

Retirees' Quarterly



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Off the Cuff

We received information about a blog being maintained by Marilyn Smidt (nursing) and her husband, Corwin, who are living in Budapest for the next 5 months. Below are their blog addresses. You will find the descriptions and the sights of life in Budapest interesting. Please check these sites:

<http://smidtsinhungary.blogspot.com/> or <http://www.csmidt.blogspot.com/>

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OOPS! We wish to apologize for misspelling the name of the author of the poetry that we published in the July Quarterly. The poems were written by Kim Wyngarden, not Kim Winegarden as printed. We are sorry for the error. It's the type of error that can happen when an old man isn't paying close attention to his work.

* * * *

At an intersection when driving, look both ways, not just twice, but THREE times! In Texas recently my wife and I headed out one morning to have coffee and conversation in a restaurant rather than at my daughter's home where the teenage kids were still sleeping, and the adults at work. I pulled up to an intersection at an incline facing the sun, planning to turn left onto the crossing road. Marlene, my wife, said, "There are two cars coming from the right." I watched them pass, watched them go out of sight to the left, saw nothing coming from that direction and pulled out into the cross street and WHAM! A large pickup truck with "brush bars" across the front of it, (I later learned.) seemingly shot out of a cannon, slammed into my left front wheel, rearranging it up onto the engine of the car, sending the car spinning and heading right for a brick wall. All I saw was the wall coming fast. Fortunately we missed that. People came running, "Are you hurt? Are you hurt? "I don't know." I couldn't feel any pain, but then I saw blood dripping from my head and I changed my tune. I was taken to the hospital and had my scalp sewed back together again. Marlene and I both got black and blue marks in various places, but we are doing fine now. The air bags inflated and deflated so fast that I never saw them, just the white powder that seemed to fill the car when they inflated and we were headed towards the wall. I thought it was smoke and told Marlene, "You get out of the car just as fast as you can!" I was afraid of fire. I still can't believe it happened, but it did. Marlene's black and blue marks were mostly from the seat belts. They can present a serious danger.

A few years ago when we lived in a condo, there was a man who was rolled out onto the deck of a condo on a stretcher every day some distance behind our place. He was completely paralyzed, a quadriplegic, a result of an auto crash. On impact he apparently slid down and forward in his seat. The shoulder belt, he thought, caught him right below the chin, instantly breaking his neck.

For about five dollars at any auto parts store, you can buy a sort of small padded bib through which the shoulder and seat belts can be threaded. This device holds those two belts closely together. It is designed to prevent the kind of injury described above by keeping the belts closer together and spreading the impact of the restraint over a larger area of your body. Ideally they would be standard equipment. It's mighty cheap insurance, I'd say. No, we weren't wearing ours that morning. When I cleaned out the car a few days later at the junk yard, I found them under the front seats. There's a lesson here! I'd say they should be sewn onto the belts so you don't have to fuss with them every time you start out on a journey.

Jerome and Anne Miller Donate Theater to Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp



(BLUE LAKE, MUSKEGON)—On Thursday, July 17, 2008, Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp’s new theater was dedicated to the memory of Jerome and Anne Miller of Grand Rapids. The dedication took place during a concert by the *Domkantorei St. Martin*, a visiting 65-member choir from Mainz, Germany.

The Millers, both of whom retired from the faculty of Grand Rapids Community College, provided for a gift to Blue Lake as a bequest in their estate. Their generous gift, totaling over \$500,000 in cash and property, is the largest single donation from any individual in the camp’s history. Anne Miller died in February 2003 and Jerome Miller passed away in May 2007.

In addition to attending concerts at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp over the years, the Millers connected with the camp’s programs and mission as avid listeners to Blue Lake Public Radio, the camp’s broadcast division.

Anne (VanderWoude) Miller was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1921 to a Dutch Navy captain father and a German artist mother. She was educated at the University of Michigan, where she received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees. She received her doctoral degree, also from the University of Michigan, in zoology and parasitology, in 1950. Dr. Miller conducted some of the earliest research in the area of genetics and worked at the University of Michigan’s School of Public Health. During her teaching career and after her retirement, she developed interests in sewing, weaving, and other hand crafts; traveling, including such far-flung locales as Panama, the Galapagos Islands, South America, Kenya, India, China, and many others; and gardening.

Jerome Miller, also born in 1921, moved with his family to the Ann Arbor area as an infant. His education was interrupted by military service during World War II, including with the Army Medical Corps in the Philippines. Dr. Miller received bachelor’s and master’s degrees (in biology), as well as a doctorate (in zoology) from the University of Michigan. He met his wife while they were both working at the University of Michigan Biological Station. Although he did not share his wife’s love of travel, Jerome Miller was an avid amateur photographer and pursued interests in electronics and technology.

In 1956, the Millers joined the faculty of the then Grand Rapids Junior College where Anne chaired the science department and taught zoology, while Jerome taught botany and biology. Dr. Anne Miller retired in 1986 and Dr. Jerome Miller retired in 1987.

