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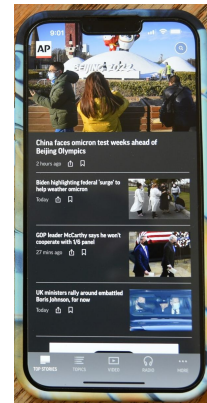
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# Connecting

Jan. 15, 2024

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-AP Photo by Gene Herrick

Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this Jan. 15, 2024.

Today is Martin Luther King Jr. Day – and the AP photo above is one of the most celebrated images ever taken of the civil rights leader. The photographer was our colleague **Gene Herrick**, now 97, and it captures the moment on March 22, 1956, when King is welcomed by his wife Coretta after he left court in Montgomery. King was found guilty of conspiracy to boycott city buses as part of a desegregation campaign, but a judge suspended his \$500 fine pending appeal.

Connecting brings sad news of the death of our colleague **Le Lieu Browne**, who died at her home last Thursday at the age of 89. She was diagnosed with stomach cancer last October.

Her close friend and neighbor **Marguerite Sheridan**, who was with her at the time of her death, shares the obituary for Le Lieu and said a visitation will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday at the Crestwood Funeral Home, 445 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street (between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> avenues) in New York City.

“She was able to see many family members before she passed,” Marguerite said. “She took a trip to France in early December and family from California visited these past several weeks. And, of course, she had many of her friends stopping by.”

In May 2018, Le Lieu published a book, **Bend The Willow**, that is, in the Amazon description, “the story of how one country, Vietnam, became two, while two hearts, Vietnamese and American, became one despite the turmoil and tragedy of war. Le Lieu Browne tells how she, a Vietnamese woman from the Mekong Delta whose father was killed by the communists when she was a young girl, met Malcolm W. Browne, the legendary American journalist and Vietnam war correspondent who became the love of her life. They married, covered the war and, after it, the world, until he died in her arms in the United States in 2012. Le Lieu’s is an inspiring tale of the power and the beauty of the human spirit against all odds.”

If you have a memory to share of Le Lieu, who was a frequent Connecting contributor, please send it along. Excerpts from a remarkable story about her in the Valley News of West Lebanon, N.H., written at the time of her book’s release, can be found in the Final Word.

Friday’s story on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of AP video journalist **Myles Tierney** sparked memories among our readers. **Krista Larson**, AP’s West Africa bureau chief, said a photo of Tierney still hangs in the bureau. (Tierney once served as West Africa bureau chief.)

Here’s to a great week ahead – be safe, stay healthy (and warm), live each day to your fullest.

Paul

# Le Lieu Browne, journalist and author, dies at 89



Le Lieu Browne, wearing her late husband Malcolm's watch, one she always wore.





In this Aug. 11, 2012, photo, former Associated Press Saigon bureau chief Malcolm Browne, right, and his wife Le Lieu, second from right, look at a photo shown to him by Edith M. Lederer showing her in Vietnam where she too served as an AP correspondent along with AP photographer Nick Ut, left, at a memorial tribute in New York to former AP Vietnam staffers Horst Faas and George Esper. Malcolm Browne died Monday, Aug 27, 2012, in a New Hampshire hospital at age 81. He was acclaimed for his trenchant reporting of the Vietnam War and a photo of a Buddhist monk's suicide by fire that shocked the Kennedy White House into a critical policy re-evaluation. (AP Photo/Valerie Komor)

Le Lieu Browne was born in Vietnam on November 11, 1934. She was educated in Paris and returned to Vietnam beginning her career with the Minister of Information of the Republic of South Vietnam, went on to work with Radio Australia, The United States Information Service and with her dear husband, Malcolm Browne, as a Photographer and Journalist bringing them around the globe covering world events for the New York Times. Le Lieu retired as the project General Manager of the New York City Refugee Employment Project after twenty years of service . She split her time between New York City and Vermont. Le Lieu led an active retirement enjoying painting, attending theatrical and musical events, visiting museums and taking advantage of all NYC and Vermont has to offer. Le Lieu published her memoirs, "Bend the Willow - A story of friendship, family and love" in 2018. She is survived by her sister in France, brothers in California, her stepdaughter in NY and stepson in Canada, nieces and nephews in the U.S and Europe and many very dear friends in places across the world. She passed away at home in NYC on January 11, 2024. She will be greatly missed by friends and family.

## Pay a visit to Five Myles exhibition



**Kevin Noblet** - Ellen Knickmeyer's mention of the 25th anniversary of AP cameraman Myles Tierney's death prompts me to urge AP folk to find an excuse to visit the remarkable Five Myles exhibition and performance studio in NYC in the coming months. New shows are announced regularly on the website - <http://fivemyles.org/>

Myles' mom, Hanne Tierney, opened Five Myles in his memory and spirit in a converted Brooklyn garage in 1999. She has run it ever since, earning a long string of positive reviews, grants and prizes while focusing on both avant-garde art and the local community. But she told me she plans to wind it down this year, so it's important to go soon or it may be too late.

A formidable artist in her own right, Hanne and I became friends soon after Myles died in Sierra Leone. AP reporter Ian Stewart was severely wounded in the same attack and my boss at the time, International Editor Tom Kent, flew to England to be with Ian and his family while he underwent surgery there. I stayed in New York, and I met with Hanne and others of her family, and then helped AP arrange a memorial event for Myles at Hanne's loft in Manhattan's Soho neighborhood.



Hanne and I talked by phone a few times about the arrangements and bonded in one moment: It was when she told me she was getting calls from multiple women, in different cities in the US, Europe and Africa, each claiming to be Myles' girlfriend.

"Are you getting these calls, too? What are you doing about them?" she asked.

