

PHOTOS

Hal Buell

WHY NOT A CAMERA?

The landing craft moved straight and true toward the distant shore, a black sand beach anchored at one end by an ugly hump of a mountain called Suribachi. AP photographer Joe Rosenthal hunkered down against the steel bulkhead, huddled over his 4x5 Speed Graphic to protect it from the salt spray. He was surrounded by Marines, kids really, ten or fifteen years his junior, and a line of hand trucks loaded with mortar ammunition. Rosenthal, 33, from San Francisco, rejected by the Army for bad eyesight, took scant notice of the mountain, where, in a few days' time, he would experience the defining moment of his life. His concern was the beach; his concern was how many of his companions, youths who in other circumstances he might have photographed playing football or basketball in California, would die; his concern was whether he would die.¹

Rosenthal stood briefly and photographed other landing craft also headed for the beach. Then the boat crunched on the sand, and Marines--Rosenthal with them--rushed into the hellfire of the Iwo Jima landing in World War II on February 19, 1945.

Rosenthal would write later that surviving the beach under fire was like walking in rain and not getting wet. But survive the beach he did, as he had survived previous assault landings on Guam, Peleliu, and Anguar. He made pictures of Marines struggling in the heavy, granular basalt of the terraced beachhead, of fallen Marines, of the beach under fire, and of American troops dug in along the island's

coast. His photos, flown later that day to Guam and a photo pool office which handled and relayed combat photography, were radioed on to San Francisco, on the way to the front pages of America's newspapers.²

On the fifth day of the Battle of Iwo Jima, Rosenthal and two Marine photographers climbed the slopes of Mt. Suribachi in search of pictures that marked the taking of the island's high ground. Atop the dormant, five hundred sixty-foot volcanic cone, they came upon a group of Marines preparing to raise an American flag.

"The colonel wants us to put up a bigger flag than the one we put up earlier," one of them told Rosenthal, "so that every son of bitch on the island can see it."³

Rosenthal looked for the right position, the best picture. He chose a straight-on view, pulled over some small boulders, and stacked a few Japanese sandbags on top to gain a bit of height.

The flag swung up in a steady arc, pushed by five Marines and a Navy corpsman. It flapped and stood out straight in the brisk, Pacific Ocean wind.

"I just hoped that I got what I saw in the viewfinder," Rosenthal recalled later. He made three other pictures, one of Marines holding the flagpole in place while it was tied down, and two of Marines waving their weapons and helmets beneath the flag.⁴

Then everyone went about the business of war. The battle would continue until March 26. Nearly seven thousand Marines would die; twenty-one would be wounded; twenty-two thousand Japanese would die, and twelve hundred would survive. The bloodletting ranked with Gettysburg.⁵

Rosenthal's picture appeared in Sunday papers of February 25 and became an instant national phenomenon, the lasting image of the Pacific war. It was chosen as the symbol of a war bond drive, and Rosenthal was recalled to the United States to help with the campaign. AP gave him a pay raise and a bonus of a year's salary. The three flag raisers who survived the battle also were summoned home and hailed as heroes. A postage stamp of the scene was issued, the first with images of live persons. The

world's largest bronze statue, the Marine Memorial at Arlington, Virginia, was commissioned and unveiled in 1954. Books were written about the picture. It was featured in movies, and later, there would be television documentaries to tell the story of the flag raising at Iwo Jima.

But there also was controversy. The picture was said to be phony, posed, not a photo of the first flag raising.⁶ The charge of “posed picture” haunted the image and plagued Rosenthal. The charge was proven false again and again, and the power of the image made it the most published photograph ever made, arguably the most famous of all time.

The AP Wirephoto network that distributed Rosenthal's picture was only ten years old in 1945, still a relatively new use of a technology that revolutionized daily picture journalism. It was nearly twenty-four hours before Rosenthal's picture reached U.S. newspapers, and that was high-speed delivery by World War II standards. In the twenty-first century, the picture could have been transmitted from atop Suribachi and delivered in minutes, in color, via satellite circuits that straddle the world. The AP photo service that began in 1927 was a plodding, mailed, and hand-delivered system that trailed those of other agencies. AP pictures by wire were only a vision.

In a London photo magazine of 1898, William Gamble, the editor, had written of the revolution that would come if “it were possible to transmit the pictures over the wires with the same facility as we now transmit the words.”⁷

Scientists were working on it. By 1910, they had achieved some success with technologies that delivered a reasonable rendition of pictures across hundreds of miles of wire. In 1926, the American Telephone & Telegraph Company put its system to use in a commercial service for picture transmissions among major U.S. cities.

The technology for printing photographs on newspaper pages was developing, too, and after 1900, pictures became part of daily journalism, especially in the mass circulation tabloids. But most pictures

were local. Pictures by wire were limited to occasional transmissions using the AT&T service.

Transmission fees ranged from fifty to a hundred dollars, depending on the size of the photograph and the distance it was sent, too expensive for regular use. And the quality of the pictures did not compare to the that of original photographs.

So picture distribution before 1935 relied on the mail, trains, and infrequent shipments on airlines. It took about eighty-five hours to get a picture from one coast to the other. The Hearst newspapers started International News Photos in 1915, and the *New York Times* inaugurated Wide World Photos in 1919.⁸ Scripps-Howard National Enterprise Association got into the photo business in 1925. Its pictures were days, sometimes more than a week, in transit, so they were feature-oriented.

AP General Manager Kent Cooper wanted a service that would send news photographs by wire on a regular basis. In 1927, AP hired its first two photographers, Berk Payne in Washington and N.B. Harris in New York. Gradually, AP photographers were added in other cities, and AP newspapers were asked to contribute their best pictures. Soon, hundreds of photos were being printed daily, captioned, and taken to post offices. Control centers were established in eight U.S. cities where AT&T commercial picture transmission service was available.

