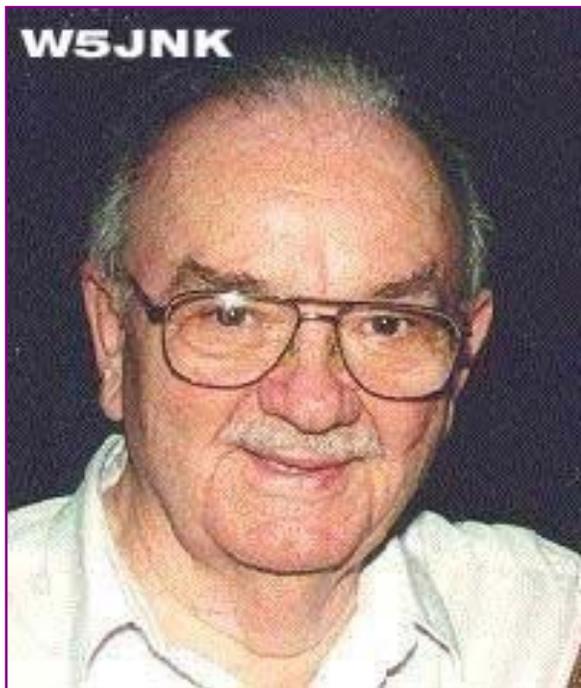


VWOA NEWSLETTER

Email Issue #46

Francis T. Cassidy Editor

2009



Milbert A. Wells, W5JNK

Bert Wells responded to the Editors request of Memories to Share with VWOA Members with the following information which was published in VOLUME # 43, NUMBER 4 of the Old Old Timers Club newspaper called the SPARK-GAP TIMES OCTOBER 2006.

Amateur licensed first in 1936 as W9YLB. Moved to Dallas TX and employed at Braniff Airways, Inc in 1940. Callsign is now W5JNK.



Bert A. Wells-W5JNK at age 21

He has served in various capacities with Braniff Airways for 48 years. Retired and now spends his personal time as Executive Secretary of The Old Old Timers Club and Secretary Treasurer of QCWA Chapter 41 of Dallas, TX.

He remembers the year 1942, when he, along with other Braniff Airways flight radio operators all (Air Corps Enlisted Reservists) who plied their trade on C47s ferrying supplies from Goose Bay, Labrador to Greenland.

Memories: The flights were long. Working our turn for landing from a circling stack, but we lost no aircraft.



ON THE RAMP



NEXT STOP GOOSE BAY



READY FOR TAKE OFF



AIRBORNE

He also said: "No one should see a picture of me today at 88." He declined to provide one requested by the Editor, so I had to surf and find one on the Internet.

GREENLAND

After Pearl Harbor, airlines provided cockpit crews to ferry supplies. I was one of the Braniff Airways radio operators enlisted as a CW op (Air Corps Enlisted Reserve). The airlines turned aircraft over to the government. I flew east from Dallas TX in a Braniff Airways DC-2 which had been stripped of seats, and as I remember I grabbed anything I could to keep from sliding to the rear on takeoff. Eventually to Mitchell Field to Presque Isle Maine and Goose Bay, Labrador. There I was introduced to a C-47 operator position.

I started out on the Goose Bay-Greenland leg. Many aircraft took off and by today's standard, we were crawling along. Two Braniff operator accounts follow.

FRANK MILLER W5PBN #3066

On the trip east from Dallas TX we had to overnight in Knoxville, TN as the navigation lights on the old DC-2 were out. I worked all night but never isolated the short that was blowing the fuse. I never had the same crew twice on the Greenland runs. On the ships that I flew we had about 4 to 6 inches of condensed food in the bottom of the cargo bin behind the co-pilot seat.

These were so hard you had to bang on them with a hunting knife. On the run to Greenland we all got hungry and decided to try one of the bars. They should have been called bricks. I stood on the knife while another guy guided it to cut through the bar to make smaller pieces. All you could do was suck on it to soften it a little then rake your teeth over it to shave off some of the food. The label warned as to the speed you could consume the bar without getting indigestion due to the high food concentration.