“Jerry’ and Anne were impressed with the Camp’s programs for aspiring young musicians,” says Jerry Foster, a close friend of the Millers and trustee of their estate. The Millers and Fosters were neighbors and friends, beginning in 1971. Anne Miller and Mr. Foster’s wife, Hannelore, were particularly close. “Anne was held in high esteem for her ability to teach zoology. She was also admired for her gentle demeanor and on-going friendships with her students throughout her life,” Mr. Foster adds. “Jerry was known as a very good professor of biology and enjoyed working with computers.”

According to Mr. Foster, the Millers often worked together on the gardens that they maintained at their home in Grand Rapids and their summer home in Chester, Vermont.

According to Blue Lake Executive Vice President Bill McFarlin, “This generous gift from the Miller Estate coincides with the establishment of a formal planned giving program at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. This program will offer potential donors investment options such as charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts, which are designed to have benefits for both the donor and the organization receiving the gift. Gifts such as the Miller bequest and other planned gifts will be crucial to sustaining Blue Lake’s mission in the future.” For more information on Blue Lake’s planned giving program, please contact the Development Office at (231) 894-1966 or (800) 221-3796.

Construction of the Jerome and Anne Miller Theater was completed in June 2006, in time for that year’s camp season. The 700-seat, air-conditioned theatre, located in Camp Gershwin, features a large stage, full orchestra pit, and generous backstage areas. The theater also includes an educational wing with four classrooms and serves as the principle venue for Blue Lake’s Theater Department. The theater’s lobby contains three original paintings by Michigan artist Maria Ruggiero, commissioned by anonymous Blue Lake benefactors.

The *Domkantorei St. Martin* from Mainz, Germany, was founded in 1987 by their director, Prof. Mathias Breitschaft. This mixed choir of youths and adults sings during Sunday services once a month in the Mainz Cathedral. The group has toured Europe and the Middle East, performing with orchestras and in concert and church venues. In 2007, the *Domkantorei* combined with Blue Lake’s International Youth Symphony Orchestra for a performance of Ludolph Arens’ “Festival Mass in E-flat” at the Mainz Cathedral. Ludolph Arens was the grandfather of Blue Lake’s Founder and President, Fritz Stansell. The program for the *Domkantorei*’s July 17 concert will be announced from the stage.

In addition, during their visit to Blue Lake, the *Domkantorei* joined the Blue Lake Festival Orchestra and several Blue Lake choral groups and soloists for a performance of Beethoven’s “Symphony No. 9.” The concert will take place on Saturday, July 19, 2008, at 8:00 PM, at Blue Lake’s Stewart Memorial Shell and was conducted by Prof. Breitschaft.

The combined Jerome and Anne Miller Theater dedication and concert of the *Domkantorei St. Martin* was free and open to the public. For more information on this and other concerts in Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp’s 2008 Summer Arts Festival, please contact the camp at (231) 894-2616 or (800) 221-3796.

Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, a summer school of the arts located on a 1,200 acre campus in Michigan’s Manistee National Forest, offers fine arts education for all ages. The summer camp annually serves more than 5,100 gifted elementary, junior high, and high school students with diverse programs in music, art, dance, and drama, while offering 175 performances during its Summer Arts Festival. Blue Lake also operates a widely acclaimed International Exchange Program and two public radio stations. Since its inception in 1966, Blue Lake has provided cultural enrichment to more than 220,000 gifted students and countless concert-goers. For more information, log on to www.bluelake.org.

An Aspirin a Day... It's Not a Bad Idea

Tom Deschaine, Psychology



My weekdays typically begin with a walk, a cup of coffee, and settling down at the computer. The first site I visit is my email. Who knows, someone may want me to become rich, attend a social gathering, provide an outstanding stock tip, or share a joke. Usually there is something of interest. But there it was in the “From” column of my mailbox – Keith Longberg – and listed as the subject was “Quarterly.” He was looking for a war story, book review, or almost anything worthy of print. My initial reaction was to hit the delete button and pretend it was never received. (Sorry, Keith.) Maybe I could say I was sick, tired, too busy, in Iceland for the summer, or some such other fabrication. I mean, what does the guy expect? I’m not a writer and in each issue I read some incredible articles, which I am sure I cannot match. My inner voice said, “Don’t embarrass yourself,” so I proceeded with my daily activities for several days without responding.

However, every time I opened my email I saw Keith Longberg. Eventually the guilt got to me, but what can I share that might even be remotely interesting? My days, I suspect, are like many of yours, filled with a variety of tasks. Activities with family, grandkids, church, volunteerism, travel, social obligations, and sometimes just plain goofing off fill my time. So, what do I have to say that you might find amusing or beneficial? Late one night, while struggling with my guilt, the answer came. Aspirin!

For several years friends and colleagues would inquire about my limp. I did experience discomfort in my right lumbar region, but never realized it resulted in a limp. My activities were not limited and I was able to jog two or three miles four or five days a week. Physical therapy helped somewhat but the realization came that it was time to visit an orthopedic surgeon. The evaluation was conducted in late November 2007 with the verdict that my right hip was shot – bone on bone. I requested a replacement as soon as possible as we were looking forward to a trip to Mexico beginning February 17. All the preliminary procedures were completed and the hip was replaced on January 2, 2008.

In 2004, two stents were placed in one of the arteries of my heart. For several years, as I had an earlier cardiac event in 1989, part of my daily therapeutic regimen included taking an aspirin.