The first big test of the new AP service came at the 1928 national political conventions, where Democrat Al Smith and Republican Herbert Hoover won the presidential nominations. Four AP photographers took the pictures, and daily photo chief Alexander Murphy got them developed, captioned, and sent. The best were transmitted on the AT&T service to AP centers for distribution to newspapers.⁹

From headquarters, Norris Hughes sent out the rules for AP photo staffers: Send mail packages special delivery, make sure photo captions tell the story of the picture with punch, and “in a story of transcendent importance, send the first available picture, tho poor.” And nothing too risqué. “There ought to be no difficulty deciding which pictures are indecent.”

The upstart AP was competing with bigger, more seasoned agencies, but by the early 1930s, it was distributing photos to more than eight hundred newspapers.

Competition was fierce; rival photographers pushed to get the best angles for their pictures, raced, and sometimes connived, to get their film out first. At the 1932 Democratic convention in Chicago, at the climactic session that nominated Franklin D. Roosevelt for the White House, the doors of the hall were locked to maintain order against a crush of people outside. AP's Al Resch recalled the scene, and the way out. An AP messenger, Henry Ferguson, all of four feet ten inches tall, feigned a fainting spell in the heat of the convention floor. The marshals unlocked a door so he could be taken outside to an ambulance, which sped him to the AP office. Film holders were hidden in his shirt, and the AP pictures got to the AT&T transmitting station long before the competition could deliver its photos.¹⁰

When Max Baer beat Primo Carnera for the heavyweight boxing championship in 1933, five photographers were at ringside, and six messengers rushed their film round by round to the AP office. Within four hours of the fight, fifty-two packages of action photos were sent off by air and another twenty-four by rail to meet newspaper deadlines across the country.¹¹

AT&T ended its commercial service in 1933, despite an increasing demand for news photos. The service had cost the company nearly three million dollars, and it wasn't making enough money. So the transmitters were shut down and photo distribution reverted to the mail, the railroads, and the airlines.

But even before the commercial service went under, Cooper was lobbying AP's publisher-directors to establish a picture network that would send photos swiftly to match the stories on the news wire. It was a hard sell. In the Depression, publishers weren't looking for costly new services, especially after the telephone company already had failed.

It was no help when AP flopped in covering the disaster of the Morro Castle, a luxury cruise ship that caught fire as it returned to New York from Havana in 1934. AP was late in shooting aerial pictures of

the flaming ship off the New Jersey coast. Competing agencies delivered pictures long before AP did, and when photographer Harry Harris finally was sent to shoot, his airplane sputtered to a forced landing far from transportation. That bad show on a big story was cited by skeptics as evidence of AP's inexperience in picture agency work.

Newspaper publishers in the Hearst and Scripps-Howard groups led the opposition to a new AP service, worried that their own photo services would be threatened. Opponents called it wasteful, visionary beyond belief. Even if it worked, they argued, only wealthy papers could afford it at the expense of smaller newspapers.

But AP directors authorized the development of Wirephoto, overriding bitter opposition in a sometimes-angry debate at the AP annual meeting in April 1934. It would become as revolutionary a development in journalism as the invention of the telegraph a century before. The Wirephoto network was set up quickly, the first transmission going to forty-seven newspapers in twenty-five states on January 1, 1935. The first picture was an aerial view of a plane crash in upstate New York.

Wirephoto quickly became indispensable to newspapers.

In August, humorist Will Rogers and aviator Wiley Post were killed in an airplane crash near Point Barrow, Alaska. Pictures were made at the scene by a medical missionary and a trading post shopkeeper, and AP arranged to have the plane that carried the bodies of the two men also ferry the film to Fairbanks. It was flown on to AP San Francisco, processed, and transmitted to the nation's newspapers, the only picture coverage of a compelling story.

At the 1935 World Series between the Detroit Tigers and the Chicago Cubs, pictures were transmitted within twenty minutes of the first pitch, unthinkable speed for the time, and some newspapers were on the street with photos before the game ended.

Editors wanted more pictures, faster. The challenge was getting them to a transmission point when a news story broke far from network bureaus. The answer was to create a portable transmitter and take it to the site of a story. AP technicians put together a system that could be carried in two suitcases, each weighing about forty pounds. By 1936, they had the system working well in the laboratory.

But news didn't happen in the laboratory. The proving ground was in western Pennsylvania, where floods had isolated Pittsburgh, its airport awash, highways impassable, and most communications down.

AP packed its portable transmitter in cartons and shipped them to Pittsburgh, to be reassembled on the scene. It was a long shot; the system had not been operated outside the lab, let alone in a flooded city.

A plane carrying the transmitter and two AP engineers, Harold Carlson and Jim Barnes, was forced down short of Pittsburgh, and they had to charter another. That flight landed on the wet runway just before the airport was closed. The AP crew went to the nearby telephone company building to assemble the system. Working by candlelight, the crew put the transmitter together on table tops, a mass of wires, tubes, switches, and black boxes.

Pictures of the flood were obtained from the local newspaper. The telephone company found a working line. The Wirephoto drum rolled. The transmitter worked. The photos were the first ever delivered from a portable system, and the only ones newspapers got in those first days of the flood.¹²

In 1938, Francis Alvin Resch, a taciturn Phi Beta Kappa from Illinois, became chief of the photo service. Resch would run the show for thirty years, building Wirephoto into the dominant force in news pictures. Soon after he took over, London advised by cable that AP could buy film of the sinking of an insurgent ship in the Spanish Civil War if Resch approved the two thousand dollar price demanded by the naval officer who made the photos. That was big money for a picture. Resch couldn't get clearance from his bosses, so he approved the purchase himself, sight unseen. The photos were sensational and exclusive,

a major beat for AP. The deal set the competitive standard, a tone for the purchase of film from amateur photographers on major stories.

