The Old Time Radio Club

The **ILLUSTRATED**

Number 421



Established 1975

PRESS

June 2014



"Hear my Adventures and all the other exciting programs for you boys and girls."

LISTEN
Monday thru Friday

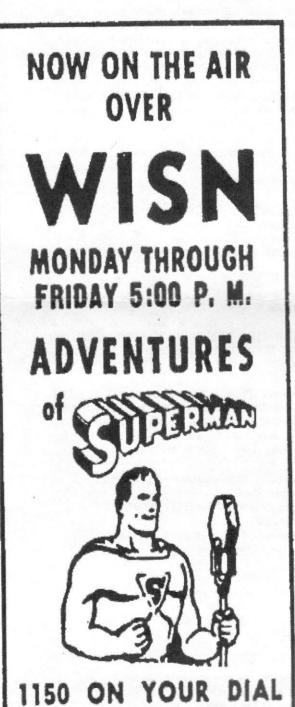
5:15 Superman

5:30 Captain Midnight

5:45 Tom Mix

KLO

MUTUAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN ARE TOPS!



MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Club Membership: \$20.00 per year from January 1st to December 31st. Members receive a media library listing and a monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$20.00; April-June, \$14.00; July-September, \$10.00; October-December, \$7.00. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues of the newsletter. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The Old Time Radio Club meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. during the months of September through June at St. Aloysius School Hall, Cleveland Drive and Century Road, Cheektowaga, NY. There is no meeting during the month of July and a Club picnic in August.

Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The Old Time Radio Club is affiliated with the Old Time Radio Network.

CLUB MAILING ADDRESS
Old Time Radio Club
56 Christen Court
Lancaster, NY 14086



All submissions are subject to approval prior to actual publication.

DEADLINE FOR THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS IS THE 1ST OF EACH MONTH PRIOR TO PUBLICATION.

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Send all articles, letters, exchange newsletters, etc. to: *The Illustrated Press*

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REMINDER

All renewal and new member checks should be made out to D. P. PARISI, not the Old Time Radio Club.

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Library Rates: Audio cassettes and CD's are \$1.95 each and recorded on a club supplied cassette or CD which is retained by the member. Rates include postage and handling and payable in U.S. funds.

Club Web Page: Now you can view and download our various catalogs and club information at --www.buffalo-otr-club.org

The Illustrated Press



Message From The Editor:

Good News! After almost a year's absence Jerry Collins donned us with his presence at our May meeting. Jerry gave us an update on the particulars to what has happened in the last year. He thanked all of us for cards, e-mails, and visits. While not quite ready to quarterback the Bills, he looked good and had that familiar smiling face. I echo the sentiments of the rest of the club in wishing him a speedy return to his old self. By the way, anyone interested in acquiring one of Jerry's many publications, you can do so by e-mailing him at his e-mail address.

Librarian Dan Marafino is running out of space for cassette library, and is asking to relinquish his position as cassette librarian. We are asking if anyone would like to handle the job. The biggest requirement is having enough space for all the tapes. You also have to be a local member that attends most meetings. If it's possible we could get several members to take a portion, for example tapes A thru D. We need some volunteers very soon. Think it over, and if you're interested give Dan a call or say something at the next meeting. One good thing in being librarian is you have all the great shows at you finger tips. A bonus for anyone

While we did not mention it at the last meeting, our picnic will be coming up in the first Monday of August. We usually meet at about 6:00pm or a little later in the parking lot under the gazebo. All are welcome to attend-rain or shine. In the past we've asked members to kick in a couple of bucks or so to help defray expenses. You should also bring a dish to pass and if you like, a guest. Hope to see you in August.

The Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club along with its newsletter Radio Recall is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. I did send them a congratulating piece. It follows below.

On behalf of myself and the Old Time Radio Club of Western New York I wish to congratulate the Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club and Radio Recall on 30 years of service. I greatly enjoy your newsletter and the splendid way you have spread the good news of Old Time Radio to chestnuts like me and others who long for the creaking door of Inner Sanctum or listening to the thundering hoof beats of the great Silver and the sound of the Overture of William Tell. I will never tire of hearing the wise words of The Shadow, and intros of The Whistler, Dragnet, Gangbusters, or The Adventures of Jack Armstrong. All the old thrillers and classic comedies still exist to people like me and fans of Old Time Radio because of clubs like yours and mine. I wish you continued success in keeping our hobby alive for the next generations to come.

