almost impossible to track the girls down. Yet an AP team not only found them, but interviewed them without putting them at risk of reprisal.

Investigative correspondent Kristen Gelineau, based in Sydney, Australia, tracked down an advocate in Malaysia who was herself a Rohingya child bride and carefully coordinated a plan with each girl. Some concocted an excuse to leave their homes and met with AP at safehouses. Many simply could not get unlocked.

Thanks to knowledge of the community, the team coordinated interview times with the girls so they could arrive at their homes after their husbands had left for work and leave well before they returned.

In addition to juggling safety concerns, Indonesia video journalist and business correspondent Victoria Milko filmed in their dark and claustrophobic apartments, capturing both the youth and isolation of the girls while protecting their anonymity.

Read more [here](#).

BEST OF THE WEEK — SECOND WINNER

Persistence, smarts net first images from the heart of Lahaina since deadly Maui fire



Seattle-based photographer Lindsey Wasson had a goal: Before she left Lahaina while working on an enterprise story, she wanted to be able to document what surely would be haunting images following a deadly fire.

She succeeded.

With help from Honolulu reporter Jennifer Sinco Kelleher, Wasson worked the phones and drove miles around the island over three days to find someone who could get her access to Front Street — an area where many died as they tried to flee the flames but that was closed to the public. She hit pay dirt when a teacher who had talked to Kelleher ultimately led to a woman who agreed to take Wasson in.

The two entered through an adjacent zone that was open to residents and into the heart of Lahaina.

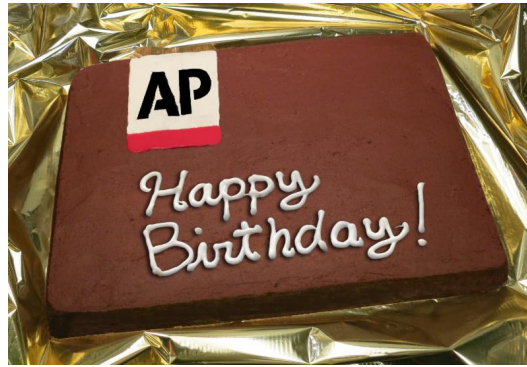
In series of images, Wasson documented the famous banyan tree, which showed new growth; Front Street now cleared of the burned-out cars; the ashes of a Buddhist temple that was photographed in flames; and a moonscape where tourist shops and restaurants once stood.

AP had not been there since two days after the Aug. 8 blaze when a multi-formats team was told to leave.

Wasson returned to Seattle with more than four dozen extraordinary and exclusive images on the AP wire, and a bylined story with help from Honolulu statehouse reporter Audrey McAvoy — a day before the area reopened. The images were used prominently by members including NPR, CBS News, NBC News, FOX, Hawaii Public Radio and Hawaii's largest paper, the Honolulu Star Advertiser.

Read more [here](#).

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Greg Halling](#)

[Scott McFetridge](#)

Stories of interest

AP Promotes Liberal Talk of 'Can Journalism Save Democracy?' (and Defeat Trump) (NewsBusters)

Tim Graham

Most of the anti-Trump media have endorsed the argument of leftist New York University professor Jay Rosen that "horse race" coverage of the 2024 election is trivial and should be shelved in favor of full-blown panic about the stakes of a second term for President Trump. In other words, the media must engage in incessant fear-mongering about democracy dying in darkness if Republicans win.

As polls often show Biden behind Trump now, Associated Press media reporter David Bauder recently promoted this Rosen thesis and the recent issue of The Atlantic dedicated to scaring everyone into voting for Biden.

"The stakes are high," said David Halbfinger, politics editor at The New York Times. "We saw on Jan. 6 of 2021, when we cover politics, we don't just cover elections. We cover democracy now. Everybody has to take their jobs seriously, and it's good to see that everybody is."

Voting Republican is anti-democracy. Democrats and democracy are the same.

Halbfinger said. Journalists have learned — or should learn — to take seriously what the former president says while campaigning. “The skeptics who might have consoled themselves about the first term of Trump, saying that he’s too incompetent to get things done, they can’t console themselves by saying Trump and his people don’t know what they’re doing this time,” he said. “They’ve learned a lot and they’re preparing.”

Bauder noted Rosen and former Washington Post columnist Margaret Sullivan, who hosts the podcast “American Crisis: Can Journalism Save Democracy?”, have repeatedly urged for more of this democracy-in-danger coverage. Journalists should report “with far more vigor — and repetition — than they do about Biden being 80 years old,” Sullivan wrote last month in a column for The Guardian.

Thankfully, Bauder balanced the story a little, and let conservatives like me respond:

Read more [here](#).

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The Washington Post’s New Boss Is Walking Into an Epic Mess (DNYUZ)

In an interview with the newspaper he’s about to take over, Will Lewis set his goal for The Washington Post in plain terms: continued growth.

“We’re going to expand. We’re going to get our swagger back,” Lewis told the Post in November, days after his appointment was announced. “I know that right now is not our greatest time, but we’re going to grow again. And we’re going to get that confidence back and that swagger back. I can tell you that with absolute confidence.”

How far that confidence will carry him at the Post remains a key question for the newsroom as the newspaper Lewis will oversee beginning Jan. 2 is a far cry from the upper echelons of success it once reached.

