

July, 2012



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

PIKES PEAK CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Upcoming Events

July 19th - General Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church
August 16th - General Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church
September 20th - General Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church

Pikes Peak Chapter Steering Committee

CHAPTER LEADER

Kimberly Argo
Son, Jonathan Charles Frazier

MAILINGS & DATABASE

JANE & STEVE GABRIEL
Son, Jonathan Steven Gabriel

TREASURER

FRANK SCHAGER
Daughter, Kira Ann Schager

NEWSLETTER EDITOR & EMAILINGS

STEWART & LETA LEVETT
Son, Aaron Paul Levett

SC MEMBER/PAST CHAPTER LEADER

Laraine Asaro-Boyd
Son, Michael Edward Anderson

SC MEMBER/FACILITATOR

BOB & YVETTE THOMPSON
Son, Ryan Barry Thompson

SC MEMBER/FACILITATOR

LEONIE CRAMER
Son, Julian Anthony King

Welcome

Our support group meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. Meetings are open to the parents, grandparents and older siblings of your loved one. We meet at the **First Baptist Church** downtown at 317 E. Kiowa. We understand your pain; won't you let us help you through your grief?

Our next meeting will be on July 19th, 2012.

The death of your child is probably the most traumatic, life-changing event that you will ever experience. The Compassionate Friends is an organization of parents who have also lost a child to death. Each of us has experienced the deep, searing pain that you are feeling now. Each of us has turned to other parents who were farther into their grief journey for guidance, support and understanding. This is done through our monthly meetings, our newsletter, our website, our Telephone Friend program, our library and our e-mail program. Each month parents find our meeting to be a safe place where they can talk about their pain and problems with others who are uniquely qualified to understand; bereaved parents offer gentle suggestions or often simply listen. We invite you to bring a friend to your first few meetings until you feel a level of comfort with the group. Do not be surprised if we talk about the happy times with our children, the wonderful memories and the various methods we have created to keep our children close to us. It is here that many bereaved parents find hope as those who are more seasoned in their grief shine the light of experience to help illuminate each grief path. We have no dues. We are self-sustaining through donations and the generosity of so many in our community. **You Need Not Walk Alone.**

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Any of these members may be contacted to talk to you about your loss:

CHAPTER LEADER

KIMBERLY ARGO 217-0155

INFANT LOSS

COLLEEN & ART MANNON 535-9868

LEUKEMIA

JANE & STEVE GABRIEL 282-1924

SUICIDE

LARITA ARCHIBALD 596-2575

SKATEBOARD / AUTO ACCIDENT

RAYE WILSON (303) 814-9478

DRUG / ALCOHOL LOSS

STEWART & LETA LEVETT 531-5488

TODDLER / YOUNG CHILD LOSS

BOB & YVETTE THOMPSON 573-2743

TEEN / YOUNG ADULT LOSS

BARB REYNOLDS 599-0772

GENERAL GRIEF

LARAINÉ ASARO-BOYD 351-7653



ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACTS

TCF National Office
P.O. Box 3656
Oak Brook, IL 60522
630-990-0010 or toll free 877-969-0010

EMAIL: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

WEBSITES:

National - www.compassionatefriends.org
Colorado - www.tcfcolorado.org

Online Support

The Compassionate Friends offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. Please check the schedule for dates and times of the sessions.

Note: Times posted on the schedule are based upon Eastern Time.

www.compassionatefriends.org

LOVE GIFT DONATION

Your Name _____

Child's Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Anniversary Date _____