"Yes, we are. We agreed to cover air fare to the memorial for the first caller. But we're telling the rest they have to buy their own tickets."

We had a good laugh about that. Indeed, more than one of the callers showed up for the memorial, exchanging stories about Myles' extraordinary kindness, courage and, of course, charm.

Hanne's loft also was the venue for a touching memorial to longtime AP staffer Susan Linnee, who died in 2017 after developing brain cancer. Susan had been Myles' boss when she was bureau chief in Nairobi and became a good friend to Hanne.

## Finding something that moves him

[David Beard](#) - I don't get to your newsletter as much as I ought to, but every time I do, I find something that really moves me. Today (last Friday), it was Lee Mitgang's account of his post-mortem of Cleveland Schools Superintendent Frederick "Doc" Holliday and the unrealistic expectations society (and a person) can place on one individual.

As a former Argentina and Caribbean hand, I viscerally felt Ed McCullough's heartfelt rundown of his time in Haiti and Buenos Aires and the recurring tragedies there today ("There is no bottom").

And yet we keep chugging. Ebony Reed, from high school journalist of the year to news executive nearly three decades later, still grows and learns more every day. Bruce Lowitt stops to recognize (and share) the beauty of clouds and patches of blue above a covered bridge in Vermont. And without doubt a large percentage of your readers scored in elite categories on Washington Post's book-reading analysis.

It may seem that combining pragmatic perspectives of experienced and hard-working journalists and former journalists is like shooting fish in a barrel. But I know the difficulty in making each daily newsletter sing—and recognize the balance of planning and flexibility you need.

I know I'm speaking for many when I say simply: Thanks, Paul.

## Good advice from her hometown publisher

[Michelle Morgante](#) - The founder and longtime publisher and editor of my hometown's community weekly [has died](#). John Derby, who was 87, was in the news business for 60 years and was California's oldest working publisher. He emphasized local news and was a key thread in the fabric of this community.

A remark he's said to have made to his staff is worth sharing: "The value in what we do is in the people we serve. We have always contended that newspapers are not dying. Bad newspapers are dying, but the good ones are alive and well. They continue to play a very important role in our country, our region, and our local community."

Rest in power, John Derby.

*Connecting series:*

## A story that stayed with me

### *Tour boat capsizes, killing 20 passengers*

[Chris Carola](#) - This particular story stays with me in large part because I pass by the scene of the tragedy several times a year.

On the afternoon of Oct. 2, 2005, the Ethan Allen tour boat capsized on Lake George in New York's southern Adirondack Mountains. In addition to the boat's captain, there were 47 passengers, most of them retirees from Michigan on a fall bus tour of the Northeast.

The boat was cruising along the lake's east shore a few miles north of the village of Lake George when it tipped over and sank in clear, calm weather conditions. Twenty of the passengers died. Nearby recreational boaters helped pull the captain and the other 27 passengers from the water.

I was about to host some friends I had invited over to watch an NFL game when news of a boating accident on Lake George interrupted the telecast. After calling my news editor, I headed north to the accident scene, about a 30-minute drive from where I live in Saratoga Springs.

Having spent plenty of time on Lake George since I was a kid, I knew the location where the capsizing had occurred, off Cramer Point, which is accessible from the main north-south road running along the lake's west shore.

By the time I arrived, the survivors had been transported to a nearby hospital or to a hotel in the village. The bodies of the drowning victims had been recovered and were laid out in the side yard of a seasonal home. Yellow police tape kept anyone from getting too close, but I could see the bodies were draped with the type of colored tarps homeowners along the lake use to cover wood piles or small boats hauled out of the water for the season.

I spent the rest of the afternoon gathering info from authorities and interviewing people who were nearby when the boat capsized. Just before dark, a long line of vehicles arrived at the scene. There weren't enough funeral home hearses available, so most of the bodies were placed individually in law enforcement or volunteer fire department SUVs to remove them from the scene in a dignified manner.

Investigators later determined that modifications made to the vessel affected its stability and it was overloaded due to out-of-date passenger weight limits, causing it to capsize when hit by a wake or wakes from other boats.

After some digging, I found out where the captain of the boat, a retired state trooper, lived with his wife at their home near the lake's southern end. A couple of days after the accident, I pulled up to the home to find the captain standing on a ladder, cleaning the gutters. I was able to ask just a few questions before we were interrupted by his wife, who said he had a phone call. I was the first and only reporter to interview him in the immediate aftermath of the accident.

I get up to Lake George as much as I can, no matter the season – it's one of my favorite spots anywhere. I typically travel the road along the lake's west shore, and every time I drive past the pull-off for Cramer Point, I can't help to think of all those bodies covered in blue tarps, and the long line of vehicles queuing up to take them away.

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## ***1989 Bay Area World Series***

David Lubeski - Being in Lake Placid for the Miracle On Ice in 1980 was certainly my biggest career thrill, but I wasn't even assigned to the game. My colleague Jack Doniger covered it for AP Radio. I just tagged along to the Field House that afternoon.

The Story That Stayed With Me took place over the course of a 10-day period and unlike traveling to the scene of the story after it happened, I was one of thousands who were in the middle of it when it happened.

It was the 1989 Bay Area World Series between two local teams - The Giants and the A's.

I was there with AP Radio colleague Mike Gracia. After the first two games in Oakland, won by the A's, we drove over the Bay Bridge on a 20-minute drive to our hotel in downtown San Francisco.

When we got to Candlestick for Game Three we made our way to our seats in the football press box at the very top of the stadium on the third-base side. Mike and I had seats across the aisle from each other about six or eight rows back from the floor-to-ceiling windows. The first pitch was about a half hour away. I looked out to see the grounds crew giving one last smooth-over of the infield dirt as we were filling out our lineup cards.