In preparation for hip surgery I was instructed to stop the aspirin and begin taking Coumadin. Surgery went well and I was a good patient experiencing a relatively rapid recovery. On January 9, when I returned to the surgeon’s office, they removed the staples and said they were pleased with my progress. After returning home my wife, Jodi, settled me in my chair and left to get some groceries. Everything was fine!

Sometime later I began to feel extremely tired and nauseated and sweat was pouring from every pore of my body. Meanwhile, Jodi arrived at home, deciding not to make an extra stop to get the potatoes she had forgotten. She took one look at me and knew I was in distress. I told her I wanted something for what I thought was heartburn, some soup, and to take a nap. The

compression stockings required after hip surgery were wet with sweat and I asked her to help me get them off. As I stood, she pulled the stockings down and I went to the floor with them.

Jodi immediately called 911 and periodically thumped my chest. (Finally, her chance to really pummel me.) While she was still on the phone, and in less than five minutes, both the fire-fighters and paramedics arrived. They hooked me up to an EKG machine. All this is second hand to me for I was in and out of consciousness. A few neighbors gathered to lend support, one being an emergency room physician, Sean. He read the EKG and turned to Jodi, hugged her and said, "It doesn't look very good." Later, one of the neighbors told Sean that he had never seen anyone's skin look as gray as mine did. Sean's response was, "That's how people look just before they die." Soon I was on a gurney and, with sirens blaring, off to the emergency room at Spectrum Butterworth. I have vague recollections of several individuals waiting for me on arrival. They prepped me in the ER and then it was off to the cath lab where a cardiologist cleared out a blockage in the stent where blood had coagulated. The time the ambulance left my house to the time I left the cath lab with a cleared artery was less than an hour and a half. Amazing!

I am happy to report no long-term damage occurred and my heart is functioning as well as it did prior to the attack. Obviously I dodged a very big bullet. Yeah! Throughout this process we found email to be of real value. Jodi was able to quickly update family and others who were concerned.

What had happened? The cardiologist explained that the blockage occurred because I was taken off aspirin, resulting in a clot in the stent, which blocked the flow of blood in the anterior left descending artery (sometimes called the "widow maker.") I don't blame surgeons for not wanting to work in a bloody field, which is why they curtail the use of aspirin to prevent hemorrhage. My new therapy was to stop Coumadin, take Plavix for at least a year, and take aspirin daily for the rest of my life.

What's to be learned here? First, for me to survive, I should live near a first-rate medical facility, cherish a woman who wants me to be around even after 46 years, pray, and take aspirin. Second, there are countless people in your lives aside from family who are deeply concerned about you, be they be old friends or new acquaintances. Cards, emails, phone calls, visits, and their expressions of concern (sometimes tearful) can be a humbling experience. How fortunate I am to live in such an environment.

Retirees' Breakfasts

Breakfasts are at 9:00 a.m. at The Breakfast Nook, corner of Fuller and Plainfield on the last Thursday of each month, except as indicated below.

Your spouse and friends are welcome.

October 23

November, no breakfast because of Thanksgiving

December, no breakfast because of Christmas

January 29

February 26

Universal Health Care: In our times? Right here in the U.S. of A? Why not?

By Mike Franz



As State of Michigan retirees, you and I have great healthcare insurance. We always did, too. We earned it. There is always talk of lowering the coverage for those still employed, but our coverages seem safe enough. So why should we be concerned if millions of other Americans have little or no coverage?

When this idea was first proposed to America in the 1950's, Ronald Reagan and the far right attacked it as "socialized medicine" and labeled it a communist scheme to take over the world. Of course they did not point out that Great Britain, at the end of WWII, adopted it for their people after all the sacrifices they made for the cause. Is it possible people in the U.S. did not make the same sacrifices? Canada and Europe soon followed. I even read last year that the little island of Taiwan had achieved it. Imagine that, a small capitalistic outpost off the shores of communist China has it. The largest, most wealthy capitalistic nation in the world does not have it. Get the gist?

So why do we not have it? I read in a recent article in the Press by Dr. James Dobson that 55 per cent of the doctors in the U.S. approve of it. They do not necessarily think they will not retire as millionaires if it is approved. I wonder what the other 45 per cent might be thinking. In Michael Moore's documentary "Sicko," he interviewed a doctor in England who makes 150,000 a year, has two prestigious cars, a townhouse in the city and bonuses for patients who lose weight or quit smoking. He also has lots of time off, makes his quota in nine months. He said he was perfectly content with what he makes. When Michael asked his uncle, a conservative Canadian, why he approved of their healthcare system, he said, without hesitation, we expect to take care of all of our citizens. He could not imagine it being any other way. What do our conservatives think?

I sometimes wonder why corporations, who complain all the time about the rising cost of healthcare and even negotiate to lower the coverages for their employees to improve their "bottom lines," do not embrace the idea. It would be paid for out of payroll taxes after all, the employee's taxes, not theirs.

