



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS of the Pikes Peak Region

March, 2011 Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

March 17th - General Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church

April 14th - General Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - First Baptist Church

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

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

CHAPTER LEADER

LARAINÉ ANDERSON 351-7653

INFANT LOSS

COLLEEN & ART MANNON 535-9868

TODDLER / YOUNG CHILD LOSS

BOB & YVETTE THOMPSON 573-2743

LEUKEMIA

JANE & STEVE GABRIEL 282-1924

TEEN / YOUNG ADULT LOSS

BARB REYNOLDS 599-0772

SUICIDE

LARITA ARCHIBALD 596-2575

DRUG / ALCOHOL LOSS

STEWART & LETA LEVETT 531-5488

SKATEBOARD / AUTO ACCIDENT

RAYE WILSON (303) 814-9478

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 March 17th, 2011.

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.**

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.tfccolorado.org

Colorado Springs - www.tfccolorado.org/coloradosprings

Would you be interested?

Many people find the thought of reincarnation, psychics, talking to the dead and apparitions total bunk where others find the subject a bit scary or fascinating. People who have lost a loved one often seek ways to communicate with those that have moved beyond our earthly realm. Some think that toying with such things is best left alone. What do you think? Do you have stories to share or want to hear of others experiences? Have you ever been to a John Edward reading or read a good book by Sylvia Browne? Perhaps a local reading that hit the mark or a vision that came true or was so fantastic you need to share? Let me know if the subject intrigues you and if you'd like to see one of our monthly meetings devoted to such things usually left unspoken. Drop me a line and let me know your thoughts. stewart@archangelgifts.com



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**LOVE
GIFTS**



Leonie Cramer and Carl Reese in memory of

Julian King

DOB: March 18th

Anniversary: December 31st

*Our beloved Julian,
How we wish we could celebrate your birthday
with you. We miss your love and your smile all
the time. You brought so much joy to all who
met you. You are forever in our hearts.*



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?*



**LOVE
GIFTS**



Betty Stieglmeyer in memory of

James Craig Stieglmeyer

DOB: March 11th

Anniversary: February 2nd

*Editors Note: Betty Stieglmeyer was our chapters
first chapter leader starting the chapter in 1979.
She now resides in Arizona and we recently
received the following note from her:*

Dear Ones -

*How proud I am of all the work
& effort it takes to keep such a needed
organization going & growing. Could have
faith or energy - God always will provide
the right people at the right time.*

*I'm moving to a small place where
I will be free of cooking & cleaning -
How I look forward to that - I'm
enclosing my new address - Please
keep me on your mailing list!*

*We started in end of 1979 - with just
2 couples - there was no national
organization - The Lord has been
with us all the way & still is
You are doing an excellent job & have
reached out & grown - Blessings to each &
every one of you Love-hugs Betty Stieglmeyer*



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Our those who read our newsletter on a regular basis, you'll notice that we've changed our child's birthday and anniversary format. In the past we've included a "cause of death" column with the hopes that new viewers to the newsletter might connect with someone else who has experienced a similar loss. Our National headquarters has requested that any cause of death listing be removed for privacy consideration. We thank you for your understanding.

Remembering Our Children On Their Birthdays

Child's Name	Date of Birth	Compassionate Friend
Wayne Allen Garrett	Mar 4	Joyce and Greg Garrett
Logan Lawrence	Mar 5	Janet & Edward Lawrence
Steven Warren	Mar 6	Linda & Mark Warren
Erin Marie McCallister	Mar 7	Steve & Carol McCallister
Keith Andrew Barrett	Mar 8	Ree Barrett
Owen William Howard	Mar 10	Mike & Carol Parker
James Craig Stiegelmeyer	Mar 11	Betty Stiegelmeyer
Conri Lee Barber	Mar 13	Sean & Cherie Barber
Marisa Nicole Pilant	Mar 14	Stephen & Julie Pilant Richard & Elizabeth Jamison
Cathleen Bartlett Maxwell	Mar 17	Dick & Marty Maxwell
Julian King	Mar 18	Leonie Cramer & Carl Reese
Megan Huyge	Mar 21	Stan & Rebecca Huyge
Billy E. Hendrickson	Mar 22	Grace & Delbert Hendrickson
Clayton Champion	Mar 24	Jessie & Phyllis Roark
Christopher J. Novich	Mar 24	Susan & Joe Novich
Marc Darby	Mar 25	Lori & Steve Darby
Justin A. Clayton	Mar 26	Terry & Sharon Clayton
Scott Martinson	Mar 26	JoAnn Martinson
Kari Ann Kirt	Mar 28	Lon and Andrea Kirt
Sarah Jo Card Ferrara	Mar 28	Carol & Andrew Ferrara
Kira Ann Schager	Mar 28	Frank & Lori Schager



