



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 43 – 29th JANUARY 2021

GREETINGS!

Just another Manic Monday.... Day 309 of the great lockdown....Here at home, Covid eclipsed by other worries in SA – read below. Animal Farm vibes - a set of rules for the people – another for the politicians – the Mpumalanga Premier face mask scandal - the Empress has no face mask! And Eloise leaves another trail of havoc... In UK, another 5 weeks of lockdown, the Union is in peril, with the Scottish National Party set to win an outright majority at Holyrood in May and determined to wrench Scotland from the United Kingdom. No wonder, with the hallowed “Burns Nicht” another casualty of the pandemic! And “Underneath the Arches” - Police catch 300 people at rave in packed railway arch in the UK. Covid is taking its toll psychologically - People coming off of antidepressants are increasingly turning to inadequate Facebook support groups to “fill the void” of professional mental health support, a new study has warned.... “Manipulative broadcasters’ intrusive reports from hospitals are simply feeding despair. The people who are watching are the isolated, the lonely, and the already-frightened who are being driven further into the depths of terror and despair”. A Tory revolt looms over almost incredible “state plans to use child spies against their parents.” Elsewhere, Putin continues his pogrom against Alexey Navalny, with savage repression of Russian protestors supporting him. China continues her repression of Hong Kong, and covert and overt assault on the West - Chinese fighter jets entered Taiwanese air defence zones for a second day running. China also labelling Biden a “Trump 2.0”, as Biden comes in with a whimper, not a bang, almost unbelievably protected by 40 000 National Guardsmen – who were NOT called out when BLM and Antifa were trashing and looting US cities. Go figure...

"Some hae meat an canna eat, And some wad eat that want it; But we hae meat, and we can eat, And sae the Lord be thankit." (Selkirk Grace) — *attributed popularly to Robert Burns*

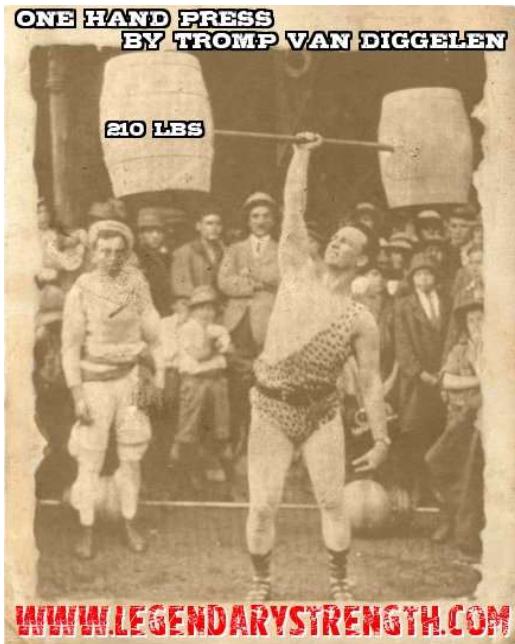
OPERATION BARKHANE:



An RAF Chinook has delivered heavy equipment to extend French and Malian forces' operational range as part of Op Barkhane, the French counter insurgency operation in the West African Sahel region. The recent operation saw a Chinook of 1310 Flight lift a large Air-portable Fuel Container to a Forward Operating Base to enable ground and air forces to operate at a greater distance from Gao. This operation required several days of planning before personnel from the Joint Helicopter Support Squadron and the crewman of the CH-47 were able

