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The third degree

by John Blanton

In August I was pleased to receive an e-mail from Jared McCormick. I wrote him a short response, and asked his permission to reprint the mail in our September newsletter. Please refer to Jared's remarks in our on-line newsletter.

In brief, Jared took me to task for my attempts at "trying to find a way to prove DR. Patton's credentials have been falsified." The "DR Patton" in question is Don R. Patton, a local creationist, who has for years claimed to have a Ph.D. degree. Jared also mentioned my accusations that Don Patton has incorrectly quoted main stream scientists and science writers. In his letter Jared said, in part:¹

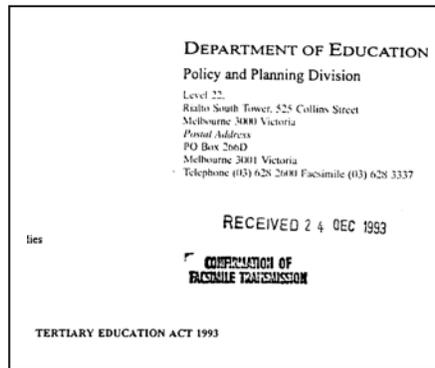
It has come to my attention that one of your staff members, namely John Blanton has been trying to find a way to prove DR. Patton's credentials have been falsified. The problem is, there is overwhelming evidence (to include the official records) and several witnesses that prove the contrary.

The remarks and the wording tugged at my memory. I searched back into our records and pulled up some correspondence from creationist Steve Rudd. He has a Web site, which contains this material of interest:²

John Blanton, head slanderer for the North Texas Skeptics

Atheist, evolutionist, humanist, Bible hater, North Texas Skeptics staff.

John Blanton is on staff for the North Texas Skeptics and through this organization is directly associated with: [names of many NTS members]



Excerpt from the Victoria (Australia) Board of Education letter, showing the date stamp for 24 December 1993

EVENTS CALENDAR

October program

Saturday October 17, 2009
2 p.m.
Center for Nonprofit
Management
2900 Live Oak Street in Dallas

The State Of Intelligent Design

They used to be called creationists. ➔ Then they dressed up in cheap tuxedos and changed the name of the game. ➔ Now it's called Intelligent Design. ➔ How did we get to this place? ➔ Who are the players, and what are they saying now?

The NTS will present The State of Intelligent Design.

Board meeting/Social dinner

Saturday October 24, 2009 at
7:00 pm
Roma's Italian Restaurant
7402 Greenville Ave., Suite 202
Dallas, Texas (214) 372-0500
Let us know if you are coming.
We sometimes change or cancel
these events.
NTS Hotline: (214) 335-9248

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The North Texas Skeptics is a tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) scientific and educational organization. All members receive the NTS newsletter and may attend NTS functions at which admission is charged at no or reduced cost. In addition, members will receive mailings on topics of current interest or social events.

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There is absolutely no question about it that this organization as a whole, is either ignorant of what their organization publishes and the facts that underlie, or is deliberately slanderously dishonest and a promoter of lies.

Although John Blanton falsely accused Patton of misquoting most of his scientific references, Blanton has never supplied any shred of evidence to support this claim. Countless challenges have been made to him and his organization to come clean. Yet his organization continues to make this false unsubstantiated claim. Such is as evil as it is slanderous. We have had many different groups preen through these very quotes and in the end are satisfied Blanton's claims are as unscholarly as they are vacuous.

Although John Blanton falsely accused Patton of having a phony college degree. Blanton also stated that Patton has no formal training in geology and accused Patton of having a fake degree. When he was later directed to our page that details Dr. Patton's credentials, he called Patton a liar. When Key authentic original documents were presented to Blanton, he accused Patton of forging these documents to support, "his phony degree". Blanton actually contacted Jan Williamson, believing this person to be as fictitious as the letter. To Blanton's horror, Jan Williamson was not only a VERY REAL PERSON, but also verified the letter was authentic. When Jan Williamson told John Blanton directly that the accreditation of the school where Patton earned his Ph. D. was valid, like Satan himself, Blanton continued speaking these lies against Patton. Rather than withdraw the charge as false and unsubstantiated, John Blanton, continues to this day with his slanderous accusations.