Western New York Old Time Radio Club.

To all of our members, have a happy and safe summer. See you at August Picnic.

Nameless Terrors Exploring the Dark Side with The Whistler

By Elizabeth McLeod



Nothing is more frightening than the dark side of the human psyche.

And on that simple truth was built one of radio's most memorable programs.

"The Whistler" is better known today among Old Time Radio fans than it ever was during the era of its original broadcast. For most of its run, the series was purely a West Coast feature, its audience confined to the marketing area served by its sponsor, the Signal Oil Company. While the show attracted a cult following in the west, attempts to bring the show to a national audience achieved only middling success — and so it was that most Americans living during the OTR period never heard the show.

But even without a national audience, "The Whistler" achieved a remarkably consistent level of quality — and while it never had the big-name star power of such shows as "Suspense." it didn't really need the big stars, not with its stock company of first-class working radio actors. Such performers as Frank Lovejoy, Jeanette Nolan, Elliot Lewis, Lurene Tuttle, Wally Maher, Betty Lou Gerson and dozens of others —the cream of Hollywood AFRA —brought "The Whistler's" tight little morality plays to life each week, plays set in a world in which all that separated an ordinary citizen from the electric chair was the slightest little twist of fate.

The typical "Whistler" plot involves a rather faceless white-collar American. Male, fortyish, trapped in a go-nowhere job with an ungrateful boss. He's probably married, and chances are his wife is either a cold-blooded social climber or a sharp-tongued harridan. Whatever the specifics, his life has ground along in this rut year after year, wearing away his very soul — until one day he has the opportunity to 1) kill his boss or his wife — or both — or 2) make an enormous sum of money by RETURN WITH US NOW...

committing just one little crime. The dark vision of this series being what it is, Our Hero will wrestle with his conscience and finally do the deed — only to overlook the one little detail that will bring his world crashing down. (One could draw some interesting psychological conclusions from "The Whistler" about how the Post War Man, deep down, viewed his life — but then, it's only a radio show, right?)

The cleverness of "The Whistler" is the way in which this standard plot could be reworked — there are dozens of variations, and while the twist endings are sometimes obvious, more often they genuinely take you by surprise. You listen to each episode knowing the protagonist is going to be foiled by Fate — the only question is how will it happen," and the ingenuity with which the plots are developed reflects well on the writers, and on the overall vision of producer George W. Allen.

The Whistler himself is an essential part of the package. Although several actors played the part, only Bill Forman really captured the sneering malevolence of the character — an omniscient narrator who seems to be the living vocalization of a guilty conscience. Adding to the ominous atmosphere of the series are the musical scores by Wilbur Hatch — heavy with flutes, the music meshes perfectly with the action, helping to build the tension right up to the crashing finish of each episode.

I'm not going to elaborate on specific episodes here — far be it from me to spoil any endings! Suffice it to say that the show was at its peak from about 1945 thru 1949 — and just about any episode from this part of the run will satisfy. "The Whistler" is a show that's best enjoyed in isolated segments—listening to too many episodes at a sitting can be exhausting, and can also draw too much attention to the formula aspects of the scripts. Listen at night, by all means - but not just before going to sleep!

Elizabeth McLeod is a journalist, researcher, and freelance writer specializing in radio of the 1930s. She is a regular contributor to "Nostalgia Digest" magazine and the Internet OldRadio Mailing List, maintains a website, Broadcasting History Resources, and is presently researching a book on Depression-era broadcasting. Elizabeth is always looking for 1930s radio recordings in all formats — uncoated aluminum or 'acquer-coated discs, vinyl or shellac pressings, or low generation tape copies. You can contact her at lizmcl@midcoast.com

Debunking The Myths Of Inner Sanctum Mystery By Martin Grams Jr.