AP photographer Max Desfor was covering a Washington Redskins football game on Sunday, December 7, 1941, when the stadium loudspeaker broadcast messages telling military officers to call their offices. Desfor headed back to the bureau. The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor.

Within hours, he photographed Japanese diplomats burning documents in their embassy yard and being escorted by an angry Secretary of State Cordell Hull through the hallways of the State Department.¹³

Photographers shared the peril of the battlefield with troops, lugging their fifty pounds of 4x5 Speed Graphic equipment with them, scrounging film where they could, and shipping it undeveloped and unseen to be processed and transmitted.

In the Pacific, Frank “Pappy” Noel was among the first to feel the sting of war. He was with the British in Malaya as the Japanese drove down the Malay Peninsula. By January 1942, Singapore was under air attack and Noel was suffering from malaria. AP recalled him, but two hundred seventy miles at sea, a Japanese submarine torpedoed the freighter he was aboard, killing five people. Noel’s cabin door jammed, but he battered it open with a heavy chair, picked up his cameras, and boarded a lifeboat. The survivors watched as the sub shelled the ship until it went under. Three days later, as Noel and the others drifted on the Indian Ocean, another lifeboat came alongside. A survivor asked for water, a cigarette, anything to ease the burning of the tropical sun. But there was nothing to give. Instinctively, Noel raised his camera and made a picture of the sailor reaching out. The boat drifted off, a squall developed, and it was not seen again. After five days, Noel’s lifeboat miraculously drifted ashore on Sumatra, and he made his way to London. His picture of the crewman was distributed and won AP’s first Pulitzer Prize for photography.¹⁴

Another AP photo came to symbolize Britain's stiff upper lip in the face of the Blitz. Night after night, German bombs rained, fires raged, and Londoners took shelter in subways, darkened streets, and cellars. Not Eddie Worth. The AP staff photographer, who would later be on the beaches of Normandy, crept along the edge of a roof on Fleet Street. He had noted on an earlier night that St. Paul's Church had survived the German air raids, and he intended to photograph it during the bombing. Worth moved along the roof, his helmet slipping and sliding across his balding head, and turned his viewfinder to the church, with its towering spires, standing clear against the fire, smoke, and explosions. He raised his camera and made his photo. The picture found its way into German hands as well, and was used as Nazi propaganda to show the effect of the attacks.¹⁵

Pictures from the field flowed into London from North Africa, Italy, and, after D-Day, from the Allied march across Europe. The pictures had to be cleared by censors in London, and then put together with photos from other pool members and from the military.

Photo coverage was skimpy on D-Day, January 6, 1944, when Allied forces stormed the Normandy beaches. AP pool photographers still were offshore in the English Channel when troops hit the beach. Three other news photographers made it to shore, and they got out only a handful of pictures; one man's film was lost, and famed *Life* magazine photographer Robert Capa's film was largely destroyed by mistakes in the London darkroom.¹⁶

George Bede Irvin was covering the invading Americans near St. Lo in July 1944, photographing the bombardment of German positions, and then moving closer to get a better shot. There was a shouted warning: The American bombs were falling short. Irvin leaped for a ditch but paused to reach for his camera. A bomb fragment caught him and killed him. He was the first AP photographer killed while covering the news.¹⁷

AP's Pete Carroll won a coin toss with a colleague to photograph the liberation of Paris. He was on a press truck ahead of U.S. troops, despite holdout Nazi snipers and occasional firefights in the street, and his photos of the Americans marching along the Champs Elysées, the Arc de Triomphe behind them, was one of the lasting images of the war.¹⁸

Coverage of war in the Pacific was markedly different. There were no familiar datelines like London and Paris, only strange names like Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima. Or Tarawa.

Frank Filan, a veteran photographer of the Pacific campaign, leaned on the railing of a troop transport off the coast of Tarawa, his latest stop in covering island invasions. It was November 22, 1943. He watched the bombing and shelling of Japanese fortifications on the tiny atoll and wondered how any installation or soldier could withstand it. Once in a landing craft and headed for the beach, however, it became clear that many Japanese, and their heavy artillery, had survived. A Japanese shell hit Filan's landing craft. With the Marines, he jumped over the side and began wading through the waters bloodied by the casualties of Japanese crossfire. Filan held his camera over his head to save it from damage.

A Marine nearby was hit and Filan went to his aid. They stepped into an underwater shell hole, and Filan lost his equipment but kept his hold on the wounded Marine and helped him to shore and to a corpsman.

"There I was," he said later, smiling at the irony of it, "a photographer in the middle of a battlefield without a camera." But Filan went to work bringing wounded Marines in from the nearby battle zone. His actions won a Navy commendation. The next day, not to be denied pictures, Filan borrowed a camera from a Coast Guard photographer and shot scenes of the ferocious battle, pictures that won a Pulitzer Prize.¹⁹

In 1945, AP's Max Desfor was sent to Saipan by the military but wasn't told why. Once there, he was told he would be photographing the landing of a B-29 bomber. It was the Enola Gay, returning from

Hiroshima after dropping the first atomic bomb. Desfor was the only civilian photographer to cover the plane's return. After Japan's surrender, he waded ashore outside Tokyo with the first Marines to land there, and then was one of the first newsmen to photograph the ruins of Hiroshima.

During the war, the U.S. Army Signal Corps had taken over AP Wirephoto research, commandeering its resources for the development and production of picture transmission equipment for the military. With peace, AP could go back to work to meet the growing needs and demands of American newspapers.

