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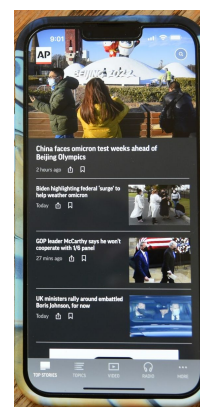
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Connecting

Jan. 9, 2024

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Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning on this Jan. 9, 2024,

Connecting received great response to the call Monday for your memories of a story you covered that have stayed with you to this day. I hope you'll take time to read them. Great stories.

I also hope you'll share your own story - more to come tomorrow - and I look forward to hearing from you.

DIRK BEVERIDGE - Our colleague [David Tirrell-Wysocki](#) wrote to say that the wife of former Richmond and Concord COB Larry Laughlin contacted him recently to try to contact a former colleague of Larry's -- Dirk Beveridge, who worked in the London bureau for years. Please contact David if you can help.

Congratulations to all the Wolverine fans among you - including my longtime friend from my first bureau in Albany, **Mike Hendricks**, and our pastor friend **Scott Chrostek** - after Michigan secured its first CFP national championship last night over Washington.

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

Paul

New Connecting series:

A story that stayed with me

100th anniversary of Custer's Last Stand

Jim Carrier - In 1976, Lou Uchitelle, then with APNewsfeatures, asked me to do a piece on the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Little BigHorn, or, as it was called at the time, Custer's Last Stand, in Montana. Until then, frankly, I was not a student of history. Nor was I a believer in "spirits." But standing on that ridge, I felt something stirring. It turns out that the enmity between the Northern Cheyenne tribe, and the U.S. which had hired Crow scouts, was still in the air. The new battle was over coal, which both tribes had in abundance. The Indians were being screwed out of royalties.

As recently as 2017 VP Pence visited the Crow Nation and declared an end to the government's "war on coal" and lifted a moratorium on mining on federal lands. Their neighbors, the Northern Cheyenne declined for environmental and social reasons.

When I left the AP two years later to run the newsroom at the Rapid City (SD) Journal, I began reading obituaries of people who had come west in covered wagons! History, I learned, is not stuff in boring books.

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2002 Virginia sniper shootings

Mary Ellin Arch - *Virginia News Editor, 2000-2003* - The story that will always stay with me: the sniper shootings of 2002. To refresh, this is when John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo wreaked havoc up and down Interstate 95 in Virginia and along the Capital Beltway around Washington, D.C. (The crime spree was incorrectly dubbed "The Beltway sniper attacks," proving, once again, that Washington will always grab the spotlight from Virginia.)

This story was particularly memorable because:

The 24/7 news cycle was just becoming A Thing, and CNN and similar outlets hadn't a clue how to fill all those hours. So in the beginning, rumor was a 24/7 reporting staple. When the tip came in that the snipers were (purportedly) spotted along Richmond's Broad Street, I dispatched several reporters and monitored the man-on-the-street "witness" reports on CNN, which were all rumor. Our reporters became increasingly frustrated with my calls for updates, invariably shouting into their cellphones, "THERE'S NOTHING HERE!" I would have stopped calling them for

updates, but the General Desk was dialing me at regular intervals pressuring to know if we could "match" CNN.

The pressure to match was never so intense as when we attempted to verify The New York Times' reports by Jayson Blair. As we learned later, it was all made up. There were no "grape stems found at the scene" - just one of the reported "developments" we chased. As with the Broad Street snafu, our reporter in Northern Virginia assigned to the sniper story became increasingly irritable over my repeated calls relaying New York's latest "matching" request.

My personal life took a real back seat during the months of the sniper spree, which spanned 10 months and almost all of 2002. At the time I had two children aged 6 and 13. Due to all the extra and late hours, I almost never saw them, and when I did, I was focused on trying to shield them from the awful threat practically in their backyards. I did manage to squeeze in a trip to my father's 90th birthday party, out of state, in between sniper shootings.