Some will say the public largess is not big enough to take care of its costs. Right now the major costs come in three areas: the insurance companies, the physicians, and the drug companies. Everybody knows the drug companies are having a field day with gouging us for the costs of drugs. When the latest senior Medicare bill was passed, the politicians made sure Big Pharma would not have to negotiate for the charges of their drugs. They poured millions into lobbying for this purpose and both parties bought in. We could easily lower the cost of prescription drugs if the Federal government were the sole purchaser of them and had the power to negotiate their fair price. We would no doubt have a shortage of physicians at first, since some doctors obviously expect to make gazillions on their practices and medical schools are expensive and rather selective in how they accept applicants. With strong Federal support we could eventually supply the demand. They did it in Taiwan, remember? There would be no need for-profit insurance companies, but 30 percent of their employees are there to see to it that people's coverages are

reduced or denied to create greater profits for the company. Some of the others could be absorbed by the government if they are performing the legitimate service of providing benefits according to the contracts and policies that apply.

With medical costs greatly reduced, and under control, we might find universal, single payer coverages a real boon to our healthcare system. In the upcoming election there will be talk about some intermediary measures that would take us in that direction. I personally consider the use of “affordable” healthcare to be just as misleading as lowering our dependence on “foreign” oil. We need to lower our dependence on all oil, both foreign and domestic, and we need to create the circumstances under which all healthcare is affordable for all Americans.

I was talking to a stranger on the phone the other day and he informed me his sister was in critical care and whether she lived or died depended on her insurance coverage. I have a dear diabetic friend who falls through the donut hole in her meds after six months and cannot afford to pick up the difference. My brother died of lung cancer at age 66, and his Medicare kicked in just in time to pay for his last two days in the hospital. He had no coverage when he was ill and could have perhaps prevented this disease with good preventative care which he could not afford because he was self employed. My younger brother could not get health coverage for his daughter in college because she had some minor condition that prevented it. You have your own stories, I am sure. But most important, what kind of society are we? We certainly shouldn't let millions of our citizens, especially our children, go without necessary health insurance because the insurance lobbyists and companies are so powerful, and because lawmakers will not stand up to them for the benefit of the people.



Chicago Magnificent Mile Lights Festival

Saturday, November 22, 2008
Reservation/Release Form and payment due before November 17.

General Information

\$45.00 includes:

- RT Transportation by deluxe coach
- Coffee and doughnuts
- Parking at GRCC • Prizes
- Depart GRCC for Chicago at 8:00 a.m.
- Approximate arrival back to Grand Rapids, 10:30 p.m.

Limited Seating
Make Your Reservations NOW!

- Visit the museums or shop until you drop!
- Enjoy Chicago's Magnificent Mile annual lights festival and parade with Michigan Avenue illuminated with a million holiday lights!

Your participation supports the GRCC Alumni Association Scholarship Fund.
For more information, call Ed Sosa, GRCC Alumni Relations, (616) 234-4039.



Grand Rapids Community College
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Visit the Alumni Web site often at www.grcc.edu/alumni

A Student is Remembered

Richard Reid, German, French, Spanish

Dennis L. studied in one of my Spanish classes at Creston High School. He had a time of it. Once when he read the results of a test, he let slip a sotto voce scatological expression, and the whole class heard his vexation at receiving a low percentage grade. There was quiet laughter not of derision but of comprehension. Normally he was too polite to give vent to ugly words aloud.



But Dennis was intent to master the complexity of Spanish verb conjugations. He stayed after school one afternoon reviewing the verb families tense by tense, irregularity by irregularity, exception by exception. The review must have been worthwhile. Indeed he passed the course.

After graduation in 1967, unbeknownst to many Creston faculty members, he went off to Vietnam. Whether he went by selective service draft or by intent, I know not. In Vietnam his brief life could not survive the threadbare politics and policies of containment.

Now at Creston High School the engraved plaque with the name of Dennis L. memorializes one so young who died in distant Vietnam. Memory struggles to recollect his visage, the reddish hair, the freckled face, and the pale blue-tinged eyes which envisioned a future life of work, marriage, children that would never be. His bronze-engraved name brings forth evocations of unfulfilled youthful potential cut short and sacrificed to shibboleths of expediency held dear, enforced, and enshrined by old and spent haggards, anachronisms in the midst of surging interdependence who could not see past the nation-state. In Washington my son and I found his name on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall:

PFC - E2 - Marine Corps - Regular

Length of service 0 years

His tour began on December 18, 1967

Casualty was on June 6, 1968

In QUANG TRI, SOUTH VIETNAM

HOSTILE, GROUND CASUALTY

GUN, SMALL ARMS FIRE

Body was recovered

Panel 59W - Line 6

For one stripped of mortality before life's normal expanse, draw his soul ever nearer to Thy Concourse on high, O Lord.

A China Trip

By Dave Holkeboer

En route from Beijing airport one sees all the Olympic construction and, now, almost a solid mass of residential and office towers lining the 20 mile route to the city center. Skyscrapers are often ostentatious by our standards and feature extraneous architectural elements unrelated to any discernable function, as if their builders were flaunting wealth. And there is plenty of wealth to flaunt. Despite forecasts that car ownership will double in 5 years, the freeways into town are already at capacity. A bicycle, once ubiquitous in Beijing, is now a rarity. A new suburban Harley Davidson dealership is doing well. But we, my friend Annie and I, didn't come to China to see Manhattan on steroids and soon headed south.



