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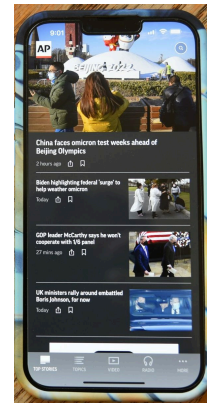
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Connecting

Feb. 8, 2024

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Colleagues,

Good Thursday morning on this Feb. 8, 2024,

We're sorry to bring news of the death of our colleague **Will Lester**, admired for his abilities as a desk editor in AP's Washington bureau and earlier as news editor in the Miami bureau, and beloved by the many who worked with him.

Will served with The Associated Press for more than four decades.

"Will Lester was the type of person that makes AP special," said executive editor **Julie Pace**. "A talented and committed editor, and equally kind and good human. He cared about his colleagues and his work. He mostly operated out of the spotlight, and generously applauded those whose work found it. We will miss him."

From **Sally Buzbee**, executive editor of The Washington Post and former AP executive editor and Washington bureau chief: "Will was an excellent, insightful and thoughtful journalist. He also was one of the most caring and most delightful people any of us at AP ever worked with. He will be missed."

Our colleague [Dave Tomlin](#) was Columbia, S.C., bureau chief when he hired Lester into the AP in 1982, and said: "I admired Will's reporting and writing in The State newspaper for years, so when he finally knocked on AP's door, I said yes before he asked. He was a great addition to the bureau and a good friend."



When he reached 40 years of AP service, Lester said, "At one time, staying with one company for 40 years would be seen as an accomplishment. I'm afraid that now it is seen by some younger staffers as a sign of limited ambition. No matter, I have enjoyed the time spent with one great company."

We will bring you his wire obituary in tomorrow's Connecting.

If you have a memory to share about Will, please send it along.

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

Paul

Remembering Will Lester



Meg Kinnard - Let me tell you about my friend Will Lester - a politics reporter turned Washington, DC desk editor - and an all-around good human.

When I was fairly green at the AP, many moons ago, I started going to DC for annual meetings for our union, with colleagues from around the country. I knew some of them, at least by their bylines, but mostly, I was the new face in a room of people who, through the Guild, had been working together for a long time already. It was a little overwhelming.

Pretty quickly, though, I met Will, who was for many years among those who helped organize the Washington bureau. As soon as I sat next to him, any trepidation I had about being the new face was gone.

“Tell me the latest gossip from South Carolina,” I remember him saying with a grin, explaining that, before he’d landed in AP’s DC bureau, he had worked for a couple of SC newspapers, and served as AP news editor in Columbia. “I’ll always love that weird place,” he said with a mild, southern drawl.

Instantly, we had a bond. Whenever big, weird, or - as often happens - big AND weird news would generate from this state that we both loved, I’d get an email or a social

media mention from Will, both encouraging my reporting and reveling in the unique circumstances of being a reporter covering South Carolina.

I've been known to wade into controversy on Twitter from time to time, and Will would always let me know he had my back when the trolls would troll - as trolls like to do. If he said I was OK, I believed it, and just ignored them. They never really bothered me that much, but with Will in my corner, they were powerless.

I kept going to those DC meetings, and I kept sitting by Will. His thoughtfulness in terms of how to motivate our colleagues to advocate for certain issues, and his suggestions on how best to reach them, were spot-on. We teamed up on recruiting new members, and I was so thankful to be of any help to him in doing so.

Later in my career, I started working for our DC bureau while continuing to live in SC, and Will, at times, became my editor. Working late on a story often meant that Will would be the one handling it, so we got to know each other in a different way. His edits were careful and precise, and I never felt that my journalistic voice got lost in the process. He was a true professional - and he understood me.

Tonight, I'm working late on a story, and I really wish Will were there on the desk to read it for me. There is a void in AP's Slack channels tonight - a huge void - that will never be filled. There will never be another Will Lester.

I'm not one to often proselytize, but I am thankful for my faith tonight, because it tells me that there will come a time when there will be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things will be passed away. This is how I know I'll see Will again.

Rest easy, my friend. You and Jim Davenport save me a seat, I'll join y'all some day with all the latest gossip from South Carolina. Until we all meet again.