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 Laraine know ahead of time so that we can allow enough time for the celebration.



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Remembering Our Children On Their Anniversaries

Child's Name	Age	Date of Death	Compassionate Friend
Kevin Michael Burns	16	Mar 3	Stan & Willie Burns
Jessica Robison	17	Mar 3	Terri Robison
Steven James Gantz	13	Mar 4	Diana Gantz
Brian Michael Gregory	16	Mar 6	Roy & Phyllis Gregory
Terry A. Shank	28	Mar 6	Carol Vierling
Michelle Sandra Seal	3	Mar 7	Walter & Diana Seal
Tiffany Maxwell	34	Mar 7	Diane Maxwell
Michael Jeffrey Waller	25	Mar 10	Jeanie Young
Jillian Overly	1 month	Mar 10	Dauna Overly
Sean William Staat	25	Mar 11	Susan & William Staat
Andy Cope	27	Mar 14	Debbie & Kurt Adelbush
Adam J. Hurst	32	Mar 14	Kim Troeger
Jim Agnew	31	Mar 17	Tom Agnew
Danae Lynne Marie Mannon	3 months	Mar 18	Colleen & Art Mannon
Jody Elizabeth Houtz	17	Mar 18	Jane & Chris Houtz
Keltryn Lenae Brinkman	2	Mar 19	Jim & Judy Brinkman
Megan Huyge	1 day	Mar 22	Stan & Rebecca Huyge
Christopher Calegar	10	Mar 22	Kevin & Linda Calegar
Gary Michael Owens	32	Mar 27	Freda Maria Garcia
Colin Peter Baerman	32	Mar 28	Paul & Kerry Baerman
Jonathan Frazier	21	Mar 28	Kimberly & Michael Argo
Timothy Patrick Shea	21	Mar 31	Joe & Paula Shea

Handling Friends and Relatives

Relatives and friends can be very uncomfortable with your grief, and, therefore, may try to persuade you to do things for which you are not ready. They may tell you that you "should feel better" or that you "shouldn't talk about it." Only you know what is good for you; consequently, you should do only what you find comfortable, even if it means not seeing some people for a while.

Other people may have set a timetable on how long your grief should last. Coping with the death of a child takes years, not weeks or months, and, unless you have had a child die, it's impossible to understand. Stick up for yourself; it is difficult when you are not sure of anything. You know how you feel, so don't let anyone tell you how to act, think, or feel.

Tell your relatives and friends what you want them to do. If you want to be remembered at anniversaries and holidays and they are remiss, let them know how it makes you feel. Also, share with them that you want your child to be mentioned in conversations. You may cry, but let them know it is normal and they are not the cause of your crying. Let them know it is better for you to cry than for them not to mention your child, which would cause you to grieve silently.

