

EDITH M. LEDERER

During a 55-year career with The Associated Press, Edith M. Lederer has worked on every continent except Antarctica covering wars, famines, nuclear issues, political upheavals and major global issues.

The first woman assigned full-time to the AP staff reporting the Vietnam War, Lederer also covered the 1973 Middle East war, the war in Afghanistan, the first Gulf War, the conflict in Northern Ireland, the end of the war in Bosnia, the civil war in Somalia and the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda.

Born in New York City, Lederer grew up on Long Island and graduated from Valley Stream North High School in 1960. She received a B.S. degree from Cornell University, graduating with honors from the College of Home Economics, now the College of Human Ecology, in three years in 1963. She received an M.A. in communications from Stanford University in 1964.

Her first job in journalism was working for Science Service in Washington, D.C., a Scripps-Howard syndicate, covering the social sciences and medicine. In March 1966, she joined The Associated Press in New York City, and covered assignments ranging from student riots at Columbia University to Robert F. Kennedy's successful Senate campaign.

Two years later, she was transferred to San Francisco where she covered student unrest at Berkeley and San Francisco State, the Angela Davis trial and Patty Hearst's kidnapping. She also covered the California state Assembly in Sacramento, when Ronald Reagan was governor.

In 1972, she started her career as a foreign correspondent in Saigon, reporting not only from South Vietnam but Cambodia and Laos as well. Shortly after she left Vietnam in the summer of 1973, she was back on the front line -- this time in Israel during the Yom Kippur War.

In 1974, she was assigned to Mexico City and the following year she was named bureau chief for Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, the first American woman to head a foreign bureau for The Associated Press. But Lederer's assignment was short-lived. After five months she was expelled by the country's military government for reporting on military exercises. Her next post was chief of Caribbean services based in Puerto Rico where she was in charge of more than a dozen countries and territories.

In 1978, she returned to reporting and transferred to Hong Kong where she helped cover China's opening to the West and moves toward a Western-style economy. She also made a rare visit to North Korea and went to Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion in December 1979, masquerading as a rug buyer. The series of stories she wrote was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

From Asia, Lederer was sent to East Africa and then to London which she used as a base to travel the world on a wide variety of assignments for 16 1/2 years.

She helped cover the downfall of communism and the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the Romanian revolution. A series of stories she wrote on the impact of the Soviet break-up on its nuclear stockpile and programs was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

Lederer reported on the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and ran the AP operation in Saudi Arabia after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the first Gulf War that followed to liberate the country. She also helped cover the crash of Pan Am Flight 103, the death of Princess Diana and the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya.

While based in London from 1982-98, Lederer also wrote about military and international security issues and global problems ranging from population growth to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

She covered the major United Nations conferences in the 1990s on population, women and the growth of cities.

Her global background has proven to be exceedingly useful in her current assignment as AP's chief correspondent at the United Nations.

During the past 22 years, she has reported on the diplomatic side of conflicts from Syria, Iraq and Yemen to South Sudan and Congo and major global issues including the nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea, climate change, combating poverty and women's rights.

Lederer has received many honors including four lifetime achievement awards from the Overseas Press Club, the International Women's Media Foundation, the Washington Press Club Foundation and the Newswomen's Club of New York.

She is also a recipient of a National Headliner Award, a National Press Club Award, the University of Missouri Honor Medal for Distinguished Service in Journalism, the United Nations Correspondents Association's Silver Medal, and The Population Institute's award for individual reporting. She was part of the AP team that won the Associated Press Managing Editors award for coverage of the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

Lederer is a co-author of "War Torn," a book by nine women who covered the Vietnam War.