-0-

Sandy Johnson – *former Washington bureau chief* - Will Lester was a critical voice on Election Night 2000 when the presidential race hung in the balance. We were frantically analyzing vote count and projection models after all the television networks called Florida for George W. Bush, and thus the presidency. The AP vote count showed the margin between Bush and Al Gore in Florida getting closer -- not wider as the network calls suggested. Millions of votes were still to be counted in Miami-Dade, Palm Beach and Broward counties. Will had been a longtime news editor in Florida and knew the state's political history well, reminding us that all three counties were Democratic strongholds. His guidance helped inform AP's decision to not call Florida for Bush. As AP held firm -- and the vote count got closer and closer -- the networks all retracted their calls. As we all remember, the presidential race hung in the balance for another month. Will was part of the AP team that was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for our work on that longest of election nights, a fine legacy for a much-admired colleague.

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Will Lester (in blue shirt) at Gary Clark's retirement party in Atlanta in 2009. From left, Brent Kallestad, Dan Sewell, Michael Giarrusso, Gary Clark, Matt Bokor and Will Lester.

Brent Kallestad - Will followed Matt Bokor as news editor in Miami in late '86 if memory serves and remained in that role until some point in the mid-'90s when he transferred to DC.

I was the Tallahassee correspondent during that period and enjoyed a wonderful professional as well as personal relationship with Will, COB Gary Clark and many of AP's highly talented staff of that period.

In my opinion, the Miami news editor's job ranks among the toughest of any across AP circles for a variety of reasons and responsibilities. Will poured his heart and soul into it for a good eight or nine years while at the same time looking out for the staff's best interests and welfare. He was a gentle, positive, warm and caring human being doing a really difficult job.

Will so deserved retirement, but leaving AP was going to be difficult for him. He loved its mission and its people.

He will remain in the minds and hearts of those of us who had the opportunity to work with him.

-0-

Peggy Walsh - Will was one of the most genuine, nicest and most conscientious AP people I've never met.

He joined AP in South Carolina in 1982 when I was Atlanta news editor. Back then it was the hub of six other states and coordinated features for the region. It meant

staffers from those bureaus contributed to Southern roundups.

Will and I joked for 40 years about an assignment I created for when news was light - Sunday in the South.

We spoke every week for several years but never met in person. Although the assignment was tedious, he was always gracious, funny and on time.

We stayed in touch through the years always joking about S-I-T-S.

The world lost a kind, funny and genuine man. Sundays will never be the same.

All about the vinyl

EDITOR'S NOTE: Responses to Ye Olde Editor's column about record stores of yore and the vinyl records they sold.

[Sibby Christensen](#) - I can one-up you on the subject of early recorded music, also in the 1940s. The 78rpm wax records (unfortunately easily broken) with only one song on each side. Most were popular 10-inchers, though classical pieces might be on a 12-inch disk.

There was a Mr. Carty who worked at one of El Paso's department stores who would often phone to alert me that a new release had come in by Perry Como, Jo Stafford, Peggy Lee or Bing Crosby. (Even now, when I encounter a reference to Crosby, Sills & Nash, I think: Bing?) Then on the next Saturday, I'd hop on the local bus to the store and splurge almost all of my allowance on the latest treasure.

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[Steve Hendren](#) - I sure enjoyed your piece on vinyl and record stores. I was a king of vinyl during my high school years and since the statute of limitations has likely expired, I can now divulge my crime of ordering new releases through my mom's Columbia House membership for \$4.99 (\$5.99 for some blockbusters), recording the album on my reel-to-reel tape deck, and then selling the album for \$3.99 (or \$4.99) to a classmate. Therefore, I built my music collection at \$1.00 per album. Illegally of course.

As for my record store experience, I too loved perusing the titles when I was in college and my mom's mail order option was less convenient. A friend picked out a new title, handed it to me, and said, "Buy this one; it'll change your life". I did and it did. Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon. I still have it and it's been played once to record it.

So I did build a bit of a vinyl collection after my high school boot-legging days, however, I yearned for a technology that would address the degradation that occurs to vinyl when that diamond needle carves away a portion of that soft vinyl groove, and some of the song's fidelity, every time it's played. And sure enough, along came compact discs and streaming. No, the quality isn't as good as a new vinyl album but then neither are my ears, thanks to Pink Floyd.

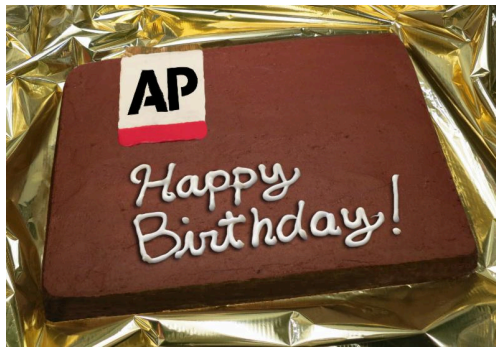
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[Christopher Lehourites](#) - As a vinyl record collector, I enjoyed your story today!

