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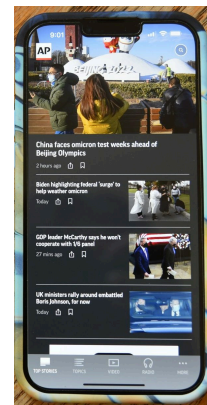
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Connecting

Feb. 19, 2024

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Colleagues,

Good Monday morning on this Feb. 19, 2024,

If you're a regular viewer of CBS Sunday Morning, like I am, then I trust you saw this segment yesterday morning:

Two years ago journalist Mstyslav Chernov and a team from the AP team documented Russian forces bombarding the Ukrainian city of Mariupol. Their footage exposed the horrors of the attack which formed the basis of Chernov's Oscar-nominated documentary, "20 Days in Mariupol."

If you missed it or want to view again, click [here](#). (Thanks to Jerry Cipriano, Lee Siegel and Peggy Walsh for sharing.)

We lead today's issue with an account by our colleague **Mike Harris** of health issues he encountered over the past year. It has a happy ending – and I know I join all of his friends and colleagues in wishing him a continued successful recovery.

Mike joined the AP as a newsman in Chicago in 1969, worked as a sports writer in Indianapolis and Cleveland and was named the AP's Auto Racing Writer in 1980. He was based out of New York Sports the rest of his career, living in Westfield, NJ, until winding up in Raleigh from 1995 until his retirement in July 2010. He and his wife Judy moved to Newton, Mass., shortly after their first grandchild was born that year.

He covered college sports, the NFL, Major League baseball, the ABA and the NBA, the NHL, tennis, golf, Super Bowl XIII, Olympics in Las Angeles and Seoul and hundreds of auto races, including 40 Indianapolis 500s and 30 Daytona 500s.

Click [here](#) for a video showing Mike ring the bell at the end of radiation treatments; a still of that big moment is below. (Thanks to Mark Mittelstadt for his tech support in bringing you both.)

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

Paul



Former AP auto writer Mike Harris survives 'frightening adventure,' now on the road to full recovery

Mike Harris - Reading Connecting five days a week I often think about the old saying that if you love your job, you never work a day in your life. It seems a lot of you feel

the same way.

Of course, there were some tough days. But I am grateful for my 41 years working for The Associated Press.

One of my favorite things about Connecting is the monthly list of colleagues in their 80's, 90's and 100's. I joined that list last June and considered myself very lucky to be starting my eighth decade.

I had no idea I was about to undergo a very frightening adventure that would have me questioning my future.

Until last September I was living a relatively healthy life. I was taking medications for high blood pressure and high cholesterol, but both were well under control. And I was walking three miles five or six days a week.

No one knows what the future holds, but I felt like I was likely to be around for a good few years.

My wife, Judy, and I went on a week's vacation trip in late September, heading to Kansas City to attend the wedding of a good friend's daughter, then flying on to New Mexico to visit a longtime friend who has been battling some serious lung problems and can no longer travel.

We had a great time at both stops and, on the day before we were to head home, we drove to Albuquerque, visited the Atomic Energy Museum and then checked into our hotel for our last night's stay.

Judy was unpacking and I was lying on the bed poking around on my cellphone, looking for a nearby place to eat dinner, when I suddenly found that my pointing finger was not working. Then I realized my entire right arm was numb and I could barely raise it.

Scared, I told Judy that I was afraid I was having a stroke. She called the front desk and asked them to call 911.

Paramedics arrived at our room within 10 minutes. By then, my hand and arm were feeling normal. But, our course, I was scared and anxious and I needed to be checked out.

The first thing the EMTs did was test me to see if I did have a stroke or mini-stroke. The answer appeared to be no. But I was taken to the emergency room at a nearby



hospital for further tests.

That began a 14-hour marathon at the ultra-busy ER. During that time, I was tested several times for signs of a stroke, had a CAT-Scan and an MRI. By about 5:30 in the morning it was determined that I had a brain tumor, called a meningioma.

The tumor was in the sheath above the brain and most meningiomas are benign, but it was still a very scary diagnosis.

