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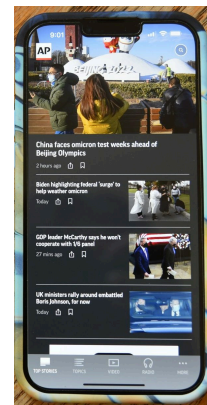
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Connecting

Feb. 7, 2024

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Colleagues,

Good Wednesday morning on this Feb. 7, 2024,

We lead with a memo to AP staff from Washington Bureau Chief **Anna Johnson** and **David Scott**, vice president and head of news strategy and operations, that outlines AP's election coverage priorities and focus on explanatory journalism as this presidential election year continues to heat up.

Working in the office or working remotely? Our colleague **Dan Perry** takes a look at the dilemma facing businesses in an interesting post in today's issue.

The AP recently completed a full week in the office for its bureaus around the world, during the week of Jan. 22-26, and we bring you a few photos. Our colleague **Jessica Bruce**, senior vice president, Human Resources and Corporate Communications, said the AP's goal is to be in the office 50 percent of the time: "Two days a week every week, the same two days globally. Tuesdays and Wednesdays. And four times a year

we spend a full week in the office. We've just finished one of those weeks. People come in additional days as business requires."

Are you of the age that you could remember dropping into a music store, picking out a 45 and going into a booth to listen to the record before plunking down a dollar bill?

Then my latest Spotlight column in my hometown newspaper, The Messenger of Fort Dodge, Iowa, is just for you. It focuses on the record stores of yore in Fort Dodge, back when vinyl was king and before digital music and YouTube and so on. But, as some of you know firsthand, vinyl is making a comeback.



Click [here](#) to read.

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

Paul

An 'indispensable role' in US elections



A view of the White House grounds during a press preview for the White House 2023 Spring Garden Tours, March 30, 2023, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

By Lauren Easton

As the 2024 presidential campaign gets underway, Washington Bureau Chief Anna Johnson and David Scott, vice president and head of news strategy and operations, outline AP's election coverage priorities and focus on explanatory journalism.

Here is their memo to staff:

Over the past year, we have been preparing to carry out our indispensable role in U.S. democracy. Our Politics and Democracy teams have spent months covering the campaigns, understanding the pressures on the election process and learning what matters to voters across the political spectrum. Our Decision team has built new tools and streamlined its workflow so it can maintain our steadfast commitment to accuracy and position AP to swiftly declare winners up and down the ballot. Our Data Visualization and Digital teams have prepared to do more for our audience online than we ever have before.

Explanatory journalism is at the heart of our elections coverage this year. As misinformation and distrust continues to spread, it is essential that we transparently explain the how and the why of our vote count and our race calls. This year, we will show our work in new ways, including publishing detailed reporting about our race calls in real time to customers and our digital audience on APNews.com.

We also are doubling down on our efforts to explain the often-complicated election process in the United States in all formats -- text, video, graphics, immersive storytelling and more.

This effort is led by Deputy Washington Bureau Chief and Political Director Steven Sloan. He's the conductor of this coverage, charged with bringing together departments, formats and platforms to execute our vision for 2024. It's his job to ensure that AP -- in all the ways we tell stories -- publishes a cohesive and holistic politics and elections news report, not just on election nights but every day of the year.

There is no news organization better positioned to cover 2024 than AP. Our national Politics, Democracy, Public Opinion, Data Visualization and Decision teams are joined by our Washington news team and journalists from all corners of the AP to tell this story.

Follow AP's election coverage: <http://apne.ws/NPaexpm>

Click [here](#) for link to this story.

Around the AP world, a full week in the office



New Delhi staff pose for a photo during AP's in-office week before eating fresh pizzas baked by Satish Sharma, senior general manager, and Bhavna Chadha, finance manager, in New-Delhi, Jan 24, 2024. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



Members of the Race and Ethnicity team pose for a photo, Jan. 26, 2024, after being together all week in AP's New York headquarters. From left: reporter Graham Brewer, video journalist Noreen Nasir, editor Aaron Morrison, reporter Terry Tang and reporter Matthew Brown. (Photo courtesy of Terry Tang)



Colleagues pose for a photo in the Jakarta office during lunch, Jan. 23, 2024. (Photo courtesy of Haruka Nuga)

Is it curtains for the office?

Yes, synergies. But still: Must we really haul people from here to there daily, deposit them in common quarters, parade them before one another and arrange them in rows and groups?

By [DAN PERRY](#)

Imagine two scenarios. In one, you bring together the most pleasant and brilliant people selected from the global population of 8 billion. In the second, you take what you can get from those within commuting distance—perhaps eight million, in a major city.