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Arrival of Pueblo crew in 1968

Harry Moskos - The news story I most remember covering was the arrival of the crew of the USS Pueblo to American soil at Midway Island on Christmas Eve 1968 after exactly 11 months of captivity by the North Koreans. I was the only print reporter there to cover the event. The Navy could take only four journalists from Honolulu to cover the event: one print reporter, a TV reporter, a print photographer and a TV photographer. I was the lucky one, winning the coin toss. Cmdr. Lloyd Bucher was very open in his comments and his crew had nothing but praise for him. Bucher and the other 82 members of the USS Pueblo were released along with the body of the one petty officer killed in the attack. At that time, I was the chief of bureau at the AP Honolulu office.

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Witnessing an execution

John Bolt - I had been with The Associated Press in Atlanta for not quite two years when I was called on to witness an execution -- by electric chair. It was Feb. 21, 1985, and the person was Van Roosevelt Solomon. Being in Atlanta, home of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals (Georgia, Florida, Alabama), we dealt with a lot of death penalty appeals. This was at the time when electrocutions were still rare and each one was given all-out coverage. (Sadly, those days are gone.)

The AP and UPI were two of the five media witnesses mandated by Georgia law to be the press pool. (As I recall, the other three were a hometown newspaper, radio and TV station.) While the Albany correspondent, Eliot Minor, usually handled this duty, I had covered a lot of circuit court rulings, and kinda figured that the day would come when I would be asked to witness an execution. I thought a lot ahead of time how I would respond if asked, especially since I was and am an ardent opponent of the death

penalty -- but that's another post. I hadn't quite made up my mind when the assignment did indeed come.

I was covering the appeals process for Solomon, and Eliot was not going to be able to be our witness, so I was asked if I would do it. At the time, I was told I could decline, but still being fairly new -- and with ambition -- I wasn't sure if that would affect my future. (I know, a callous calculation.)

Besides my opposition to the death penalty, the other thing that really bothered me was that I felt that by virtue of being a state-mandated witness, I would be part of the "system" carrying out the execution. I tried to call my minister to talk about it, but as I remember it he was not available in time.

But I finally realized my refusal to witness the execution would clearly not have stopped it, and then remembered that my responsibility as a reporter was to, well, "report," to impartially relay the information to the public and let it decide.

So off I went to Jackson, Ga. for the night; executions were scheduled for 12:01 a.m. to give the state rest of the day to cope with any appeals before the death warrant expired and it would have to go through that process again.

When I got there, a crowd of protesters had gathered across the road from the prison entrance and a media area was set up just outside the fence. This was pre-cell phone so we had installed a phone there (but I don't recall if it was on a tree as sometimes happened).

As the time approached, a prison van arrived to take the media pool to the actual death chamber, which was not a short distance from the gate; we were searched, and again as I recall, our belts were taken away. We then went to a room to wait until the time came to be ushered into the death chamber.

Other witnesses were already there when we arrived and were seated near the front. Solomon was brought in and placed in the chair. His shaved head was moistened before the cap was placed on his head -- to better conduct the electricity. (I also just remembered that the state AG, Mike Bowers, was there to witness his first execution.)

Solomon was asked if he had any last words, and he said, "I would like to say I would like to give my blessing to all the people who tried to save my life," and I seem to remember he added something about cursing everyone who didn't. (That part of the quote didn't make the a-wire apparently, because I can't find it.)

The execution itself was, well, uneventful as those things go. Some tensing of the body, some noise, and then a doctor verifying he was dead. (Not too long before this one, however, one electrocution became especially grisly when smoke started pouring out of the condemned man's pants leg; that was one of the reasons injections started taking hold as the preferred method.)

After riding back out to the gate, I dutifully phoned in the story, fulfilled my pool responsibilities and headed to a nearby motel where we had rented a room for the night.

When I got there, I must have written the PMer (remember those?) and then tried to go to sleep.

I failed.

Eventually, I just got up and drove the 50 or so miles back home -- I needed the windshield therapy.

It's been 38 years since that day, but my stomach still gets queasy thinking about it, and every once in a while, I still wonder if I made the right decision to be a witness.

However, while the experience stiffened my personal opposition to the death penalty -- Van Roosevelt Solomon never really had a chance in life, and he never pulled a trigger, but drove the getaway car -- I am pleased to say that never once in my time covering capital cases was my objectiveness questioned.