Inner Sanctum Mystery was not a great staple of American Broadcasting....but the signature sound effect, that of the creaking door, was imprinted in the memories of radio listeners for generations. Himan Brown, the creator, producer and director of the 1941-52 radio program, would ultimately register the sound of the creaking door for Federal Copyright Production on February 17, 1949, under the name "The Creaking Door," submitted in the form of a sample radio program—marking one of two sounds ever copyrighted (the other was the three NBC chimes). Sounds can not be copyrighted which is why, on a technical standpoint, the copyright on a creaking door stands to be challenged in court...but Brown did make much use with the sound effect by incorporating it as the signature opening for a later series, The CBS Radio Mystery Theater.

"The door told me to use it. The door spoke to me. 'Make me a star,' it said. It was a door that I used on the *Dick Tracy* series," Himan Brown later recalled. "I used all kinds of doors. When I did a sequence on Tracy with haunted houses or criminal background or some such thing, I used this door, and the door creaked. You didn't have to fake it; you didn't have to play with it. It was a door with rusty hinges that was badly sprung and it creaked."

Simon & Schuster, publishers, was at that time publishing a monthly mystery novel under the byline of "An Inner Sanctum Mystery." The first was published in July 1930, *I Am Jonathan*

Scrivner, written by Claude Houghton. The series initially took on a variety of genres, always indicated by the color of the book's binding: blue for serious drama, red for lighter fare (romance); and green for detective stories. Later, as a result of the radio program, the Inner Sanctum books contained solely mysteries. It was through Simon & Schuster that Himan Brown licensed the name for his radio program—under one condition. At the conclusion of each broadcast the announcer revealed this month's Inner Sanctum mystery novel—free publicity for the publisher.

If you can get your hands on s copy of *The Lunatic Time*, published in 1956 and written by Johnburt, you will discover that the story is actually based on the *Inner Sanctum* radio broadcast. "The Unforgiving Corpse" from May 28, 1951. Roeburt, recycling his own stories, re-titled the same *Inner Sanctum* drama for the June 17, 1962 broadcast of *Suspense*, "The Lunatic Hour."

All this reminds me of the Warner Bros. cartoon, *Racketeer Rabbit*, from 1946. Bugs Bunny performs his usual antics against two caricatures of Peter Lorre and Edward G. Robinson. In one scene a door opens with a long creak and Bugs Bunny makes a direct reference to *Inner Sanctum Mystery*.

For clarification, the exact name of the program is *Inner Sanctum Mystery*, not "Mysteries." Singular, not plural. A number of people have been challenging me on this, but I continue to ask them to listen to a recording of *Inner Sanctum*. While the earlier scripts of the series list "Inner Sanctum Mysteries," the announcer clearly refers to the program singular.

In 2002, I amateurishly put together a book about the radio program. (Yes I titled the book Inner Sanctum Mysteries. That was done on purpose because most people incorrectly type the title wrong in search engines. And the book refers to the series as a whole plural so the title of the book was not meant to be the same as the program itself.) No one wanted to publish the book (probably my young age had something to do with it) so I self-published a compilation of assorted trivia and other pertinent information so fans of the program could learn more about the series beyond a brief entry in an encyclopedia. Since then, I finally acquired a complete run of each and every Inner Sanctum Mystery radio script, along with files of material from advertising agencies, library archives and other private collections.

One recording that circulates today is "The Amazing Death of Mrs. Putnam" and fans continue to debate whether or not the recording is the first broadcast of the series. I do not know the origin of the controversy, or why people insisted it was never broadcast on the evening of January 7th 1941. Maybe it is because the announcer and host Raymond Edward Johnson never made reference to it being the premiere episode. Regardless, last week I received yet another e-mail telling me that my episode guide is inaccurate and "The Amazing Death of Mrs. Putnam" aired later in the series run. So to close the file on this debate, enclosed is the NBC announcer sheet for that very broadcast, two production sheets verifying the cast, the announcer, the organist, the producer, and the title of the broadcast. Also enclosed are the first two pages of the radio script to verify the January 7th 1941 broadcast date.