That's when it began.

At first it sounded like the crowd was getting loud, like the cadence of stomping feet in the stands, but as it got louder, I felt a vibration growing in intensity. Mike and I looked at each other and I yelled out, EARTHQUAKE!

Now the press box is rocking and soon the entire stadium is moving. It felt like being on a luxury liner on rough seas. Dozens of reporters were on the move, streaming up from the rows in front that were closest to the big windows. but by then the noise was deafening and there's now a logjam to get out the door of the press box. I stayed put. I knew running out of the press box wouldn't get me to a safe haven, it was shaking just as much on the other side of the door.

Local reporter Bob Fouts (father of NFL hall of famer Dan Fouts) ran past me and wrapped his arms around a post that was behind us. There was nowhere left to run so I helped him hold up the post as we stood nose to nose hugging the pillar.

The entire quake lasted an eternity of 15 to 20 seconds of deafening sound and intense shaking. When it stopped, I heard a loud cheer coming from the stands. I turned around and took a few steps back to my seat and picked up the phone at my desk. It was dead.

I looked around and saw Mike who had been caught in the logjam to get out of the pressbox. I held the phone receiver up in the air for him to see and shook my head. He turned and ran to the bank of phones the league had installed in the back of the room. Only every third phone was working and he managed to hit paydirt. He would

keep the line open to DC and do live reports, describe what he was seeing down on the field, drop-ins during newscasts, whatever they needed back in the studio.

There was a lot of scrambling going on and many reporters now had no way to make contact with the outside world.

I grabbed my tape recorder and headed out into the stands. As I made my way down towards the field, I stopped to interview spectators. When I arrived on the field, I saw commissioner Fay Vincent sitting in his golf cart at second base. There were only three or four reporters talking with him and as I joined them, I realized I had the only microphone in the group and was the only reporter in the stadium recording the voice of baseball's top official.

After the commissioner wheeled away, I made my way down to the clubhouses and gathered as many player interviews as I could. Along the way several of the players had moved into the stands to find their families. It was a strange sight to see players in uniform in the stands mixed in with fans.

On my way out of the clubhouse, Giants general manager Al Rosen was talking to reporters in a tunnel. Once again, I was the only one recording his words. He was saying that nobody knew the extent of the damage but there was a report that the Nimitz was down. The Nimitz was the name of the elevated freeway just east of the Bay Bridge. The upper deck of the freeway fell on top of the roadway below killing 42 motorists, we later learned.

On the Bay Bridge a man tried to flag down a young woman who drove around him and plunged to her death in the collapsed section he was trying to warn her about.

I got back up to the press box where Mike had been filing his reports. The press box crowd had thinned out considerably. The entire ballpark was being evacuated for fear of aftershocks that could be just as devastating as the original quake. In fact, over the next few days there would be dozens of aftershocks, some quite intense.

Mike and I were the last two people to leave the press box after filing everything we had up to that point.

It was dark when we left the ballpark, which was a dicey experience without working traffic signals or any other lights, except for the headlights on cars.

On a night that seemed surreal, it was even more so when making the climb up the steps for 21 floors in the dark in a hotel with no electricity or phone service. There was dim emergency lighting in the hallways on each floor along with soft drinks in large tubs of ice and many hotel guests were out of their rooms mingling in the hallways.

When I opened the door to my room, the dim light from the hall gave it a slight glow and I saw clothes that had been on hangers scattered on the floor, drawers were open and lamps were on the floor and the chair at the desk was overturned. On top of everything else, I thought for a moment that I had been robbed. My room was ransacked. Then it hit me. This is what the quake did to my room. (When power was

restored, the drink tubs disappeared, the mingling ended, doors were closed and everyone was a stranger again.)

It was still dark outside in the morning when the phone in my room woke me. The first sign that something had been restored. It was newsroom supervisor Jack Sheehan in the Broadcast News Center in Washington whose first words were, "Are you ready to go to work?"

For the next few days, I would get up before dawn and make my way to a satellite truck to do live reports on the network and some days there would be a news conference with the baseball commissioner and every day I'd be at the ballpark for player workouts and some days I'd go down to the Mission District where the quake damage was the worst.

Mike was dispatched to Oakland and the collapsed freeway.

In the week before the city began to come back to life, downtown was a ghost town. Shattered glass covered just about every sidewalk from the windows of the skyscrapers. Businesses and stores and restaurants were locked up. It was almost a week before full power was restored everywhere.

One day while in the Mission District I overheard a feisty white-haired man in his 60s or 70s complaining loudly about not getting enough help and not getting needed services. I mistakenly thought he might be open to having his grievance aired on the radio. I approached him, introduced myself and asked if he wanted to share his story. His reaction stunned me. He bellowed, "Get out of my face you media maggot" and as I turned and walked away, he was still shouting with arms waving,

As the city came back to life, one evening Mike and I got reservations at a very nice restaurant. I was looking forward to a quiet respite. We invited two reporters that we knew from UPI Radio to join us. Mike and I waited outside the restaurant for them and when they got out of their taxi, one of them was wearing a navy blue windbreaker with the giant yellow letters UPI on the back. I asked him to take off the windbreaker before we went inside. He asked why and I told him I didn't want to advertise that we were media maggots.

In the next few days a few more of our fellow broadcast reporters at the AP arrived to help out. Steve Katz and Jan Johnson in the city and Amanda Barnett on the Oakland side which freed us up to head down to the quake's epicenter to see the damage and talk to officials and citizens. When we got there many of the people were living in tents. They were afraid to be inside a building. What stood out to me was that every chimney sticking out of a rooftop had fallen to pieces.