From the single photo wire that had linked cities and newspapers on one circuit, regional and state networks emerged in the post-war years, allowing picture transmissions of special interest to a state or area. By 1951, there were two hundred twenty photo transmitters in a hundred fifty seven U.S. cities, sending twenty thousand pictures, half made by AP photographers, half by photographers for AP newspapers.²⁰

European photo operations also expanded. Photo bureaus opened in Paris, Rome, Berlin, and then Frankfurt, where AP picture operations had been shut down by the Gestapo during the war. German staffers went back to work, some with AP photo files they had hidden from the Nazis.²¹

Kent Cooper worked with Japan's Kyodo news agency to create a wire service along the cooperative membership lines of Associated Press. Kyodo's Yuichi (Jackson) Ishizaki joined AP and established the Tokyo photo operation, a crucial editing and relay point when the Korean war broke out.

Photographers in Korea shipped film from their 4x5 Speed Graphic cameras to a U.S. air base outside Tokyo, with competitors' film often on the same plane. That led to races down Japanese highways to Tokyo bureaus. There, the film would be processed, submitted to censors, and sent to San Francisco by radiophoto. The race for the Tokyo radiophoto line was fierce. The second man in line might wait an hour or more for his turn, and the third would have no chance to meet U.S. newspaper deadlines.

Ishizaki got to the filing point one day with combat photos to send and no time to waste in parking. So he drove his jeep up the short flight of steps of the building that housed the international transmission site and dashed up the stairs inside to file. Another day, Ishizaki raced to the filing point with pictures and Bill Achatz, already inside, lowered a basket on a rope to pull them up and file before competitors could get there.²²

Desfor delivered one of the signature photographs of the Korean war. During the bitter winter of 1950, he had parachuted into the war zone just south of the Yalu River to make pictures of U.S. forces pushing North Koreans back to their border with China. But Chinese troops crossed the Yalu and pushed U.N. forces back. Desfor crossed the icy Taedong River on a temporary bridge near Pyongyang and a few miles downstream saw the twisted steel girders of a bombed-out bridge covered with hundreds of fleeing Koreans, inching their way precariously, hand over hand, along the bared girders. Some fell into the freezing water. Thousands more waited their turn. Desfor never forgot the deathly silence.

“They covered the whole bridge, or what was left of it, edging their way foot by foot on the girders. They were fleeing the Chinese the same as we were,” Desfor recalled. “I walked over to the edge of a concrete wall, the river about fifty feet below me, and thought to myself, ‘the poor, miserable souls.’ ” He raised his camera and made his pictures, but the brutal cold turned his fingers numb after just a few frames. Desfor won a Pulitzer Prize.²³

Days earlier, Pappy Noel had been captured by the Communists while with a convoy of Marines trying to reach an isolated regiment south of the border between North Korea and China. In November 1951, his name appeared on a list of POWs.

At the Tokyo press club that December, AP correspondents were having drinks and talking about what they might send Pappy as a Christmas present. Whiskey, perhaps, or cigarettes, or canned food.

“Why not a camera?” Desfor suggested. That got a laugh, but, as he recalled, “The more we had to drink, the better the idea sounded.”

In Panmunjom, as delegates bickered in the “peace tent,” photographer Bob Schutz and correspondent Bob Tuckman pursued the idea with newsmen from the Communist media: Wilfred Burchett of Paris’ *Ce Soir*, Alan Winnington of London’s *Daily Worker*, and Chu Chi-ping of the Beijing *Tu Kung Pao*.

Early in January, 1952, the Communist newsmen told the AP men that the deal had been approved, and Schutz delivered a camera, film, and flashbulbs to Chu Chi-ping over a back fence at the peace talks. The secret project was dubbed Father Christmas. The waiting game began.

AP did not know it at the time, but Noel was not a favorite of his captors. He escaped from the camp during the summer with a U.S. officer, only to be spotted and turned in by Korean peasants a few days later. He spent more than a month in a prison “hole” that permitted no room to move.

Months later, Noel was taken by jeep from his prison quarters, fed a substantial meal, and shown Communist correspondence about the picture-taking plan. Noel went to work, determined not to fall into a trap of shooting propaganda photos.

On January 24, Tokyo got word that a Christmas package was being delivered to Bob Schutz. It was Noel’s film, and Schutz carried it to Tokyo. The pictures had been censored by the Chinese, some sections of the 4x5 film literally scissored out. But eleven photos made it to Japan, and the captive Noel had his scoop: “First Photos from Korean POW Camp,” as a U.S. headline said. His pictures showed American prisoners in the camp and their condition. It was the first of many photo shipments that Noel made from a number of camps. While the initial contact by Schutz and Tuckman had defied U.S. military media rules barring Western journalists from associating with their Communist counterparts, the effect

was ultimately to bring comfort to the families of the POWs shown and enable military officials to confirm that some men listed as missing in action were indeed alive.

Noel was freed by the Chinese in August 1953 with other POWs.²⁴

Photo technology made rapid strides in the 1950s, and competition became even more intense. In 1952, AP put into service a new kind of picture reception machine called PhotoFax. It did not require manual operation but recorded pictures automatically one after another on a roll of paper. PhotoFax cut the cost of labor and chemical-optical photo supplies, savings that brought new newspapers into the Wirephoto network.

Photo operations in Europe were growing, too. By 1956, London AP was the largest picture agency in Britain. Some seven thousand wire pictures moved through the London desk annually, and seven hundred fifty thousand prints were sent by air to twenty-five countries.²⁵

Meanwhile, Acme became United Press Telephoto in 1953, and Hearst's photo service became part of the new United Press International in 1958. So it was AP versus UPI, two major international services battling for newspaper play and business.

The competition often was fierce, and out of necessity, every wire service reporter working abroad learned to transmit pictures as well as file stories. Yet sometimes, these skills fell short, as in March 1959, when Communist China's forcible takeover of Tibet forced the Dalai Lama, Tibet's Buddhist leader, to seek political asylum in India.