to successfully under sling the container and transport it the 25 nautical miles to the camp. The three Chinooks based in Gao, Mali that form 1310 Flt are currently operated by personnel from RAF Odiham based 27 Squadron RAF, together with supporting elements from the Tactical Supply Wing and Joint Helicopter Support Squadron. Another recent operation demonstrated the integration of the French led helicopter force when an RAF Chinook flew in formation with a Danish Merlin and a French Caiman helicopters to extract French infantry from a location south of Gao at the conclusion of their task. The whole formation was escorted by two French Tiger helicopters and demonstrated how the whole force is now integrated. Colonel Sylvain the French Commander of the Groupement Tactique Desert – Aerocombat (GTD-A) said: “The GTD-A, takes under command all of the deployed helicopters supporting Op BARKHANE within Mali. The aim is to provide direct support to ground units, deliver MEDEVAC and possess the capability to conduct autonomous operations against armed terrorist groups. Given the huge scale of Mali and the operating area, these tasks are achieved on a daily basis by French, British and Danish aviation aircrew and aircraft. These personnel are fully integrated into the structure of the GTD-A, all share common missions and frequently fly as mixed formations. Sorties are standardised in order to enhance flight safety, but this also gains efficiency across the board. The excellent degree of operational success illustrates the exceptional levels of integration and synergy between the three nations. It is a fantastic example of teamwork with a common mind-set.”

TROMP VAN DIGGELEN



Tromp was famous in his generation as a strongman, author and teacher, born in 1885 who endured a sickly childhood like many old-time strongmen. He actually almost died three times as a child, from pleurisy, pneumonia and bronchitis. However, his mother was determined to have a healthy kid and she decided to set up an appointment with Eugen Sandow to help the youngster. Tromp was only 12 years old, but Eugen told him to exercise with strands. Unfortunately, Tromp was so weak that he couldn't even pull them. Sometime later, Tromp's science teacher tried a different approach and gave him a physiology text book in order to teach him more about human body and ways to gain strength, since he felt sorry for Tromp Van Diggelen who couldn't even compete in sports like other kids his age. During a class with Mr. Tatham, his science teacher, Tromp came to an idea of muscle flexing, to increase strength, through improved blood flow.

Soon enough Tromp was standing in front of the mirror, flexing and relaxing his muscles while visualizing them becoming stronger and more powerful. At the same time, he dreamed about having a perfectly carved body like Eugen Sandow. The next time his mother saw him, she couldn't believe her eyes. In 1899, only two years after his appointment with Sandow, Tromp's mother brought his son to Eugen once again. Sandow was surprised to hear that Tromp hadn't made a use of his expander, but became strong purely through flexing and relaxing muscles. Nevertheless, Sandow advised him to continue with this practice as it was obviously working well for him. "I had the pleasure of meeting Tromp van Diggelen c. 1958 in Cape Town. He was then a genial old chap, and drove up in his 1938 SS100 Jaguar sports car and stopped outside where I was living in Newlands. I told him that my grandfather had been enthusiastic about Tromp's system of body-building. Much to my amazement, Tromp suggested that I take my girlfriend for a drive in his car. When I realized that he was serious, I accepted with great delight. At the time I had a 1955 TF MG, parked nearby. Tromp was visiting his son, a doctor, who lived opposite where I was staying" (Ian McArthur, Sep 2019) The "Jaguar Magazine" of Jan/Feb 2018 has an excellent article on Tromp's Jaguar SS 100. Read it at: https://issuu.com/natalia461/docs/jaguar_magazine_jan_feb_2018

SAAF HOURS FLY:

The SA Air Force (SAAF) did not meet its own targets set for flying hours in the 2019/20 financial year, with total hours and VVIP hours both less than planned. According to the Department of Defence annual report for that financial year, the airborne service of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) expected aircraft from its VIP squadron – 21 – to spend a thousand hours moving top government people, including President Cyril Ramaphosa, to and from important meetings and events locally, continentally and internationally. The target was missed by 92.9 hours. All told, the SAAF planned for aircraft in its fleet to be airborne for 17 200 hours with by far the majority – 12 200 – used for force preparation. 4,000 hours were set aside by SAAF budget planners for use in force employment of SAAF assets. 2,576 of these were used. No detail of which aircraft types, classes or missions, for example, cargo, trooping, search and rescue or mercy flights are provided. The report does not specify whether helicopters or fixed wing aircraft were utilised but notes hours flown are dependent on “the number of serviceable aircraft and operational taskings received.”