Ten days after it was originally scheduled, Game Three of the World Series was played without incident before 62,000 spectators in Candlestick Park. The Athletics won the game and then came back and closed it out the following evening. The sweep avoided having to play a World Series game in November for the first (and only) time in the 1900s.

I covered many major sports events of note in my 35 years with AP, but the World Series earthquake is The One That Stayed With Me.



# AP sightings

## American Thai Silk King Missing In Malay Jungle



JIM THOMPSON

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Jim Thompson, the "Thai silk king," millionaire and one of the best-known Americans in southeast Asia, has been missing for more than 24 hours in jungle in the Cameron Highlands near Ipoh.

Thompson, 51, a resident of Bangkok, was visiting friends in the Malaysian resort center Sunday when he set for an afternoon walk in the jungle. After he had been gone for about three hours, a search was launched for him. By darkness he had not been found.

At least 100 persons, police, military and civilian volunteers, searched the area Sunday, but failed to find any trace of Thompson.

Plans for an area search this week were being made by Sunday.

Thompson's friend, a Dr. Anandaram of Bangkok, said that the silk king appeared to feel better prior to his walk.

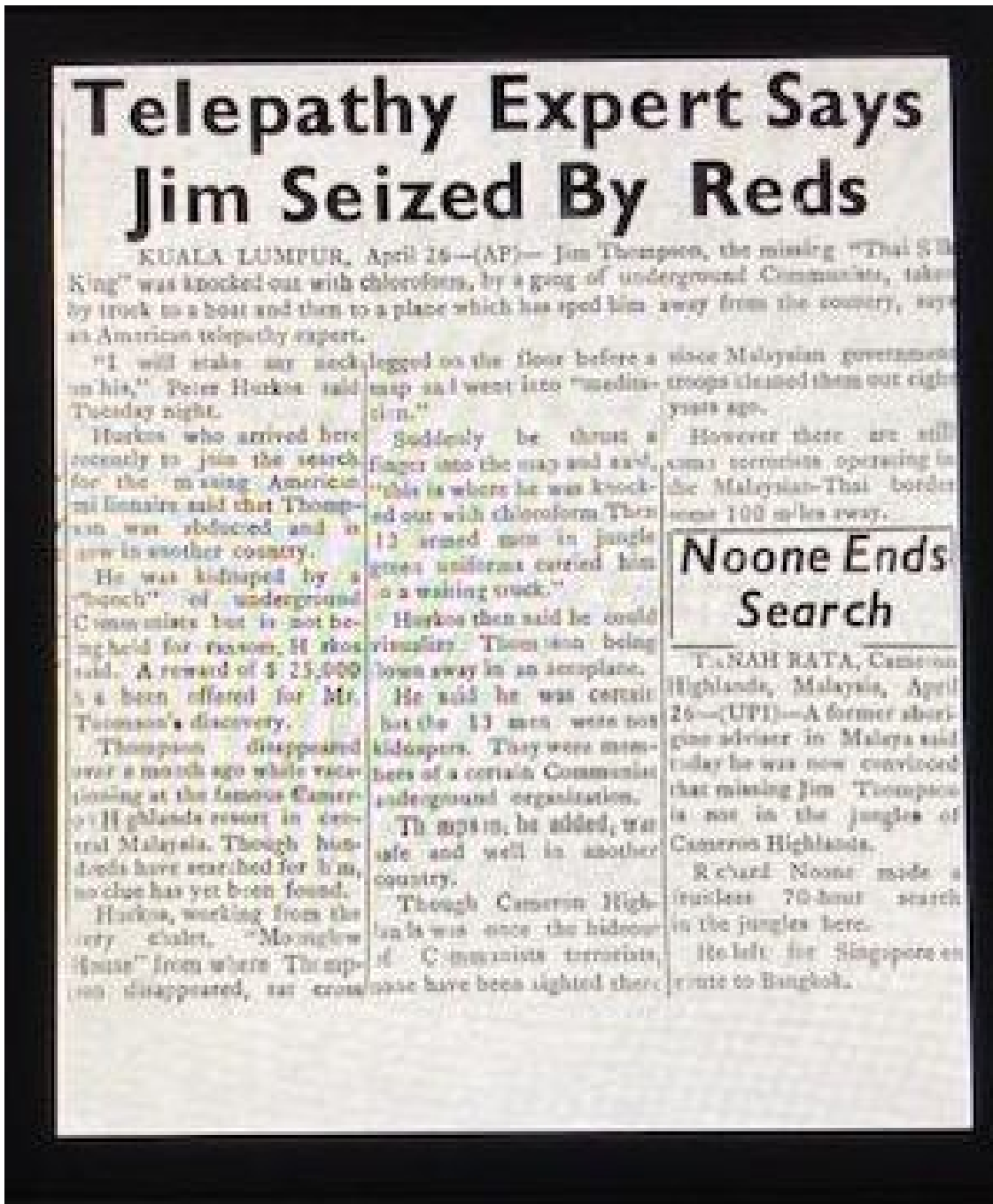
Thompson was an officer in the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the war service of the American people, during World War II, and served in Asia.

Dr. Anandaram said that Thompson and several associates had been in the area for some time, but a search was not made until Sunday.

After the war he stayed in Bangkok and began promoting the silk trade. It was an ever-widening business and Thompson carried a fortune from it.

His business in Bangkok is known formally as the Thai Silk Co., but most everyone calls it "Jim Thompson's Shop." It is a modest-looking structure, but the most interesting of its kind.

Thompson, a bachelor, had a vacation home in Bangkok and is known for his generous parties.



**Marty Steinberg** - Two AP sightings from the Jim Thompson Museum in Bangkok, which I visited several days ago during a vacation in Thailand.

