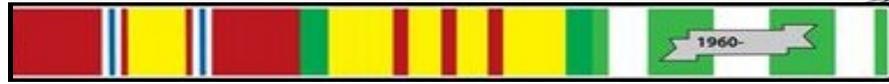




NEWS AND VIEWS

VVA # 223 - THE REDWOOD EMPIRE CHAPTER



Volume 17, Issue 4

MAY 2015

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH OTHER VETERANS



Sonoma County Women Veterans Wellness Day

By Astrid Ortega NP, CDE, retired

On April 4th at the Dhyana Center and Bliss Organic Day Spa in Sebastopol, thirty women vets spent a relaxing, healing, and blissful day. We were treated to a day full of serenity, healing, and being pampered. The day began with informative short presentations by several speakers.

Linda Yeates, Team Leader at the North Bay Vet Center in Rohnert Park, spoke about services for homeless vets. Doctor Vera Smith, an Internist from the Santa Rosa VA Clinic, spoke about newer services for women veterans and how to access them.

Lauralyn Castle, Senior Veterans Claim Worker, gave us detailed information concerning service-connected disability compensation, medical coverage, educational benefits, and many other VA benefits. She told us about walk-in appointments and passed out an extensive fact sheet with phone numbers and the addresses of Veterans' agencies and services.

We were then given a tour of the spacious and welcoming Dhyana Center and Bliss Spa. We women vets were treated to a delicious and healthy lunch catered by CERES. Everyone's energy was boosted in mid-afternoon by the indulgence of natural fruit juice drinks prepared by the staff to help keep your blood and liver healthy and aid in digesting that fabulous lunch. The rest of the day we were pampered with facials, pedicures, manicures, and hour massages that we had signed up for



Julia Sutton, Kate O'Hare-Palmer, and Stephanie Jones

earlier that morning. In between our treatments we waited in a lovely room full of healthy snacks and very comfortable chairs and sofas.

The women participants talked amongst themselves until called for their treatments. Relating our military and life stories and getting information, we reassured one another. It was time well spent. The women ranged in ages from Korean War Vets and Viet Nam War Vets to the younger generation from the Iraq/Afghan War. The younger women seemed to really enjoy talking with us--the "older generation vets".

All in all, a very healing and rewarding day; connecting with these women who had served their country and now were finding their way in the civilian world. Many of them asked "How could I go so long without taking care of myself?". Kate O'Hare-Palmer has received many phone calls about what a positive experience this was for the participants.

It was unanimous--we would love to make this an annual event for Women Vets of Sonoma County.

Thank you to all the agencies; the staff of both the Dhyana Center and the Bliss Organic Day Spa, the volunteers, CERES, and all the contributors for making this healing day possible.



Vets tour the Dhyana Center

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

Eleanor Roosevelt

VIETNAM VETERANS of AMERICA - REDWOOD EMPIRE CHAPTER 223

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DONATIONS

In our ever growing efforts to serve local veterans, VVA Chapter 223 is always looking for new sources of funds to support the cause. We're still a very small entity trying to serve the veterans of Sonoma County.

You can help by making a tax deductible contribution directly to VVA Chapter 223. Send donations directly to the Chapter at the address on the back page. Thanks...

NOTICE

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of VVA, Inc., National, State, Chapter 223, or the newsletter staff, but of the corresponding party. All articles by the Chapter have permission for reprint in all Vietnam Veterans of America newsletters. Anything else must come from the original source.

To make a contribution to the News and Views, submit a story, or a photograph, please call or email: Charles Earthman: 707.778.6598, or c.earthman173@gmail.com To make a complaint about the newsletter, please call: Ken Holybee: 707.887.8891, or holybee@comcast.net

VVA Chapter 223 invites you to place an ad in the News and Views, please contact:

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A business card size ad in our newsletter is \$100.00 for a full year... With a 100% Tax Credit!