Yolo Compassionate Friends and Sacramento Valley TCF



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A Conversation With My Dead Son

Me: *[Grieving] Why did you have to die so early?*

Son: *Um, Dad...*

Me: *You're here! What are you doing here?*

Son: *Well you know me, full of surprises!*

Me: *I'm so angry with you! Why did you have to die?*

Son: *You have a right to be angry with me. I did some pretty stupid things growing up but I guess this topped them all. But, hey, stop blaming God will you? I made the choices that took me away. God had nothing to do with it.*

Me: *Do you know how much you screwed up our lives?*

Son: *You and Mom seem to be doing pretty well. I think that group you've been attending has done you a lot of good. I suggest you not stop going for awhile, looks like you still have issues.*

Me: *Well that's a nice way to put it. A parent is not supposed to bury their child, it's just not right.*

Son: *Time out Dad. I know it's not the natural order of things but you always said "No one ever promised us tomorrow." Besides, look at all the help you guys give each other. If it wasn't for your group look how bad off some of the others would be. And they started just like you... mostly.*

Me: *Yeah, I guess that's true. But look what you've done to your Mother. She can hardly look at a picture of you without crying.*

Son: *Mom is stronger than you think and she's healing every day. I know I hurt you when I left but your life now has a different purpose, a better purpose. You've changed haven't you Dad?*

Me: *How could you not? Life hasn't been easy since you left us. It was always you, always about you. And it still is, it's just so difficult.*

Son: *No one said it's going to be easy, but, I know, I didn't help much.*

Me: *Still, why did you have to die?*

Son: *Keep going to the meetings Dad. You still got issues.*

Me: *[Silence]*

Son: *Dad?*

Me: *Yeah.*

Son: *I love you Dad.*

Me: *I love you too and I always will.*

Stewart Levett - Pikes Peak TCF

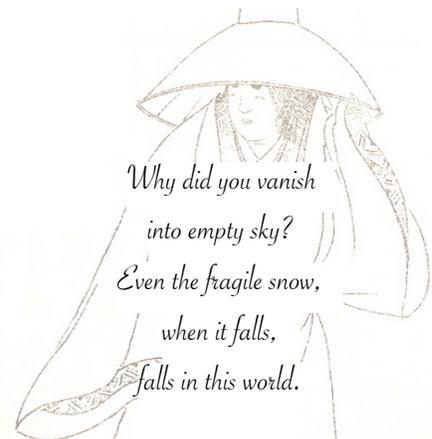
A Parents Loss

One bright sunny summer day early in the morning I was sitting in my front yard listening to the birds singing. I had a bird house in a high pole in my yard. I became aware of a red robin in the bird house. It was a mother robin peeking her head out. She would not come out and I realized that she was sitting on her baby eggs.

I knew that she would not leave the nest with her babies even to look for food. As I watched I became aware of another chirping. As I looked past the fence I saw another red robin hopping along the sidewalk. It was the father robin. He would chirp then stop and listen. The mother robin chirped back. Then the father chirped back. This went on for several yards until he reached the fence. He then flew to the bird house and gave her what ever he had in his mouth. I was in awe of the scene. The bond and love that a parent animal or human has for their young is love above all.

Ree Barrett - Pikes Peak TCF

Why did you vanish into the empty sky?



Izumi Shikibu was a Japanese poet who lived approximately 936 to 1033 A.D. She wrote this poem after her daughter Naishi died and is considered by many to encapsulate true grief.



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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

Tell us what you want. Is there something specific that you'd like to see? Perhaps more stories or articles on healing? Recommendations for books or poems written by other TCF members?

Do you have a poem or a prayer, story or picture that you would like to share? We also welcome your contributions to our newsletter whether original or something you may have read. If submitting something you've read or know is copyrighted material, you must obtain written permission from the author prior to us going to publication.

Please address any submissions to:

Stew Levett
160 El Dorado Lane
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

Or write to: Stewart@Archangelgifts.com

Submissions need to be received by the 10th of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter. Thank you.

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

Angel Eyes: Giving Comfort, Providing Hope

Our group offers bereavement services for parents, families, friends and caregivers who have been affected by the sudden unexpected loss of an infant or toddler. This group offers you a comfortable place to heal and learn how to live with your loss. Nothing is asked of you; you do not have to speak if you choose not to.