Jim Thompson was an American businessman who lived in Thailand and is credited with revitalizing the country's silk industry. He was born in Delaware in 1906, went to Princeton and was in the OSS during World War II. After the war, he settled in Bangkok, went into design and built a fabulous house, which is now a museum housing his Asian art collection. He disappeared in Malaysia's Cameron Highlands in 1967 and was declared dead seven years later.

The two AP clips were among a series of news stories about his disappearance, projected on a wall at the museum. Maybe some Connecting buddy knows more first-hand details about this mystery?



**Paul Stevens** - Sunday's high temperature in Kansas City was in minus digits, but it didn't impact my shelter pup Ollie a lick. A scarf from my AP past helped cut the cold when we took out on numerous walks.



# Iconic shot from frigid Arrowhead Stadium

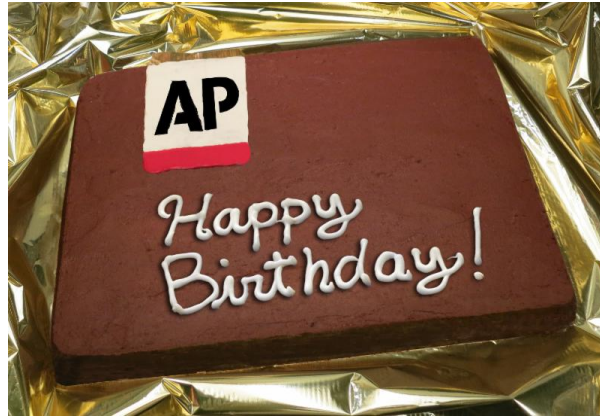


THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

Kansas City Star/Emily Curiel

**Chris Ochsner, Kansas City Star** - I got to edit photos from the Chiefs AFC Wild Card game with the Dolphins Saturday night from the comfort of my warm home. Kansas City Star photojournalists Emily Curiel and Nick Wagner were sending me photos directly from their cameras from the frigid, sub-zero sidelines. I saw the play when QB Patrick Mahomes' helmet broke, and was praying to the photo gods that we had at least Mahomes after the play with a hole in his helmet. A few minutes after the play, Emily sent this frame to me. I'm not sure how this moment could have been captured any better. Great to see one of our staff members making what will be undoubtedly one of the most iconic sports photos of 2024. The Star team is on a roll.

# Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Bob Young](#)

## Stories of interest

***Tom Shales, Pulitzer-winning TV critic of fine-tuned wit, dies at 79*** (Washington Post)

By Adam Bernstein and Brian Murphy

Tom Shales, a Pulitzer Prize-winning television critic for The Washington Post who brought incisive and barbed wit to coverage of the small screen and chronicled the medium as an increasingly powerful cultural force, for better and worse, died Jan. 13 at a hospital in Fairfax County, Va. He was 79.

The cause was complications from covid and renal failure, said his caretaker, Victor Herfurth.

TV critics in New York and Los Angeles traditionally had greater show business clout than one in the entertainment backwater of Washington, but Mr. Shales proved a formidable exception for more than three decades.

As The Post's chief TV critic starting in 1977, he worked at a newspaper still basking in the cachet of its Watergate glory, his column was widely syndicated, and his stiletto-sharp commentary on TV stars, trends and network executives brought him national attention and influence.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Mark Mittelstadt, Michael Rubin, Dennis Conrad.

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## ***Donald Trump ordered to pay The New York Times and its reporters nearly \$400,000 in legal fees*** (AP)

BY MICHAEL R. SISAK

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump was ordered Friday to pay nearly \$400,000 in legal fees to The New York Times and three investigative reporters after he sued them unsuccessfully over a Pulitzer Prize-winning 2018 story about his family's wealth and tax practices.

The newspaper and reporters Susanne Craig, David Barstow and Russell Buettner were dismissed from the lawsuit in May. Trump's claim against his estranged niece, Mary Trump, that she breached a prior settlement agreement by giving tax records to the reporters is still pending.

New York Judge Robert Reed said that given the "complexity of the issues" in the case and other factors, it was reasonable that Donald Trump be forced to pay lawyers for the Times and the reporters a total of \$392,638 in legal fees.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Adolphe Bernotas.

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## ***Houston reporters had huge hopes for nonprofit newsroom — until the firings*** (Washington Post)

Story by Will Sommer

When they heard the rumors of turmoil at the top, the journalists of the Houston Landing gathered in the newsroom on Monday.

There, they listened through a door as the CEO fired their beloved editor. Then, a star reporter was fired too.

Later, some cried in the hallway or confronted the executive about a decision none saw coming. Many wondered how things could have gone bad so fast at a well-funded, experimental nonprofit publication they hoped would be shielded from the market forces that have clobbered the rest of the media industry.

"This was supposed to be the lighthouse," said one Houston Landing reporter who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of concern for their job.

The sudden turmoil at Houston Landing — a seven-month-old news site backed with a hefty \$20 million in foundation funding — is raising questions about whether the scores of nonprofit outlets attempting to save journalism in communities across the country will end up mired in the same woes as their languishing corporate rivals, from muddled transitions to digital formats to executive decisions that often come without a clear rationale.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Sibby Christensen, Harry Dunphy, Mark Mittelstadt.

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## ***Former Peoria Journal Star editor and Pekin native dies at 107*** (Journal Star)

Charles L. Dancey, a former editor of the Journal Star, has died at age 107.

A native of Pekin and a graduate of the University of Illinois, Dancey died Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024. He had been a newspaperman since 1938. He was named editor of the Journal Star in 1958, and served in that capacity for more than 20 years.