SA WORRIES:

While the Covid-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdown has been a constant stress on the world at large for the past year, South Africans say they have additional concerns. The latest ‘What worries the world’ report from global polling firm, Ipsos, shows that South Africans are far more concerned with rising unemployment, violent crime, and government corruption – with Covid-19 falling to the bottom of the list of things stressing them out. The Ipsos survey is run monthly and gauges the views of people from 27 countries globally, who are asked about 18 main points of stress. As is to be expected amid a global pandemic, the Covid-19 crisis emerged as the biggest concern globally, with 47% of all respondents placing it as their primary worry in December. This continues the trend seen through much of 2020. South African respondents, however, said they have bigger things to worry about, only a quarter (24%) put Covid-19 as their biggest concern with more focused on unemployment, corruption and crime. Of all the countries surveyed, South Africans found corruption and crime to be the most pressing issue of those listed.

These were the top five biggest worries for South Africans:

1. Unemployment – 59%
2. Corruption – 59%
3. Crime and violence – 58%
4. Poverty and social inequality – 29%
5. Covid-19 – 24%

South Africa faces unprecedented economic decline and record levels of unemployment, all while reports of government corruption related to the Covid-19 continue to make headlines.

THE GREAT DAILY MAIL AIR RACE 1959:

Following two years in the Far East my (home) posting was to the Central Flying School at Little Rissington. On arrival there I was immediately sent on detachment to the Helicopter Squadron at South Cerney just outside Cirencester. At that time helicopters were comparatively new in operations and we had a mixture of British and American types, Sycamore 12's and 14's, Sikorsky S 51 Dragonflies, Sikorsky S 55 Whirlwind, and a very small Saunders Roe Skeeter.

I had only been on the Squadron a few weeks when we were called together and told that we were going to be part of the RAF Team to compete in the Daily Mail Air Race in recognition of the 50th Anniversary of Bleriot's crossing of the English Channel. The race, between Marble Arch and the Arc de Triomphe, was open to anyone and all means of transport from motorised lawnmowers, roller skates and people like us who had access to fast jets for the Channel crossing. No matter what was used everyone knew that it was going to end up as the RAF versus the Fleet Air Arm. Our entrants “clocked out” from Marble Arch onto the pillion seat of a motorcycle, a short dash down to the Thames Embankment where we had two big barges lashed together to form a floating helipad, then an authorised low level flight across London by helicopter to Biggin Hill, and a quick transfer to a

Hunter T7 two seat trainer. Then it was a high speed, low level flight across the Channel to a French Air Force station Villacoublay. Then it was another transfer to a helicopter for a quick flight to Issy heliport in Paris. The trip was finished with another pillion seat motor cycle ride to the Arc de Triomphe.

I was fortunate enough to be part of the crew in France and we had ample free time for sight seeing during the race period of July and the blessing of very good weather. There were many stories to tell about this race but as an example the Sycamore 12's we used in London started to be affected by metal fatigue after being flown to the limits. One day our airframe fitter reported a crack in the gearbox cowling but nothing daunted, one of our senior NCO's walked across the road to a Newsagent/Tobacconist's nearby where there were several advertising boards on the pavement, picked one up, gave it to the airframe fitter and said "Fix". The result was a patch and the only plane or event to see an RAF plane flying over London advertising Walls Ice Cream.

On a more serious note the Sycamore 14 used as the number one aircraft in France had Bristol Aeroplane's demonstration rotor blades fitted which were highly polished as was the rest of the helicopter. On a test run with five people aboard, and in a climb, we exceeded the suggested top speed by some 10 to 15 knots!! As the race progressed so the race times dropped and both the Fleet Air Arm and the RAF started to look at ways of "cutting corners". To start with we did away with the fuel drop tanks on the Hunter knowing the Navy could not do the same as they were flying the twin-engine DH 110 (Sea Vixen). As this kept us neck and neck we attempted to speed up the various transfers. Our Chief pilot, Flt. Lt. Smith took our lead aircraft on a test flight from Issy Heliport back to Villacoublay. He crossed the airfield boundary at high speed and very low, heading for the Control Tower. From our crew room the next we saw was a huge cloud of dirt and debris and with the realisation that he had, had a major crash. We drove to the crash site to find the remains of the helicopter but no sign of the pilot. It was 2 or 3 minutes before Smithy calmly walked out of the control tower having reported his flight "terminated"!!! (He had forgotten how low he was and when he flared out, the tail rotor hit the ground with the resultant lack of control). The debris covered a big area with some parts of the rotors being half a mile away. The RAF did in fact win the race with a time of 40 minutes and 40 seconds and had various celebration parties and stories to tell.