A very kind ER doctor, who had spent a lot of time with us overnight, said I needed to have the tumor removed as soon as possible and suggested we stay in Albuquerque and have it done there. But he also said it would be no problem for me to fly home. Judy and I both agreed it would make more sense to be back in Boston (we live in suburban Newton) for the support system and the top-notch medical care available there.

We left the ER at around 6 a.m., took an Uber to our hotel, picked up our luggage, which had spent the night in our room, ate a quick breakfast and drove to the airport, which was only about a mile away.

We were not charged for our hotel room because Judy had kept the hotel staff up to date on what was going on. And, when we got to the airport, I told the person who checked us in at Hertz that I had spent the night in an ER and had not had time to fill the gas tank. He not only waived the charge but arranged for someone to drive us and our luggage to the terminal.

We made the flight, but, with a long stopover in Austin, TX, we didn't get home until midnight. Meanwhile, Judy had called our primary care physician's office and left a message about what was going on, asking for him to arrange an appointment with a neurosurgeon as soon as possible.

We did not hear back that day, but when Judy called the doctor's office early the next morning, we found that he had gotten us an appointment with one of the best neurosurgeons in Massachusetts for 12:30 that day.

It turned out that one of our primary care doctor's patients is the neurosurgeon's resident and several calls to his office did the trick.

The surgeon told us he usually did not operate on anyone my age, but that I was a good candidate because of my walking and generally active lifestyle.

I was put on steroids to lower the swelling around the tumor and anti-seizure medication to make sure I had no more incidents before the surgery, which was scheduled for the next week.

After a 6 ½-hour operation, we were told they had gotten all of the tumor except perhaps 1 percent near one of the major veins in the brain. It was deemed a very successful surgery and I was home three days later, feeling tired but with all my functions intact.

The biopsy showed some very aggressive cells and I was advised to undergo radiation to keep the tumor from growing back. Starting the week of Thanksgiving, I did 30 sessions of radiation – five days a week for six weeks, ending Jan. 3.

Now I'm well on my way to a full recovery. I feel pretty much back to my old self and I'm walking and building up my stamina. I also feel incredibly fortunate that the mild seizure I had in Albuquerque alerted us to the tumor and allowed me to have it removed and go on with my life.

I hope to be on that Connecting list of aged colleagues for many years to come.

John Lawrence Hotard, 1942 – 2024

[Scott McCartney](#) - Sad news about the death of John Hotard, state editor in Dallas when I first got hired at AP. John was always cool under pressure and a great teacher. A straight-shooter who epitomized all that the AP stood for. When he went to American Airlines, he was the same honest broker who understood news so well. I worked with him in a different dynamic when I covered AA for The Wall Street Journal, and John was always John — funny, curious, caring. He will be missed.



Excerpted from [John's obituary](#):

John's first job after graduating was with the Hammond Times in the northwest corner of Indiana. It was there that he got the experience needed as a reporter. Two years later he returned to Texas to join the Associated Press in Dallas. He spent almost 15 years with the AP, the last seven as state editor.

In 1974, John married Susan Elizabeth Swain, an English teacher at Eastern Hills High School in Fort Worth and TCU graduate, whom he met on a blind date. They celebrated their marriage almost 49 years until her death in February 2023.

John switched from journalism to public relations in 1985 when he joined the corporate communications department at American Airlines in Fort Worth as a company spokesman. There he supported the operations side of the airline and was a member of the "Go Team," a group of employees from various departments who traveled to the site of accidents or major incidents, to aid in the investigations.

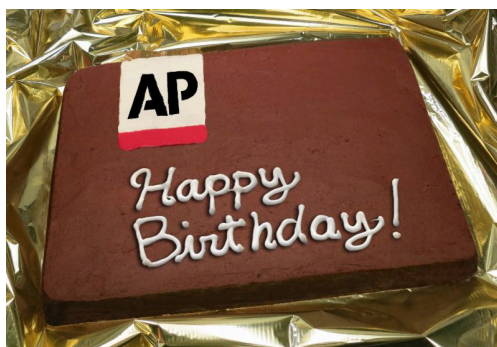
AP 'Sighting'

[Adolphe Bernotas](#) - From New York Times' online update during Feb. 15 coverage of Trump's hush-money case.