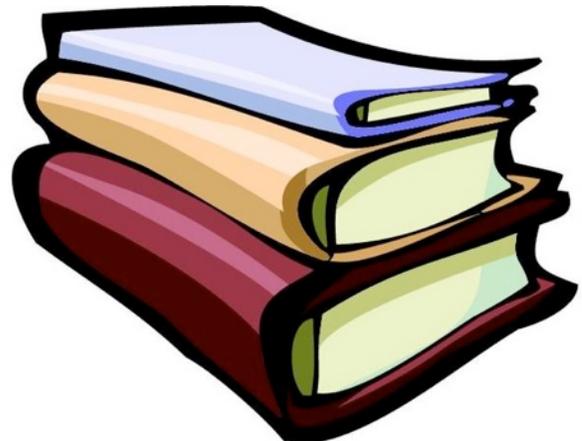
Dedication _____

Picture Enclosed: YES NO

Mail to:
Frank Schager
2235 McArthur Ave.
Colorado Springs, CO 80909

Lending Library

Our chapter offers a lending library with a variety of books on grief and bereavement. We encourage you to browse our library and feel free to check out a book to take home with you. We only ask that you sign out the books and return them in a timely manner so others can have the benefit of them as well. If you have read a book that was helpful to you and would like to share it with others, donating that book in your child's name is a wonderful way to honor them. Stickers are placed in these books to note whose memory they are given in.





A Word About The Waldo Canyon Fire

June 26th started out fairly normal but would become one of the most terrifying days of my life. One day away from leaving town to Las Vegas for a seminar, I had been intently following the forest fire which started two days before. The morning of the 26th Leta & I were talking about the danger to our home and if we should pack up belongings and find someone to care for our things. We decided that we were in a safe enough location and that the fire would have to jump Williams and go through Queen's Canyon to even worry about the *possibility* of danger. I estimated the fire would need to burn over 6500 acres to even come close to worrying about evacuation. That was at 2:00 p.m.



At 4:30 p.m. the rooms in my house turned very dark and when I peered out the curtains into my back yard I was greeted by a blood red sky and smoke so thick it choked you. I was interrupted in my panic by the phone ringing and a friendly computerized voice telling me I needed to evacuate my house. During the phone warning my cell phone rang and I quickly ran to retrieve it. It was another reverse 911 call telling me to leave my house. Our house was now thick with smoke



and a look out the window displayed a street full of neighbors stuffing belongings into their car. And we hadn't even started packing! There was over 10,000 acres burnt in just a couple of hours.

We were lucky. We made it out safely (It took over an hour to drive two blocks) and the fires eastward progress was halted before our neighborhood was destroyed. Many families were not as fortunate and tragically two people lost their lives in the Mountain Shadows portion of town. Other members of our TCF family were also affected and were, fortunately, also able to go home.

Tragedy has a way of catching us unawares and after the initial shock it is only then that we can think straight and be able to cope with the reality of what has happened. The city of Colorado Springs has banded together to help in the grief and suffering of those trying to cope with their loss. Sound familiar?

Oh, one last thing. God bless our firefighters.

Stew Levett - Editor
TCF Pikes Peak Chapter



Carol & Don Manning in memory of

Kyle Joe Manning

DOB: July 7th - Anniversary: June 19th



Remembering Our Children On Their Birthdays

Child's Name	Date of Birth	Compassionate Friend
Ryan Thompson	Jul 1	Yvette & Bob Thompson
Michael Jeffrey Waller	Jul 4	Jeanie Young
Karen Sue Crawford	Jul 4	Joy Andrews
Sean Thompson	Jul 5	Rick & Frankie Thompson
Lisa Elaine Berns	Jul 6	Robert (R.J.) & Lynn Berns
Kyle Joe Manning	Jul 7	Carol & Don Manning
Blake Smith	Jul 8	Brian Smith
Anthony James "Tony" Pisor	Jul 10	Cynthia Pisor-Zapel
Cristoval Ornelas	Jul 13	Annette & Chris Ornelas
Jack Lincoln Farrell	Jul 13	Pamela Welch
Travis Holappa	Jul 14	Kim & Terry Packa
Sarah Katherine Stouber	Jul 18	JoAnn Labenberg
Katie Steckiel	Jul 19	Wendy Steckiel
Cris Cruz	Jul 19	Henrietta Madrid
Tiffany Maxwell	Jul 20	Diane Maxwell
Ryan Sayers	Jul 20	Tom & Kate Sayers
Justin William Winner	Jul 21	Dale & Rosanne Winner
Brian Patrick Adair	Jul 21	Duane & Mary Adair
Arthur Lipphardt Jr	Jul 23	Art & Chris Lipphardt
Amanda Stocchero	Jul 24	Sandy Stocchero
Craig Matthews	Jul 24	Cathy Genato
Keltryn Lenae Brinkman	Jul 25	Jim & Judy Brinkman
Alexander Pegler	Jul 26	Eric & Lisa Pegler
Michael Williams Greist	Jul 28	Allan & Judy Greist
Toby Ferrer	Jul 28	Maria Hymes
Scott Michael Gerwatowski	Jul 28	Linda Gerwatowski, Helen & Walter Rakocy
Michelle Howie	Jul 31	Annette Howie