We left Presque Isle with a load to Goose Bay. On arrival at Goose Bay the weather had closed in on Presque Isle and we waited to return. A short time later they decoded the weather as 9000 and 9 miles so we took off. Over the St. Lawrence River, after being challenged by Presque Isle they came on and said: "Here is the we---" and his signal went off. The captain said the range went off also. I think there were 4 planes in the flight, one

plane sat down in a wheat field. I asked the CW op on the flight to report on the ground but the Capt. would not let him use the ship battery so we were not sure he got down. We finally got the Presque Isle tower but our codes had expired and couldn't get the weather in the clear. All he could say was to head inland to the west for better weather. The main power cable to the field had been cut. Someone drove a spike through the cable!

To make it more interesting, our range receiver and the direction finder was now out and our ship compass was off but we did not know how much or which way! I tuned the ranges we needed in on the communications receiver that fortunately had the range band. Later the Captain told the Canadian officials, "We had a radioman and not a knob twister on board" and gave me credit for navigating the ship to Montreal. That was perhaps the best compliment I have ever received.

Over the St. Lawrence River the captain asked the crew chief to dump one cabin tank into the mains but he misunderstood and dumped them both. Later when he asked for the other one to be dumped into the mains we discovered we were flying with no reserve cabin tank fuel. The captain ordered the chutes readied. I picked out four chutes with the latest packing date. I had never had a

chute on let alone jump! The captain chose the lightest man to be the last one out, ME. Back then I could turn sideways and not be seen, tipping the scales around 100 pounds, so I would be the last to leave.

We were about ready to jump when the copilot thought he saw some lights. It was Montreal, but where was the airport? We used the communications set on the tower frequency. (The tower asked us to reduce the transmit power!) The tower located us by our landing lights. Three of our 4 tanks were empty and we were rocking the ship to get that last drop of fuel. When they filled the tanks for our return to Presque Isle they put in 800 gallons. The fuel tanks (201, 201, 210, 210) hold a total of 822. At 95 gallons per hour, it was close.

JOHN E. DALBY, W5COE(SK), #3222

I do well remember standing alongside the BW-1 up-grade landing strip listening to the voice communications with Hal's (BNF op Harold Vester) crew on their approach, hoping to high heaven that they would make it into the strip OK. I was surely glad when I saw them break out of the OVC and head for the runway.

Those were wild days for all of us. I spent my time with a crew of AAL pilots, then finally with some guys from Pennsylvania Central Airlines (which later became Capitol Airlines). Our

crossing was pretty uneventful as I recall, except that the QRM on 8200 was horrible with all the brand-new military radio ops trying to work BW-1 at the same time. I spent most of my time copying the WX coded in SYKO. I turned down a trip from BW-1 to BW-8 with the AAL guys, as I was tired, dirty and hungry and just wanted to get back to civilization! I regret it, as would have liked to see the sun rise over the Greenland Ice Cap.

WVOA Member Bert Wells ends his submitted story with this advice to the WVOA Editor:

A good story about this time in my life is in Ernest K. Gann's book "Fate Is The Hunter" Chapter 9 – Valhalla – The Tortuous Route Thereto. Simon & Schuster 1961

THANKS BERT----THE EDITOR

We sadly report that we have received notice recently of the following SK WVOA Member:

Millard, William H.

SK on October 24, 2008

WVOA Life Member William H. (Bill) Millard learned the Wireless Art while enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

His submission as featured author was detailed in WVOA Newsletter #14

WENDELL'S NEWS CORNER

WVOA Member THOMAS J. O'BRIEN, K2CPF TJ IS A MARITIME MASTER RADIO ELECTRONIC OFFICER (MREO) IN THE U.S. MERCHANT MARINE. HE IS ALSO THE SECOND RADIO OFFICER FOR THE "PROJECT LIBERTY SHIP" S/S JOHN BROWN. TJ, WHILE ASHORE IS A U.S. COAST GUARD AND FCC CERTIFIED GMDSS INSTRUCTOR WHO WILL TEACH STCW COURSES ANY WHERE IN THE WORLD. TJ HAS COMPLETED COURSES IN A+, NET+, CNNA, MSCEE AND COMPUTER SECURITY.