Blanton and the North Texas Skeptics live by the rule, "If you say something false enough times, people will begin to believe it." Or "throw enough mud and people will look dirty." To this day, the North Texas Skeptics publishes documents that accuse Patton of having a phony degree, yet other than the 5 word title, there is no other information supplied. This is a well known internet scam trick to get the slanderous headlines into web crawler search engines. Such illustrates just how black a heart Blanton and his organization must really have to allow such things to exist at all!

While openly slandering the name of Patton around the world, John Blanton cleverly keeps his name out of sight. John Blanton likes to cower in the dark caves of anonymity only surfacing to make slanderous, evil, unsubstantiated claims he knows, for sure are false. We know he knows they are false, because we have directly shown them to be false. But truth is not something he values. So in addition to being a dishonest liar, John Blanton is a coward. The North Texas Skeptics has no credibility or integrity because of it.

Black heart? Now that is cruel.

OK, there is more here than I can manage in a few pages, but I will make a few points.

First of all, if I have ever in the past accused Don Patton of having no formal training in geology, I sincerely apologize. I have known Don for 20 years, and in this time I have observed he has considerable knowledge of geology. It is more knowledge he could have gotten from watching The History Channel on TV. Furthermore, Rudd's Web site lays out Don's academic record:³

Four years, Florida College, Temple Terrace, FL (Bible)

Two years, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN (Geology)

Two years, Indiana Univ./Purdue Univ., Indianapolis, IN (Geology)

Two years, Pacific School of Graduate Studies, Melbourne, Australia (Education)

Ph.D. in Education granted 12/10/1993

To be sure, the four years of Bible study doesn't count much for geology, but any courses at Austin Peay or Purdue should be worth something. However, Don's Ph.D. degree from Australia (1993) is in education, not geology. Also, a little assistance to Steve Rudd: The actual name is *Pacific College of Graduate Studies* (PCGS).

In years past Don has discussed his education with me, and here is what he has had to say: He does not claim to have either a bachelor's degree or a master's degree. He stated he decided to skip the usual route and to go straight for the Ph.D.

This brings us to Don Patton's Ph.D. in education from PCGS.

I tried to imagine what it must have been like to obtain a Ph.D. from grand old PCGS, and I thought about my own academic experience.

I went to Austin, where I spent four years and obtained a B.S. in engineering science. Later, while otherwise employed full time, I attended night classes at the University of Texas at Dallas and obtained master's degrees in math and physics. At no time was any of this easy.

I considered a Ph.D., as well. In the basement of the physics building at UT Dallas were offices for some of the Ph.D. candidates. I stopped by and talked to some of them, just to get a feel of what it would be like to go for a Ph.D. The facts were like cold water. Six years minimum, I was told. It's a full time job. And these are some really smart people.

When I discussed his Ph.D. program with Don Patton, he did not mention any such hardships, but I am sure he was being too modest. It should be an interesting story, and Don must be eager to share his experiences. His e-mail address is on the Steve Rudd Web site.

So, what about the grand old PCGS? Is or was this a real institute of higher learning, accredited to bestow advanced

college degrees? Steve Rudd provided me with an interesting letter. It says:⁴

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Policy and Planning Division

Level 22

Rialto South Tower, 525 Collins Street

Melbourne, 3000 Victoria

Postal Address

PO Box 266D

Melbourne, 3001 Victoria

Telephone (03) 628 2600 Facsimile (03) 628 3337

17 December 1993

Mr. David Chambers

Principal

Pacific College of Graduate Studies

P.O. Box 475

Glenroy 3046

Dear Mr. Chambers

TERTIARY EDUCATION ACT 1993

Under the *Tertiary Education Act* 1993, recently passed by the Victorian Parliament, provision is made for the recognition of defined higher education courses of study of private providers as well as recognized universities. Under the Act, recognized universities are those institutions that are established or recognized as a university under a Victorian Act of Parliament or established as a university under an Act of the Commonwealth of Australia, another State or a Territory. Following proclamation of the Act on 1 July 1993, providers of higher education courses of study other than these require the specific approval of the Minister for Tertiary Education and Training.

