



# The Guide Star



Mingo Creek Park Observatory

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.  
Founded June 9, 1929 by Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon

Website: [3ap.org](http://3ap.org)

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Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

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## Be There With Bells On: AAAP Christmas Party, December 9<sup>th</sup>



Yes, the Christmas Season is drawing near.

It's a wonderful and yet peculiar time of year for astronomers—a holiday that on one hand brings the stars a little closer to their rightful place in public awareness, and on the other compels people to adorn their houses and businesses with bright strings of bulbs and floodlights. Still, these Yuletide ironies won't hinder our celebrations! The annual AAAP Holiday Party is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>. Once again, the festivities will take place at the Middle Road Firehall in the North Hills and contributions of refreshments and door prizes will be appreciated.

As always, the Holiday Party, promises an evening highlighted by:

**Delicious Food . . .**

**A Plentiful Assortment of Door Prizes . . .**

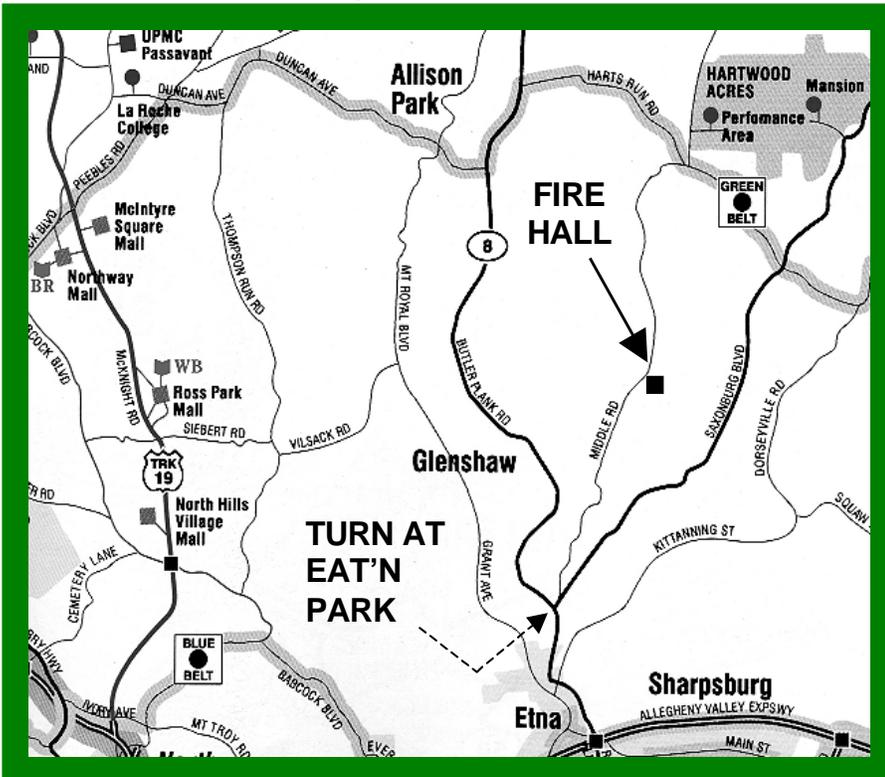
**The Traditional End-of-Year Talk by Tom Reiland . . .**

and last, but not least...

**Liberal Servings of Cheer, Community, and Astronomy Chat**

(All of this, and a in a well-lit room, too.)

## Directions to the Christmas Party



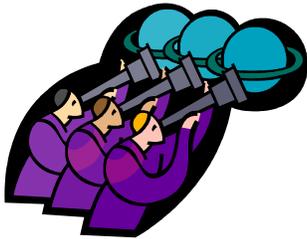


## REMEMBER *The Kevin Brunelle Astrophotography Contest*

How could any of us forget? This is the most-anticipated meeting of the year!

Join us at for November 18<sup>th</sup> business meeting for our annual photo extravaganza, *The Kevin Brunelle Astrophotography Contest*. Bring yourselves, your astronomical expertise, and of course your aesthetic sensibilities. Sit back and enjoy the handiwork of your fellow members—a diverse range of stunning astronomical and atmospheric images—and cast your vote for your favorites in three categories:

1. **Astronomical images taken with optics of focal length no greater than 150mm**
2. **Astronomical images taken with optics of focal length greater than 150mm**
3. **Images of atmospheric phenomena**



As always, the meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. at the Carnegie Science Center. See you all there!