Remembering Our Children On Their Anniversaries

Child's Name	Age	Date of Death	Compassionate Friend
Andrew Paul Whiteman	20 years	Jul 2	Lyle Whiteman
Damon Vincent Christianson	33 years	Jul 3	Chaela Christianson
Heidi Susanne Wolfe	20 years	Jul 3	David & Karen Wolfe
Adam Roy Hodges	5 years	Jul 4	JoAnn Ewing
Nicole Megan Yagi	9 years	Jul 5	Jackie & Dennis Yagi
Jay Aguanno	19 years	Jul 7	Jean Aguanno
Kaitlin Bartlett	17 years	Jul 8	Kim Bartlett
Shannon Diane McMahon	16 years	Jul 9	Robert & Jeanette McMahon
Angela Gisela Martinez	34 years	Jul 11	Maria Hymes
Jack C. Jefferson	5 years	Jul 11	John & Dena Jefferson
Abigail Ruth Smelser	23 years	Jul 11	Robin Myers
Cristoval Ornelas	1 day	Jul 13	Annette & Chris Ornelas
Christopher Skaggs	15 years	Jul 13	Ernest & Tanya Skaggs, Carl & Annette Cordova
Jack Lincoln Farrell	1 day	Jul 13	Pamela Welch
Philip Dix	24 years	Jul 14	Ann Dix
Zachary Dean Glenn	3 years	Jul 14	Kristin & Larry Glenn, Janice Bren
Kristopher Lohrmeyer	17 years	Jul 16	Dan and Lori Lohrmeyer
Blake Smith	1 year	Jul 17	Brian Smith
Jeanne Burroughs Widmar	33 years	Jul 18	Arlene & Charles Burroughs
Ryan Rickman	11 years	Jul 19	Jean Rickman
Amanda Stocchero	15 years	Jul 19	Sandy Stocchero
Michael Benjamin Decker	18 years	Jul 20	Mary & Jerry Decker
Veronika Olivia Baca	1 year	Jul 22	Sharon Baca
Travis Grimmer	29 years	Jul 23	Mary Lou Grimmer
Sarah Katherine Stouber	7 days	Jul 24	JoAnn Labenberg
Cathleen Bartlett Maxwell	6 years	Jul 24	Dick & Marty Maxwell
Travis Holappa	25 years	Jul 25	Kim & Terry Packa
Kari Ann Kirt	15 years	Jul 26	Lon & Andrea Kirt
Christie Fike	32 years	Jul 28	Shirley & Dan Emerson
Benjamin Stewart Easton	22 years	Jul 28	Susan Stewart
Derek Matthew Chandler	14 years	Jul 29	Billy & Cherie Chandler
Nathan Gentry	7 years	Jul 29	Susan Gentry
Jimmy Schmidt	13 years	Jul 30	Jim & Laurie Schmidt
Jonathan Steven Gabriel	5 years	Jul 31	Steve & Jane Gabriel
Patricia Spain Boden	39 years	Jul 31	Myra Spain



THOUGHTFUL POEMS

As Long As I Can

By Sascha. (Sascha's son Nino drowned at age 3; years later, her daughter Eve died by suicide at age 21.)

As long as I can, I will look at the world for both of us.
As long as I can, I will laugh with the bird, I will sing
with flowers, I will play to the stars, for both of us.
As long as I can, I will remember how many things on
this earth were your joy. And I will live as well as you
would want me to live, as long as I can.