People who have received bereavement services report that it is very helpful for them to have people to talk to who can understand the grief of losing an infant or young child. This group is a safe place where you can talk about both your grief and the precious memories you have of your child. Each month we will begin with a particular topic, talk about how you might be affected and have time for general sharing.

The group is led by an ANGEL EYES social worker whose mission is to help families and others cope with the sudden, unexpected death of an infant or toddler throughout the state by providing a range of bereavement services. For additional help and information: **Angel Eyes 1-888-285-7437**
Web site: www.angeleyes.org

Meetings are held the 3rd Monday of the Month

Location: Colorado Springs Penrose Library, 20 N. Cascade Ave

Time: 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

There is no cost and parking is free at the meters after 6:00 p.m.



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THOUGHTFUL POEMS

This is a poem found on Grievingdads.com and most people and websites have attributed it as "Author Unknown." Others say it was penned by Eileen Knight Hagmeister. I have not been able to verify either way.

A Man in Grief

Eileen Knight Hagmeister

To be a man in grief,
Since "men don't cry" and "men are strong"
No tears can bring relief.
It must be very difficult
To stand up to the test
And field calls and visitors
So she can get some rest.
They always ask if she's all right
And what she's going through,
But seldom take his hand and ask,
"My friend, but how are you?"
He hears her crying in the night
And thinks his heart will break.
He dries her tears and comforts her,
But "stays strong" for her sake.
It must be very difficult
To start each day anew
And try to be so very brave--
He lost his baby too.

Think of every day, every challenge, every triumph
(and indeed) every defeat as feathers on your
wings.
Then one day the sum of all your wisdom will let
you fly where only eagles dare!

Quoted by Sha Ta Ha

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 steams
When mindless fate destroys their dreams.

Ken Faulk
TCF/Northwest Connecticut



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HEALING WORDS

Why We Still Go to TCF

*“Are you still involved with that group?
Aren't you over it yet? Why do you go?”*

These are questions I often hear now that it has been more than seven years since Mark died. I suspect you hear them too. There are easy answers. But not everyone understands, unless you have been there. Here are ten I can think of:

1. Because we never want the world to forget our child, so what we do we do in his or her name.
2. Because when we reach out to help someone else, we also help ourselves.
3. Because someone was there for us when we needed it most; now the best way to say “thank you” is to pass it on by being there for others.
4. Because it is the one thing we do that can bring something positive out of tragedy.
5. Because we have found in TCF better friends and closer bonds than we ever thought possible. Here we can cry and hug people even if we don't know their last name or what they do for a living. And it doesn't matter.
6. Because few people are qualified to walk up to a newly bereaved family and say, “I know how you feel.” And because we can, we must.
7. Because sometimes we need to talk, too, and to remember and share. We are further along than many around us, but we never forget.
8. Because many of us believe that one day we will meet our child or brother or sister again, and he or she will ask, “So what did you do with your life after I left?” And we will have an answer.
9. Because our presence might help newly bereaved families understand that they will survive and even laugh again.
10. Because we love cold coffee, cookies, and hard metal chairs.

Richard Edler

TCF, South Bay/L.A., California, Chapter

*Grief is like a long, winding valley where any
bend may reveal a totally new landscape.*

C.S. Lewis

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

There are two days in every week about which we should not worry – Two days which can be debt free from fear and apprehension.

One of these days is Yesterday with its mistakes and cares, its ashes and pains, its faults and blunders.

Yesterday has passed forever beyond our control. All the money in the world cannot bring back yesterday.

We cannot undo a single act we performed; we cannot erase a single word we said. Yesterday is gone.

The other day we would do well not to worry about is Tomorrow – with its adversities, its burdens, its large promise and poor performance. Tomorrow is also beyond our immediate control. Tomorrow's sun will rise either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds – but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in Tomorrow, for it is as yet unborn.

That leaves only one – Today. Any person can fight the battles of just one day. It is only when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities – Yesterday and Tomorrow – that we break down.

It is not the experience of Today that drives people mad – it is remorse or bitterness for something that happened Yesterday and the dread of what Tomorrow may bring.