The Himalayan "god-king" was rarely photographed, and his flight into exile was front-page news around the world. Both AP and UPI chartered planes to carry the film of his arrival at Tezpur, India, to the nearest radiophoto transmission point at Calcutta, hundreds of miles away. The race was even-up until AP's hired pilot, fearing that tensions between India and what was then East Pakistan made the most direct route too risky, took a circuitous path that brought him into Calcutta well behind the UPI plane.

By the time AP correspondent Jim Becker had his first picture ready to transmit, his UPI rival, Earnest Hoberecht, was already sending his third--and chortling over a huge worldwide scoop. Cables from AP London bombarded Becker: "URGENT BECKER SECOND UPI DALAI LAMA ROLLING NOW OUR SUBSCRIBERS UPSET ANXIOUS APPHOTOS LONDON." When the desperate Becker finally got access to the radiophoto machine, fifty-seven minutes had passed. Then came another cable: "URGENT BECKER UPI DALAI LAMA FULL HAired. OUR DALAI LAMA SHORN CLARIFY URGENTLY."

"I knew right away that God had saddled me with a cowardly pilot but he had more than leveled the playing field by matching me with a UPI correspondent ... who was almost certainly the only member of the entire foreign press corps who had no idea what the real Dalai Lama looked like," Becker wrote years later. It turned out that Hoberecht had cropped the three UPI photos to remove extraneous figures. The bearded, long-haired man speaking into a microphone was the Indian foreign ministry's press spokesman; the bald monk in robes was nowhere in sight.²⁶

During the 1960s, AP expanded its photo operation in Asia, adding portable transmitters there for assignments in Southeast Asia, where once-exotic datelines were becoming steady news fare. Jackson Ishizaki, sent from Tokyo to New Guinea in 1962 after one of the Rockefeller family, Michael, 22, vanished there, stopped in Saigon on the way home. Opposition forces bombed and strafed the presidential palace of Ngo Dinh Diem just outside Ishizaki's hotel room. He made pictures of the flaming building and took the transmitter he carried with him to the communications office to send exclusive radiophotos back to Tokyo.

But it was still a challenge, sometimes frustrating, to get photos from remote datelines into the AP network. When President Dwight Eisenhower went to New Delhi and hundreds of thousands of people jammed the streets as his motorcade passed, AP pictures were filed through the Indian post office, which

reported them sent by 7 p.m. Hours later, well after midnight, AP photo editors were fending off a flood of complaints; no Ike pictures were getting to U.S. newspapers. AP picture editors banged on the post office door demanding an explanation. The photos had been transmitted, they were told, but only as far as Calcutta, where the interference of magnetic fields prevented radio transmission before dawn.

AP was creating its own ways around such blocks. In 1960, the Wirephoto network linked major European cities, and a round-the-clock cable link between London and New York was opened three years later. The AP photo network extended from San Francisco in the west to the eastern borders of Europe.

Photo transmission from Asia became crucial business when Vietnam escalated into a major story in the early 1960s. No war was photographed like Vietnam, and none likely will be again. There were no restrictions, access to the battlefields was relatively easy, and new technology enhanced combat coverage.

AP photographers in Vietnam carried far different equipment from those who had covered World War II and Korea. Gone were the bulky Speed Graphics and cumbersome 4x5 film holders. Photographers in Vietnam carried compact 35-mm Nikons and Leicas. Their equipment bags were loaded with a variety of lenses, for wide angle and long-shot photos. The photographers draped their necks with as many as cameras as they could carry, to be ready for pictures close in or far away, and so that they had extras when the swamps or the rigors of battle put a camera out of commission.

The chief of AP's photo team was Horst Faas, a masterful photographer, a skilled news reporter, and the man who saw to the logistics of the coverage. He told all AP staffers in Vietnam, including reporters, to carry cameras for better picture coverage of a war that could flare anywhere.

Faas' foresight paid dividends at once. The first indelible image to come from Vietnam was from the camera of the AP bureau chief, Malcolm Browne. A Buddhist monk called Browne in June 1963 to tell him there would be a protest against the government the next day in Saigon. Tips like that were frequent, and usually not useful, but Browne decided to check it out. Amid joss smoke and chants from a

Buddhist temple the next morning, an elderly monk got out of a small car at a nearby intersection and sat down on a mat in the street. He was doused with gasoline and struck a match, and flames enveloped him.

Browne photographed the awful scene, and his pictures put Vietnam on the front page of American newspapers, a shocking wake-up call to a worsening situation. He won a Pulitzer Prize for his war reporting that year, and the burning-monk image was part of his coverage.²⁷

Faas won a Pulitzer in 1965 for his combat photographs made on self-starting assignments that usually began with word of fighting in the countryside. Like his colleagues and competitors, he would race to the Saigon military airport to find a spot on a helicopter heading into the combat zone. Their film went back to Saigon the same way, when there was a medical or supply helicopter going back. Those photographs were sent on for publication without the filter of censorship or official interference, stark contrast to the restrictions of World War II and Korea.

AP reporters and photographers quickly learned the lessons of Vietnam War coverage: Dress like the military so as not to stand out and possibly draw fire; be among the first off the helicopter because there is relative safety in the noise, rotor wind, and confusion; carry condoms to protect film from rivers and swamps; bring along cash to pay Vietnamese troops for evacuation if wounded.

But such precautions didn't mean safety. Faas was seriously wounded in a rocket attack, his life and his leg saved by the quick action of a U.S. Army medic. After he recovered, he went back to his coverage.