In view of the fact that some institutions have students currently enrolled in courses of study leading to a higher education award, it was considered necessary to clarify the status of these students from the date of proclamation. The approvals indicated below relate to courses currently offered and are subject to the conditions identified. They are provided without prejudice to the outcome of consideration by the Review Panels of your application under Section 11 of the *Tertiary Education Act* 1993.

In relation to the following courses of study offered by the Pacific College of Graduate Studies each

course of study is accredited under Section 11(e)(i) of the *Tertiary Education Act 1993*.

The accreditation shall remain in force until 30 June 1994 under the conditions detailed below.

Master of Arts
 Doctor of Ministry
 Bachelor of Arts
 Doctor of Biblical Studies
 Doctor of Philosophy
 Doctor of Christian Education
 Bachelor of Ministry
 Master of Divinity
 Doctor of Theology

Under Section 11, authorization is granted from 1 July 1993 to the Pacific College of Graduate Studies to conduct each of the courses specified above until 30 June 1994.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

This is enlightening. It seems to say that the PCGS was given just twelve months to grant the listed degrees. Presumably PCGS no longer has this privilege, else I expect Steve Rudd or others would have remarked on the fact. Also, what does this have to say about the prospects for a 1993 PCGS cricket season?

There is additional irony. The letter bears a stamp: "RECEIVED 24 DEC 1993." According to Rudd (see above), grand old PCGS awarded Patton's degree two weeks prior.

But wait. There must be more to all this PCGS business. George Brown has written a review of dubious educational institutions. He has this to say:⁵

Pacific International University (Victoria)
<http://www.pacificuniversity.com>

Pacific International University had its roots in Melbourne, Australia, and in 1993 obtained accreditation from the Higher Education Division of Victoria to offer Masters and PhD level qualifications. This accreditation was short lived though, and the university relocated to Missouri, USA. For a period of time it still maintained a Victorian address for correspondence and delivery; however, this was removed due to pressure from the Victorian Office of Tertiary Education and Training. In the USA, where it still operates today, it claims accreditation from the 'American Accrediting Association of Theological Institutions Inc.', an unrecognised accrediting agency.

It's hard to get past the idea that Pacific College of Graduate Studies and Pacific International University are strongly linked. Wikipedia has the following entry for *Pacific International*:⁶

Pacific International University was an unaccredited, conservative, Christian university and seminary located in Springfield, Missouri. 1989 alumnus of Pacific International University Carl Baugh was the university president.[1] The school has been referred to as a diploma mill.[2][3] Pacific International University is not accredited by any accreditation body recognized by its country. As such, its degrees and credits might not be acceptable to employers or other institutions, and use of degree titles may be restricted or illegal in some jurisdictions.

Carl Baugh is the famous creationist promoter of the Paluxy River "mantracks." This newsletter has previously treated Baugh's own inflated resume.⁷

An entry on the TalkOrigins by Brett Vickers has more to say about PCGS and Carl Baugh. It lends additional support for the idea that PCGS and Pacific International share the same bedroom.⁸

Baugh has also claimed Ph.D. degrees in education and anthropology from the Pacific College of Graduate Studies in Melbourne, Australia and the College of Advanced Education in Irving, Texas. According to Glen Kuban, who has thoroughly researched Baugh's Paluxy "man-track" claims and his credentials, neither Pacific College nor the College of Advanced Education is accredited or authorized by any regional or national body to grant degrees [4]. Pacific College is a small religious school run by Australian creationist Clifford Wilson, a close associate of Baugh's. The College of Advanced Education is a division of the International Baptist College, of which Baugh himself is president.

The reference in the above quote cites a source from Glen Kuban.⁹

So, how does grand old PCGS stack up against your grandfather's *alma mater*? It's time for a reality check.