(Sent in by John Page, who was there.)



The crashed Bristol Sycamore Mk14, XG540.

From L to R: Cpl Bob Hartland, Flt Sgt Peach, Cpl Ray Burrige, WO Hayhurst (as my memory serves me.) The wreckage was gutted and striped for useable spares, loaded onto a flat bed, pushed into the back of a disused hangar, and left.

BLOODHOUND LSR:

The Bloodhound Land Speed Record project, today 25 Jan 2021, announced that it is looking for a new owner to take the team through to setting a new World Land Speed Record in 2022.



Testing, testing...

In 2019, the Bloodhound team deployed out to South Africa to conduct high speed testing of the most advanced straight-line racing car in history. The car smashed the test programme target of 500 mph, hitting a peak speed of 628 mph (1011 km/h), validating the computer modelling used in designing the car and proving that Bloodhound has real record-breaking capability.

The team now needs to install the Nammo monopropellant rocket, giving the car a top speed of over 800 mph (1287 km/h). Once again, the car will then run on its specially prepared 12-mile (19.2 km) long dry lake bed race track at Hakskeen Pan, Northern Cape, here in South Africa. Completing the rocket installation and taking the car to South Africa to exceed 800 mph will cost GBP 8 million, based on the costs of the test programme to date. It's an expensive business....

Exercise among the Locals: TALES FROM THE GERMAN WOODS:

In the years leading up to the fall of the Soviet Union and reunification of Germany, the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR), some 150,000 troops at its height, regularly exercised over the Northern German countryside. Special dispensation was given by the government and, within guidelines, troops could deploy anywhere covered by the authorized area (a "443" area). Very large exercises, Lionheart in '84 and Reforger in '87, were interspersed by smaller divisional, brigade or battalion exercises. Compensation was paid by HMG for any damage done. Sometimes the loss was too much – one CO of a cavalry regiment was sacked after three of his Chieftain squadrons drove over a very valuable asparagus field (probably later leading to PTSD while browsing the odd restaurant menu). And often, in the early days, farmers would encourage armoured vehicles to accidentally damage an old barn so he could claim for a new one; obviously as more barns were replaced they were less enthusiastic about 8 self-propelled artillery howitzers parking on their stoep. It was one dark, foggy, damp and January late evening in 1986 when the Gun Position Officer on recce approached a forbidding old German farmhouse. He required to park his battery of eight 155mm M109A2s overnight. He was tired and cold. He had for company his battery guide, WO2 "Tiny" Brooks who was dating the German regimental hairdresser and thus spoke the local patois. In the dull, fog-obscured light he knocked on the door. After several minutes he knocked again, upon which an upstairs window above the porch was thrown open. A high pitched and reedy voice piped "Was wollen sie?" followed by the head and shawled shoulders of a little old lady. Tiny lifted his head and asked in his best lover-learned German "Guten Abend. Ich mochte acht kettenfahrzeug hier ubernachten. Kann ich mit deinem Mann spreche?" The reply, when it came, was much louder, strengthened by decades of resentment and was in perfect English: "No you can't; you killed him in 1945!" followed by the sound of a window slamming. *(Sent in by Bob Napier, who was there.)*

MEMBERS WRITE:

Jesper Scheelke wrote in: Thank you for another lovely Ramblings. Regarding the Vaal rescue last week, I think they could have mentioned that the Air force called on The Mountain Search and Rescue Club to help them to get the two old people to safety. My son, Peter and his teammate were picked up in Lonehill, flew to the Vaal and were hoisted down to harness the old people and get them into the helicopter. The helicopter then brought them to the waiting ambulance. (Members will remember that Peter was part of the MSRC team who rescued Peter and Mary Gaddin in the "Bird on

a Wire” saga, when they flew into and hung for hours by their Bathawk’s prop on an unmarked zipline...)