Xi'an was a 13 hour train ride from Beijing. You knew you were far away from prototypical China. The pace of life was slower. Motorized pedicabs wait at the train station. Xi'an's claim to fame and major source of income is the Terra Cotta Soldiers, a display of life-size clay warriors dating from 210 BC and discovered in 1974 by several local farmers. The figures include warriors, chariots, horses, officials, acrobats, strongmen and musicians. Current estimates are that in the three pits containing the Terracotta Army there were over 8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses and 150 cavalry horses, the majority of which are still buried in the pits. Tourists spend \$90 per person for a day tour to visit the site, but we chose instead to spend \$1 for a public bus ticket. Once there, it's a mile walk past several hundred newly constructed shops from which hawkers noisily emerge offering ersatz jade, fur pelts and a horde of cheap replicas of the warriors. Among thousands of tourists, I never saw a foreigner.

Xi'an is far enough west that the noodle shops were typically owned and serviced by Muslims, distinguished by their white lace trimmed caps and head scarves, who had immigrated from western China and as far away as Urumqi. The noodles were widely varied and tasty but after a solid week of eating Chinese food, a Pizza Hut sign a couple featured a well lit, comforting American design, up to date fiberglass seating and plastic eating utensils, but the menu, written in Chinese, featured a choice between octopus pizza or squid pizza.

On the five-hour ride to Luoyang, a "soft sleeper" train compartment like we enjoyed from Beijing was not available. A "hard sleeper" would have to do. That meant, instead of a private room with bath, a tight compartment with six beds and no bath. My assigned bed was occupied with a noisily snoring Chinaman who appeared to be in the rapid eye movement of the sleep cycle. Since the train was already moving, I squeezed through 13 train cars until I came to "hard seating," normal train seats a couple of price points down from what I paid for but far more civilized. After whiling away some time in the dining car I was suddenly told to leave. "Get out," a railroad employee tersely warned. I considered his language unequivocal and left only to find they were preparing for a meeting of "the leaders." The leaders were a cadre of 20 or so uniformed railroad employees who marched past with precision and speed like well trained soldiers, their serious eyes pointing straight ahead and their arms swinging in unison as if they were going into battle. A half hour later they all marched past us in reverse and presumably

went back to sleep. The 5 hour trip was essentially a tour of China's coal belt where they unearth a cheap grade of high sulphur coal that fouls the country's air.

In Luoyang, we ordered bowls of rice with a chicken dish and a large bowl of fish soup. A young man at the next table was extremely upset at his girlfriend and loudly banged his teacup against a porcelain plate. It commanded the attention of all the patrons and a waitress came up to me with her hand over her mouth and said "bu hau ese", or "It's so embarrassing!" It's rare in China to see open demonstrations of anger and, when they happen, the participants ordinarily stand far apart from each other. That's part of the style for getting mad in China; you don't touch anybody. The girlfriend got up and moved 10 feet away. Her boyfriend, having reached a level of frustration that obviously pained him, kept banging his cup. The bill was \$1.65, including the entertainment.

I never saw a foreigner in Luoyang. Apparently the locals hadn't either. They lined up in a public park on a Sunday to get their picture taken with "the foreigner." Kids, grandmas, grandpas, People's Army soldiers, it didn't matter. I was intensely scrutinized. Uniformed adolescent school girls from almost every school in town were bussed there to pass out one page computer printed blurbs about their schools and seemed to do so with wide smiles and unbridled enthusiasm. Most of the pony tailed girls wore baseball caps sporting a Nike emblem which matched their uniform color. They would begin "Welcome to Luoyang" but then their English failed them and they would blush and giggle. It's one thing to learn English in school, quite another to converse with a foreigner.



Luoyang just happens to be in coal country and all its electricity is fired by coalpower. But that's true of most Chinese cities. The air is so thick with pollution the sun never seems to shine. Each morning you wake up to a dense haze. In Shanghai we walked along the Bund, an important street that winds along the Huang Po (Yellow River)

and is lined with British colonial architecture dating back to the early 20th century when British traders began to disseminate Chinese goods around the world. But the pollution was so thick you couldn't see across the river. In fact, at times it was difficult to make out the river itself walking along beside it.

The Peace Hotel in Shanghai, so famous its only sign is in English, is situated at a prominent intersection of the Bund, but is now closed for renovation. It was for most of the 20th century a haven for Westerners including my aunt who stayed there during the forties. I'm sure the bar was stocked with an ample supply of Guinness Ale and Gordon's gin, that is until Mao Tze Tung in 1949 forced all Westerners into exile including most of the British business people who populated the Bund. Its distinctive colonial architecture, once an embarrassment to the Communists for its representation of foreign control, now ironically is protected by the current government and houses high end European fashion shops. So is a little British restaurant on the second floor of a Bund office building where one could actually order eggs over easy with whole wheat toast and marmalade. Yet, as much as they were willing to cater to western predilection, the coffee was still Nescafe.