Dancey began his career as a city-county reporter in Pekin, later covered the federal beat and the county courthouse in Peoria, the legislature in Springfield, and for intervals, the U.S. Congress. His work at the newspaper also included duties as a copy editor, editorial writer, superintendent of the news and mechanical departments, assistant to the president, and management responsibilities in connection with a Journal Star-owned TV station.

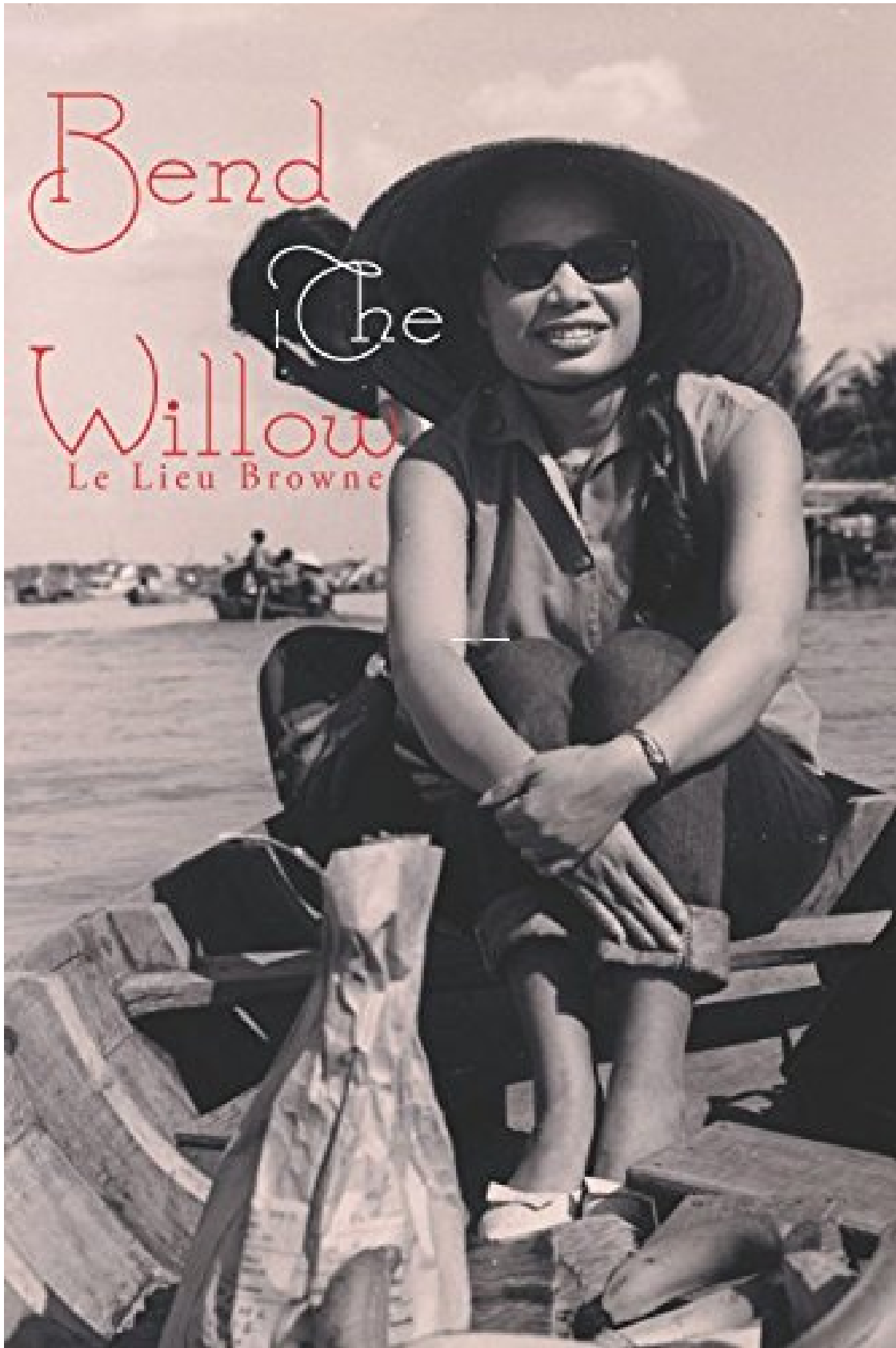
His editorial function took him repeatedly to the Soviet Union, the Middle East and Latin America, in particular, and on one occasion to Mainland China.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Don Cooper.

## **The Final Word**

### ***Profile of Le Lieu Browne***





(Excerpts from [Valley News](#), "Thetford Resident Recalls Her Life in Vietnam and Years of Travel", by Nicola Smith, published Aug. 6, 2018:

Now 83, Browne has written and self-published the recently released *Bend the Willow*, a memoir about her life in Vietnam and the United States.

It traces her childhood, her education in France and her return to Vietnam where she worked from 1960 to 1966 as an interpreter and liaison in Saigon between the foreign press and the South Vietnamese government. It is also the story of her marriage to journalist Malcolm Browne, their travels together and the tumultuous events of April 1975, when South Vietnam fell to the Viet Cong.

Malcolm Browne, who took the famous 1963 Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of the Buddhist monk immolating himself in protest against the policies of the South Vietnamese government, died in 2012 from Parkinson's disease. He is buried at the back of the property, his grave surrounded by hydrangeas. Le Lieu Browne, a slight figure with short, silky white hair, often takes Blondine for a short walk to visit him.

Life without him has been difficult, she said, melancholy written on her face. But then a tough pragmatism takes over. She's endured profound losses — of family and country — and life is about the business of getting on with it.