When I was assessing my move from London back to Rhode Island, I considered just tossing almost everything and bringing only some clothes with me. But because of my 1,500 or so vinyl records I knew I had to hire a moving company, and since they were taking the records, I figured I could keep much of the rest of my stuff as well.

But the main reason was the records!

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[David Powell](#)

Stories of interest

Russia says former Fox News host Tucker Carlson has interviewed Vladimir Putin (AP)

By DAVID BAUDER

Russian President Vladimir Putin has been interviewed by former Fox News host Tucker Carlson, the Kremlin confirmed Wednesday. It is Putin's first interview to a Western media figure since his full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago.

Carlson had released a video from Moscow on Tuesday in which he said he would be interviewing Putin. Carlson claimed that Western journalists had interviewed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy multiple times but could not be "bothered" to interview the Russian president.

The interview will be posted Thursday, according to Justin Wells, head of programming at Carlson's streaming network. It's not known what was said in the interview.

Putin has heavily limited his contact with international media since he launched the war in Ukraine in February 2022. Russian authorities have cracked down on media,

forcing some independent Russian outlets to close, blocking others and ordering a number of foreign reporters to leave the country. Two journalists working for U.S. news organizations — The Wall Street Journal’s Evan Gershkovich and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s Alsu Kurmasheva — are in jail on charges they reject.

Read more [here](#).

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Oversight board urges Meta to rethink its policy on manipulated media in high-stakes election year (AP)

BY ALI SWENSON

NEW YORK (AP) — An oversight board is criticizing Facebook owner Meta’s policies regarding manipulated media as “incoherent” and insufficient to address the flood of online disinformation that already has begun to target elections across the globe this year.

The quasi-independent board on Monday said its review of an altered video of President Joe Biden that spread on Facebook exposed gaps in the policy. The board said Meta should expand the policy to focus not only on videos generated with artificial intelligence, but on media regardless of how it was created. That includes fake audio recordings, which already have convincingly impersonated political candidates in the U.S. and elsewhere.

The company also should clarify the harms it is trying to prevent and should label images, videos and audio clips as manipulated instead of removing the posts altogether, the Meta Oversight Board said.

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

-0-

5 facts about how Americans use Facebook, two decades after its launch (Pew Research)

BY KATHERINE SCHAEFFER

Social media giant Facebook launched 20 years ago this week. Over the last two decades, the site has transformed the way people connect online, and its reach has grown to 3 billion monthly users worldwide. In recent years, lawmakers and the public in the United States and abroad have grown more critical of Facebook and its parent company, Meta.

Here are five key facts about Americans and Facebook, based on Pew Research Center surveys.

How we did this

Around seven-in-ten U.S. adults (68%) say they ever use Facebook, a share that has remained relatively flat since 2016, according to a survey conducted between May and September 2023.

With the exception of YouTube – used by 83% of adults – no other social media platform comes close to Facebook in usage. Roughly half of adults (47%) report using Instagram, while around a third use Pinterest (35%) and TikTok (33%). About three-in-ten each say they use LinkedIn (30%), WhatsApp (29%) and Snapchat (27%). Smaller shares use X (formerly called Twitter), Reddit and BeReal. Meta owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

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

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The New York Times made more than \$1 billion from digital subscriptions in 2023 (Nieman Labs)

BY: SARAH SCIRE

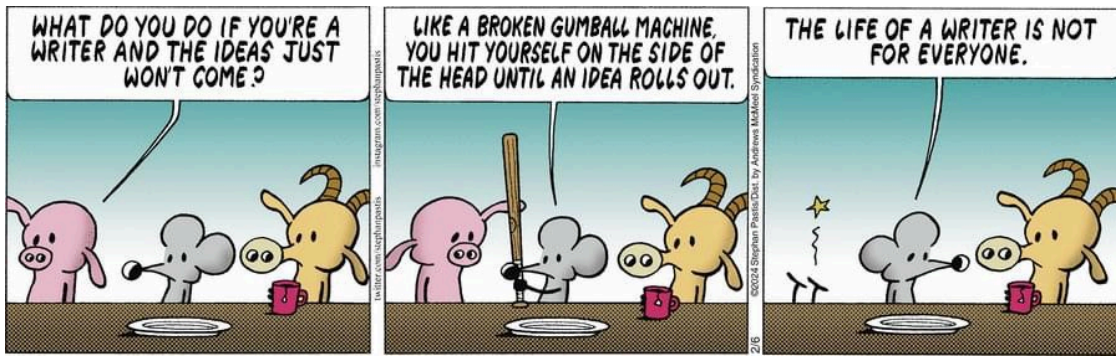
The New York Times ended 2023 with 10.36 million subscribers, including 9.7 digital-only subscribers, according to an end-of-year report presented to investors on Wednesday.