Although Shanghai now has about 16 million people, it grows by the day as rural people continuously stream into the city looking for economic opportunity. I settled into a 4 star hotel near the central train station. Few guests but lots of hotel personnel standing as erect and motionless as statuary at the entry doors and behind the reception desk. They dutifully listened to questions in English as if they understood them. They didn't. Not until I spoke Chinese did their faces light up and things begin to happen. The in-room safe wasn't connected to the cabinet so I asked if it could be attached. They complied by attaching two 1/8" drywall screws into the 1/4" luan plywood beneath it. Since that didn't materially improve the security, I picked the entire safe up under my arm and took it to the front desk. I asked if they would hold it for an hour or so because I planned to steal it later. They saw no humor in this, nor did they replace the safe.

From the 21st floor the Shanghai train station below looked like an ant colony with tens of thousands of people scurrying in and out. Everybody goes by train in China but, since there is no computerized system for tickets, each sale is transacted separately in person at the train station.

On one leg I was forced to book an air ticket. I found a travel agency, told them where I wanted to go and handed them an American Express card. No, air tickets are bought in cash. I hauled out an appropriate number of US \$20 bills. Sorry, only Chinese money. I spent one hour at a nearby bank to change the bills into renminbi currency while a young girl laboriously transcribed my visa number, passport number, name, address, et alia, onto some onion paper. Each American bill was passed through an optical reader to validate its usefulness. A couple of bills didn't make it through the process. No, they weren't counterfeit, just a little ragged in one corner. I finally made it back 4 blocks to the travel agency and came up with a real, albeit handwritten, ticket on China Eastern Airlines. China Eastern pilots were flying this week. The prior week they were flying planeloads of people to their destination and then returning without unloading the passengers. Presumably they learned their work stoppage techniques from our own unions. The Chinese government, however, took a dim view of this and had them back to work in a jiffy. One nice thing about Communist central control!

Shanghai is a preponderantly Chinese city but a unique square block is dedicated to western proclivities. Quichey bars and restaurants reminiscent of yuppieville USA where, if you order a Bud Lite, they don't stare at you as if you're from outer space. They simply go get one. A hamburger is a hamburger and coffee is served out of a Bunn Coffeemaker. I offered my seat at the bar to a couple of smartly dressed Chinese women and let them know in Chinese they were welcome to sit down. Their response, "Oh, don't worry about it. We're fine." Next to me sat a tired 60 year old accountant from Houston, a partner in Price Waterhouse who had the Petro China account. He lived in a \$200 per night hotel across the street, had an English speaking driver and a cadre of employees all of whom were enjoined to speak English at work. I speculated what it would be like to live in China and yet be entirely insulated from it.

If you visit China, it's easier to hire lots of hand holding. There are plenty of tourist agencies ready to take your money in exchange for new Mercedes busses that transport you door to door, English translators, guides, wake up calls, American breakfasts with "real" coffee, planned excursions and the like. But I always found China travel more interesting without such amenities.

Scholarship Fundraising Program Shelved

By Keith Longberg



I asked one of the VP's a few weeks ago, "When is a good time for innovation?" The answer, as expected, was "Always. Never." "Always" is theoretically correct, of course, but "Never" is much more likely to be the case on the ground. There is a third answer also, and that is "Not now, maybe later." That may well be the most common answer, and it has a favorable chance of turning out to be "Never" eventually, but meanwhile that's uncertain.

In the mid 80's I read in the paper an article about a wealthy NY industrialist who had been invited to give a graduation speech to sixth grade students graduating from the elementary school in Harlem from which he had graduated. During his speech, on an impulse, he said later, he promised to pay for the college education of each of those students, the overwhelming majority of whom could reasonably be predicted, based on past performances of students from that school, not to graduate from high school. His gift transformed the thinking, the expectations, of those students as well as their families. Suddenly, for the first time in their lives, those students perceived that they had a chance, a realistic basis for hope for a better future and a reason to work for it. His gift provided hope and made an enormous and lasting impact on those approximately twenty-eight elementary students and their parents or guardians.

I visited this man in his NYC office a short time later, and asked him how what he had done could be replicated on a larger scale here in GR. He told me, "Don't look around for another rich person like me. Put together a plan to help kids who don't have hope, kids whom we know don't have a good future ahead of them, a plan to which the average person can contribute small sums of money regularly over many years. People will support a plan like that if it is well articulated, and if they are asked to give. The trouble is this: *No one is asking people to DO this!*

I have been thinking about this concept and working on it in one way or another ever since. I put the concept on paper and called it The Great Expectations Scholarship Program. The concept was to raise funds to pay for two-years of credit and required books and fees at GRCC along with mentoring for students and their parents and enrichment experiences for them until they graduate from high school. Scholarships would be awarded to those sixth-grade students least likely, according to their teachers, to be able to stay in school and graduate. This award would be intended to promote hope and motivation in these children who have little reason to have hope for a good future otherwise. In Grand Rapids, where more than half of the students fail to graduate, there is an enormous need to do something to put worthwhile goals within the sight of young children. We can pay up front, or we can pay later for much more expensive and longer-lasting conditions. It is this new approach to curbing student drop-outs which has been shelved by the Foundation.