Addendum: It's funny the details that come back once you start recalling events like this -- like the name of the attorney general -- and the issues that were at the core of his appeal. Folks had argued for years that people of color were more likely to get the death penalty than whites, but University of Iowa professor David Baldus had done a recent study concluding that the race of the victim was a larger determinant. Put another way, killing a white person was more deserving of death than killing a Black person. However, it became just another in a long list of failures to stop executions, which of course we still do, and innocent people still are killed by the state -- but I said that was another post.

Today, we may argue it differently, i.e. Black lives matter.

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1995 Oklahoma City bombing

[Dan Sewell](#) - Enjoyed Jacqui Cook's description of visiting the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, and now hope to visit it someday.

On her question of what is a story that stayed with me, my answer is the same as hers: the 1995 bombing.

One reason was the shock to learn that the devastation that claimed 168 lives was the work of domestic terrorists, not a Middle Eastern terrorist group as was initially widely suspected.

Army veteran Timothy McVeigh was arrested soon after the bombing on a weapons charge after an Oklahoma state trooper pulled him over for driving without a license plate. Two days later, he was identified as the chief bombing suspect, with the stunning motive of avenging the Branch Davidian deaths at the fiery end of the Waco, Texas, siege exactly two years earlier.

Having arrived from Atlanta in the bombing aftermath, I was sent to Tinker Air Force Base where McVeigh had his first appearance on federal charges in a military

courtroom. I was sitting about 10 feet away from him and watched him closely. He seemed bewildered and blinked nervously often. It was hard to believe this tall, gangly young man had done this.

A media opportunity spot was set up outside with the Murrah Building visible in the background. Among those who came through to express their thoughts were the Rev. Jesse Jackson, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, budding country music star and Oklahoma native Toby Keith, and the mother of country music star and Oklahoma native Garth Brooks.

Managing Editor Darrell Christian had quickly dispatched Mike Silverman from New York to direct coverage on the ground, joined by National writers including Cohen and Fred Bayles, regional writers like me, and photographers and other reporters from around the region and country. We all blended together with the Oklahoma staff in the days ahead.

As Jacqui remembers from her work on the General Desk, these were long days of reporting, writing and editing. I turned 40 on April 27, and COB Lindel Hutson arranged a birthday cake for me. Everyone in the bureau gathered around as I blew out the candles (after obligatory jokes about setting off the sprinklers).

Then, everyone immediately went back to work.

I usually ended my day watching the late local TV news in my hotel room for any leads to pursue the next day. One night, the local news showed a video of a children's party that had been shot in the day care center that was in the Murrah Building. Fifteen children died in there on April 19.

Watching those sweet, smiling children and knowing they would be killed in the explosion was too much, bringing me to tears and providing a particularly searing memory of that terrible event.

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Anti-abortion violence

[William Kaczor](#) - Many stories stayed with me from my AP career, but the one topping the list is anti-abortion violence. I did not know it at the time, but I was a witness to the event that triggered thoughts of violence in the minds of some anti-abortion extremists. I was covering the Supreme Court for Medill News Service as a Northwestern grad student in 1973 when Roe v Wade was decided. Back then, we filed by snail mail so I focused on SCOTUS stories of local interest to our subscribing newspapers rather than on major decisions such as Roe. Instead, I dictated to a radio student, and he went on the air with an Atlanta station. Nearly a dozen years later, I was AP's Pensacola correspondent when the ringing of a telephone awakened me in the predawn hours of Christmas Day 1984. It was the editor of the Pensacola News letting me know that an abortion clinic and the offices of two abortion doctors had just been bombed. That was my introduction to what would become the biggest continuing story of my career. A heavy fog hung over Pensacola, and I could barely see

beyond the hood of my car as I searched for the bombing sites, guided by the flashing red and blue lights of first responder vehicles.