The Times added 300,000 new digital-only subscribers in the last months of 2023, more than it added in any quarter for the previous year. The Times now makes more than twice as much revenue from digital subscriptions as it does from print subscriptions. Revenue from digital subscriptions totaled \$1.09 billion in 2023.

The New York Times, we've noted before, no longer features a news-only subscription. Instead, it's all about The Bundle. With significantly better retention rates for subscribers who use multiple Times products, the company is pushing its all-access digital bundle that includes Games, Cooking, Wirecutter, and The Athletic alongside its journalism. At the end of 2023, a little under half — 4.22 million or 43% — of digital-only subscribers were bundle or multi-product subscribers.

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

The Final Word



Shared by Michael Weinfeld, Charlie Monzella.

Today in History: Feb. 8, 2024



Today is Thursday, Feb. 8, the 39th day of 2024. There are 327 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 8, 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in England after she was implicated in a plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

On this date:

In 1693, a charter was granted for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in the Virginia Colony.

In 1910, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated.

In 1922, President Warren G. Harding had a radio installed in the White House.

In 1924, the first execution by gas in the United States took place at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City as Gee Jon, a Chinese immigrant convicted of murder, was put to death.

In 1952, Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed her accession to the British throne following the death of her father, King George VI.

In 1960, work began on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, located on Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street in Los Angeles.

In 1965, Eastern Air Lines Flight 663, a DC-7, crashed shortly after takeoff from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport; all 84 people on board were killed.

In 1968, three Black students were killed in a confrontation between demonstrators and highway patrolmen at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg in the wake of protests over a whites-only bowling alley.

In 1971, NASDAQ, the world's first electronic stock exchange, held its first trading day.

In 1973, Senate leaders named seven members of a select committee to investigate the Watergate scandal, including its chairman, Democrat Sam J. Ervin of North Carolina.

In 2007, model, actor and reality TV star Anna Nicole Smith died in Hollywood, Florida, at age 39 of an accidental drug overdose.

In 2020, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing said a 60-year-old U.S. citizen who'd been diagnosed with the coronavirus had died on Feb. 5 in Wuhan; it was apparently the first American fatality from the virus.

In 2021, longtime NFL coach Marty Schottenheimer died in North Carolina at 77.

In 2022, "The Power of the Dog" topped the 2022 Oscar nominations with 10. (It would go on to win just one, best director for Jane Campion.)

In 2023, Rescue teams in Turkey and Syria searched for signs of life in the rubble of thousands of buildings toppled by a catastrophic earthquake. The confirmed death toll from the world's deadliest quake in more than a decade approached 12,000 and eventually would be more than 50,000.

Today's birthdays: Composer-conductor John Williams is 92. Broadcast journalist Ted Koppel is 84. Actor Nick Nolte is 83. Comedian Robert Klein is 82. Actor-rock musician Creed Bratton is 81. Singer Ron Tyson is 76. Actor Brooke Adams is 75. Actor Mary Steenburgen is 71. Author John Grisham is 69. Retired NBA All-Star and College Basketball Hall of Famer Marques Johnson is 68. Actor Henry Czerny is 65. Rock singer Vince Neil (Motley Crue) is 63. Former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa P. Jackson is 62. Movie producer Toby Emmerich is 61. Actor Missy Yager is 56. Actor Mary McCormack is 55. Basketball Hall of Famer Alonzo Mourning is 54. Actor Susan Misner is 53. Dance musician Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (Daft Punk) is 50. Actor Seth Green is 50. Actor Joshua Morrow is 50. Rock musician Phoenix (Linkin Park) is 47. Actor William Jackson Harper is 44. Actor Jim Parrack is 43. Folk singer-musician Joey Ryan (Milk Carton Kids) is 42. Actor-comedian Cecily Strong is 40. Rock musician Jeremy Davis is 39. Hip-hop artist Anderson.Paak is 38. Actor Ryan Pinkston is 36. NBA star Klay Thompson is 34. Professional surfer Bethany Hamilton is 34. Actor Karle Warren is 32.

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.



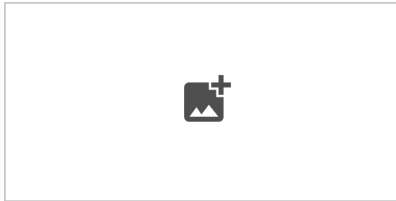
Got a story to share? A favorite memory of your AP days? Don't keep them to yourself. Share with your colleagues by sending to Ye Olde Connecting Editor. And don't forget to include photos!

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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