Men Do Cry

I heard quite often "men don't cry" though no one ever
told me why. So when I fell and skinned a knee,
no one came by to comfort me.
And when some bully-boy at school would pull a prank
so mean and cruel, I'd quickly learn to turn and quip,
"It doesn't hurt," and bite my lip.
So as I grew to reasoned years, I learned to stifle any
tears. Though "Be a big boy" it began,
quite soon I learned to "Be a man."
And I could play that stoic role while storm and tempest
wracked my soul.
No pain or setback could there be could wrest one single
tear from me.
Then one long night I stood nearby and helplessly
watched my son die.
And quickly found, to my surprise, that all that tearless
talk was lies.
And still I cry, and have no shame. I cannot play that
"big boy" game. And openly, without remorse,
I let my sorrow take its course.
So those of you who can't abide a man you've seen
who's often cried, reach out to him with all your heart
as one whose life's been torn apart.
For men DO cry when they can see their loss of
immortality. And tears will come in endless
streams when mindless fate destroys their
dreams.

by Ken Falk - Northwest Connecticut TCF Chapter

Who Could Have Known

Who could have known the
exquisite difference your brief life
would make upon mine?
Who could have known a tiny baby
would show me the beauty of a sunrise,
or the wonder of a rainbow, or the pain
of a tear? Who could have known an
innocent child would take away my
fear of death, and point me in the
direction of heaven? Who could have known
that you would succeed
where so many others have failed?

Dana Gensler
TCF, South Central, KY

That echo across all decades ...
Priceless words
Indelibly etched on the heart.
Sometimes
Thoughts were never spoken,
But unexpected sentiment -
A quick embrace,
A silly smirk,
Or joyous laughter -
Reaches through the pain
And warms the heart.
We came too soon to understand
The folly of harsh words
Or neglected touch,
For who can know which taken-for-granted
event
Will become -
A last moment.

Diane N Fields TCF, Westmoreland County, PA
"The Healing Journey", TCF Oak Brook, IL





HEALING WORDS

Five things a Firefighter/Medic Wants you to Know

By Aaron Espy, firefighter/paramedic

Aaron Espy is a Firefighter/Paramedic in Kitsap County, Washington. A professional firefighter since 1980, he is also a freelance writer and poet.

Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national publication of The Compassionate Friends.

Moms and Dads, can I talk to you for a minute? I was too busy during the emergency, and afterward – well, you both had more important matters to attend to. It doesn't matter whether you live in the Pacific Northwest or Florida, Maine or Kansas City. If your child was taken from you suddenly, there was probably someone like me in attendance who fights fire and delivers medical aid for a living. Chances are, they've struggled with the same feelings I struggle with. Here are five things I'd like to tell you. It's my hope that something I say will make your struggle through grief a little easier to manage.

#1 - Your Child Was Not “Just Another Patient”

Perhaps you assume that because I've seen thousands of patients in my career, I wouldn't remember your son or daughter. Not true! Only the loss of a fellow firefighter affects us more profoundly than a child's death. When I lose a child in the line of duty, I don't leave the experience at the station. Your child's face comes home with me. I see him when I'm fishing, working in my garage, or just drifting off to sleep. I can still recall vividly the hour I spent with a little girl from a car accident almost fourteen years ago. She has a permanent place in my memory, just like your little one.

(It's the inability to come to terms with these memories that drives many a firefighter from his or her career. Those of us who are old-timers in emergency medicine have learned to deal with the tragic cruelties of life we must face. Some exercise vigorously. Others, like me, write about our experiences. Sadly, there are some who are unable to cope with the pain and turn to drugs or alcohol.)

#2 - I Did More Than Provide Medical Care

When I am fighting to save a child, I talk to them. It doesn't make any difference whether they're responding or not. I reassure and attempt to comfort them. If they're awake and very young, I give them a stuffed animal to hold. I do one other thing. I tell them that their mom and dad love them very much. I do this because several years ago, a mother told me —I would've given anything to tell my son I loved him just one last time. Since then, I try to tell every child that you, their parents, love them very much.