----- Original Message -----

From: THOMAS O'BRIEN

To: 'Francis T Cassidy' ;

Sent: Wednesday, March 25, 2009 3:48 PM

Subject: RE: WVOA 2009 Newsletter #45

FYI

TJ O'Brien

I have sailed with Cookie as R/O on the Brown a few times. Great man to know,

TJ

FINAL VOYAGE FOR DeLACY "COOKIE" COOK M.E.B.A. Chief Engineer DeLacy L. "Cookie" Cook, who sailed for his country in World War II and continued serving aboard the hallowed Liberty Ship SS JOHN BROWN until just recently, has sailed into the sunset at the age of 85.

As an M.E.B.A. member Cookie spent many productive years working for United States Lines. In his later years he became Chief aboard the BROWN, one of two seaworthy

Liberty ships. He spent his earlier years on the West Coast and was a graduate of California Maritime Academy in 1943. He shipped out as a 3rd A/E to assist in the war effort soon after and served in convoys crossing the Atlantic to Europe for the rest of the war. After the cease of hostilities he shipped out for 12 years aboard U.S. Lines vessels before taking a port engineer position with the company in Baltimore. He continued with great success until 1985 when he retired. But seawater was still in his blood and he began volunteering his talents to the upkeep of the JOHN BROWN. He worked on the ship's triple expansion reciprocating steam engine and helped keep the vessel in good working order. When the Brown's Chief Engineer John Minor retired in 1994, Cookie took over as Chief.

"The JOHN W. BROWN was his life for the last 20 years, from the time he retired until the day he died," said his wife of 59 years, the former Marjorie "Marge" Speicher.

Joe Cadden, a retired M.E.B.A. member who was Cookie's assistant and is acting Chief Engineer said, "He was a nice guy in every way and the best engineer I ever worked with during all my years at sea. Cookie had more background knowledge than the average engineer. He was an old reciprocating engine man, and in addition to that was responsible for all the machinery aboard the ship, both electrical and mechanical. It was a tremendous responsibility," he noted.

A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. on May 3 aboard the JOHN W. BROWN, Pier 1,

Clinton Street, (Canton) in Baltimore, MD. At his request, he was cremated and will be buried at sea during the ship's voyage to Norfolk, VA in July.

History of the Amver System as published by



The genesis of the Amver system ultimately finds its roots in the RMS TITANIC disaster in 1912. Ships passing within sight of the ill-fated passenger liner were unaware that it had hit an iceberg and was sinking. Upon later investigation, those who had seen the distress flares from the stricken ship admitted they thought they were merely part of the maiden voyage celebrations!

However, the resultant idea of a ship reporting system that could identify other ships in the area of a ship in distress, which could then be sent to its assistance, would not become a reality until the advent of computer technology. As late as the mid-twentieth century the world's commercial shipping fleet and burgeoning air transport system lacked an available full-time, global emergency reporting system. On April 15, 1958 the United States Coast Guard and commercial shipping representatives began discussions which led to the creation of Amver.

Originally known as the Atlantic Merchant Vessel Emergency Reporting (AMVER) System, it became operational on July 18, 1958. Amver began as an experiment, confined to waters of the North Atlantic Ocean, notorious for icebergs, fog and winter storms. Vice Admiral Alfred C. Richmond, Coast Guard Commandant at the time, called on all commercial vessels of U.S. and foreign registry, over 1,000 gross tons and making a voyage of more than 24 hours, to voluntarily become Amver participants. The basic premise of Amver, as a vehicle for mariner to help mariner without regard to nationality, continues to this day.

The first home of the Amver Center was at the Customs House in downtown New York City, due to the fact that many commercial cargo and passenger lines operating in the Atlantic maintained offices nearby, and Amver's success would depend on close ties to the merchant fleet. Subsequent homes for the Amver computer would include Washington, D.C; Governors Island, New York; and now at Martinsburg, West Virginia. A Visitors Center has continuously resided in New York, currently at the Coast Guard's Battery Park Building, just a few blocks from the old Customs House.

The system's first computer was an IBM RAMAC (Random Access Method Accounting Control), characterized as being able to "evaluate information and determine the position of vessels through dead reckoning."

The product of the computer was a "Surface Picture" or "SURPIC" of an area of the ocean, indicating the Amver-participating ships in the vicinity. The world's oldest maritime radio station, Sweden's Gothenburg Radio (SAG) which began operating in 1905, was the charter network participant in 1958.