Last year, her younger sister, who is married to a Frenchman and has lived in France for decades, wanted to make a trip back to Vietnam. "I didn't want to go. I didn't want to return," Browne said. But her sister persuaded her in the end. She has mixed feelings about the enterprise now.

"Whatever I visualized about the past in my head, it's not there anymore. It's painful in the way that it wiped out whatever I had in memory."

She had made a previous trip with Malcolm in 1994, when the poverty seemed more visible. War veterans begging in the streets, 20 years on; women and their children, too.

What struck her last year was the relative prosperity, the high rises, the population growth, the transformation of small villages to major towns, the loss of some natural habitat. The former AP bureau where Malcolm worked in downtown Saigon still stands but is now dilapidated.

When Le Lieu Browne and her sister spoke French to an older Vietnamese cab driver in Saigon, he told them he was happy to use it again because he almost never had the chance; a majority of the Vietnamese population was born after Saigon fell to the Viet Cong in April 1975, according to an article in *The Atlantic*.

Not everything about the enormous changes that have taken place disturb her. "I'm glad that they're prosperous, I'm glad that the country is unified because there's peace."

Still, travel without her husband felt unnatural. "I found it very, very sad to go through the past without him — and because it's a Communist country," she said. She is quite certain that it was the last time she would see her home country, she said.

Browne grew up in the southern city of Ben Tre in the Mekong Delta in the 1940s and 1950s, one of seven children born to her mother Nguyen thi Le and father Huynh van

Tet. As part of French Indochina, Vietnam had been under colonial rule since the mid-19th century. The Japanese occupied Vietnam during World War II, and Ho Chi Minh's Communist Viet Minh party was formed in 1941 to resist the Japanese. The Viet Minh's ultimate objective, though, was to oust the French and declare independence.

As the French fought their way back into Vietnam in 1945 to reclaim the country, the Viet Minh came and took away Browne's father, a high-ranking land administrator who was considered suspect because he had worked with the French before the war.

He was put under house arrest and no one in the family knew whether he was dead. But Browne's mother succeeded in tracking him down and, after months of separation, the family went to live with him, still under house arrest. As the French advanced, the Viet Minh moved the family farther into the jungle. But, when a friend of Browne's father urged escape toward the French Army in Ben Tre, her father refused.

"Why should we escape? We didn't do anything," Browne recalled him saying.

The Viet Minh came for him that night. The theory in the family was that someone denounced him to the Viet Minh for trying to flee. Browne remembers hearing the knock on the door, the voices demanding to see her father, and then seeing her father, dressed in shorts and an undershirt, walking out the door. That was the last time they saw him, and when months went by without word, they presumed he'd been executed.

Although her father had worked with the French, he was a nationalist, Browne said. He was an admirer of both Ho Chi Minh, she said, and the goal of wresting the country from French control.

In retrospect, Browne said, "I thought maybe he was naive but I know he really loved the country, he really wanted independence." Her mother, by contrast, did not want the French to leave.

The disappearance of her father, naturally, was a life-altering shock for her and her family. (His friend arrived safely in Ben Tre the next day, which led over the years to numerous iterations of "what if" for Browne.) Her mother, a school teacher, was left with seven children to raise.

"It affected me very much," Browne said. "I miss that kind of father's love."

Her father's death also turned her against the Communist Viet Minh. "After they killed my father I decided it was not for me." Like her father, though, she later came to admire Ho Chi Minh for his desire to see the country freed from colonialism.

The French return initiated a long struggle between the French and the Viet Minh for dominance, culminating in the surrender of French troops at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The country was then divided into North and South Vietnam.

In 1949, Browne's mother sent her to Paris at the age of 15 to get an education, where she lived with a relative who was unsympathetic to her homesickness. When Le

Lieu cried one day, the result of chopping onions, the relative was derisive, telling her to grow up.

“At that moment I told myself, never cry, never cry again, and I kept my promise. I decided I would have to depend on myself,” she said.

That she did.

After graduating from high school in France, she continued her education at the London School of Economics, until acceding to her mother’s request to come home.

She’d always been intrigued by journalism, and in 1960 she got a job at the South Vietnamese Ministry of Affairs in Saigon, working as a Deputy Minister of Information, coordinating with the foreign press to set up interviews with government officials.

In the course of her work she met journalists from all over the world who were coming to Vietnam in search of the next big war. She was friendly with Western journalists, and felt more Westernized at that point than she felt Vietnamese. But she was also wary of their intentions and quietly contemptuous of their ignorance of Vietnam. Until, in 1961, she met Malcolm Browne.

“He looked very young, like a young British man with very white skin,” she recalled. Browne was tall and lanky, with a shock of red hair. He was married at the time, with a baby. This violated her cardinal rule: no married men.

He had characteristics, however, that set him apart from some of the other American reporters who tended to be loud, demanding and blunt, which was not the Vietnamese way. He was “really very correct, polite and courteous,” she said. He tried to learn Vietnamese, which also separated him from other American journalists.

In hindsight, she said, psychologically Malcolm reminded her of her father. Still, it had never occurred to her that she would become involved with an American and his promises to leave his wife left her skeptical.

“I didn’t believe him. I never trusted any men, especially Americans,” she said.

However, when he convinced her of the seriousness of his feelings for her, cabling his wife that he wanted a divorce, she decided she wanted to be with him. Theirs was a long and close union, without children.

Her mother approved of their marriage; her father would never have consented to her marrying someone who was not Vietnamese, she said. She did want to have children, she said, but she also wanted to travel the world with Malcolm and do her own writing and photography. Her desire for the latter superseded the former.

The Brownes married in 1966 and were in Vietnam, off and on, until the Tet Offensive of 1968, although Le Lieu really left for good in 1966. Malcolm went to work in 1968 for the New York Times. Le Lieu became a photojournalist for the Times, and worked alongside her husband.