#3 - I Struggle With Feelings of Failure and Inadequacy

When a firefighter/paramedic loses a child, he or she may struggle with personal feelings of failure. So often we repeatedly ask ourselves —what if? questions. —What if I'd been at a closer station? What if I'd arrived five minutes sooner? What if I'd tried another course of treatment? It's these feelings of inadequacy that often keep a medic from approaching the parents of his patient. If a firefighter seems to be avoiding eye contact, he likely is not only struggling with his emotions, but possibly struggling with the feeling that he has failed. It's a common occurrence, despite the fact the medic may have performed flawlessly.

#4 - I Grieve With You

Macho as we'd like to portray ourselves, we are by nature a group of men and women sincerely touched by the sorrow and suffering of others. That's one of the reasons we are drawn to the fire service in the first place. We have a deep, burning drive to make a difference, to alter tragedy in the making if we possibly can. Maybe it's because we feel we have an image to uphold. Whatever the reason, we firefighters tend to be good at holding our grief in check until we are alone. We present a tough-as-steel facade and inevitably do our crying in the station's hose tower or the compressor room where no one can hear us.

#5 - I'm Available to Answer Questions

So often there are procedures or treatments you may not understand. They are almost always done for a very good reason, and with your child's best interest in mind. Almost without exception, the firefighters and medics who fought to save your child would be happy to answer any questions you may have. We also need to be informed when we unknowingly make comments that hurt or offend.

I won't make the mistake of telling you I know how you feel. I can try to imagine your pain, but I'm sure I could never know how it really feels unless I'd lost one of my children. I can tell you that I, and all my fellow fighters, do care. It is the chance that we will save the next victim of tragedy that keeps us doing what we're doing in the face of so much sorrow. We wish for you strength and peace on your journey.



Love Gift Donations

Our chapter exists entirely through your donations which are tax deductible. Love Gifts enable us to continue our outreach to bereaved parents through our many chapter activities. A Love Gift is money donated to the chapter in memory of your child who has died. If you feel a Love Gift is an appropriate way to honor the memory of your child, please consider a donation, large or small. Please fill out the form located in this newsletter and mail it to the address listed. All pictures submitted will be returned unless you specify for us to keep them and place them on our Child Remembered board displayed at monthly meetings.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

\$50 or more - Newsletter Sponsor. May include a full page for printing. Please remember to send your page "Copy Ready" as you would like to see it printed in the newsletter.

\$0 to \$50 - A picture, if available, and dedication to be listed in the newsletter. Love Gift donations should be sent directly to our treasurer, Frank Schager whose address is listed on the Love Gift Donation Form. *Wouldn't you like to make a dedication to your child and help our chapter?*



Chaela Christianson in memory of

Damon Christianson

DOB: May 30th - Anniversary: July 3rd

Is This Your Child's Birthday Month?

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday, bring pictures or favorite items that belonged to your child to our monthly meeting! You may also bring a dessert or other food to celebrate... If you plan on doing this, please let Kimberly know ahead of time so that we can allow enough time for the celebration.

Excerpts from my eulogy to my son, Damon Christianson - 5/30/77-7/3/10

"Damon once again was facing a very long period of pain, suffering, and recovery, such a very short time after he fought so hard to become healthy, not just physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. However, he had courage, and courage doesn't mean absence of fear, but responding in its presence. He seemed to cry, rather a lot for him, that week, but was so grateful that he had friends who cared, and were there for him, and loved him unconditionally. That includes friends whom perhaps he hadn't seen for a while. He tried hard not to display his emotions (unlike his mother), because it was so important for him to remain upbeat and positive- to look at his cup as ½ filled, not ½ empty. If the truth be known he looked at it as completely filled.

And I have no doubt that Damon would have done whatever he needed to do so that he once again would be riding, kayaking, studying, working, playing, and praying just as he did this summer! I'm comforted by the fact that he got to do those things he so loved, that he didn't have to endure more suffering and then leave us, that his departure from earth was probably swift and painless.

My greatest blessing is that God loaned him to me for 33 years (and 33 days), just like Jesus, and I know where he is! I don't think there was anyone more surprised than he on that early morning of July 3rd, 2010. He was born at 4:57 AM on May 30th, 1977, and I wouldn't be surprised if he left us around the same time. He was always an early riser! I do think that the Lord said, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."