Only two years after Amver began, its database had grown to 5,000 vessels for an average of 770 ships "on plot" during a 24-hour period. The system began receiving sail plans, position, diversion and final (arrival) reports from all around the world. Even today, Amver remains the only worldwide ship reporting system, though several similar "regional" systems have been created.

By 1962, Rescue Coordination Centers (RCCs) in England and Ireland were offered and began using, search and rescue (SAR) information from Amver. By 1963, Amver was plotting vessels on voyages worldwide. It soon became evident the more ships that participated in the system, the more effective it became. The system's technology allowed international SAR agencies to locate a ship in distress, and determine how many, and what type, vessels were in the vicinity. In its first decade of service, Amver information proved its worth in a variety of rescue and disaster scenarios.

In the early years, Amver-participating ships responded to situations as varied as an engine room explosion which seriously injured two

crewmembers aboard the M/V CHRYISSI; a 17-year old Norwegian seaman injured in a fall aboard the M/V GYLFE; a 10-year old boy experiencing sharp abdominal pains aboard the M/V WOLVERINE STATE; an SOS reporting a fire aboard the Japanese M/V SUWAHARU MARU; and, an expectant mother needing medical aid aboard the SS DORIC.

In 1966, the Coast Guard moved its regional headquarters from the Customs House to Governors Island, in upper New York Bay. The move included the Amver Center and consolidated all New York area Coast Guard activities, including a Rescue Coordination Center, at one site. One year after the move, AMVER's title was revised to read Automated Merchant Vessel Reporting program.

Amver's second decade was marked by rapid technological progress. It took Amver only a short time, in the view of its operators and customers, to prove its cost effectiveness as a SAR tool. After all, participation was free of any costs! In critical situations of a fire, flooding or medical emergency, SAR mission coordinators found Amver invaluable in saving precious response time. In 1967, Spanish radio stations Cadiz Radio (EAC), Vigo Radio (EAF), and Santa Cruz de Tenerife Radio (EAT) joined the Amver network of coast radio stations. This increased the system's coverage in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean regions.

By 1968, an additional 37 coast radio stations in the Pacific and 28 in the Atlantic were cooperating partners in Amver and the international effort to pursue and promote the safety of life at sea. As a service to the maritime community, frequencies of participating radio stations were published in the quarterly AMVER BULLETIN Magazine.

In 1971, the system was formally expanded worldwide as operations were shifted to Washington hosted on a Control Data Corporation mainframe computer at the Department of Transportation Systems Center. Amver's name required revision once again to reflect its global reach. But at this point, the AMVER acronym was so well known in the industry that the Coast Guard was reluctant to change it. Instead, the title was changed to the "Automated (computerized) Mutual-assistance (its basic premise) Vessel Rescue (its stated purpose) System. Today, due to its global acceptance and familiarity, it is simply called Amver.

Amver took its place in the history of the 1960s and 1970s by playing an important role in the U.S. space program. Amver was a part of the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo and Skylab Programs, providing the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) with a prospective maritime support plan in the event of a space flight emergency. At the same time, Amver continued its job of protecting mariners at sea, as in the case of a Scottish seaman

aboard the M/V TYNE BRIDGE whose life was saved when an Amver SURPIC produced a nearby passenger liner with a doctor on board.

Amver's growing reputation pulled in new cooperating radio systems to the network. Twelve stations in the United Kingdom joined in 1978 and were directly responsible for a dramatic increase in the number of participating vessels. By 1980, Amver Center specialists were processing 2,000 reports every 24 hours.

On October 4th, 1980, Amver made its mark in the world news media by orchestrating the response to an engine room fire and flooding aboard the Dutch liner PRINSENDAM, carrying 519 passengers and crew. The tanker WILLIAMSBURGH, the M/V GREATLAND, the S/S SOHIO INTREPID and the S/S PORTLAND diverted. The 1,095-foot tanker arrived on scene in less than 7 hours, and ultimately took 175 survivors aboard from lifeboats, motor launches and life rafts. In recognition of Amver's role in the safe evacuation of everyone on board, the Government of Norway mandated that all its merchant ships participate in the Amver system.