**VVA Chapter 223
Phone number is 526-4218
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President's Letter

As this term of office ends it is time to thank everyone for the assistance and work they have put into our chapter. As reported last month, we are looking for a newsletter editor to fill in for Brooke. Brooke and Charles have done a great job with our newsletter and the website getting the chapter national and state awards for our publications. Our chapter is always mentioned in the national Zephyr because of the work we do and the reporting of our members on these projects. I would like to ask that more members submit reports or articles highlighting our work. Our members that are not able to attend our events would like to be kept informed and maybe they will be able to attend in the future.



Ken Holybee

I have noticed that some of our members are starting to age a little and their health is not what it was twenty years ago. I hope we are able to hold events that they are able to attend in the future.

This week we had a positive advancement in our legislation. S 901 and HR 1769 were introduced into congress. These bills are to create a center of excellence in the VA to look into the health and birth defects of children of veterans. The research will look at scientific evidence for treatment and assistance for the children. We need everyone to call, mail, or email their senators and members of congress and request they sign on and support these bills. Tell them that this is for the children of those that have served. This legislation is for all veterans of all eras and all toxins that they may have been exposed to--knowingly or not.

It has been an honor for me to represent our membership at all levels of the VVA for these years. Our chapter is a forward looking chapter and we work hard to make life easier for all veterans.

There will be a Lobby Day in Sacramento on May 13th. We are joining with other groups to get the most out of this day with legislators coming to speak to us about their legislation and other priorities in Sacramento. Contact me for more information on this.

Continued on page 8

Women's Committee....

Kate O'Hare-Palmer

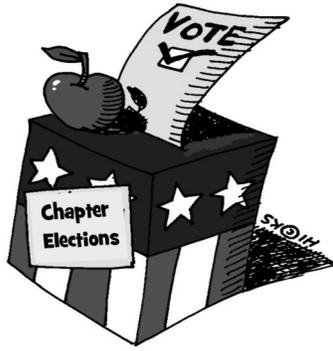
First of all, I would like to thank all those that helped make the first Sonoma County Women Veterans Wellness Day on April 4th a true success. We had planned for 25 participants this first year, and we had 29 women veterans that showed up! Some had seen our brief note in the calendar of events in the Press Democrat and joined in! The smiles on everyone's faces and the exchange of information definitely helped us reach our goal. Many would like to see a follow-up seminar with Lauralyn Castle, our Sonoma County Veterans Service Office representative. We could not have done this without our community support. Blessings to all.



Kate O'hare-Palmer

On April 30th, there will be Congressional Hearings of the House Committee of Veterans Affairs examining Access and Quality of Care and Services for Women Veterans. The issues include: increasing the Dept. of Veterans Affairs and VA employees' accountability, Homeless Veterans Reintegration, GI Bill Processing Improvement, Barriers for Veterans Education Act, consideration of certain time spent receiving medical care from Department of Defense of active duty for purposes of eligibility for post-9/11 educational assistance. Vietnam Veterans of America Women Veterans Committee is submitting a report for the record to reflect our position on resolutions from our committee. We expressed support for H.R. 1356(Coffman and Speier), Establishment of Structural Standards to Meet Gender-Specific Health Care Needs in Medical Facilities of Department of Veterans Affairs. We also addressed H.R. 423(Franks and Valadao), Improvement of Care Provided to Newborn Children. S.469 (Murray for herself, Gillibrand, Tester, Baldwin, Sanders, and Bennet), Women Veterans and Families Health Services Act of 2015 is another bill to follow. The Reproductive and Fertility Treatment, Preservation Assistance, Adoption, and Childcare Assistance within this bill is far-reaching and a long time coming! Every veteran should read this. It

Continued on page 8



2015 Chapter Election

Elections were held for Chapter Officers and Board of Directors members at the April general meeting. These were the first Chapter elections in two years after the membership voted in 2013 to make elected positions two-year terms. Since that time, the Chapter has voted to elect officers annually and Board members bi-annually.

There were no comments by the candidates running for office and, because they all ran unopposed, a motion was made that all nominees be elected by a white ballot. A voice vote was taken and the results were unanimous, and that was that. The Oath of Office will be administered at May's general meeting. Jil McGivney is still the AVVA representative to the Board. That position will come up for re-election in 2016.