Among those I interviewed that Christmas Day was anti-abortion militant John Burt, a burly ex-Marine and former KKK member, who became the instigator of more violence that in subsequent years would take the lives of two doctors and a volunteer clinic escort. The young bombers, a married couple and an engaged couple, were quickly arrested. They were members of a First Assembly of God Church and called their conspiracy "The Gideon Project." One of the women, who both were 18, said the bombings were "a gift to Jesus on his birthday." A defense lawyer called them "fools for Christ." They were convicted on federal charges but given light sentences -- probation for the women and 10 years for the men, who served about half that time. The Ladies Center clinic was slightly damaged and continued functioning. One doctor's office was destroyed and the other was seriously damaged. Both doctors quit doing abortions. One said he had "gotten the message." The other wanted to continue but was unable to get insurance.

Burt, who ran a home for unwed mothers called Our Father's House, led anti-abortion demonstrations and brought along "baby Charlie," what he said was an aborted fetus, in the wake of the bombings. Little more than two years later he and several others were arrested for invading the Ladies Center, damaging equipment and injuring the director and a NOW volunteer, both women. Burt served 141 days in jail. In 1988, he violated probation but avoided another jail term after helping, unknowingly he claimed, another would-be bomber, John Brockhoeft, case the Ladies Center. Brockhoeft was arrested before carrying out his plan and later served time for a Cincinnati clinic bombing.

One of Burt's followers, chemical plant worker Michael Griffin, fatally shot Dr. David Gunn, an Alabama physician, outside a second Pensacola abortion clinic, while Burt was conducting a protest there. I was on a temporary assignment that day in Tallahassee covering two stories already budgeted on the A-wire, but Mobile, Alabama, correspondent Garry Mitchell was only an hour away and initially covered Gunn's murder. I took over the story the next day including Griffin's failed effort to get a young, inexperienced lawyer named Joe Scarborough (a family friend who later became a congressman and now MSNBC talk show host) to represent him. Two seasoned lawyers, instead, took the case but couldn't prevent him from being convicted. He is serving a life sentence.

Gunn's death was the nation's first anti-abortion murder but not the last. A defrocked Presbyterian minister, who joined Burt and other protesters for demonstrations during Griffin's trial, made sure of that. Paul Hill also appeared on national television programs advocating the murder of abortion providers although insisting he would not do it himself. He changed his mind in 1994 and purchased a shotgun just days before he used it to kill Dr. John Bayard Britton, a Jacksonville physician, and retired Air Force Lt. Col. Jim Barrett and wound the volunteer escort's wife, June. Hill fired into the windshield of the couple's pickup truck after they had driven Britton from the airport to the nearby Ladies Center. My coverage of the shootings included a disturbing death row interview of Hill after he was convicted. AP photographer Mark Foley and I visited him at Florida State Prison five days before the 10th anniversary of the Christmas bombings. The cheery multicolored lights of a Christmas tree glimmered through the window of a small cubicle where we met. Hill smiled almost

constantly and sometimes laughed. His demeanor, though, clashed with his words. He said he would be more helpful to his cause dead than alive and hoped his execution would encourage more violence against abortion providers. Hill said he had prayed that God would "raise someone up" to do more killing after Gunn's murder. "And then I realized I might have been the one I was praying for," he said. Hill did not want to appeal his death sentence, but it was required by Florida law. That delayed his execution in the electric chair until 2003.

Burt was free on bond when Hill was executed. He had converted Our Father's House into a boarding school for troubled teenage girls and had been arrested for allegedly molesting one of his students. He was subsequently convicted and died in prison in 2013 shortly after I retired from the AP. University of West Florida sociologist Dallas Blanchard wrote a book about the Christmas bombings and studied why Pensacola had become ground zero for anti-abortion violence. He said it probably was due to the "cultural schizophrenia" of a city that was relatively moderate -- due largely to well-traveled military people -- in a religiously conservative area. Blanchard said Burt also was a "magnet" who attracted national anti-abortion players to Pensacola. The violence continued after his imprisonment. A homeless man in 2012 set fire to the Ladies Center, by then renamed but continuing to do abortions. The building was destroyed, but Pensacola's last abortion clinic moved to another site. The state in 2022 forced it to close after three patients nearly died and repeated violations of Florida regulations and laws including a 24-hour waiting period. The closure came shortly before the Supreme Court reversed Roe. The Florida Supreme Court now is considering whether to uphold a 15-week abortion ban and a subsequent six-week ban is on hold pending that ruling. A proposed state constitutional amendment to restore abortion rights has enough signatures for the November ballot but it, too, is awaiting a decision by the Florida Supreme Court on whether it meets legal requirements to go before the voters.