Although I originally wrote the plan with the GRCC Foundation in mind, I first shopped it around in our community, offering it to a former mayor, a former superintendent of schools, and

to the GRPS's Student Advancement Foundation instead of to GRCC, without stirring up any interest for the concept. I did that because at the time the GRCC Foundation was not continuing to promote the Million Dollar Faculty Program, which was launched in 1985 and enthusiastically supported by the faculty and staff. The million dollar goal that had been set for contributions and pledges to the GRCC Foundation from its own faculty and staff, initially described to me by an administrator as a "crazy idea," had been reached and exceeded, and the Foundation apparently just hung out a "Mission Accomplished" banner and forgot about the program and the need it was designed to fill. Newly hired faculty and staff were not informed of the program or asked to participate in it. As the number of retirees blossomed and were replaced, participation in the plan by faculty and staff steadily dropped year after year from a high of about 86% down to approximately 26%. Apparently no board members or administrators, some of whom reportedly were financially astute, were paying enough attention to the bottom line to ask, "What's happening here?" I was convinced that the Foundation was not in position to take on this new challenge.

After Dr. Andy Bowne was hired as director of the GRCC Foundation, I gave him copies of the material I had prepared on the Great Expectations concept. The financial goal I had set was \$50,000,000. That's a lot of money, an unprecedented amount for the college to raise, I believe. But I thought of that figure as just a starting point; it is far from enough in view of the huge numbers of children who are dropping out of local schools each year, apparently with nothing having been done that has actually reduced the dropout rates. The fifty million dollar goal is also a drop in the bucket compared to the hundreds of millions of dollars that are being spent for medical buildings in our community, most of it just a few blocks away from the college. I believe the fifty million dollars could be reached if the right people and the right promotional efforts were effectively used. A similar program in Kansas City was funded by a single charitable organization in the amount of \$70,000,000.

Dr. Andy Bowne favored the plan right away, and he soon had a quarter of a million dollar contribution as "seed money" for the program from a local corporate donor. That was outstanding validation, I thought. Andy and I met with the directors of the GRPS elementary, middle, and high schools and explained the concept to them. Their reactions were positive: "Outstanding!" "Wonderful!" "Compelling!" One key administrator, told me, "We need this program!"

GRCC IS THIS COMMUNITY'S COLLEGE! No other local organization or system is better positioned to take on the challenge of intervening in the early lives of local school children than the GRCC Foundation. This program, if implemented, can help many local children to become the first in their family to break the cycle of drop-outs and poverty by giving them hope for the future that will motivate them to stay in school and begin their college experience at this college. Here they can get a solid educational experience that will prepare them for a brighter future. What will they do if they don't even graduate from high school? What human potential will remain undeveloped? What will it cost this community?

I don't claim that implementing the Great Expectations program would be easy or without cost or much work. I do, however, insist that this is a realistic program with a worthwhile and an achievable goal. It would require actions by the college and its foundation that have not been attempted yet, as far as I know. It would require a full media campaign delivering information

about the program that saturates the local residents, waiting rooms, restaurants, and retail outlets with information about the program and the need for it, with invitations for outside individuals and organizations to participate in the promotion and solicitation of support. We can't, and shouldn't, do this alone. We need the president of the college and the director of the foundation on television and in the pages of the paper often explaining the need and the promise of the concept. We need to promote ourselves in ways that have been attempted, taking full advantage of new technology. This could involve creating a blog for a virtual GRCC community as well as using the Internet as a conduit for those who will contribute electronically, but may not be willing to contribute in more cumbersome and time-consuming ways such as in person, via the telephone, or US Mail. We need the involvement and networking assistance of leaders from all areas of our community, the professions, industry, business, government, religious organizations and especially the general public. I believe the public will support this plan if they are invited to participate by buying multi-year subscriptions of support, which would enable them to have the option of having contact with scholarship winners.

I was informed recently, however, that the Great Expectation Concept was being 'shelved,' as in "not now, maybe later." I was given two reasons why the Foundation shelved the plan. First, I was told that the downturn in the market impacted the Foundation's return on investments to the extent that it was now in negative territory rather than yielding six figure benefits. Second, there are plans to raise money to build a Life-Long Learning Center on campus and this would require the full focus of the development staff. Also, I know you can only go to the well so many times, although this was not stated. I don't have the knowledge to say whether the proposed building would be more important to the college and the community than raising money to provide hope and motivation for at-risk sixth grade children. Perhaps it would be in the short-term. I do know, however, that it is much easier to raise money for bricks, cement, steel and glass than it is for just kids. The prospect of some rich people's names being on a new building will provide motivation for giving money and some measure of immortality in return. Donors will be able to point to the building with pride for the rest of their lives. I have no objection to that at all, myself. Such largesse has a long and honorable history in this country.

There could be, it seems to me, two other possible reasons why the program has been shelved. First -- and here I am just speculating as I have no facts, just a little common sense -- I just don't think any interim college president would be interested in kicking off a long-term program that would require the kind of management Great Expectations would require, and then, after a short while, leaving the new heavy responsibility in the lap of a new president. I don't know if that was a factor here, but if so, it is a prudent and understandable factor.

Another cause could be that the proposed plan would surely be management-intensive and would require an expanded permanent staff to oversee the selection, mentoring, enrichment and progress of scholarship winners, and perhaps the finances of the program also. It could understandably just be too much for the present small Foundation staff, which I know is already fully engaged and very busy.