The Chapter Officers remain the same, but the Board of Directors has three new members giving it a new look and a fresh perspective. Brooke McKusick and Charles Earthman did not stand for re-election. Both had served several terms on the Board and they will continue to carry out important duties and Chapter functions.

The 2015–16 Chapter leaders are:

President, Ken Holybee; Ken has served as Chapter President four consecutive terms and has held the position in other years as well. Ken also serves on the VVA National Board as a Member-At-Large, California State Council Legislative Chair, CSC Agent Orange Committee Chair, President of California Veterans Benefit Fund, and Sonoma County Veterans Housing Advisory Committee.

Vice President, John McGivney; John has served several terms as the second in charge. John is a past California State Veteran of the Year and is one of the most respected leaders in our veteran community. He supervises the food giveaway program and chairs the Education Committee.

Treasurer, Bill Burke; this is Bill's second term as

treasurer and we are lucky to have him. Bill brings top notch accounting skills and a keen knowledge of fiscal management that keeps the Chapter going.

Secretary Alan Dalton; Alan took over the secretary's job from Dave Philips and has done a great job. He brings an intelligent business management background to the job and his attention to detail in record keeping is second to none.

The Board of Directors:

Lou Nuñez – fourth term

Anthony Tate – second term

John Crooker – past President

Astrid Ortega – first term

Bob Cheadle – first term

Congratulations to the newly-elected leadership of VVA Chapter 223. *Now get to work!*



News and Views Editor's Notes

Brooke McKusick, the editor of News and Views, is taking some time off. Charles Earthman has assumed the editor's duties in the interim. Charles has been an associate editor and writer for News and Views for many years. We hope the quality our readers have come to expect will not suffer.

We hope Brooke will return to the newsletter in the near future, but in the event he is unable, the Chapter's Board of Directors is looking for someone to take on the job as editor of this award-winning newsletter. Charles will edit the newsletter until a replacement is found, but because of other commitments, he can only do this for a short time.

If you know anyone who is interested, please talk to the Chapter President or any member of the BOD.

May Events

May is here and with it comes a busy schedule of events culminating with the Memorial Day ceremony at Santa Rosa Memorial Park. Chapter 223 and the veteran community will be marching in parades, eating pancakes, and putting out flags for the Memorial Day commemoration. Ongoing events like Texas Hold ‘em, Vet Connect on Tuesday mornings, and all the monthly committee meetings will take place as usual. Since May will be a very busy month for the Chapter, it’s all hands on deck. Oh yea, the Wednesday Night Farmers Market also starts in May.

Events in May

May 13 - 1st Annual All-Veterans Day at the Capitol. Veterans visit the Capitol to show support for veterans’ issues, spend the day at the State Capitol meeting local legislators, educating legislators and staff on veteran’s issues, and hearing from key legislative and Administration speakers.

May 16 - Luther Burbank Rose Parade & Festival. “Out of a Storybook” is the theme for the 121st Annual Luther Burbank Rose Parade & Festival. Parade starts at 10am in downtown Santa Rosa. This theme allows for a wide range of creativity and expression for everyone involved. What will Chapter 223 do?

May 20, Wednesday, 9am: Volunteers will assemble with work garb, gloves, and long-handled screwdrivers at Santa Rosa Memorial Park on Franklin Avenue to dig up the flagpole holes. Lunch provided

May 24 - American Legion Post 21 Pancake Breakfast and Good Old Boys Motorcycle Run. Come early and lend a hand for this fundraiser and stay to be a part of the Good Ol’ Boys MC 4th Annual Veterans Run. Pack leaves 11am for a ride around Sonoma County. Then back to Vets Building for live music from Blue Rock Country Club, the Show & Shine Car Show, vendors, steak dinner, and raffle prizes. Proceeds benefit American Legion, Vet-Connect, AMVETS, and Vietnam Vets.

May 25, Monday - Memorial Day, 6am: Gather at Santa Rosa Memorial Park to setup the flags. A ceremony honoring the fallen begins at 10am and will be followed by a reception with refreshments. At 3pm the flagpoles are taken down; the poles go back onto the trucks, and the flags are stacked and returned to storage locker in their proper order. After the last flag is stored away, we will eat (Pizza). Volunteers are needed. We thank you in advance.