Anti-abortion violence was a story that I did not enjoy. Abortion is not an issue that I ever felt strongly about one way or another, but the violence that it caused was another matter. Even most abortion opponents disavowed it. That left the Gideon Project bombers, Paul Hill and Michael Griffin virtually alone although their actions in Pensacola did result in a few copycat crimes elsewhere and may have been a precursor to other modern-day political violence such as the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection.

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Memory of Christmas hymn sung in Texas death chamber

Mike Graczyk - Just two weeks ago I was reminded again of convicted killer Jonathan Nobles, whose punishment I covered in October 1998.

It's a memory I relive every year on the same day: Christmas.

I was attending Mass on Christmas Eve when the choir, as is customary, began singing "Silent Night." My mind immediately was taken to the Texas death chamber where

Nobles now 25 years ago sang the hymn. The lethal drugs began flowing into his arms to execute him for fatally stabbing two women after breaking into their home in Austin.

If you sing the words to yourself, you'll quickly get to "Round yon virgin, mother and child..." That's as far as Nobles got before slipping into unconsciousness and then death.

I often get asked if my experiences reporting and writing about capital punishment in Texas after witnessing hundreds of executions over some 40 years give me nightmares. The answer is no. Condemned inmates have said prayers and poems, told jokes, shouted obscenities, spoke in foreign languages, laughed and cried and even greeted me by name.

But Nobles' final words continue to stick with me – surfacing every year -- taking me briefly away from the Christmas joy I hope to be experiencing with others.

Recalling the old newspaper model

[Tammy Mitman](#) – The contribution that Mark Hamrick made in Monday's Connecting, "Would you turn the clock back if you could?", brought to mind a blog I began in March 2016 and kept going until I took on a more important job a year later.

I had been worried about the traditional newspaper business model for many years, ever since I worked for one of the first internet ad-serving companies. So, when I had the time to write about that old business model, I did.

It all seems quite quaint now. Thing is, in one part of my blog I listed all the benefits of the newspaper business model that I could think of, all the good things it delivered, along with a newspaper. Reading over it now does turn the clock back for me. And I confess, I like those memories — a lot.

The blog is called [Save My Daily](#). The relevant page is [Benefits](#).

You might enjoy reading it.

Bill Hancock honored at College Football Playoff championship

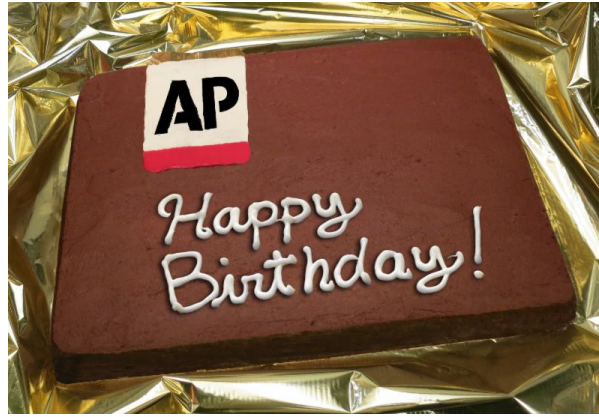


Our colleague **Bill Hancock** was honored Monday night in Houston for his contributions to college athletics before the start of the College Football Playoff national championship game between Michigan and Washington. Hancock announced in June he would step down as executive director of CFP when his contract expires Feb. 1, 2025. He was named executive director a few months after the event was created in 2012 and was the only CFP employee at the time. Hancock presented the championship trophy to Michigan, 34-13 winner over the Huskies.



In the photo above, from left: Grandchildren - Andie, William, and Jack, wife Nicki, Bill, Dr. Mark Keenum (President of Mississippi State and Chair of the Board for the CFP), John Steinbrecher (Commissioner of the MAC), Daughters-in-Law Karen and Kristin and son Nate. (Anyone who doesn't have a last name listed is a Hancock.)