Priscilla Henwood writes: My Dear Friends and Family,
My book “Priscilla Henwood Remembers A life Full of Caring Love” is now available. One of our Villagers, Di Norton, has become involved in a project called Emmanuel Educare Centre in Khayelitsha. This struck a note in me that such vital efforts must be given every possible assistance to enrich the work, for these mothers and children. That is why I am donating all profits from the sale of my book, to support the mothers and children far into their future lives. With best wishes to you all, Priscilla. (See advert attached at end of Ramblings)

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Ten months later, the tsunami of Covid propaganda, misinformation and mismanagement continues to assail...this is the forty-third weekly Newssheet - “Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings” - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (preferably not on the antics of Ministers (various) or NCCC!) that will help us all to keep in contact and entertained through the lockdown and prohibition.

Thanks again to all those who have contributed, and continue to do so! We will use contributions progressively as we move upwards and onwards...

Please continue to take care – we’ve made it so far - keep safe in these incredibly troubled times: wash your hands, cover your face, make space, avoid gatherings and remember that all this, too, shall pass...

We’ll keep you posted on resuming lunches when we can, and further developments at Wanderers as negotiations progress.

So, let’s hear from you...Please continue to send your suggestions or contributions to:
bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

‘Once you reach a certain age you become permanently unimpressed by a lot of sh*t’

The only way they could get more than a thousand people at Biden’s inauguration was to call out the National Guard!

The latest report on the much-debated Samara Machel air crash is that both Russian pilots died on the final IMC approach from Covid... This is a very serious illness and explains much of history...

A Kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work. As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied, 'I'm drawing God.' The teacher paused and said, 'But no one knows what God looks like.' Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, 'They will in a minute.'

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six-year-olds. After explaining the commandment to 'honour' thy Father and thy Mother, she asked, 'Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?' From the back, one little boy (the oldest of a family) answered, 'Thou shall not kill.'

One day a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast on her brunette head. She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, 'Why are some of your hairs white, Mum?' Her mother replied, 'Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white.' The little girl thought about this revelation for a while and then said, 'Mummy, how come ALL of grandma's hairs are white?'

The children had all been photographed, and the teacher was trying to persuade them each to buy a copy of the group picture. 'Just think how nice it will be to look at it when you are all grown up and

say, 'There's Jennifer, she's a lawyer,' or 'That's Michael, He's a doctor.' A small voice at the back of the room rang out, 'And there's the teacher, she's dead.'

A teacher was giving a lesson on the circulation of the blood trying to make the matter clearer, she said, 'Now, class, if I stood on my head, the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I would turn red in the face.' 'Yes,' the class said.' Then why is it that while I am standing upright in the ordinary positions the blood doesn't run into my feet? 'A little fellow shouted, 'Cause your feet ain't empty.'

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The nun made a note and posted on the apple tray: 'Take only ONE. God is watching.' Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. A child had written a note, 'Take all you want. God is watching the apples'. *(Sent in by Richard Tasker)*

And on the 8th day, God created Seniors. Most seniors never get enough exercise. In His wisdom God decreed that seniors become forgetful so they would have to search for their glasses, keys, and other things, thus doing more walking. And God looked down and saw that it was good. Then God saw there was another need. In His wisdom He made seniors lose coordination so they would drop things, requiring them to bend, reach, and stretch. And God looked down and saw that it was good. Then God considered the function of bladders and decided seniors would have additional calls of nature, requiring more trips to the bathroom, thus providing more exercise. God looked down and saw that it was good. So, if you find, as you age you are getting up and down more, remember it's God's will. It is all in your best interest even though you mutter under your breath.

Nine Important Facts to Remember as We Grow Older:

#9 Death is the number 1 killer in the world.

#8 Life is sexually transmitted.

#7 Good health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die.