## Welcome, New Members!

Greetings and salutations to the newest stars on the AAAP horizon—these new members who were voted in at the October 14<sup>th</sup> business meeting. Welcome!

**ROGER M. ANGELELLI  
KRISTEN ANGOTTI  
WILLIAM ANGOTTI  
WILLIAM M. CRESS  
BRETT ALAN HORN  
EDWARD JAQUAY  
PHILIP LAMB  
JUDY MARICEVIC  
ANDREW E. MELZER  
JORDAN NEFF  
SANDIE NEFF  
JOHN W. PODROSKEY III  
CHRISTOPHER J. RANDAS  
DAVID L. WALLACH  
WILLIAM WHITE  
G. WOLLENWEBER**

## Night Sky Network:

### *NSN News from Coordinator Chrissie Chojnicki*

As relatively new (and very active) members of the Night Sky Network, we have been making strides toward improving the club's educational and outreach resources. Here is our NSN News to date:

■ Our club became one of the "Stars in the Night Sky Network" on the list! We have had 5 NSN related events since we joined in June. Out of the 21 new clubs that joined the NSN in June 2005, we were listed as #1.

■ We have just received our 2<sup>nd</sup> NSN toolkit. The name of this toolkit is *Our Galaxy, Our Universe Outreach ToolKit*, and it deals with scale and distance in our Solar System, Galaxy, and Universe. After holding one more NSN event within our membership year, we will receive the next kit: the *Black Hole Survival ToolKit*, which deals with gravity and black holes.

■ Thanks Craig Lang for all your great efforts in conducting Night Sky Events!

■ I would like to invite anyone who is interested in becoming a participant in the Night Sky Network to contact Chrissie Chojnicki or Craig Lang. We plan on having training classes in the near future for both toolkits.

■ The last teleconference was with Dr. Steven Squyres. This was awesome and I hope many of you participated in this telecon. Information on the next telecon follows:

### ***Have you ever wanted to be an astronaut? NSN Telecon: Talk with a Shuttle Astronaut.***

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, November 30, 2005, 6:00 p.m. Pacific, 9:00 p.m. EST, for the next NSN Telecon.

Dr. Janice Voss, a veteran astronaut of five Space Shuttle flights, is our guest speaker. Dr. Voss has logged over 49 days in space, traveling 18.8 million miles in 779 Earth orbits. She will discuss her experiences and is looking forward to discussing your questions about human space flight.

**TOLL-FREE CONFERENCE CALL LINE:** 1-877-917-1549.  
Call anytime after 5:45 p.m. the evening of the telecon. An operator will answer and:

\* You will be asked for the passcode: NIGHT SKY NETWORK

\* You might be asked for the call leader: MICHAEL GREENE

\* You will be asked to give your NAME, the CLUB you belong to, and number of people listening with you.

More details will be posted on the listserv or wiki at least two weeks before the telecon. Until then, mark November 30<sup>th</sup> on your calendars!

# Mingo News

## Rules and Regulations for the Mingo Creek Park Observatory

by Ann Norman

Here are rules and regulations set forth by the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh for the proper use of the Mingo Creek Park Observatory and surrounding grounds.

### USE OF THE HILLTOP SITE:

If everyone follows these guidelines, we believe visitors and members will think of the Mingo Creek Park Observatory as the finest amateur facility in the region.

The gate combination can be given upon request to members in good standing only by the Director, Associate Directors, or other AAAP Officers. The gate combinations will be changed once a year in January or otherwise when deemed necessary.

The observatory site is for use by AAAP members and guests. If members are present and the gate is open, the public is welcome to enter the grounds. Therefore, if there are few members present and/or privacy is desired, please close the gate after you enter.

AAAP members are not expected to exercise police duties. If public visitors misbehave or are intoxicated, you may make a reasonable request for them to leave, but do not do so if you feel this would be unsafe. Call the police (911) or, if necessary, leave and get help.