Amver development has followed the state-of-the-art from punch cards and vacuum tubes, through the printed circuit board, to the microchip. In 1982, database maintenance operations were shifted to two Prime 750

mini-computers installed at the Operations Computer Center on Governors Island.

In October of 1982, the first joint Amver/satellite-alerting rescue occurred, using the experimental Argos and Cospas-Sarsat system. December of that year saw the U.S. Maritime Administration and the Coast Guard sign an agreement making Amver participation mandatory for U.S.-flag shipping, and suspending the requirement for the filing of reports to the overlapping USMER reporting system. This benefited many U.S. masters, already Amver participants, who were juggling reports to two parallel systems, and allowed for a consolidated plot of all U.S. shipping worldwide.

On the occasion of the concurrent 25th Anniversaries of Amver and the International Maritime Organization in 1983, IMO published an open letter to all mariners, endorsing the value of the Amver system. That year, Amver participation grew by 16 percent. In 1985, a snapshot of Amver's last three years had the system tracking 87,543 voyages.

The decision was made in the late 1980s to become even more proactive in Amver recruitment by exhibiting at, or attending, industry exhibitions and trade shows, such as Posidonia (Greece); the Seatrade Tanker Show (UK); SMM (Germany); Cruise Shipping (USA); SASMEX (UK); NEVA (Russia); Maritime Cyprus, and Super Yacht (France).

The U.S. Coast Guard also created an annual Amver Awards Program as a way of rewarding those ships which remain "on plot" for at least 128 days in a calendar year. These awards have become instrumental in Amver recruitment and retention. Amver awards are a tribute to the support of a ship's crew, management, and ownership, which is so integral to the program's success.

Amver award ceremonies have been hosted by U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad; and maritime industry organizations, such as the Norwegian Shipowners Association; the German Shipowners Association; and the Propeller Club of the United States (Ports of Piraeus, London and Limassol), among others.

The awards consist of a Letter of Appreciation to the company, a Certificate of Merit to each ship, and a colored Amver pennant, representing a ship's continuous participation in the program: blue for (1) year; gold (5) years; purple (10) years. A distinctive plaque is presented for (15) years, an engraved pewter plate for (20) years, and an acrylic globe for (25) years.

In addition, several special annual awards have been subsequently created by maritime organizations such as LLP, Ltd. (Publishing) (UK); PTT Telecom Netherlands (U.S.) (Satellite Communications) Inc.; Argus Business Media (SAFETY AT SEA Magazine) (UK); the Association For Rescue At Sea

(AFRAS); and the New York Council of the Navy League, honoring ships involved in rescues requiring extraordinary shiphandling, heroism or danger.

With the advent of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), the role of Amver was redefined to complement the emerging technology. Rescue coordination centers around the world seized on the value of Electronic Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs), Inmarsat-C and Digital Select Calling terminal auto-alarms to "take the search out of search and rescue." Then, attention could be turned to Amver as a tool for the rescue phase of the operation. As the industry became familiar with this technology, Amver-participating ships have been instrumental in investigating potentially accidental alerts, thus saving limited SAR resources for actual emergencies, and saving money and lives.

The beginning of the 1990s saw the need for the entire software package of Amver to be rewritten in UNIX/Windows technology to keep pace with the evolution of data processing. This new version would provide more capacity; mechanisms for recurrent routings and maintaining ships on station (e.g., research ships or fishing factory ships); graphic plot depiction; and parser capability, once again bringing Amver current with the state-of-the-art. Home for the Amver Center was moved to the Operations Systems Center, a new facility designed and built to consolidate many Coast

Guard computer systems at Martinsburg, West Virginia. Contracted out to civilian operation, this facility released many staff members for reassignment throughout the Coast Guard.

In 1992, an Amver-participating ship recovered famed French yachtswoman Florence Arthaud after her trimaran capsized during a solo race. This resulted in Amver's first exposure on national network television on the NBC "Today" Show. Host Joe Garagiola conducted a live interview with Ms. Arthaud while a filmed segment, shot in the Rescue Coordination Center on Governors Island, explained Amver. During the Columbus Quincentennial celebrations in New York, Amver hosted the arrival of the 35 Tall Ship masters of OPSAIL 1992 to a receiving line of dignitaries including Secretary of Transportation Andrew Card, Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), and Coast Guard Commandant, Admiral John Kime.