Communications from Vietnam to the world outside were shaky at best. A single radiophoto circuit was the only link for deadline delivery of spot news photos, and it was a balky one, sometimes working to Tokyo, sometimes to Manila, sometimes to Frankfurt. AP staffers drew duty at the postal telegraph, to wait hours until a circuit opened, then to transmit as many prints as possible when the

connections were made. But in the end, courier shipments carried the bulk of Vietnam photographs out to AP and on to newspapers by Wirephoto.²⁸

Eddie Adams had covered wars and riots and celebrations and world leaders, and he wondered to himself how he ended up on the floor of a Vietnam jungle, where the Viet Cong were pouring heavy fire on the Marines he had accompanied into battle. Adams hugged the earth like the others around him but with one difference: He was looking for pictures. Adams focused his lens on a nearby Marine, his mouth wide in fear, terror in his eyes. Adams' finger moved to the shutter, but at the last minute, he stopped and put the camera lens down. It would have been, he recalled later, a photo too close to the soul, too telling of human vulnerability, to belong in newsprint. "I did the right thing," he said.²⁹

When the Communists launched surprise attacks across South Vietnam during the Tet holiday on January 31, 1968, Faas--still on crutches as a result of his leg wound six weeks earlier--sent staff photographers and freelancers to cover the story in the embattled streets of Saigon.

On Sunday morning, a television crew from the NBC bureau, next door to AP, was heading out to Cholon, the city's Chinese sector, where street fighting had been reported. Adams went with them.

Reaching Cholon, the group heard shooting ahead. They left their jeep and walked carefully in that direction. The An Quang pagoda, a Buddhist compound whose monks were long noted for anti-government sympathies, had been taken over by a Viet Cong squad, only to be driven out by South Vietnamese marines. As the newsmen arrived, they saw two marines bringing a man in a plaid shirt, his hands tied behind him, toward the intersection where they stood with Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Loan, the national police chief. Loan had helped to direct the counterattack, and Adams and NBC cameraman Vo Suu assumed he would question the Viet Cong suspect.

Adams recalled later that he wasn't surprised when Loan drew his pistol. "It was common to hold a pistol to the heads of prisoners during questioning," he said. "So I prepared to make *that* picture ... but it didn't happen. At that instant, the colonel shot the man in the temple."

Adams' 35-mm Nikon had caught the actual instant of the bullet impacting the man's head from inches away. The prisoner fell dead, blood gushing on the pavement. "The colonel walked up to me and said, 'They killed many of my people ... and your people, too.' And then he walked away," Adams said.³⁰

The picture won AP's fourth Pulitzer Prize in Vietnam.³¹

In June 1972, Nick Ut and other newsmen converged on Trang Bang, thirty-five miles west of Saigon, after Communist troops seized the village at a key intersection on Highway 1. Vietnam Air Force fighter-bombers launched a napalm strike, but the deadly drop was off-target, hitting friendly forces and civilians. Ut photographed the aerial attack in the distance, and then the wounded villagers fleeing toward him. A young girl, naked after tearing off her burning clothes in an attempt to escape the flames, was running straight toward his lens. He made the photo, and then took the girl and her father to a hospital in nearby Cu Chi. Kim Phuc survived and became a lifelong friend to Ut, whose own brother had been killed in combat as an AP photographer. Ut's Pulitzer Prize picture became another icon of the war.³²

Faas and Michel Laurent were at the soccer stadium in Dacca, Bangladesh, in 1971 when four men were executed, ostensibly for rape but more likely for political dissent. The two AP men had seen the brutality of war but not scenes like the one they photographed that day. The captives were taken from a truck, thrown to the ground, burned with cigarettes, then bayoneted repeatedly, and finally trampled to death.

"During the terrible torture, sweat ran down my face, and my hands were trembling so much I couldn't change the film," Faas said. "When the bayoneting started, Michel was just as pale as the victims. It went on and on. The crowd cheered and took no notice of us. I hoped the men would die quickly, but it

took almost an hour. Then the mob came in to finish the execution with their tramping feet. I hope and pray that no AP man has to see such terror again.”

The pictures won Faas his second Pulitzer Prize and Laurent his first, and were later credited with helping spur official action against political torture in Bangladesh.³³

In the United States, civil rights demonstrations were taking to the streets, covered by reporters and photographers who sometimes became targets of Southern wrath.

In the violence that erupted when James Meredith became the first black admitted to the University of Mississippi in 1962, AP’s Jim Bourdier made his photographs by hollowing out the pages of a book, concealing his camera inside, cutting a hole in the cover, and using a release cord to trip the shutter.

Bill Hudson was in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963 when black demonstrators defied a city ban on protest marches. Hudson had seen police dogs in cages nearby. The police turned the dogs on the black marchers, and Hudson’s photos became symbols of the civil rights struggle, there and again when police turned fire hoses into weapons against demonstrators in Selma, Alabama.³⁴

Jack Thornell was following Meredith, who had become a civil rights activist, as he marched through Mississippi in 1966 to promote black voter registration. Meredith was shot on the highway. Dodging buckshot, Thornell made pictures of the wounded Meredith in agony, companions trying to help him, the shooter visible in nearby bushes. Thornell won a Pulitzer Prize.³⁵

After the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, President John F. Kennedy met with his predecessor, Dwight D. Eisenhower, at Camp David, Maryland, the presidential retreat. Trying to present a united front after the disastrous attempt to topple Cuba’s Fidel Castro, the two men posed for the customary photographs, shook hands, and talked to the press. Paul Vathis, longtime AP staffer at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, was a favorite of Eisenhower and his wife, Mamie, from years of covering Camp David, and he knew the ropes. Press Secretary Pierre Salinger declared “the lid is on,” Washington-

speak for no more pictures, and Eisenhower said to Kennedy, “I know a place where we can talk,” and they walked down a gently curving path toward a cottage.