Jonah Bromwich

Donald J. Trump is making remarks outside the courtroom. We don't have someone there, but the Associated Press does. The wire service reports that Trump is saying he'll sit in the courtroom during the day and campaign at night, complaining that he'll be in court for months.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



[Mack McClure](#)

[Angie Lamoli Silvestry](#)

[David Tirrell-Wysocki](#)

Stories of interest

Photographer and Reporter Arrested for Covering Anti-Government Protest (F Stoppers)

by Alex Cooke

On a day marked by tensions surrounding press freedom in Thailand, two journalists found themselves ensnared in the legal system for their investigative work into acts of political defiance against the monarchy.

The saga unfolded as freelance photographer Natthapon Phanphongsanon was depicted in the back of a police vehicle, captured by the lenses of his peers outside the Thing Song Hong police station in Bangkok. This visual testament to the day's events underscored the precarious balance between state authority and journalistic inquiry in Thailand.

The incident, which occurred nearly a year prior to their arrest, involved the defacement of the Grand Palace wall with graffiti—a visual protest against the pro-monarchy laws that govern the country. Specifically, the graffiti featured an anarchist symbol and a line through the number 112, a direct reference to Article 112 of Thailand’s Criminal Code. This article, infamously known as the lese-majeste law, imposes harsh penalties on anyone found guilty of insulting the monarchy, with sentences ranging from three to fifteen years in prison.

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

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‘The Investment Firms Leave Behind a Barren Wasteland’ (Politico Magazine)

By JACK SHAFER

The great American newspaper ain’t what it used to be. At practically every newspaper in the country except for a fortunate few, hard times have reduced page count, eliminated news beats and resulted in the layoffs of thousands of journalists.

The hardest hit, Margot Susca reports in her new book, *Hedged: How Private Investment Funds Helped Destroy American Newspapers and Undermine Democracy*, have been the chain newspapers — Gannett, GateHouse, Lee Enterprises, et al. — purchased and squeezed by private equity firms like Alden Global Capital. Nationwide, the percentage of newspapers owned by private equity rose from 5 percent in 2001 to 23 percent in 2019; they include such storied titles as the Chicago Tribune, the Orange County Register and USA Today, as well as scores of smaller papers. Some papers have been reduced to zombie versions of their former selves as the new owners have shaved them down to minimize costs, depriving readers of the comprehensive coverage they enjoyed in the golden age of newspapers.

Susca, an American University professor of journalism and a former newspaper journalist, writes that these new owners have turned their backs on what she thinks is the true purpose of newspapers — to serve democracy — in their pursuit of greed. For a taste of the book, see this excerpt in Neiman Reports.

As someone who’s covered the industry’s growing travails for some time, you can detect a bit of skepticism from my questions. Is Wall Street really to blame for the fall of newspapers? By the end of our conversation, she was asking me, “Did you just brush up on your Milton Friedman?”

Read more [here](#). Shared by Richard Chady.

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Sinclair’s recipe for TV news: Crime, homelessness, illegal drugs (Washington Post)

Story by Sarah Ellison

Every year, local television news stations owned by Sinclair Broadcasting conduct short surveys among viewers to help guide the year's coverage.

A key question in each poll, according to David Smith, the company's executive chairman: "What are you most afraid of?"

The answers are evident in Sinclair's programming. Crime, homelessness, illegal drug use, failing schools and other societal ills have long been core elements of local TV news coverage. But on Sinclair's growing nationwide roster of stations, the editorial focus reflects Smith's conservative views and plays on its audience's fears that America's cities are falling apart, according to media observers, Smith associates, and current and former staffers who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal company matters.

Smith, an enthusiastic supporter of Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump who has built Sinclair into one of the largest television station operators in the country, purchased the Baltimore Sun last month. In a private meeting with the Sun's journalists, he urged them to emulate coverage at the local Sinclair station, Fox45, which in 2021 produced a documentary titled simply "Baltimore Is Dying."

Read more [here](#). Shared by Doug Pizac, Dennis Conrad, Richard Chady.