“It’s a very grim mood right now,” a Post national reporter told The Daily Beast. The sentiment comes after a year of chaos at the Washington institution, one that has been bookended by steep job cuts; the departure of a dimly regarded publisher and the naming of two new ones; and a mass bleeding of talent, both through departures and buyouts, leaving the newsroom bereft of some institutional knowledge.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Mark Mittelstadt.

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Renowned Dallas journalist and bestselling author Hugh Aynesworth has died (KERA)

By Jerome Weeks

Hugh Grant Aynesworth was, as the title of his first book declared, "a witness to history."

For such an amiable — even soft-spoken — man, Aynesworth had a resumé of news stories and investigations that reads like a chronicle of the past 60 years of American violence and trauma. He personally saw and covered the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the arrest and shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald. In 1993, he covered the Branch Davidian siege at Waco. He reported on the 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City which killed 168 people.

Over the course of a year, he and a partner interviewed serial killer Ted Bundy in a Florida prison in 1980 while Bundy's murder convictions were still being appealed.

On November 12 this year, after Aynesworth was admitted to the UT Southwestern emergency room, doctors determined he had suffered a stroke months before. After a week at the hospital and a week in rehab, he returned home on November 25.

Earlier this month, his wife, Paula Aynesworth, decided he needed to enter hospice care.

He died Saturday at home. Aynesworth was 92.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Linda Sargent.

Today in History - Dec. 27, 2023



Today is Wednesday, Dec. 27, the 361st day of 2023. There are four days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 27, 1979, Soviet forces seized control of Afghanistan. President Hafizullah Amin (hah-FEE'-zoo-lah ah-MEEN'), who was overthrown and executed, was replaced by Babrak Karmal.

On this date:

In 1822, scientist Louis Pasteur was born in Dole, France.

In 1831, naturalist Charles Darwin set out on a round-the-world voyage aboard the HMS Beagle.

In 1904, James Barrie's play "Peter Pan: The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up" opened at the Duke of York's Theater in London.

In 1932, New York City's Radio City Music Hall first opened.

In 1945, 28 nations signed an agreement creating the World Bank.

In 1958, American physicist James Van Allen reported the discovery of a second radiation belt around Earth, in addition to one found earlier in the year.

In 1985, Palestinian gunmen opened fire inside the Rome and Vienna airports in terrorist attacks that killed 19 people; four attackers were slain by police and security personnel. American naturalist Dian Fossey, 53, who had studied gorillas in the wild in Rwanda, was found hacked to death.

In 1995, Israeli jeeps sped out of the West Bank town of Ramallah, capping a seven-week pullout giving Yasser Arafat control over 90 percent of the West Bank's 1 million Palestinian residents and one-third of its land.

In 1999, space shuttle Discovery and its seven-member crew returned to Earth after fixing the Hubble Space Telescope.

In 2001, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld announced that Taliban and al-Qaida prisoners would be held at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In 2002, a defiant North Korea ordered U.N. nuclear inspectors to leave the country and said it would restart a laboratory capable of producing plutonium for nuclear weapons; the U.N. nuclear watchdog said its inspectors were "staying put" for the time being.

In 2012, retired Army general Norman Schwarzkopf, who as head of United States Central Command led forces against Iraq in the Gulf War, died in Tampa, Florida at age 78.

In 2016, actor Carrie Fisher died in a hospital four days after suffering a medical emergency aboard a flight to Los Angeles; she was 60. (Her mother, Debbie Reynolds, would die the following day.)

In 2021, U.S. health officials cut isolation restrictions for asymptomatic Americans infected with the coronavirus from 10 to five days, and similarly shortened the time that close contacts needed to quarantine;

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Amos is 84. Rock musician Mick Jones (Foreigner) is 79. Singer Tracy Nelson is 79. Actor Gerard Depardieu is 75. Jazz singer-musician T.S. Monk is 74. Singer-songwriter Karla Bonoff is 72. Rock musician David Knopfler (Dire

Straits) is 71. Actor Tovah Feldshuh is 70. Journalist-turned-politician Arthur Kent is 70. Actor Maryam D'Abo is 63. Actor Ian Gomez is 59. Actor Theresa Randle is 59. Actor Eva LaRue is 57. Wrestler and actor Bill Goldberg is 57. Bluegrass singer-musician Darrin Vincent (Dailey & Vincent) is 54. Rock musician Guthrie Govan is 52. Musician Matt Slocum is 51. Actor Wilson Cruz is 50. Actor Masi Oka is 49. Actor Aaron Stanford is 47. Actor Emilie de Ravin is 42. Actor Jay Ellis is 42. Christian rock musician James Mead (Kutless) is 41. Rock singer Hayley Williams (Paramore) is 35. Country singer Shay Mooney (Dan & Shay) is 32. Actor Timothee Chalamet is 28.

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.

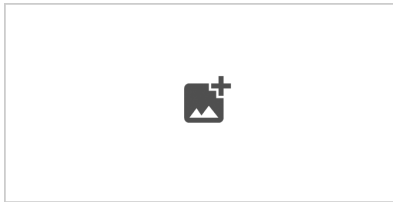
- **First job** - How did you get your first job in journalism?

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

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