Logic suggests the former, given the thousand-times larger sample, will yield a stronger enterprise and better co-workers. You may not be able to grab a beer after work with them, but that is not the purpose of most companies. This understanding was the silver lining of opportunity on the dark and tragic cloud of Covid.

Last year was when most people put the pandemic behind them fully—and 2024 is supposed to be the big year of RTO—the "return to office" yearned for by middle managers everywhere. A study published in recent days shows that out of 1,000 company leaders surveyed about 90 percent wanted a full return and over 70 percent thought it would help revenue (despite scant evidence).

Every study shows resistance on the part of many workers. But a deeper dive into the numbers shows that a clear majority of them favor hybrid work, which suggests that they do enjoy the perks of office life. They cite "work-life balance"—which attaches to their own well-being and not the company's as such.

There is a nuance there that the discourse tends to ignore: the advantages of remote work,, such as selecting from a global talent pool, actually benefit the employer. And by availing themselves of the opportunity, they'd further save in many ways: the wasted time commuting, the energy costs of travel, the spaces and arrangements for accommodating finicky humans.

I have seen all this for years, first as a regional chief for the Associated Press in various parts of the world, and now as a partner in a PR agency whose purview is not limited to any city. The pandemic created a sea change; we sought our clients globally, and they no longer expected frequent meetings in person. Suddenly, two-week delays for in-person meetings melted away, enabling immediate action and considerable efficiency. The limitations of the past began to seem absurd.

Read more [here](#).

Connecting sky shots

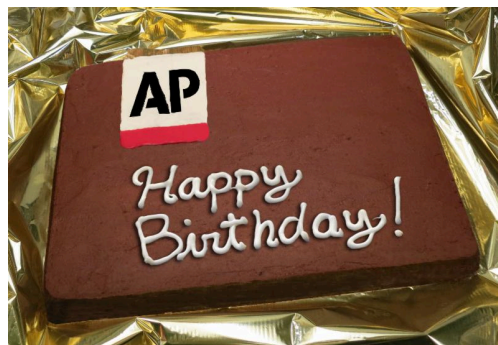


Atlantic sunrise – Off St. Simons Island, Ga. Shared by [Hank Ackerman](#).



Albany sunrise – A cold winter morning with a waning moon reflecting off the ice at Tsatsawassa Lake (east of Albany, NY) and the sun barely lighting the sky. Shared by [Marc Humbert](#).

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[David Redfern](#)

Stories of interest

Over Tacos and Beer, Journalists Mourn Their Lost Jobs (New York Times)

By Alexander Nazaryan

For journalists, bars have long functioned as second newsrooms. Over martinis, sources share secrets. Over beers, ordinary men and women plead for coverage of some local outrage. And when the news business has convulsed, eliminating afternoon editions or shuttering foreign bureaus, reporters have knocked back a scotch or two, shaken their fists at management and vowed to soldier on.

That was the mood in Washington on Friday evening at the National Press Club, which invited any journalists who had recently been laid off for free tacos and drinks. Though hundreds of reporters and editors have lost their jobs across the country since the start of the year (one editor said he feared that an “extinction-level event” loomed over the industry), newsrooms in the nation’s capitol appeared to suffer inordinately, with a relentless procession of bad news throughout the fall and winter.

In November, Bloomberg shed more than a dozen jobs. The next month, The Washington Post eliminated about 240 positions through buyouts. In late January, The Los Angeles Times cut its D.C. bureau to the bone; a week later, The Wall Street Journal decided to jettison roughly 20 staffers in Washington. And then there was The Messenger, a lavishly-funded online news outlet with offices in Washington that flamed out after less than a year of operation.

“We had a conversation a few months prior that we felt pretty stable in our jobs,” said Sam Murray, 25, formerly a data journalist for Bloomberg. “One morning it all ended. Very unexpected.”

Read more [here](#). Shared by Michael Rubin, Myron Belkind.

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Before raid, Marion police chief tried to persuade reporter to leave newspaper: Lawsuit (Kansas City Star)

BY KATIE MOORE

Former Marion Police Chief Gideon Cody tried to persuade a Marion County Record reporter to leave the newspaper and start a competing news outlet — and promised to invest in the venture — as the paper investigated him, a federal lawsuit alleges.

Reporter Phyllis Zorn rebuffed the offer and Cody went on to lead a raid of the newspaper last August. Zorn filed a lawsuit Tuesday alleging her constitutional rights

were violated during the search of The Record's newsroom in Marion, Kansas.