The Amver rescue of explorer Tim Severin from the 60-foot bamboo sailing junk HSU FU, while reenacting the voyage of its Chinese namesake in the year 218 BC, received mention in the pages of National Geographic magazine. In 1994, a television crew from "60 Minutes New Zealand," aboard a vintage PBY plane, filmed the actual ditching of the aircraft at sea and their rescue by a Norwegian Amver-participating ship. Later that year, six Amver-participating ships converged on the burning Italian cruise ship ACHILLE LAURO to recover

504 of the 976 survivors. And, in the largest single Amver operation in its history, a flotilla of 41 ships from 18 nations searched over a six-day period to recover the only two survivors of the 31 crewmembers from the sunken bulk carrier SALVADOR ALLENDE.

As Amver sought to enhance its stature in the international arena, award ceremonies featured the first participation by a sitting Head of State, President Glafkos Clerides of Cyprus. Other presentation officials included Prince Albert of Monaco and Secretary General William O'Neil of the International Maritime Organization. In 1995, the Amver Visitors Center in New York City hosted a visit by King Harald and Queen Sonja of Norway, following in the footsteps of his father, King Olav V, who also visited the Amver Center in 1968.

Other distinguished guests at the Amver Visitors Center have included former National Security Advisor VADM John Poindexter; Mr. Vasily Kuprianovsky, Personal Advisor to Russian President Yeltsin; Greek Coast Guard RADM Nicholas Kalyvas; cruise ship OCEANOS SAR mission coordinator, South African Air Force Colonel George Hallows; Turkish Coast Guard Commandant RADM Ekmel Totrakan; Mr. Christoph Hinz, Director General, German Ministry of Transport; classes of the World Maritime University and industry, media, military and diplomatic officials from many nations.

Following a visit and presentation to Chinese government officials at the Shanghai Maritime Academy, the Peoples Republic of China announced its intention to allow vessels of its COSCO national fleet to participate in Amver. Just several months later, in April of 1996, the Chinese container ship GAO HE rescued a retired U.S. Navy captain from his stricken sailing vessel in the Pacific.

Taking advantage of the media-conscious era of the 1990s, Amver's visibility has been heightened by its feature in several episodes of the syndicated weekly television series "Coast Guard,"; the Public Broadcasting System/Cable program "World Business Review," hosted by former U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger; and a radio talk show on WPWA in Philadelphia.

Development of the "information highway" led to an analysis and evaluation of the potential benefits to Amver of economies and efficiencies presented by global e-mail, the Internet, and customized communications/ship-management software packages. In conjunction with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and COMSAT (the U.S. signatory to Inmarsat) Amver has assisted in the development of "compressed message" software to move report data at high speed and low cost to encourage more frequent, user-friendly reporting and thus increase plot accuracy at a time when many shipping

companies are removing full-time radio officers from GMDSS-compliant ships.

Today, some 12,000 ships from over 140 nations participate in Amver. An average of over 2,800 ships are on the Amver plot each day. The Amver Center computer now tracks over 100,000 voyages annually. Over 2,000 lives have been saved by Amver-participating ships just since 1990. The success of Amver is directly related to the extraordinary cooperation of ships, companies, SAR authorities, communication service providers and governments in supporting this international humanitarian program to protect life and property at sea.

In the coming years, Amver officials will turn their attention to negotiating with the world's major protection and indemnity insurance (P&I) clubs to consider an insurance premium reduction for Amver-participating ships as a stimulus to recruitment. Likewise, discussions will continue with other nations and major national ship registries to solicit their endorsement and active encouragement of ships under their purview to enroll in the Amver system, thus keeping it vibrant, vital and successful.

Remember to support the Annual VWOA Luncheon if you can't attend, by submitting your 73s and Business/QSL card selections, which must be SENT to the VWOA Treasurer, J. Michael Shaw, to arrive no later than **May 15th, 2009**

Can you take some time out in the New Year and submit something, short, medium or long. Provide a few Photos as well, hard copy or digital.

We would prefer to hear from you by Email at:

Or ftcassidy@optonline.net
wenben@nyc.rr.com

but if you must, send mail to:

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