### ARRIVING:

**\*\*NOTE:** the lower gate should always be left in same condition as found: (open or closed).

- ◆ Unlock gate (combination restricted to AAAP members only!).
- ◆ Set the correct numbers on the wheels, squeeze the lock as if to close it, and pull it open. (A small flashlight kept in your car will be invaluable after dark.)
- ◆ Remove lock from gate. Immediately set combination back to all "0."
- ◆ Open gate and drive forward.
- ◆ If a public star party night, the gate may be left open. Replace and lock the lock on the stationary side of the gate.
- ◆ On non-public nights, please close and lock both gates behind you. If you are expecting other members or guests, for security reasons please close and 'false-lock' the gate. (This involves closing the gate, sliding the inner tube sleeve into the stationary post, but not aligning the pin holes, inserting the pin thru the stationary post pin holes and attaching the locks back onto the pin).

This gives the illusion to non-members that the gate is locked, but members or guests can easily open the gate by simply sliding the inner tube sleeve open.

**\*\*NOTE:** if the gate is already open, leave it open. There may be scouts camping.

### LEAVING:

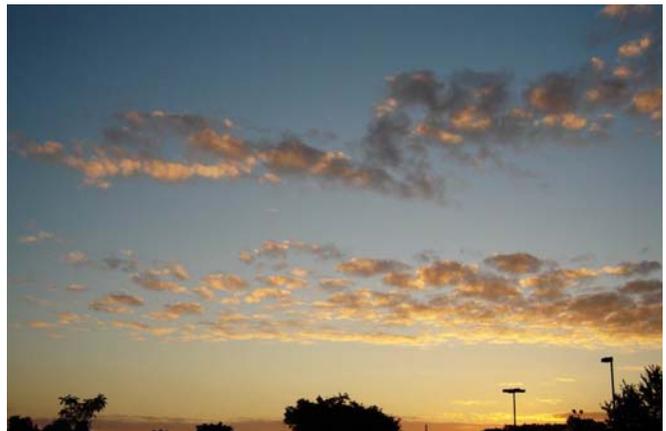
**\*\*NOTE:** the lower gate should always be left in same condition as found: (open or closed).

- ◆ If you are the last to leave, check the hilltop and pavilion parking area to be sure there are no vehicles inside the gate and that the observatory doors are closed and locked.
- ◆ Drive outside the gate. Unlock and remove the lock, set all wheels to "0."
- ◆ Close gate and attach lock to gate, making sure it is locked.
- ◆ If the lock is lost, inform the Director.
- ◆ If you are an observatory key holder, remove the spare lock from the file cabinet drawer handle in the member warm-up room and use it on the gate, otherwise follow the 'false-lock' procedure above.

**\*\*NOTE:** if the gate is already open, leave it open. There may be scouts camping.

No smoking is permitted in or near the building. Also, please refrain from smoking near telescopes on the grounds. The smoke is harmful to telescope optics, is a safety and health hazard, and reduces your visual sensitivity. If you smoke, please do not throw your butts on the ground. No littering. Keep our observing site clean.

Consuming alcoholic beverages on Mingo Creek Park Observatory property is prohibited. This means anywhere on the hilltop.



**Morning Clouds** by Fred Klein

# Wagman News

# Reviews & Resources

## A Season's Closing: Top Wagman Star-Partiers Recognized

Posted on the AAAP Listserv by Tom Reiland

I just finished going over the sign-in sheets from Wagman Observatory for this year. The numbers reflected the poor weather conditions. We had about 1,800 visitors and about 90 members assisted on 21 of 27 scheduled public and private events.

Fifteen of the nights were mostly cloudy to cloudy, and six of those had no members and public show up. Only twelve were good (6) to fair (5) nights and one was a daytime event.

All of the names on the sheets checked out except for a John Wilson who signed in on April 15 and June 25. One other volunteer was reported to me, but no name was given. He showed up with Bob Kalan and Larry Sneider on June 10<sup>th</sup>, one of our poor nights that no public attended. We had the 90 members assist 334 times (this does not include the two times Wilson signed in and the unknown member). This is well below what we would have in a good to average year. I'm hoping we get better weather next year.