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Lee Balgemann](#) (Belatedly, Jan. 5)

[Kevin Walsh](#)

Stories of interest

An Al Jazeera journalist is the fifth member of his family killed by Israeli strikes on Gaza (AP)

BY NAJIB JOBAIN AND SAMY MAGDY

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An apparent Israeli airstrike killed two Palestinian journalists in southern Gaza on Sunday, including an Al Jazeera journalist who lost four close relatives earlier in the war.

Hamza Dahdouh is the son of veteran Al Jazeera correspondent Wael Dahdouh, whose wife, two other children and a grandson were killed by a previous Israeli strike.

Dahdouh has continued to report on the fighting between Israel and Hamas even as it has taken a devastating toll on his own family, becoming a symbol for many of the perils faced by Palestinian journalists, dozens of whom have been killed while covering the conflict.

Hamza Dahdouh, who was also working for Al Jazeera, and Mustafa Tharaya, a freelance journalist, were killed when a strike hit their car while they were driving to an assignment in southern Gaza, according to Al Jazeera. A third journalist, Hazem Rajab, was seriously wounded, it said.

Amer Abu Amr, a photojournalist, said in a Facebook post that he and another journalist, Ahmed al-Bursh, survived the strike.

Read more [here](#).

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MSNBC's Mehdi Hasan quits rather than accept demotion at news network (AP)

BY DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — Prominent Muslim journalist Mehdi Hasan has decided to quit MSNBC rather than accept a demotion that saw him lose a regular Sunday night program on the network.

Hasan announced at the end of Sunday show that “I’ve decided to look for a new challenge. This is not just my final episode of ‘The Mehdi Hasan Show,’ it’s my last day at MSNBC.”

The network had announced in November that Hasan would lose his weekly show after three years but would remain as an analyst and fill-in anchor.

That decision, with no public explanation, launched a fruitless petition campaign in protest by the Progressive Change Campaign Committee. U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar called it “deeply troubling that MSNBC is canceling his show amid a rampant rise of anti-Muslim bigotry and suppression of Muslim voices.”

Read more [here](#).

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OpenAI Responds to New York Times Lawsuit, Claims Paper “Intentionally Manipulated” Prompts (Hollywood Reporter)

BY WINSTON CHO

OpenAI is firing back at The New York Times after the company was sued for copyright infringement over the use of the publisher’s articles to train its artificial intelligence chatbot.

In a blog post, the Sam Altman-led firm said that the Times is “not telling the full story” and claimed it “intentionally manipulated” prompts to make it appear as if ChatGPT generates near word-for-word excerpts of articles.

“Even when using such prompts, our models don’t typically behave the way The New York Times insinuates, which suggests they either instructed the model to regurgitate or cherry-picked their examples from many attempts,” the post states.

Read more [here](#).

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DEATH RIDDLE Head of Putin's state-run TV empire Zoya Konovalova, 48, found dead with ex-husband after being 'poisoned' (US Sun)

Ellie Doughty

THE chief editor of one of Vladimir Putin's propaganda TV channels has been found dead from a suspected poisoning, it has been claimed.

Zoya Konovalova, 48, who ran a channel operating near the frontlines of Mad Vlad's illegal war, was found alongside her ex-husband.

The former couple were both found dead at home - and Zoya apparently had 'no visible injuries'

Anna Tsareva, 35, deputy editor-in-chief of Putin's favourite propaganda newspaper was also found dead just last month

The Kuban editor was found in her bedroom and her 52-year-old former husband Andrey Gubatiyka's corpse was found close by.

"No visible injuries were found during the examination of the bodies," said a spokesman for the Russian Investigative Committee, which is probing the deaths.

The former couple shared a daughter, 15, and an adult son.

"The preliminary cause of death is poisoning by an unknown substance," said a report by her own channel.

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

Today in History - Jan. 9, 2024



Today is Tuesday, Jan. 9, the ninth day of 2024. There are 357 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 9, 1861, Mississippi became the second state to secede from the Union, the same day the Star of the West, a merchant vessel bringing reinforcements and supplies to Federal troops at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, retreated because of artillery fire.

On this date:

In 1788, Connecticut became the fifth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1793, Frenchman Jean Pierre Blanchard, using a hot-air balloon, flew from Philadelphia to Woodbury, New Jersey.