Weekly the Chapter will have a booth setup at the Santa Rosa Downtown Farmers Market. See story on page 7.

Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!
Patrick Henry



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, DC

50 Years Ago

By Charles Earthman

In 1994 I watched the commemorations of the D-day landings in Normandy. It had been fifty years and many of those vets were in their 70's or late 60's. I hadn't given much thought to how I would feel when the fiftieth anniversary of my war years came, but they're here. For many Vietnam vets, and for that matter Americans over 60, the next few years will mark the fiftieth anniversary of events that had serious consequences on our young lives and in many ways are still with us today.

Last month marked 40 years since the end of the Vietnam War. That conflict still looms large in the common memory of millions of people in Vietnam, the US, and beyond who were affected by it. The Vietnam War touched every nook and cranny of American culture and forever changed the way we look at life at home and abroad.

After a decade of combat on battle fields from the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta to the triple canopy forest of the Central Highlands, the nation of Vietnam was left in ruins and the American psyche was scared for years to come. By the time the US military left, 2.7 million Americans had served in Vietnam. 58,648 Americans and an estimated 3 million Vietnamese were killed. The conflict created unrest back home with many US citizens joining the anti-war movement. Not since the Civil War had our nation been so divided. What a hell of a time.

As we commemorate the good and the bad events that happened to us 50 years ago, many of us are still trying to make sense of it all. We should try to pass on our stories to the generations to come in hopes that they will understand that what we did--good, bad, or indifferent--we did as patriots. No matter how misled we were by our political leaders, we did it because it was our duty.

Looking back it appears that things were not as clear for us as they had been for those WWII vets of the generation before. But now in retrospect, some historic events are clear and better understood.

The tumultuous events of our time and the personal experiences of each Vietnam veteran help to define our generation. For some of us the personal ghosts and physical scars we carry still haunt us and will for the rest of our lives.



The Challenge Coin King

A challenge coin is a small coin or medallion (usually military), bearing an organization's insignia or emblem and carried by the organization's members. A truly unique and impressive collection of these coins exists in our Chapter.

Bob Ortiz, a life member of Chapter 223 and the President of Chapter 10 of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Association, has one of the largest private collections anywhere, with no duplicates. Bob has been collecting for some years now and has over 1800 coins manufactured for military groups and units from all over the world. Bob's collection is personally owned and is not a manufacturer's collection. He's done it all with a little help from his friends.

"I'd like to thank all those who have over the years helped in having this personally-owned, 1,846 (no doubles) challenge coin collection ready to be in the Guinness book of world records this year" Bob says.

Bob is still looking for more coins to add to his already impressive collection. If you want add to the collection and be a part of this world record, call Bob at 650.712.0980



The Wednesday Night Market

By Charles Earthman

The 2015 Wednesday Night Farmers' Market is here and once again the Chapter will have an information booth, answering questions and passing out information. This is our third year and we will be joined by Purple Heart Chapter 78, which has been there with us for the last two years. Sonoma County Vet Connect will also have a booth for the first time.

The Wednesday Night Farmers' Market in downtown Santa Rosa is a popular summertime event for Sonoma County residents. The Wednesday night market brings together vendors selling a large array of products including foods from Sonoma County restaurants, fresh local produce, and all kinds of others goods--all in one location.

This venue gives veteran service organizations an excellent opportunity to get the word out to veterans and answer questions about programs and services that are available to them and their families. The information booths we staff at the market are a success and we are able to reach many people, giving information and answering questions on a range of topics.

Our presence at the Market has helped us raise our profile and enhance our status as a non-profit organization helping those in need in our community. The Market takes place during the summer when there are many other activities going on in the veteran community and our participation is important and needs to continue. Keeping this effort going at the Wednesday Night Farmers' Market requires commitment and dedication. There is always a need for volunteers to help us keep up this important work.