#6 Men have two motivations: hunger and hanky-panky, and they can't tell them apart. If you see a gleam in his eyes, make him a sandwich.

#5 Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach a person to use the Internet and they won't bother you for weeks, months, maybe years.

#4 Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in the hospital, dying of nothing.

#3 All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.

#2 In the 60's, people took LSD to make the world weird. Now the world is weird, and people take Prozac to make it normal.

#1 Life is like a jar of jalapeno peppers. What you do today may be a burning issue tomorrow. Please share this wisdom with others; I need to go to the bathroom.



MATT

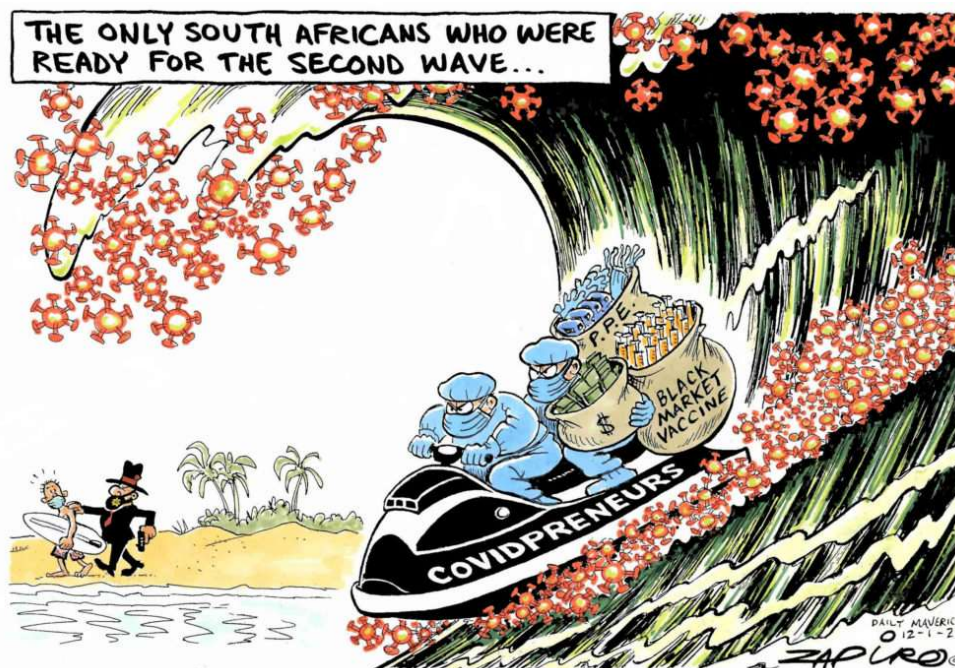


'How about I give you a hug, Grandad, and if you catch Covid we'll split the £500?'

MATT



'I was worried that he might have historic links to the slave trade'



“Priscilla Henwood Remembers a Life Filled with Caring Love”

Price – Hard copy R200 – Electronic.pdf copy R55

(Profits all go towards EMANUAL EDUCARE CENTRE, An Early Childhood Development project in Khayelitsha)

The book starts off in World War II.

At that time and aged only 20 Priscilla was adjutant at an RAF station.

She married just before her 21st birthday which she and her husband celebrated by going on a picnic and cycling tour, and attending a film called Mrs Miniver. Paul was a naval man so he went off in his ship to fight the war at sea while Priscilla fought it by looking after the pilots on land and later by manning the operations underground in the London RAF Air Ministry Department. They didn't see each other again for three years at which time the war ended. Then they came to live in Durban and start a family. They raised six children of their own and a granddaughter whose mother was tragically killed on the eve of her sister's wedding. Priscilla started a clinic for local domestic workers in Sandton and was honoured as Sandton Citizen of the Year in. Then too there are descriptions of her happy years in Helderberg Village.

To place orders – either to Dennis Henwood or Hazel Bond

Dennis Henwood - Telephone 083-503-3623, dhenwood@iafrica.com
OR

Hazel Bond – Telephone 021-855-3280, 082-678-5748, bondageh@telkomsa.net

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