In 1913, Richard Milhous Nixon, the 37th president of the United States, was born in Yorba Linda, California.

In 1914, the County of Los Angeles opened the country's first public defender's office.

In 1916, the World War I Battle of Gallipoli ended after eight months with an Ottoman Empire victory as Allied forces withdrew.

In 1945, during World War II, American forces began landing on the shores of Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines as the Battle of Luzon got underway, resulting in an Allied victory over Imperial Japanese forces.

In 1951, the United Nations headquarters in New York officially opened.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his State of the Union address to Congress, warned of the threat of Communist imperialism.

In 1972, reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes, speaking by telephone from the Bahamas to reporters in Hollywood, said a purported autobiography of him, as told to writer Clifford Irving, was a fake.

In 1987, the White House released a January 1986 memorandum prepared for President Ronald Reagan by Lt. Col. Oliver L. North showing a link between U.S. arms sales to Iran and the release of American hostages in Lebanon.

In 2003, U.N. weapons inspectors said there was no "smoking gun" to prove Iraq had nuclear, chemical or biological weapons but they demanded that Baghdad provide private access to scientists and fresh evidence to back its claim that it had destroyed its weapons of mass destruction.

In 2005, Mahmoud Abbas, the No. 2 man in the Palestinian hierarchy during Yasser Arafat's rule, was elected president of the Palestinian Authority by a landslide.

In 2015, French security forces shot and killed two al-Qaida-linked brothers suspected of carrying out the rampage at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo that had claimed 12 lives.

In 2018, downpours sent mud and boulders roaring down Southern California hillsides that had been stripped of vegetation by a gigantic wildfire; more than 20 people died and hundreds of homes were damaged or destroyed.

In 2020, Chinese state media said a preliminary investigation into recent cases of viral pneumonia had identified the probable cause as a new type of coronavirus.

In 2022, 17 people, including eight children, died after a fire sparked by a malfunctioning space heater filled a high-rise apartment building with smoke in the New York City borough of the Bronx; it was the city's deadliest blaze in three decades.

In 2023, Constantine, the former and final king of Greece, died in Athens at age 82.

Today's birthdays: Actor K Callan is 88. Folk singer Joan Baez is 83. Rock musician Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin) is 80. Actor John Doman is 79. Singer David Johansen (aka Buster Poindexter) is 74. Singer Crystal Gayle is 73. Actor J.K. Simmons is 69. Actor Imelda Staunton is 68. Nobel Peace laureate Rigoberta Menchú is 65. Rock musician Eric Erlandson is 61. Actor Joely Richardson is 59. Rock musician Carl Bell (Fuel) is 57. Actor David Costabile is 57. Rock singer-musician Dave Matthews is 57. Actor-director Joey Lauren Adams is 56. Comedian/actor Deon Cole is 53. Actor Angela Bettis is 51. Actor Omari Hardwick is 50. Roots singer-songwriter Hayes Carll is 48. Singer A.J. McLean (Backstreet Boys) is 46. Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, is 42. Pop-rock musician Drew Brown (OneRepublic) is 40. Rock-soul singer Paolo Nutini is 37. Actor Nina Dobrev is 35. Actor Basil Eidenbenz is 31. Actor Kerris Dorsey is 26. Actor Tyree Brown 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 Central Region vice president based in Kansas City.

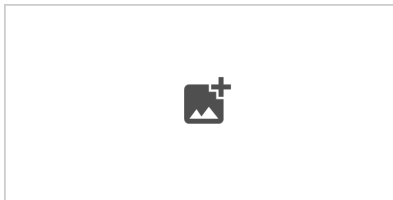
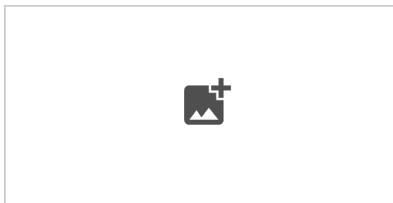
Got a story to share? A favorite memory of your AP days? Don't keep them to yourself. Share with your colleagues by sending to Ye Olde Connecting Editor. And don't forget to include photos!

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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