Wednesday Night Market 2014

April Meeting with VA Secretary McDonald

By Ken Holybee

Thursday afternoon, April 22, I went to the Oakland VA to attend a meeting with VA Secretary Bob McDonald. He spoke on a number of issues including ending homelessness for veterans, the VA budget, building trust, and customer service.

Ending veteran homelessness by the end of the year is a lofty goal. I do not see it as realistic in our area and I asked how we could accomplish this when we have no place to house anyone in Sonoma County. Secretary McDonald spoke about increasing housing in large cities by working with property owners and organizations like Swords to Plowshares to get more property owners to accept the HUDVASH vouchers. I stated that in our county we do not have any available housing and we would be losing the vouchers if we did not house the veterans in a given time period. The Secretary responded that he is working with Congress to extend the period of time from six months to eighteen. I still cannot see how this will help in the rural areas with no available housing. We need to expedite either building or acquiring adequate facilities.

The budget proposed by Congress is more than one billion less than today's budget. This will mean a cut in construction for VA facilities and a cut in health care. As proposed, it would mean that 70,000 veterans will not receive medical treatment in the proposed budget. Also, it will stop construction on renovating old facilities to accommodate female veterans. There are still a lot of VA facilities that do not have accommodations for female veterans. It is estimated that by 2017 20% of the veterans using the VA will be female.

Building trust in the VA with veterans is never an easy task. Once trust is lost it is very difficult to rebuild. I was able to comment that in my opinion that to rebuild the trust, effort would be needed at the local level. Creating a Management Advisory Committee or the equivalent at the CBOC would be the place to start.

Secretary McDonald spoke about customer service and the lack thereof in the VA. He spoke about partnering with organizations like Disney to teach the meaning of customer service to the VA. With more than 50% of the employees being veterans, that should not be a difficult task, but it is something that really needs to be addressed!

The Secretary's other mission to California was to speak to the universities and their medical students about joining the VA. The VA trains more doctors than any other medical institution. The issue is the lack of doctors. Most medical schools graduate less than one hundred and twenty

(120) doctors per year. California has a shortage of twenty-two thousand doctors. Even I can do the math on that one. We need a way to retain and recruit doctors in the VA. The numbers of veterans using the VA will increase at least five times in the next three years because of the ageing veterans and the health issues of the newer veterans.

President's Letter

Continued from page 3

On March 29th I attended the ceremony in Sacramento where 32 names were added to the California Vietnam Memorial. Twenty-two of these names were sailors that went down on the USS Frank E Evans. One of the sailors was William Daniel Brown II from Healdsburg. Of the 74 sailors that died that day, only one body was recovered. I am glad that we were able to finally honor those that did not return. There has been a lot written about the event and the ship, but I am sure that most do not know the story. There was a video made of the event in Sacramento and Charles has put a link to it on the chapter website.Keep up the good work,

Women's Committee.... Kate O'Hare-Palmer

Continued from page 3

surpasses even what our women veterans committee discussed for our resolutions.

There are many veteran bills coming out at this time and it would benefit all of us to look them up via Thomas Library: Thomas.loc.gov. Our best defense is to be informed and help pass some of those bills that are of help to all of us. Until next time.....

You can Follow Kate at vva-223.org and in News and Views. Kate also chairs the VVA's Women Veterans Committee. She can be reached at

koharepalmer@vva.org



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SONOMA COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES

SONOMA COUNTY VET CONNECT

Veterans Drop In Center
for **FREE Resources & Services**
Every Tuesday - 9 am to noon
Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building
1351 Maple Avenue, Santa Rosa
(Across from the Fair Grounds)
Information, Assistance and Referrals
VA Health Care, Veterans Benefits
Counseling for Veterans and their Families
Housing and Employment Counseling
Phone 707-755-1417

These services are also available at the Veterans Memorial Buildings in **Guerneville** on the 2nd Thursday and in **Sonoma** on the 3rd Thursday of every month. Please note the time schedule for these resource and service meetings is:
Noon to 3 pm

ALL VETERANS ARE WELCOME

NORTH BAY VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER

200 Montgomery Drive, Suite "C"
Santa Rosa, CA 95402
Phone 707-578-8387

NBVRC provides supportive services to very low-income veteran families living in, or transitioning into, permanent housing. The employment workshop is free. Veterans can obtain career training.