The advertisement featured below is altered and not original. Sadly, four different websites now reprint this ad and I do not believe the website owners are aware of this potential error. Take a closer look and you will see all reference to the name of the program, station call letters, broadcast time and celebrity has been superimposed in newer font. That means someone took the original advertisement and altered it. Not sure why-but for clarification there is a difference between an altercation and a restoration and it's a darn shame that people are reproducing on their websites. Altered advertisements have already begun creeping into published reference guides and that means whatever form of preservation and validity was attempted with those books. The authors failed. Reprinting an altered advertisement rather than the original is more terrifying than the creaking door. (My sole purpose of pointing this out is for others to reconsider if they gave any preference to plucking images off the web for illustration.)



Radio Days

It came as a shock. I hadn't realized that radio days were over. They ended, it turned out, just after World War 2. They began when the first commercial broadcast stations went on the air, circa 1920. As World War 2 ended, so did radio days. Then television blossomed. It was demonstrated in 1939 at the New York World's Fair but lay dormant during the war. Though I grew up during radio days, I hadn't realized how short the era really was until just recently, when I saw Woody Allen's movie "Radio Days." Woody, who himself grew up during radio days, probably thought they'd go on forever. Before I saw the movie, I thought they were still here.

Those who see Woody's flick hear few authentic radio names, although they may think they do. There's Bill Kern the famous sportscaster. A corpulent Latin bandleader carrying a chihuahua while conducting may look strangely familiar. Is that radio couple broadcasting at the breakfast table Dorothy and Dick, or perhaps Ed and Pegeen? But if the characters are fictitious, the settings are realistic. In the subdued lighting of "Radio Days" living rooms you'll see authentic receivers, most of them, we are told, purchased by Woody's agents at the 1985 Antique Wireless Association's annual flea market in Canandaigua, N.Y. or borrowed from the AWA's museum in Holcomb, N.Y. The AWA lent Woody's production people a crystal set, a studio console and turntable, and a large recording horn.

At the very beginning of radio days, receivers were built from circuit diagrams published in Radio News and The New York Tribune, using parts from amateur and hobbyist radio shops along Cortland Street ("Radio Row") in downtown Manhattan. These sets brought in Kate Smith and Amos;'n Andy to avant garde living rooms in the United States. No one knows how many hardwood floors were acid-burned from the wet batteries required for tube filament voltages. The advent of the allac set in 1926 eliminated the acid hazard, but the stains lingered on. In the early 1920s, radio listeners were tuning in KDKA (Pittsburgh), KYW (Chicago), WGR (Buffalo), WJZ (Newark), WIP (Philadelphia), WGY (Schenectady), and WBZ (Springfield MA). A 5-watter broadcasting from the Dyckman Radio Shop (WDBX) in New York City in 1924 was picked up as far away as Chicago and West Virginia. The three separate tuned circuits of Alan Hazeltine's neutrodyne receiver, with their respective dials, resulted in the standing joke that owners had to be "three-handed" because the dials were best adjusted simultaneously. Eventually the screen-grid tube obviated the need for neutralization and the superheterodyne led to single-knob tuning. "Radio Days," the movie, centers on the 1930s and early 1940s. The fivetube-table-model superhet had by then become a staple, and ingenuity in designing new models turned more on a cabinet design and cost reduction. In anticipation of numerous complaints that radio is not dead, let me say that I agree—but that radio days are over. Never again can the youth of America do their homework to the background strains of a string of 15 minute serials: Tom Mix, The Lone Ranger, Red Davis, Jack Armstrong, Hop Harrigan, and Don Winslow. In those days the adults would not miss Amos 'n Andy and The Shadow (Listening to the latter while

faithfully burning Blue Coal in their furnaces). All family activities came to a halt to hear Fibber McGee open his cluttered-closet door, Jack Benny play his screechy violin, and Charlie McCarthy trade insults with W.C. Fields. The forerunners of today's "soaps" were Young Dr. Malone, One Man's Family, and Ma Perkins.

These programs are relegated to history and trivia games, and with them have disappeared most of the manufacturers on whose receivers they were heard. To name but a few: Crosley, Tuska, Clapp-Eastham, Fada, Armstrong-Houck, Paragon, Atwater-Kent, Philco, Grebe, Airline, and Kennedy.