Let us, therefore, journey but one day at a time.

Author Unknown

(Adapted from the New South Wales, Australia chapter TCF)

Send Back The Noise

It's way too quiet here, since our son is not around. I'd pay any price to again hear the sound of a basketball rhythmically hitting the ground; or to answer the question, “Dad, can you make this shot? Pass the ball, probably not!” His bedroom looks more like a sporting goods store. But those balls, gloves and cleats aren't used anymore. Soccer, basketball, football or lacrosse; just one more game, win, tie or a loss. I'd buy one more ticket, regardless of the cost. It's too quiet around here; things aren't the same, I'd settle for a sound of a video game. I know it's not possible to get back our boys; so please God could you just send back the noise?

Peter Graves TCF, San Diego, CA



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Suicide: How Do We Say It?

From the moment we learned of our daughter's death, I knew that the word "suicide" had the power to erase her life while emblazoning her death in neon letters in the minds of her friends and colleagues. During the unremitting misery of those early days, I even toyed with the idea of telling no one she was gone, willing her to stay alive in the thoughts of those who knew her, forgetting that I'd already notified our family and closest friends. It was a fairy tale wish I contrived as a way of allowing myself a momentary escape from the unthinkable reality of her death. If her death were never acknowledged, would she still be here?

My fantasy vanished in the cold light of the days that followed. I knew that we could never dishonor Rhonda's memory by concealing her suicide. I wrote a letter to friends and relatives, informing them of the events leading up to her death. I hoped my letter would quell the inevitable whispers by openly acknowledging her depression and her decision to end her own life. I implored them to speak often and openly about her to us; to do otherwise would deny her existence. I never intended to embark on a campaign to confront, let alone eradicate, the stigma of suicide. What mattered most was that we who loved Rhonda must not let the circumstances of her death diminish her memory or her accomplishments. I explained that she had "taken her own life" or that "she died of suicide." An expression I refused to use then and refuse to use to this day, is the despicable committed suicide," with its implications of criminality. Historically, that term was an instrument of retaliation against the survivors, and it has no place in today's enlightened society.

Many people prefer to say, "completed suicide," but as a parent who witnessed my child's 20-year struggle against the demons of clinical depression, I don't care much for that, either. **"Died of suicide" or "died by suicide"** are accurate, emotionally- neutral ways to explain my child's death.

My first encounter with suicide occurred many years ago when my dentist, a gentle family man in his mid 30's, took his own life. Since that time, I have known neighbors, relatives, friends and other hard-working, highly respected individuals who died this way. I've facilitated meetings in which grieving parents declined to speak about their children because they couldn't handle the group's reactions to the dreaded "s" word. I've known parents who never returned to a chapter meeting because of negative comments about the way that their child died.

Rhonda was a gifted scholar, writer and archaeologist who, like my mother, suffered from adult-onset manic depression (also called bipolar disorder). She made a lasting contribution in her field, and a wonderful tribute to her and her work appeared in *American Antiquity*, *Journal of the Society for American Archaeology* (October, 1994).

Both my daughter and my mother suffered tremendously in their struggles to conquer and conceal their illness. Neither of them won that battle, but my mother responded to medications that minimized the highs and lows, and she died of cancer at 87. Sadly, doctors never discovered a magic formula that could offer Rhonda the same relief. She ended her own life at age 36, after a year of severe depression that was triggered by life stresses beyond her control. I saw her battle firsthand, and I witnessed her valiant struggle to survive. She wanted desperately to live; she died because she thought she had no alternative.

In his revealing book, *Telling Secrets*, the great theologian Frederick Buechner describes his father's suicide, which occurred when Buechner was just a boy. The conspiracy of silence that was imposed on Buechner and his brother had a profound effect on their development and their relationships with other family members. "We are as sick as our secrets," he concludes.

We whose children have taken their own lives must do all that we can to help eradicate the secrecy and stigma that surround their deaths. If we allow these to persist, we allow their lives to be diminished. We owe our children more than that.

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March 2011

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