Zorn names the City of Marion, former Mayor David Mayfield, former Police Chief Gideon Cody, Interim Police Chief Zach Hudlin, the Marion County Commission, Marion County Sheriff Jeff Soyez and Aaron Christner, a detective with the sheriff's office, as defendants.

The lawsuit alleges "the defendants are co-conspirators in an unconstitutional effort to deny Ms. Zorn her rights under the First and Fourth Amendments to the United States Constitution." It asks Zorn to be awarded \$950,000.

Read more [here](#).

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The Age of Billionaire News Ownership Is Waning: Who or What Will Replace Them? (The Wrap)

By Emily Smith

The deep layoffs at The Washington Post late last year eliminating 240 jobs were painful enough. But inside the newsroom staffers have been grumbling deeply about the insult added to injury: Not only did the second richest man in the world decide to cut deep into a celebrated institution, but the buyouts weren't even paid for by owner Jeff Bezos.

They were paid out by the paper's pension fund.

"Are you kidding me?" said one furious staffer. "He's sending rockets into space, he's got a \$500 million yacht. Do you have unrealistic business expectations or are you just seeing red ink?"

Billionaires, it turns out, don't like losing money, including Bezos, who lost \$100 million last year on the Post.

Similarly draconian cuts at the money-losing Los Angeles Times (\$30 million in 2023), owned by billionaire Patrick Soon-Shiong, and at Time magazine, owned by billionaire Marc Benioff, have many concluding that the era of billionaire benevolence for newspapers is ending.

"The rich guy rescue plan rarely works," Jay Rosen, an associate professor of journalism at New York University, said. "The rescuer typically underestimates how hard it is to find money in news and keep quality reasonably high. When that is made clear, a rich guy's commitment starts faltering. And the hedge funds lie in wait."

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

-0-

NPR's Linda Wertheimer, One Of The Network's "Founding Mothers," Announces Retirement (Deadline)

By Ted Johnson

Linda Wertheimer, one of the "founding mothers" of National Public Radio, said today that she is retiring.

"I have had a great ride over more than fifty years – and now that ride is over," Wertheimer wrote in a memo to staffers, in which she recalled being one of the first hires on the news side at the time of the network's debut in 1971, when "the only part of the company that was fully staffed was top management and engineering."

Wertheimer, Susan Stamberg, Nina Totenberg, and Cokie Roberts were dubbed the "founding mothers" of the network, becoming famous voices at a time when jobs for women at media outlets were scarce. "There were also more women doing that kind of work from the beginning than there were at most broadcast operations," Wertheimer wrote in her note.

Read more [here](#).

The Final Word

Impacted by Layoffs? We Want to Hear From You

(Nieman Reports)

In 2023, the news sector cut 2,681 jobs — nearly double the jobs lost in all of 2022 and 2021 combined. If you've experienced a journalism layoff or buyout since 2022, we want to hear from you for a new research initiative.

The Institute for Independent Journalists Foundation is conducting a census of journalists who were laid off and bought out recently. The survey should take about 5 minutes.

About the Project

Our goal is to understand the demographics, such as race, gender, disability and age, of the nearly 3,000 people who left journalism organizations as they reduced the size of their workforces over the last few years. This project is essential to understand the impact of force reductions. Results of this project will be published in Nieman Reports and distributed through the IJF Foundation, whose mission is the sustainability of freelancers of color.

How to Participate

You can take the census survey [here](#).

If you've experienced a layoff or buyout or want to contribute to the project, please email us at census@theij.com

For questions or to get involved, please email census@theij.com or join our email list [here](#).

Read more [here](#). Shared by Dennis Conrad.

Today in History: Feb. 7, 2024



Today is Wednesday, Feb. 7, the 38th day of 2024. There are 328 days left in the year.

Today's highlight

On Feb. 7, 1962, President John F. Kennedy imposed a full trade embargo on Cuba.

On this date

In 1857, a French court acquitted author Gustave Flaubert of obscenity for his serialized novel "Madame Bovary."

In 1943, the government abruptly announced that wartime rationing of shoes made of leather would go into effect in two days, limiting consumers to buying three pairs per person per year. (Rationing was lifted in October 1945.)

In 1948, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower resigned as U.S. Army chief of staff; he was succeeded by Gen. Omar Bradley.

In 1964, the Beatles arrived to screaming fans at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport to begin their first American tour.

In 1971, women in Switzerland gained the right to vote through a national referendum, 12 years after a previous attempt failed.