My engineering degree is from the University of Texas at Austin. The University is supported by state funds, and it opened for classes in 1883. The main campus comprises 350 acres north of the Texas state capitol building. Wikipedia has this description:¹⁰

The university is home to 7 museums and 17 libraries, which hold over eight million volumes. The holdings of

the university's Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center include one of only 21 remaining complete copies of the Gutenberg Bible and the first permanent photograph, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, taken by Nicéphore Niépce. The newest museum, the Blanton Museum of Art, opened in April 2006 and hosts approximately 17,000 works from Europe, the United States, and Latin America.

Also:

The university has an endowment of \$7.2 billion, out of the \$16.11 billion (according to 2008 estimates) available to the University of Texas. This figure reflects the fact that UT Austin has the largest endowment of any public university in the nation.

Famous students have included Jayne Mansfield and Farrah Fawcett. The University also has a football team.

I received my master's degrees at the University of Texas at Dallas (UT Dallas). In 1969 the Texas government formed UT Dallas from the Southwest Center for Advanced Studies, which had been donated to the University of Texas system by its Texas Instruments founders.¹¹

Due to its strong academic programs and advanced research, it has earned the reputation of a premier institute for advanced study in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Its individual faculty, which includes members of the United States National Academies of Science and Engineering and winners of the Nobel Prize, are well known in industry circles as authorities in their respective disciplines, especially in the STEM fields. UTD is located in the heart of Telecom Corridor, and has its roots in the development of the Metroplex's high tech industry.

Notable faculty members have included Wolfgang Rindler and Stephen D. Levene. Professor Rindler is a leading astrophysicist who specializes in general relativity. I am pleased to have completed (and passed) two of his courses in relativity and also his courses in electromagnetism and classical mechanics. He coined the term *event horizon*. Professor Levene is a prominent biophysicist notable for studies in DNA-Protein Interactions.

UT Dallas has a lacrosse team and a national championship chess team.

I have worked with a number of people who have earned Ph.D. degrees, and their experiences are worth noting.

Prasad Golla is a member of the NTS Board of Directors, and he earned his Ph.D. in computer engineering from Southern Methodist University (SMU).¹²

Southern Methodist University (SMU) is a private, coeducational university in University Park, Texas (an enclave of Dallas). Founded in 1911 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, SMU currently operates campuses in University Park, Plano, and Taos, New Mexico. SMU is owned by the South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church.

SMU has a first rate engineering school and has a total enrollment of 11,000. The main campus is the home of the future George W. Bush Presidential Library. SMU is rumored to have a football team.

In comparison, grand old PCGS seems to have a post office box. How many different ways do you have to spell *diploma mill*?

When I responded to Jared McCormick I told him I was not trying to prove Don Patton's degree is phony. In the legal world there is a Latin term: *res ipsa loquitur*. It is usually translated: "The thing speaks for itself." The term is used in instances where the facts are so apparent and manifest that there is no need for the claimant to prove anything more. The burden of proof then falls on the accused. We have such a situation here.

There is nothing left for me to prove. The entire academic community will come to the same conclusion I have. What would the faculty at UT Austin, UT Dallas and SMU have to say about this "degree?" For that matter, ask the same from the faculty at any number of reputable universities or colleges in the U.S. and in the entire world. Ask at Yale, Princeton, Harvard, Oklahoma State University, Brigham Young University, Texas Christian University and Baylor. Or, you can save yourself the trouble.

I will state without additional proof that creationist Don Patton does not have a legitimate Ph.D. degree of any kind.

In his letter to us Jared McCormick took up our coverage of Don Patton's misuse of quotes from real scientists.¹³

Whether or not you accept Dr. Patton's theories and science, you cannot say that he has twisted information, or misquoted any other scientist. He has been honest, upfront, and forward with all the information he has represented. I have personally checked references of where he has quoted very reputable evolutionists, thinking myself that he must have misquoted, or used ellipses to take away from what the scientist was actually saying, thereby

twisting their words. It astounded me to find out that these evolutionists actually have stated these comments in the context Dr. Patton quoted them.

In next month's issue I will take up this topic and provide a bit more insight. It is possible Jared will be surprised.