The top twelve volunteers and their totals are listed here. They can choose either a hat or a patch. I'll list the other nineteen who can get a patch later on. Thanks go out to all who gave their valuable time to help with the 2005 star parties. Great job!

- 18: **Larry Sneider**  
**Bill Hayeslip**
- 15: **Tom Reiland**
- 14: **Bob Kalan**  
**Rowen Poole**
- 11: **Bob Novak**
- 9: **Bill Moutz**  
**Flac Stifel**
- 8: **Mary DeVaughn**  
**Eric Heckathorn**  
**Joyce O-Fischer**  
**Bill Yorkshire**

## Millennium Star Atlas

Reviewed by John Cheng

*Millennium Star Atlas: Softcover Edition*,  
by Roger W. Sinnott and Michael A.C.  
Perryman. (2005) \$134.95.

Another tool makes a reappearance!!!

After what seemed like an eternity, *Millennium Star Atlas* is once again in print. The new edition will be three soft-covered, slip-cased volumes.

The price is \$134.95 until the end of November, \$149.95 thereafter. A set of acetate overlays is available separately at \$19.95.

For any that may not have seen this atlas, it consists of 1,548 charts going down to 11<sup>th</sup> magnitude. Plotted are about 8,000 galaxies and a million stars.

An atlas for some serious star hopping, Sky Publishing promises shipment in early January 2006.



## Online Starhopping Resource

Recommended by Terry Trees

I found this to be an interesting tidbit in the "Reflector Mail" section of the September, 2005 issue of the Astronomical League's *Reflector* journal.

A retired mathematics professor has published a 163-page "Starhopping" .pdf file. Not only are introductory material and techniques explained, it also offers mathematical proofs (!) and "a long list of beautiful and or interesting objects [observed] from a seriously light polluted location with a description and a detailed star-hopping path for each one".

Go to <http://homepage.mac.com/edkaufman> and download "starhopping.pdf". **Note:** "Kaufman" is spelled with one "n," not two as might be expected.

## Congratulations to Truman & Family

Posted on the AAAP Listserv Digest by Bill Roemer

It will not come as a surprise that intelligence runs deep in the family of AAAP member Truman Kohman...Leslie J. Kohman, M.D. of SUNY Upstate Medical University has recently been named as Distinguished Service Professor, SUNY's highest academic honor.

Dr. Kohman is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Truman Kohman. She is a thoracic surgeon and Director of Thoracic Oncology at the university hospital and cancer liaison physician for the hospital cancer program at SUNY Upstate.

Congratulations to Dr. Leslie Kohman and Dr. and Mrs. Truman Kohman.

## Member Article

# Mingo Roof Design: The Untold Story *by Eric Fischer*

(Author's note: This is the speech I was supposed to give at the Mingo Dedication; sorry I couldn't make it that day. My thanks to George Guzik for filling in my speaker's slot.)

The movable-roof-under-fixed-roof design of Mingo and Wagman Observatories can trace its origins to a fateful meeting with the Allegheny County Chief Engineer in the mid 80's. At the time, progress on Wagman had been painfully slow. We had submitted our initial proposal in 1979 and for several years the County Parks Dept. had diplomatically avoided us. County Commission Chairman Tom Forrester (friend and neighbor of Dr. Wagman) finally told the County Parks, Law and Engineering departments to "make it happen".

One of the first orders of business was to settle on an acceptable design. To that end, George Lindbloom and I met with Sam Kiss, the County Engineer in one of the downtown County office buildings. George brought with him a set of blueprints of his concept for two telescope rooms



separated by a central warm-up/reception room. His design featured movable roofs that rode up and down tracks sloped at about a 30-40 deg. angle to the ground (instead of parallel to the ground as is the case today). This design afforded the most complete access to the sky, but Sam Kiss gave us a polite but firm "no".

His concern was liability. Someone could easily climb up one of the tracks, fall and be seriously injured. Mr. Kiss then went on to explain the County's philosophy about unattended buildings in the County Parks: Make them so that no one can find a way to injure themselves thereon, and also eliminate objects and protrusions that could be vandalized. So much for George's sloped-roof design.