Today in History - Feb. 19, 2024



Today is Monday, Feb. 19, the 50th day of 2024. There are 316 days left in the year.

Today's highlight

On Feb. 19, 1942, during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which paved the way for the relocation and internment of people of Japanese ancestry, including U.S.-born citizens.

On this date

In 1473, astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus was born in Torun, Poland.

In 1807, former Vice President Aaron Burr, accused of treason, was arrested in the Mississippi Territory, in present-day Alabama. (Burr was acquitted at trial.)

In 1878, Thomas Edison received a U.S. patent for "an improvement in phonograph or speaking machines."

In 1945, Operation Detachment began during World War II as some 30,000 U.S. Marines began landing on Iwo Jima, where they commenced a successful month-long battle to seize control of the island from Japanese forces.

In 1959, an agreement was signed by Britain, Turkey and Greece granting Cyprus its independence.

In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford, calling the issuing of the internment order for people of Japanese ancestry in 1942 "a sad day in American history," signed a proclamation formally confirming its termination.

In 1985, the British soap opera "EastEnders" debuted on BBC Television.

In 1986, the U.S. Senate approved, 83-11, the Genocide Convention, an international treaty outlawing "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group," nearly 37 years after the pact was first submitted for ratification.

In 1997, Deng Xiaoping (dung shah-oh-ping), the last of China's major Communist revolutionaries, died at age 92.

In 2003, an Iranian military plane carrying 275 members of the elite Revolutionary Guards crashed in southeastern Iran, killing all on board.

In 2008, an ailing Fidel Castro resigned the Cuban presidency after nearly a half-century in power; his brother Raul was later named to succeed him.

In 2012, 44 were killed in a prison riot in Apodaca, northern Mexico.

In 2017, Three former elite U.S. gymnasts, including 2000 Olympian Jamie Dantzscher, appeared on CBS' "60 Minutes" to say they were sexually abused by Dr. Larry Nassar, a volunteer team physician for USA Gymnastics.

In 2019, President Donald Trump directed the Pentagon to develop plans for a new Space Force within the Air Force, accepting less than the full-fledged department he had wanted.

In 2023, Richard Belzer, the longtime stand-up comedian who became one of TV's most indelible detectives as John Munch in "Homicide: Life on the Street" and "Law & Order: SVU," died at age 78.

Today's birthdays: Singer Smokey Robinson is 84. Former Sony Corp. Chairman Howard Stringer is 82. Singer Lou Christie is 81. Rock musician Tony Iommi (Black Sabbath, Heaven and Hell) is 76. Actor Stephen Nichols is 73. Author Amy Tan is 72. Actor Jeff Daniels is 69. Rock singer-musician Dave Wakeling is 68. Talk show host Lorianne Crook is 67. Actor Ray Winstone is 67. Actor Leslie David Baker is 66. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell is 65. Britain's Prince Andrew is 64. Tennis Hall of Famer Hana Mandlikova is 62. Singer Seal is 61. Actor Jessica Tuck is 61. Rock musician Jon Fishman (Phish) is 59. Actor Justine Bateman is 58. Actor Benicio Del Toro is 57. Actor Bellamy Young is 54. Rock musician Daniel Adair is 49. Pop singer-actor Haylie Duff is 39. Actor Arielle Kebbel is 39. Christian rock musician Seth Morrison (Skillet) is 36. Actor Luke Pasqualino is 34. Actor Victoria Justice is 31. Actor David Mazouz (TV: "Gotham") is 23. Actor Millie Bobby 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.

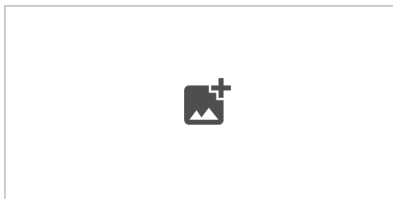
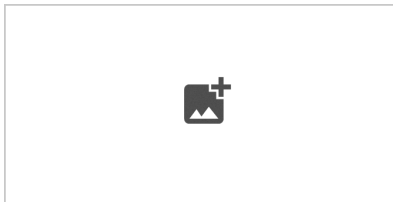
- **First job** - How did you get your first job in journalism?

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

Paul Stevens

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