References

- 1 <http://ntskeptics.org/2009/2009september/september2009.htm#letters>
- 2 <http://www.bible.ca/tracks/john-blanton-north-texas-skeptics-debater-athiest-bible-hater.htm>
- 3 <http://www.bible.ca/tracks/ask-creationist.htm>
- 4 A copy of the letter is available for view on Steve Rudd's Web site at the following URL:
<http://www.bible.ca/tracks/degree.htm>
- 5 George Brown, "Protecting Australia's Higher Education System: A Proactive Versus Reactive Approach in Review," (1999–2004), Proceedings of the Australian Universities Quality Forum 2004
<http://www.auqa.edu.au/auqf/pastfora/2004/program/papers/Brown.pdf>
- 6 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_International_University. The references are:
[1] "Distance learning". Pacific International University. January 2006.
<http://web.archive.org/web/20060128095313/http://paciuedu/index/distance-learning.shtml>. Retrieved 2007-05-17.
[2] George Brown. Protecting Australia's Higher Education System from Australian Universities Quality Agency
[3] A Matter of Degree-Carl Baugh's Alleged Credentials from TalkOrigins Archive(Originally published in NCSE Reports Vol 9, No. 6, Nov-Dec. 1989.)
- 7 <http://ntskeptics.org/1989/1989julyaugust/julyaugust1989.htm#baugh>
<http://ntskeptics.org/1989/1989septemberoctober/septemberoctober1989.htm#baugh>
- 8 <http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/credentials.html>
- 9 Glen Kuban, *The Texas Dinosaur/"Man Track" Controversy*(1986), available at <<http://paleo.cc/paluxy/paluxy.htm>>, last accessed on June 24, 1998.
- 10 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Texas_at_Austin
- 11 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Texas_at_Dallas

12 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Methodist_University

13 September 2009op. cit.

What's new

by Robert Park

[Robert Park publishes the What's New column at <http://www.bobpark.org/>. Following are some clippings of interest.]

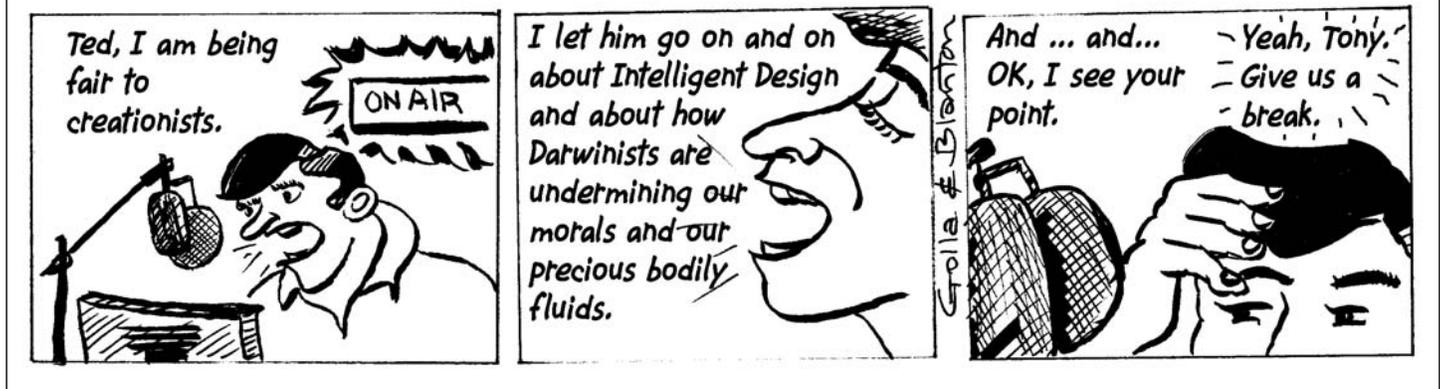
Placebos: would they work better if they had side effects?

Every doctor seeks to evoke the placebo effect. They might wear a white smock with a stethoscope around the neck for a start. A diploma and license mounted on the wall further enhances the effect. The doctor may say that your condition has been studied, and effective treatment is available. "You should feel better in a few days," the doctor says while writing a prescription. You feel better before you fill it. That's why the randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study is the most important invention in modern medicine. It tells us what works, and what doesn't. But according to Steve Silberman in *Wired* magazine, placebos have become a big problem for big-Pharma: They've started working even better, which is making one promising drug after another seem little better than the placebo. So what's happening? I suspect that the people who design the trials have gotten more sophisticated at double-blinding. That's good; it prompted industry to launch new studies aimed at better understanding the placebo effect, to the eventual benefit of medical science.