NBVRC operates Hearn House, a behavioral health treatment program that provides comprehensive treatment and housing for male veterans.

SONOMA COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

(707) 565.5960

3725 Westwind Blvd, Suite 101
Santa Rosa CA 95409

Westwind Boulevard is located near the Charles M. Schulz (Sonoma County) Airport. From Highway 101: Exit Airport Boulevard, turn left on Westwind Blvd. and right into the building's parking lot. Check Sonoma County Transit Airport route 62 & 64 for bus schedule.

P. O. Box 4059, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Please call to schedule an appointment.

FREE BUS RIDES FOR VETERANS

For 2015, veterans and college students in Sonoma County will be able to ride **Sonoma County Transit** buses free of charge. The program went into effect Jan. 1. Students and veterans just need to show a valid identification card to ride.



Need a hat?

See Earl Walters
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Coffee Cart



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Visit the VVA -223 Website often for timely updates and Chapter information...

www.vva-223.org



CHAPTER 223
GENERAL MEETING
MAY 19, 2015
BE THERE EARLY!!!

**REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION -
HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM** - Every
Monday evening @ 5:30 pm. 101 6th Street, Santa
Rosa.

SONOMA COUNTY VET CONNECT -
Every Tuesday morning, 9am to noon at the
VETS building. Vets helping vets solve problems.
VVA 223 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING -
Second Tuesday of the month, 1pm @ the VETS
building. Look for the guys looking for the room...

VVA-223 GENERAL MEETING
Third Tuesday of the month. POTLUCK @ 6pm &
Meeting starts at 7pm. Next meeting , May 19

FOOD-GIVE-AWAY PROGRAM
Fourth Tuesday of the month. Volunteers will please
check in with **John McGivney @ 575.5261** for time
and station.

POKER SCHEDULE
Cards in the air at 6pm. Check-in and pizza 5pm to
5:55 pm. Usually the first Saturday of the month.
June 6, 2015



MONDAY MAY 25, 2015

COMIC'S CORNER

The town cop was parked outside a bar at midnight, watching for drunk drivers, when he saw a man stumble out the door, trip over the curb, try thirty cars before opening the door to his own, and fall asleep on the front seat. One by one the drivers of the other cars drove off, and finally, the guy woke up, started his car and pulled out of the parking lot. The cop pulled him over and gave him a breathalyzer test. The results showed a 0.0 blood-alcohol level, the cop said, "How can that be?". The guy said, "Well, tonight was my turn to be the decoy."

When I die, I want to go peacefully like my grandfather did—in his sleep. Not yelling and screaming like the passengers in his car. -- Bob Monkhouse

"Twin boys had been adopted. One was raised in Mexico & named Juan. The other was raised in Algiers & named Ahmal. After a few years, the birth mother decided to meet the boys she'd had to give up. She found Juan & had a beautiful reunion. But her husband wouldn't take her to Algiers. They are twins, he explained. If you've seen Juan, you've seen Ahmal." -- A Prairie Home Companion

Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies. -- Groucho Marx

A woman was going through her husband's desk drawer and discovered three soybeans in an envelope containing \$30 in cash. So she asked him about it. "Well, I have to confess --- over the years, I haven't been completely faithful to you. But every time I cheated I put a soybean in the drawer to remind myself." "So where did the thirty dollars come from?" "Well, when soybeans hit ten dollars a bushel, I decided to sell."

The old lady walks up to the old man at the old age home and she says, "If you drop your pants I'll bet I can tell your age." So, the man drops his pants, and she says, "You're 83." "You're right! How could you tell?" "You told me yesterday."

Doctor, for the last eight months, my husband has thought that he's a lawn mower. That's terrible. Why didn't you bring him in sooner? Because the neighbor just returned him this morning.

Democracy means that anyone can grow up to be president and anyone who doesn't grow up can be vice president. -- Johnny Carson



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