As he squatted to pack his equipment, Vathis looked up and saw the two men walking away. JFK held his back in the way he always did to lessen the constant pain he suffered, and Eisenhower strode alongside him, hands clasped behind, holding his hat.

“They looked so lonely, the young president and the older war hero, and the stripped trees in the background, two men burdened with major troubles,” Vathis recalled. “The picture snapped into my mind immediately.”

But a burly Secret Service agent named Moose, whom Vathis had known during the Eisenhower years, was in the way. “Moose, spread your legs; I want to make a picture,” Vathis whispered.

“Paul, Pierre said the lid was on,” the agent replied.

“Moose, spread your goddamn legs. There’s a picture here.”

Moose obliged, and Vathis made two exposures through the agent’s legs, his Hasselblad camera close to the ground, the 180-mm lens angled slightly up. Salinger heard the shutter trip and scolded, “I said the lid’s on!” Vathis replied that he was just taking the film out of the camera, and Moose said, “Get hell out of here.”³⁶ The picture won a Pulitzer Prize.

In the 1960s, news photo delivery still ambled along at the rate of one black and white picture every ten minutes, the same speed as when Wirephoto began. It took at least half an hour for newspapers to receive the relatively rare color photo transmission. Over the same period, delivery of words had increased in speed twenty times over, meaning that newspapers received many more stories faster. The slow picture transmission technology meant that many stories did not have pictures.

A new picture recording system called AP Laserphoto began in 1973, which improved the technical quality of automatic picture reception, but a solution to the problem of faster transmission

remained elusive. By 1982, AP used satellite links to open a second network called Laserphoto II, which helped increase the number of color pictures but did not speed up transmission time. The major breakthrough came in 1990 with the launch of PhotoStream, an all-digital photo network that delivered pictures in seconds, in both black and white and color. Soon, all pictures were transmitted in color.

PhotoStream also eliminated the use of film and chemical-optical photography, and speeded up the handling of pictures from camera to printed page.

Cameras had changed, transmission systems, too, but the photographer behind the equipment still was the key to fast, compelling photographs, whatever the technology, and it still was primitive in some corners of the world.

Faas, Bill Achatz, and Bob Daugherty of Washington were the AP photographers covering President Richard M. Nixon's breakthrough journey to China in 1972. Daugherty recalled standing in the cold of Beijing as Nixon stepped from the door of Air Force One:

We didn't know who would greet him even at that late moment in the protocol. Then, without warning or special attention, Zhou Enlai stepped forward and reached out to shake hands with Nixon. It was a handshake to remember, decades of history running through those two hands.³⁷

That gripping picture was followed by Daugherty's photograph of Mao Zedong greeting Nixon, both men smiling past decades of enmity.

AP normally would have assigned at least 10 staffers to handle photos of a presidential mission of that importance, but the Chinese government would admit only three. So Faas, Daugherty, and Achatz worked around the clock to make, develop, and send photos. They had to carry everything with them,

cameras, film, processing chemicals, enlargers. There was one advantage, though: The circuit out was solid and reliable, an early use of satellite links on a breaking news photo story.³⁸

On March 31, 1988, Ron Edmonds, new to the White House beat, was covering President Ronald Reagan as he walked to his limousine after a speech at the Washington Hilton Hotel. It was a routine presidential motorcade, nothing unusual. Edmonds had his camera locked on Reagan as the president waved to a handful of onlookers. "I clicked my first frame," Edmonds recalled. "I heard a pop and saw him react. I kept the shutter down on my motorized camera and continued shooting frames." He did so as the president was shot, then pushed into the car to be sped to the hospital. It happened in an instant. Edmonds said he didn't realize that what he had heard was gunfire until the limousine pulled out and he saw three wounded men on the ground while security men were wrestling the gunman to the ground. Photographers beside Edmonds who hadn't been focused on Reagan at the instant the shots were fired had no time to raise their cameras and make the pictures. No one else had them.

By the end of the 1980s, with UPI foundering, AP and the British agency Reuters were the major international picture agencies, but the competition was just as hot. In 1989, Edmonds photographed George H.W. Bush as he was inaugurated president, viewed the images within seconds on the digital camera's small screen, selected the best, and transmitted it instantly to a receiving station for relay to the AP network, nearly a half-hour before anyone else. It was the first AP photo shot and transmitted that way.³⁹

Digital photography and delivery vaulted ahead again with the development of a transmitter called APLeafax, which scanned a negative and recorded the image as digital information. Eventually, the new operation was transmitting color photos in less than ten seconds.

It was a revolution in news photos. AP installed the new picture desks at about eleven hundred newspaper locations as part of its photo service, equipment that made color photographs familiar, then standard, in newspapers that before had published only in black and white.

In the spring of 1989, Chinese students demonstrated for democracy against the Communist regime, and the government retaliated in Beijing with deadly force. Jeff Widener was one of the AP staffers covering the wild night of shooting, flaming vehicles, and clashes between students and troops. As the sun rose, he found a position on the roof of a building, where he could avoid the police and army men hunting Western reporters and photographers. Chinese tanks rolled onto Changan Boulevard, where a man stepped out and stood in front of the tanks. From his vantage high above, Widener aimed his long lens and captured the picture of one man facing and stopping four tanks. The episode was brief. Bystanders pulled the man away, and the tanks rolled on. But the picture became a symbol of the democracy demonstrations and the Chinese massacre of protesters in Tiananmen Square.⁴⁰

When the United States went to war to drive Iraqi invaders from Kuwait in 1991, the military brass remembered, resentfully, unfettered news and photo coverage of Vietnam. Tight controls were put in place. Coverage was restricted to pool trips to the war zone, guided tours under military escort.