In 1984, space shuttle Challenger astronauts Bruce McCandless II and Robert L. Stewart went on the first untethered spacewalk, which lasted nearly six hours.

In 1985, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena was kidnapped in Guadalajara, Mexico, by drug traffickers who tortured and murdered him.

In 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was inaugurated as the first democratically elected president of Haiti (he was overthrown by the military the following September).

In 1999, Jordan's King Hussein died of cancer at age 63; he was succeeded by his eldest son, Abdullah.

In 2009, a miles-wide section of ice in Lake Erie broke away from the Ohio shoreline, trapping about 135 fishermen, some for as long as four hours before they could be rescued (one man fell into the water and later died of an apparent heart attack).

In 2014, the Sochi Olympics opened with a celebration of Russia's past greatness and hopes for future glory.

In 2018, biotech billionaire Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong struck a \$500 million deal to buy the Los Angeles Times, the San Diego Union-Tribune and other publications.

In 2020, two days after his acquittal in his first Senate impeachment trial, President Donald Trump took retribution against two officials who had delivered damaging testimony; he ousted Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, a national security aide, and Gordon Sondland, his ambassador to the European Union.

In 2021, after moving south to a new team and conference, Tom Brady led the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to a 31-9 Super Bowl victory over the Kansas City Chiefs on the Buccaneers' home field.

Today's birthdays: Author Gay Talese is 92. Sen. John Hickenlooper, D-Colo., is 72. Comedy writer Robert Smigel is 64. Actor James Spader is 64. Country singer Garth Brooks is 62. Rock musician David Bryan (Bon Jovi) is 62. Actor-comedian Eddie Izzard is 62. Actor-comedian Chris Rock is 59. Actor Jason Gedrick is 57. Actor Essence Atkins is 51. Rock singer-musician Wes Borland is 49. Rock musician Tom Blankenship (My Morning Jacket) is 46. Actor Ashton Kutcher is 46. Actor Tina Majorino is 39. Actor Deborah Ann Woll is 39. Former NBA player Isaiah Thomas is 35. NHL center Steven Stamkos is 34.

Got a story or photos to share?

Connecting is a daily newsletter published Monday through Friday that reaches more than 1,800 retired and former Associated Press employees, present-day employees, and news industry and journalism school colleagues. It began in 2013. Past issues can be found by clicking Connecting Archive in the masthead. Its author, Paul Stevens, retired from the AP in 2009 after a 36-year career as a newsman in Albany and St. Louis, correspondent in Wichita, chief of bureau in Albuquerque, Indianapolis and Kansas City, and Central Region vice president based in Kansas City.

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

Here are some suggestions:

- **Connecting "selfies"** - a word and photo self-profile of you and your career, and what you are doing today. Both for new members and those who have been with us a while.

- **Second chapters** - You finished a great career. Now tell us about your second (and third and fourth?) chapters of life.

- **Spousal support** - How your spouse helped in supporting your work during your AP career.

- **My most unusual story** - tell us about an unusual, off the wall story that you covered.

- **"A silly mistake that you make"**- a chance to 'fess up with a memorable mistake in your journalistic career.

- **Multigenerational AP families** - profiles of families whose service spanned two or more generations.

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

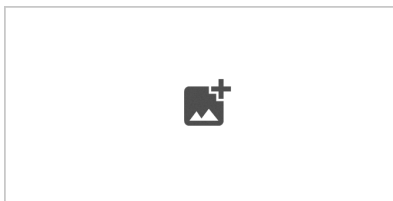
- **First job** - How did you get your first job in journalism?

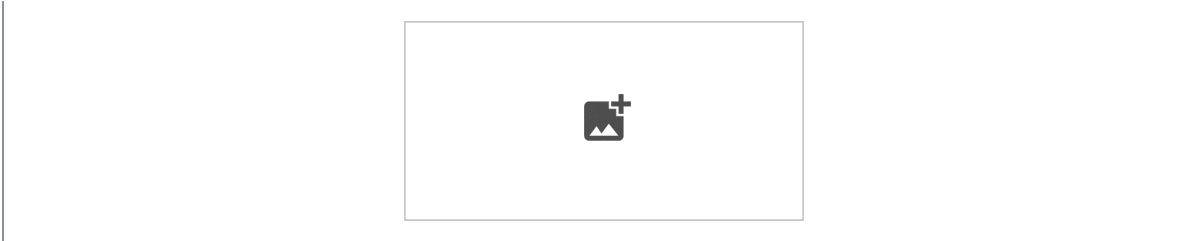
- **Most unusual** place a story assignment took you.

Paul Stevens

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