Over the years they lived in Latin America and Eastern Europe while he also covered the India-Pakistan war, Vietnam and Cambodia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. They maintained an apartment in New York, where she still lives. From 1977 he was a science correspondent for the Times, making a number of trips to Antarctica.

In March 1975, Malcolm heard that the Viet Cong (the South Vietnamese guerillas fighting with the North) were advancing on the Southern city of Kontum. Hundreds of thousands of civilians as well as the South Vietnamese Army began to evacuate.

“When Kontum fell, he said Vietnam will also fall,” Le Lieu Browne recalled. Her mother and some of her siblings were still in the South, so she went back to try to bring as many out as she could.

At 70, her mother was frail and sickly and Browne was afraid she wouldn’t survive an arduous, uncertain evacuation from Saigon and the surrounding areas.

Although Browne was able to get out two of her brothers, who now live in California, she made the wrenching decision to leave her mother behind, as well as some of her other siblings. Like everyone else in the city as the Viet Cong closed in, she was in a daze, she said. People were crying in the streets, walking around in shock. Browne got on the last commercial Air Vietnam flight out of Saigon on April 30.

“I never saw my mother again. She died two years later,” Browne said.

She has had decades to think about the conduct of the war. “The deeper we got into it, I realized that the Vietnamese military had no sense of war. They left war to the Americans.”

The rural people threw their lot in with the Viet Cong, who controlled much of the countryside.

“You side with the people who protect you,” Browne said.

The Americans brought their own insularity to the country. “They live separately from us, they keep their own culture, they don’t bother to learn the language. They come in, they don’t understand anything, they rape the culture,” she said.

Nonetheless Browne felt more Western than she did Vietnamese, not only because of her European education and independence working in Saigon. In traditional Vietnamese society there were expectations of how women should behave and what they should be permitted to do. It was too hidebound for her; she felt frustrated by the proscriptions. Her mother encouraged her to seek a career, to liberate herself from convention.

Browne has lost much of her Vietnamese language and she wrote the book in English. The language of Vietnam now is more Northern than Southern, using North Vietnamese dialect and vernacular, which makes it difficult for her to understand, she said.

“I can kind of talk with my family and friends in half English, half French, and some Vietnamese,” she said.

She misses her husband's kindness and generosity, his eclectic nature, his sense of honor and his honesty, their companionship and shared exploration.

"The worst part is in the morning. You get up, you're by yourself. But Blondine wakes me up every morning at 5:30 and I'm grateful for that," Browne said.

(Shared by Valerie Komor)

## Today in History - Jan. 15, 2024



**Today is Monday, Jan. 15, the 15th day of 2024. There are 351 days left in the year. This is Martin Luther King Jr. Day.**

### **Today's Highlight in History:**

On Jan. 15, 1929, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta.

### **On this date:**

In 1559, England's Queen Elizabeth I was crowned in Westminster Abbey.

In 1892, the original rules of basketball, devised by James Naismith, were published for the first time in Springfield, Massachusetts, where the game originated.

In 1919, in Boston, a tank containing an estimated 2.3 million gallons of molasses burst, sending the dark syrup coursing through the city's North End, killing 21 people.

In 1943, work was completed on the Pentagon, headquarters of the U.S. Department of War (now Defense).

In 1967, the Green Bay Packers of the National Football League defeated the Kansas City Chiefs of the American Football League 35-10 in the first AFL-NFL World Championship Game, known retroactively as Super Bowl I.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon announced the suspension of all U.S. offensive action in North Vietnam, citing progress in peace negotiations.

In 1974, the sitcom “Happy Days” premiered on ABC-TV.

In 1978, two students at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Lisa Levy and Margaret Bowman, were slain in their sorority house. (Ted Bundy was later convicted of the crime and was sentenced to death. But he was executed for the rape and murder of a 12-year-old girl, which occurred 3 weeks after the sorority slayings.)

In 1981, the police drama series “Hill Street Blues” premiered on NBC.

In 1989, NATO, the Warsaw Pact and 12 other European countries adopted a human rights and security agreement in Vienna, Austria.

In 1993, a historic disarmament ceremony ended in Paris with the last of 125 countries signing a treaty banning chemical weapons.

In 2009, US Airways Capt. Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger put his Airbus 320 down in the Hudson River after a flock of birds disabled both engines; all 155 people aboard survived.

In 2018, singer Dolores O’Riordan of the Irish rock band The Cranberries died at a London hotel at the age of 46; a coroner found that she had accidentally drowned in a bathtub after drinking.

In 2019, Musical comedy star Carol Channing — best known to Broadway audiences for her role in “Hello, Dolly!” — died in California at age 97.

In 2023, a plane making a 27-minute flight to a Nepal tourist town crashed into a gorge while attempting to land at a newly opened airport, killing all 72 people aboard.

Today’s birthdays: Actor Margaret O’Brien is 86. Actor Andrea Martin is 77. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Randy White is 71. Actor-director Mario Van Peebles is 67. Rock musician Adam Jones (Tool) is 59. Actor James Nesbitt is 59. Actor Chad Lowe is 56. Alt-country singer Will Oldham (aka Bonnie Prince Billy) is 54. Actor Regina King is 53. Actor Dorian Missick is 48. Actor Eddie Cahill is 46. Former NFL quarterback Drew Brees is 45. Rapper/reggaeton artist Pitbull is 43. Actor Victor Rasuk is 39. Actor Jessy Schram is 38. Electronic dance musician Skrillex is 36. Actor/singer Dove Cameron is 28. Singer-songwriter Grace VanderWaal (TV: “America’s Got Talent”) 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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