Next it was Mr. Kiss' turn. He pulled out some sketches he had been working on several days before. His suggestion was to dig a cave in the side of the Wagman hill, build up a concrete patio in front, and roll out the telescope from the cave entrance on wheels or some kind of tracks. At that moment I wanted to say Johnny or

Suzy could still fall over the upper edge of the cave entrance and land in a heap on the pavement below. George and I were not about to have the AAAP become the laughingstock of the astronomical community with the first cave-borne observatory.

George then reached into his briefcase and pulled out a sketch of an earlier design for the observatory, the familiar rectangular building with roofs that rolled horizontally out on to elevated tracks on a set of poles. Again. Sam Kiss shook his head. This time his concern was about a gust of wind lifting the deployed roofs off the tracks, and he still envisioned a determined youngster figuring out how to shinny up one of the poles and

performing a high-wire act on one of the roof tracks. George and I were getting a bit frustrated at this point. We didn't figure Mr. Kiss would be swayed by the many successful examples of roof-on-elevated-track designs already in use around the country.

The turning point came when George said "what about having the movable roof slide *under* the fixed roof?" At that moment, Sam Kiss' demeanor changed completely. His mood brightened. He started asking questions about design detailed, method of retraction, etc. We no longer felt like we were in a hopeless tribunal. He soon gave us permission to prepare formal architect's drawings. There was still much to do (contract, insurance, utilities, financing) to make Wagman a reality, but a major hurdle had been cleared.

Several years later, in the late winter of 1987, the first Wagman movable roof had been assembled, lifted onto its wheels and given a push by several construction workers. It rolled neatly under the fixed roof and came back out with no scrapes, bumps or snags. The concept had been proven for use on the second Wagman wing and, years later, on the Mingo observatory. But if it hadn't been for George Lindbloom's persistence, who knows? Maybe we would be chasing bats out of the cave every time we opened Wagman observatory!

## Observations

### ORAS Astroblast 2005:

Article and Pictures by Charlotte Tunney

We spent the weekend of October 1<sup>st</sup> with the Oil Region Astronomical Society (ORAS) at Astroblast 2005. There was a nice group of about 50 who camped and enjoyed the perfect weather, wonderfully dark skies and the hospitality of the ORAS club.



Jim and I tried mightily to drive up Friday evening after work, but it was not to be. So, we arrived early Saturday and spent a pleasant day listening to speakers in the

recently finished classroom wing, visiting the vendors, looking over the door prizes and mushroom hunting (for Jim). Later, at the pizza party, we spoke with Kevin & Cindy Van Horn and George Guzik and saw several other AAAP members.

Just as the door prize drawing ended some non-astronomy friends from Pittsburgh joined us for the evening.

When full darkness fell, the Milky Way, clotted with stars was impressive. Our friends had never seen the Milky

Way and were happy to stroll from scope to scope, marveling at nebulae and star clusters and how friendly everyone was. Later, we all went up to the observatory to get a good look at



Mars through the 14" scope. There was having its usual fluctuating atmospheric distortion problems so there wasn't a lot of surface detail, but the new telescope gave us a very good view of M 31, as well.

The clear skies held and it was after 3 AM when the rising fog got to my Dob's primary and I had to call it a night. But, what a weekend.

For dark skies and good times with astronomy-loving people, I can highly recommend Astroblast and it happens every year.

### Lovin' Life: No Monday Blues

Posted on the AAAP

Listserv Digest

Monday, October 17, 2005



**From Phil M. Breidenbach**

**Subject:** Monday, off to a great start!

Good morning AAAP'ers,

My day is off to a great start. I went out and watched the ISS pass over the northern horizon a little bit before 7:00. It was a little over 20 degrees off the horizon here in Fox Chapel, but it was easy to see and to track as it headed towards the brightening sky in the east.

I came back in and took a sip or two of coffee and then "dragged" two of my fellow employees out to the southern side of the building to watch for an Iridium Flare.

We got outside with about a minute to spare. I had just pointed out where it should appear and pointed to a nearby star to give them a comparison as far as brightness, when, right on time it showed up! WOW, was it bright!