Fortunately, museums and collectors are saving many of the historic sets from oblivion. One need only attend the annual AWA auction to appreciate the the broad range of receivers still intactsome of them even still operational-and the prices a particularly a desirable receiver will command. Atwater-Kent "breadboard" sets in good condition can fetch prices in the hundreds of dollars: some very rare receivers are priced at more than \$1000. To receiver aficionados, set names like the Crosley Pup," and the Aeriola, Sr, the AK10, the Radiola 111, and the Grebe Synchrophase conjure up special visions. Having been born too late to be more than a beneficiary of radio days, as opposed to an active participant, I sometimes try to imagine what it must have been like to be a member of the fraternity of equipment designers, operating engineers, studio personal, and performers. (At one time or another I have shaken hands and/or broken bread with David Sarnoff, Lowell Thomas, Lanny Ross, and Frank Blair, rae treats that served only to make the era seem even more remote and enchanting as

they recounted tales of radio days best appreciated by their colleagues.) In tribute to those radio days, I offer the following free-verse fade-out. It may help summon poetic images in the minds of the knowing...Jessica Dragonette, Graham Mcnamee, Gabriel Heatter, Jimmy Fidler, H.V. Kaltenborn, Floy Gibbons, Norman Brokenshire, Milton Cross, Harry Von Zell, Mary Margaret McBride, Walter Winchell, John Scott Trotter, Clem McCarthy, Red Barber, and Ted Husing...Pepper Young's Family, Easy Aces, Lum and Abner, Vic and Sade, The Goldbergs, Backstage WIFE, Morton Downey, John Charles Thomas, Russ Columbo, Rudy Vallee, Hildegarde, Kay Kaiser and his Kollege of Musical Knowledge, Vincent Lopez Ccoming to you from the Pennsylvania Grill), Singing Sam (the Barbesol man), Phil Spitalny and his All-Girl Orchestra, Your Hit Parade, and the Make-Believe Ballroom...The First Nighter, Lux Radio Theater, Mercury Theater on the Air, The Voice of Firestone, Inner Sanctum, Maxwell House Showboat, Chase and Sanborn Hour, Grand Central Station, America's Town Meeting on the Air, The Fireside Chat, and The War of the Worlds...Professor Quiz, Major Bowes, Uncle Don, The Battle of the Sexes, The sixty-four dollar question, "Wanna buy a duck"?, Time Marches On, So Long Until Tomorrow, Au revoir cheerio, a bit of tweet-tweet, God Bless You-and pleasant dreams! Donald Christiansen





THE ACADEMY AWARD THEATRE

starring

BRIAN DONLEVY

The

Great McGintu

E. R. SQUIBB & SONS

TONIGHT (III)

WISN - 9:45 P.M. C.S.T.

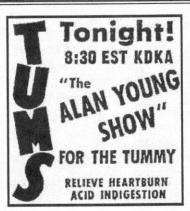


brings you action and adventure in an exciting story of the West

AT 5:30 P.M.

and every Tuesday and Thursday

MUTUAL BROADCASTING SYSTEM





TONIGHT AT 9:30 P.M.

THE NEW NASH-KELVINATOR HIT

9:30 P. M. WISN

Tonight

"FAMOUS JURY

Now TUESDAY Nights

WEMP

THRILLS!

DRAMA! SUSPENSE!

OH HENRY CANDY BAR

A BRAND NEW RADIO SHOW

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A BRAND NEW SOUP

CREAM OF POTATO

630 P. M.

Listen to Radio's Newest Thriller-Chiller THE

INTING HOUR

Every Thursday Night at 9:30 P.M.

KECA

Sponsored by your neighborhood

THRIFTY DRUG STORE

Captain Midnight By Jim Widner

The ending gong of midnight...the roar of the airplane engine, at first in the distance...then stronger as it sounds in a dive...This was Captain Midnight!

The series had its beginning in 1938 on Chicago radio station, WGN. Created by Robert M. Burtt and Wuillfred G. Moore, the creators of The Air Adventures of Jimmie Alle, the series was sponsored by thr Skelly Oil Company. The program was syndicated, recorded on 16" glass discs at a studio in an office building at LaSalle St. and Wacker Drive at the ad agency of Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. The discs were then regionally distributed to participating radio stations.