Continued from Page 8

There's a Calvary pastor named Greg Laurie from California whose ministry is Harvest Ministry. Damon and I used to listen to him all of the time on 100.7, and also to his CDs. Pastor Laurie's son, Christopher, was killed in a car accident right around this time a couple of years ago. Damon recorded a series of 3 interviews entitled "From the Heart of a Grieving Father." One of the questions Pastor Laurie was asked was, "What do you miss most about Christopher?" His answer was one word: "Everything!" And then he enumerated.

What do I miss most about Damon? Everything. I miss his sense of humor. He used to say, "Mom, we're like an old married couple. I'm beginning to watch those shows so I can be more sensitive!" I miss going to the movies with him, watching him climb to what he called our "perch," about ½ way up so there'd be room for his legs. We went often, but actually saw about 3 movies in 4 years from start to finish. I miss his saying, "Big Up!" I miss his pushing the "Do-Over" button when I'd go from 0-60 in 3 seconds for absolutely nothing. I miss driving 4-5,000 miles per month with him, the discussions we'd have, or the silences we enjoyed (I think he enjoyed the silences more than me).

I miss going to restaurants ("Subway's," "Taco Bell," "Hungry Bear," "La Casita," "Joanie's," "Poor Richard's," "Panera Bread," "Front Range Barbeque," and the "Cliff House,") sharing a meal with him when he couldn't even eat. I miss watching people in the park on Uintah St. running barefoot through the grass on a summer day, and his saying, "Look at that, Mom." And then parking on Colorado Ave., not running through the grass because he could barely get out of the car, but opening the door, and just sitting there enjoying the beautiful summer breeze, so content.

I miss listening to his hopes and dreams, his doubts, and fears, and his listening to mine. I miss his guidance and wisdom; his compassion, empathy, and sympathy. I miss his taking care of me after surgery, making sure I had enough ice packs.

I miss his massaging my feet when I was his caretaker. I miss coming home to find my dinner made, bed turned down, mattress warmer turned to high. I miss his coming into my room each night to take my glasses off, and turn off the TV amidst my protests of being wide awake. I miss going to Christian conferences and concerts at the Pepsi Center, World Arena, and the Denver Coliseum having surpassed numerous physical obstacles, hobbling over railroad tracks, and crawling over cement walls to hear him say, "These are the 'other kids,' Mom!" I miss his saying a million times per day, and I mean a million, "I love you, Mom. Thank you so much for being my mom. Thanks for what you've taught me. Thanks for what you've sacrificed." Now any of you who know me also can infer how sick he really was if he were making those statements! I miss his hugs and kisses. I'm older, now, and shrinking. He used to just hug me, and say,

"You just fit so well right here." He wasn't a very big guy, and I think he liked it that I was getting shorter.

I miss his standing in my room as he did on that last night wearing a blue T-shirt with his hair ruffled, and his eyes half-closed, saying, "I finished my homework, Mommy." just as he did when he was in first grade. I miss being at church with him, even if he couldn't be there very long - holding my hand or sitting with his arm around me, and my head on his shoulder, usually nudging me awake. I miss praying with him. He'd take my hands before each meal which he often couldn't eat and say, "Come Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen," a prayer I learned from the Christiansons 45 yrs. ago. I miss his making a big sigh and praying, "Dear Lord Jesus, Thank you for our many blessings..., and always ending each with "... by the blood of Jesus Christ we offer You this prayer, Amen."

I miss letters like this one:

Dearest Mommy-

I just wanted to take a second to let you know how wonderful you are, and how much you mean to me. Your steadfast love, courage, and patience in the face of these tough times are truly an inspiration to me. I can't say enough about how much I've learned about what true character is, from you, and feel so blessed to have you in my life. You are the best Mom, friend, and role model that a son could ask for. Thanks for being you!

Love always,

Damon

PS Lunch is in the fridge and the book is the best Christmas present that I've ever had. It means a lot, and I know will be a blessing to both of our lives. Then he drew a heart, and wrote, "D."

The book was a child's book, Love You Forever, and I will!

The Compassionate Friends
Pikes Peak Chapter
PO Box 51345
Colorado Springs, CO 80949-1345



**Pikes Peak Chapter
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