They were really impressed, I'm not sure if it was from the brightness or the fact that I knew where and when it would show up...

It was listed as a -6 magnitude flare. I'd have to agree, if it wasn't brighter.

Well, my coffee is still warm, my machine is waiting for me, I guess I should get back to them!

Have a great day everyone!

**From Truman Kohman**

**Subject:** Re: Monday, off to a great start!

AAAPers,

My day was also off to a good start:

5:51 Partial Lunar Eclipse, beginning of penumbral phase

7:33 Sunrise

7:34 Partial Lunar Eclipse, beginning of umbral phase

7:36 Moonset

8:03 Lunar Eclipse maximum

8:14 Full Moon

I got up a little after 7:00 and saw the nearly full Moon, shaded on the left (SE) side, below the Belt of Venus, in a totally clear sky. I took photos as the Moon descended from 7:22 until 7:34, by which time the Moon had set below the low hills to my southwest and the Belt of Venus was starting to fade. A pretty sight!



# November 2005

## Fridge Calendar by Cathy Rivi

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 	2	3 Taurid Meteors
6	7	8  Deadline: Kevin Brunelle Photo Entries	9	10	11 Veteran's Day	12
13	14	15 	16 Leonid Meteors	17 Leonid Meteors	18 AAAP Meeting 7:30 PM Carnegie Science Center	19
20	21	22	23 	24 Thanksgiving	25 	26 First meteor photograph 1885
27	28	29	30	<b>THIS MONTH:</b> November 18 <sup>th</sup> is a joint meeting with the Photographic Section of the Academy of Science and Art of Pittsburgh, and the Kevin Brunelle Astrophotography Contest.		
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**Also this month: Nov. 18 Lecture: From Algol to HD 209458b: How Eclipsing Stars Have Contributed to the Discovery of New Solar Systems**, Allegheny Observatory. Free but RSVP required. 7:30 p.m. Sponsored by University of Pittsburgh (412)-321-2400.

**Looking ahead: HOLIDAY PARTY DECEMBER 9<sup>th</sup> 2005**  
 Dates and times are based on Eastern Time.

AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule

Dec. 9, 2005	Mar. 10, 2006
Jan. 13, 2006	April 7, 2006
Feb. 10, 2006	May 12, 2006

## Emendments of Egregious Editorial Errors

◆ In the November issue of the Guide Star, I did commit an extremely egregious of editorial error: OMISSION OF BY-LINES. Please note:

The front-page article “The Sloan Digital Survey: Bringing the Universe to Our Doorstep” was written by Ann Norman.

The wonderful feature article “The Surprising Life of Truman Kohman” was co-authored by Ann Norman and Truman Kohman. Thank you both for the excellent article, and also for your understanding.

◆ A widespread rash of increased personal and professional responsibilities has taken its toll on this month’s issue. As you may have noticed, several sections of the newsletter didn’t make it in. Hopefully, they’ll be back again for the December issue!

◆ With the *Kevin Brunelle Astrophotography Contest* coming up this month, I’d like to once again encourage members to consider subscribing to the electronic version of *The Guide Star*. Why?

1. Because of space constraints, only the 1<sup>st</sup> Place image in each category of the photo contest will be published in the print version. All of the winners will be showcased in an online extended version.
2. The electronic version is available earlier—sometimes only hours after I’ve finished the newsletter and sent it to Webmaster Kenn Lippert! The print version can take from a week to ten days longer to reach you.
3. I know many people prefer hardcopy. Still, you can either view the electronic version online OR print it out yourself...*in color*.

### \* Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc. \*

*Founded June 9, 1929 by Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon*

#### 2005-2006 Executive Officers:

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Guide Star Editor:	<b>Kelly Fletcher</b> aaap@lexilena.com	724-316-8480

#### AAAP Member Dues\*:

AAAP Dues:	\$18.00
Junior Member (under 18):	\$13.00
<u>Sky &amp; Telescope Magazine:</u>	Add \$33.00
<u>Astronomy Magazine:</u>	Add \$34.00
<u>Night Sky Magazine:</u>	Add \$18.00

#### \*Basic Procedure for Paying Dues:

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