To get pictures despite the restrictions, Laurent Rebours of AP Paris holed up in a gas station between the Iraqi lines and the American forces border of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. As air strikes hit the Iraqis, Rebours photographed the military action and sent his film back to AP behind the allied lines.

After U.S. forces drove the Iraqis back into the desert, Brian Horton, from New York AP, drove to Kuwait and joined Don Mell, a Middle East veteran familiar with the hotels there. Mell secured hotel rooms in Kuwait City and swept out the empty cartridges from the abandoned Iraqi gun position on their balcony overlooking the U.S. Embassy compound. AP set up its photo equipment, powered by portable

generators, to send pictures via a satellite dish. It was a seven-floor walkup, but that was easy compared with what other news organizations faced on the top floors of the high-rise hotel.⁴¹

Logistical hardships were the least of the worries. In the sweeping political changes of the 1990s, conflicts without borders or front lines became common. Journalists had always been in danger, but now, they could be the targets, just as much as soldiers. By 2001, virtually all AP journalists working in danger or war zones took hostile-environment training courses and were issued protective gear. There was no safety in being in the media or a “neutral observer.”

That was particularly true for photographers covering war in their homeland. In Iraq, where Baghdad became an urban minefield, Khalil Mohammed took a photo of three charred bodies hanging from a bridge over the Tigris River and was immediately threatened.

“I told the driver to keep the engine running, just in case,” he said. “We have the responsibility to show the whole world what is happening here.”

For the men and women who tell a story with cameras, there is no substitute for being on the scene. Reporters can make telephone calls and interview witnesses to recreate a story, but a camera can record only what it sees.

¹ Oral history interview with Joe Rosenthal conducted by Hal Buell on August 15, 1997, San Rafael, Calif. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.

² Joe Rosenthal and W.C. Heinz, “The Picture That Will Live Forever,” *Collier’s*, February 18, 1955.

³ Oral history interview with Joe Rosenthal conducted by Hal Buell on August 15, 1997, San Rafael, Calif. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Richard Newcomb, *Iwo Jima* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), 296-7.

⁶ *Time Views the News*, WJZ Blue Network, March 13, 1945; apology for this broadcast March 20, 1945.

⁷ Beaumont Newhall, *The History Of Photography* (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 1964, 177.

⁸ Jack Price, *News Pictures* (New York: Round Table Press, 1937), 173-4.

⁹ “Newsphotos and Its Forgotten Man,” *Cleartime*, February 1983, 1-3.

¹⁰ “Hey Al, Don’t Forget to Mail Those Pix,” *Cleartime*, June 1980, 2.

¹¹ *News Pictures*, 173-4.

¹² Oliver Gramling, *AP, The Story of News* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1940), 419-22.

¹³ Oral history interview with Max Desfor conducted by Hal Buell on June 9, 1997, Silver Springs, Md. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.

¹⁴ The Associated Press, *The Instant It Happened* (New York, The Press, 1975), 62.

¹⁵ Oral history interview with Eddie Worth conducted by Hal Buell on November 20, 1999, London. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.

-
- ¹⁶ John Morris, *Get That Picture* (New York: Random House, 1998), 3-7.
- ¹⁷ "Bede Irvin Is Killed in Bombing," *AP Inter-Office*, (September 1944), 6.
- ¹⁸ "So They Need Not March Again," *AP Inter-Office*, (November 1944), 22.
- ¹⁹ Frank Filan, "As an AP Photographer at Tarawa Sees It," *AP Inter-Office*, January 1944, 9.
- ²⁰ Associated Press, *20 Years of Wirephoto*, 1955.
- ²¹ Wes Gallagher, "Two Views of Berlin," *The AP World*, (Summer, 1990), 12.
- ²² Oral history interview with Bill Achatz conducted by Hal Buell on November 5, 1997, Pottstown, Pa. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.
- ²³ Oral history interview with Max Desfor conducted by Hal Buell on June 9, 1997, Silver Springs, Md. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ "London Photos' 25th Birthday Finds It Biggest in Britain," *The AP World*, (Autumn 1956), 2.
- ²⁶ Jim Becker, *Saints, Sinners & Shortstops* (Honolulu, HI: Celadon Press, 2006), 17-23. Another ex-AP correspondent, Murray Fromson, recalled meeting India's consul general at a Los Angeles dinner a few years later. Learning that Fromson was a journalist, the diplomat said: "May I tell you about the time I was the spokesman for the Indian Foreign Ministry and was identified around the world as the Dalai Lama of Tibet?" Fromson e-mail message to Richard Pyle, June 11, 2006.
- ²⁷ Oral history interview with Mal Browne conducted by Hal Buell on April 21, 1998, New York. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.
- ²⁸ Oral history interview with Horst Faas conducted by Hal Buell on September 29, 1997, New York. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.
- ²⁹ Oral history interview with Eddie Adams conducted by Hal Buell on April 22, 1998, New York. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² Oral history interview with Nick Ut conducted by Hal Buell on August 15, 1997, San Rafael, Calif. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.
- ³³ Oral history interview with Horst Faas conducted by Hal Buell on September 29, 1997, New York. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.
- ³⁴ *Instant It Happened*, 148.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.
- ³⁶ Oral history interview with Paul Vathis conducted by Hal Buell on April 23, 1998, New York. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.
- ³⁷ Oral history interview with Bill Achatz conducted by Hal Buell on November 5, 1997, Pottstown, Pa. Oral history interview with Bob Daugherty conducted by Hal Buell on November 6, 1997, Washington, D.C. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ Interview with Ron Edmonds, conducted Hal Buell, November 29, 1997, New York.
- ⁴⁰ Jeff Widener, correspondence with author, August 16, 1989.
- ⁴¹ Oral history interview with Brian Horton conducted by Hal Buell on April 21, 1998, New York. AP 20, Oral History Collection. The AP Corporate Archives.