Magnetic fields: the precautionary principle in action.

According to Denis Le Bihan at the CEA-Saclay Centre, a European directive to prevent workers from being exposed to high magnetic fields could severely impact research into Ultrahigh-Field MRI which shows great promise particularly in neurological applications. It is particularly frustrating that limits on static magnetic fields resulted from the paranoia surrounding EMF, which was associated with everything from power lines

Skeptic Ink — by Prasad Golla and John Blanton. © 2009. Free, non-commercial reuse permitted.



to cell phones, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and other wireless devices. As I pointed out in an editorial in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* eight years ago, “there will always be some who will argue that the issue has not been completely settled. In science, few things ever are.”

Electrosensitivity: refugees from wireless technology.

In the wilds of the Drome Valley in southern France, living in metal- shielded campers, and wrapped in aluminum foil, they seek relief from the ubiquitous radio waves that are destroying their lives. The increased use of WiFi is not making matters any better. Radio waves, they insist, cause them real physical pain, but double-blind tests consistently show them to be unable to distinguish between real and sham electromagnetic fields.

Holy war: has it finally come down to this?

On Tuesday, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an opinion piece by Chris Mooney and Sheril Kirschenbaum with the provocative title, “Must science declare a holy war on religion?” They contrast the “in your face” style of Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, to the strategy of the National Center for Science Education, which simply focuses on getting the facts right in public science education. I love them both. Mooney and Kirschenbaum, have just published, *Unscientific America: How scientific illiteracy threatens our future*, (Basic Books). They take C.P. Snow’s admonition that “we require a common culture in which science is an essential component,” one step further. “Science itself,” they conclude, “must become the common culture.” Good idea, how do we get there?

Holy litigation: the NCSE has shown us a better way.

The National Center for Science Education (NCSE) gave us a demonstration in *Kitzmiller v. the Dover Area School District*, December 20, 2005. Scientists tend to be leery of courts; they don’t think the way we do. But beneath the wigs and doctoral hoods, we have some important things in common: we both seek the truth, and we both believe the truth can only be determined from the evidence. In *Kitzmiller*, science was pitted against revelation. It was a mismatch. There are countless examples of the public being defrauded by pseudoscience. We should view these cases as an opportunity. It would help the public to understand the value of science in their lives, even if we suffer an occasional bruise in the process. In the book, *Superstition: Belief In the Age of Science*, I concluded that, “science is the only way of knowing.” The reviewer for *Publisher’s Weekly* found that offensive.

NIH: Francis Collins rejects Darwinian evolution!

Much has been made of Collins’ oft-stated belief in evolution. An op-ed in Monday’s *New York Times* gives a very different picture. Sam Harris, best- selling author of *The End of Faith*, quotes from a series of slides Collins used in a lecture on science and belief at UC Berkeley. Consider Slide 2: “God’s plan included the mechanism of evolution to create the marvelous diversity of living things on our planet. Most especially, that creative plan included human beings.” If you listen closely you may be able to hear me screaming, “There is no plan!” That, for God’s sake, is the wonderful beauty of Darwinian evolution!

Bob Park can be reached via email at opa@aps.org.

North Texas Skeptics
P.O. Box 111794
Carrollton, Texas 75011-1794

FIRST CLASS

Address Correction Requested

Application for Membership

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
E-Mail address _____
Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____
Occupation _____
Special expertise and/or interests _____

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Membership agreement:

Yes, I agree with your purposes in exploring paranormal and pseudoscientific claims from a responsible and scientific point of view, and while I do not endorse the a priori rejection of paranormal phenomena and pseudoscientific claims, I believe that such claims must be subjected to the fair and systematic testing which rational enquiry demands.

Signature _____ Date _____

The North Texas Skeptics, P.O. Box 111794, Carrollton, Texas 75011-1794 (972) 306-3187

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