In the beginning, "Captain Midnight" was simply an undercover name fo Jim "Red" Albright, who regularly piloted cargo and passengers. As an undercover agent, Albright was trying to gather information on a gang of criminals. However, by the end of the first run, ending in a summer hiatus, the Captain Midnight persona was beginning to stick and many knew him only by that name. Captain Midnight was trying to stop the plans of the evil Ivan Shark and his daughter Fury. Shark remained as Midnight's evil nemesis throughout the length of the radio run.

Captain Midnight was helped in his efforts by Chuck Ramsey, who was a member of his Secret Squadron and Patsy Donovan (later Joyce Ryan). In the national versions (though) he appeared briefly in the Skelly shows), there was also Ichabod Mudd, Midnight's mechanic. There were a number of



different actors playing the various roles over the long run. The series grew in popularity and was broadcast over the Mutual Network beginning in 1940 sponsored by Ovaltine. Ovaltine had recently dropped its long-running sponsorship of another juvenile staple – Little Orphan Annie. That show was tired and was beginning to wane when The Wander Company, makers of Ovaltine brought the regional Captain Midnight series to a national audience. For the national run, the series moved first to the Mutual network via WGN on the 11th floor of the Tribune Building beginning in September 1940. Then it was picked up in September 1942 by the Blue Network. The studio moved to the 19th floor of the Merchandise Mart. Once more when the government split up the Blue Network from NBC, Ovaltine moved it back to Mutual beginning in September 1945 where it remained until it went off the air. With the network show, there were some cast changes. The announcer for Ovaltine, Pierre Andre,

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came over from The Little Orphan Annie series to do Captain Midnight. Don Gordon was out. The character of Patsy Donovan became Joyce Ryan and Ichabod Mudd was added as a regular. Jack Bivans took over the role of Chuck Ramsey when when Billy Rose left to join the army in 1942. Bivans left in 1943 when he turned 18 and enlisted in the Army Air Corps. Johnny Coons took over the role of Chuck until Bivans returned from military service in 1946. Captain Midnight was one of the many series to offer exciting premiums (see example below). Young listeners could also be a part of the Flight Patrol



Newspaper by signing up usually via the premiums and receiving items etc. Despite the adult sponsor, Skelly advertised by telling kids to be sure their dads go to the gasoline stations to get the premiums and, of course, Skelly products. Ovaltine continued the premiums via their foil tops and labels which offered the chance to join the Secret Squadron. Often the premium played a big part in the series. Chuck would use his Code-o-graph to contact Washington to get the duo out of a difficult situation. As a part of the Secret Wing of the Secret Squadron, each person who received their Code-o-graph was encouraged to sign the pledge within the manual. Other than Midnight who was designated SS-1, Chuck Ramsey and Joyce Ryan were the only

agents to have numbers lower than 10: Ramsey was SS-2 and Joyce SS-3. Agent (William) Lyle Kelly, who was Captain Midnight's contact to Major Steele was assigned SS-11 and was usually referred to "Agent SS=11 Kelly" in the series. Eventually, the series moved from radio to film and finally to television. The films were created bu Columbia Pictures and directed by James Horne, a Laurel & Hardy director. Midnight was portrayed by former stuntman, Dave O'Brien. The essence of Captain Albright's history and relationship to Major Steele was retained, through "Captain Midnight" became more of a secret identity. Sometimes the character would be masked and other times not. Ivan Shark returned though he did not appear as evil and ruthless as the radio Shark. Chuck Ramsey is portrayed by radio actor Sam Edwards (Gunsmoke, Six Shooter, Speed Gibson). One fifteen episode serial was created wherin Shark meets a shocking death. Many know the character from the television run starring Richard Webb. If you have an opportunity to view some of the old television shows, note the actor playing Tut, the scientist for the Secret Squadron. This is the great radio actor Olan Soule (Mr. First Nighter, One Man's Family, and others).

"Happy Landing..."







The Old Time Radio Club

THOMAS R. CHERRE 144 FONTAINE DRIVE BUFFALO NY 14215-2038



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