Any significantly innovative proposal in education is likely to face long odds. In his 2008 book, *The Last Lecture*, Andy Pausch suggests we should be willing to "be the first penguin." He says, "When penguins are about to jump into water that might contain predators, well,

somebody's got to be the first penguin. That's the penguin who is highly motivated and has the courage to take the risk." Those are qualities that he tried to promote in his technology students. Professor Pausch gave a big stuffed penguin to the team of his students which "took the biggest gamble in trying new ideas, while failing to achieve their stated goals." In essence it was a reward for "glorious failure, and it celebrated out-of-the-box thinking and using imagination in a daring way." The concept gave his students the freedom to be creative and to try something new even if it may likely lead to failure. He said, "Experience is what you get when you don't get what you wanted. And experience is often the most valuable thing you have to offer."

In my 42.5 years as a classroom teacher, I have never heard of anything remotely like a "First Penguin Award" being granted to anyone for a major effort to bring about significant improvement in education and having failed at it... or not. In my mind, educational institutions are not generally characterized as being highly innovative, at least not nearly as much as industrial, commercial, or scientific organizations are. In education, genuine innovation, like real leadership, is relatively rare, with enormous glaciers blocking changes, especially those proposed by low-level sources which are "outside the box." The glaciers even discourage thinking about innovation. I know bright, professional people who think it is just plain foolish and a waste of time to even try promoting changes. That's not a healthy mindset within any organization. In my many years in education, I haven't seen many, "First Penguins" either.

"No child left behind" is a great concept, but the fact is, that in our community more than half of local students are indeed left behind. They do not graduate. The solution is not to "dumb down" and make it unnecessary for students to turn in work, or take tests, or even attend classes. The solution is not to spend millions of dollars on buildings or to switch from a semester to a term schedule. Such changes may appear dramatic and significant to some shallow observers, but they do not address the core reasons why so many students drop out of school. We must address the root causes, which are the lack of hope and motivation and guidance that is the early-life experience of so many children. The Great Expectation concept is designed to make hope for a better future a real possibility. Without hope a child is indeed limited. It's way past time for some bold and courageous new thinking and action. It needs to happen here.

Hopefully, soon we will have a more favorable set of economic and other conditions so some "First Penguin," or a group of them, can sweep away the dust from the Great Expectations concept and use or improve it, so many local kids can benefit from it. That is my hope. We can't afford to wait until all conditions are ideal. The college and its foundation now have a well-articulated and valuable plan on the table that it didn't have before. It offers a bold, comprehensive approach that has never been tried in this community. By offering this plan, I have tried to do something important and significant in my community, and I have no reservations or regrets for having done so.

The Reading Room

Recommended by Phil Jung:

***1434* – by Gavin Menzies**

Subtitled “The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet Sailed to Italy and Ignited the Renaissance,” this book is a follow-up to *1421: The Year the Chinese Discovered America*. Menzies, a retired Admiral in the British navy, has made it his life’s work to promote the Chinese influence on the world as a whole, but especially the Western half, and in this book he uses extensive and sometimes tedious, but very scholarly, research to back up his claims. What he claims is that the Chinese had contact with the Romans and with Europe during the Middle Ages and especially at the beginning of the Renaissance, imparting to our Western forebears knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, physics, explosives, mechanics, and even the technique of perspective in art. In fact, according to Menzies’ research, representatives from Zheng He’s enormous fleet, provided not only maps of the world, including details of North and South America and Australia, but also drawings of cannons, helicopters, balloons, and most other inventions usually attributed to Leonardo DaVinci. It seems that part of the well-known Chinese fleet, huge even by today’s standards, stopped in Venice in 1434 and gave much knowledge to the Pope himself, who gave it to his assistant, from whom it filtered down from genius to genius before DaVinci got hold of it, improved the drawings, applied the principles, and in general passed it on as his own work. If that seems controversial, even preposterous, then you might check out his abundant sources before pronouncing a final judgment. It’s always exciting to read something not even thought of before, but Menzies makes reading his work an adventure.

***Counselor: a Life at the Edge of History* – Ted Sorensen**

This fine book is a memoir by one of the closest advisers to President Kennedy and one of the most distinguished persons I’ve ever read about. I have to say that it’s difficult to think of another person who has lived a more remarkable life. Maybe Ben Franklin, but I doubt it. Neither Ben Franklin nor anyone else I know drafted the letter to the Soviet Premier Krushchev that brought an end to the Cuban missile crisis and its potential for all-out nuclear warfare. Few people have met with, advised, and litigated in behalf of as many world leaders and governments for as long a time as has Sorensen, or participated – though always in the background – in as many major historical processes and events.

One of the pleasures I received in reading the extensive section on JFK was in recalling that in my lifetime there actually was a period of political idealism as well as realism, a period of hope for a better and more peaceful world, a time of great energy, creativity, and ethical responsibility. Sorensen, raised a liberal by a Republican Nebraska scholar. Lawyer, and public servant, joined JFK’s staff at the age of 24 and remained his most trusted adviser, apart from his brother Robert, until his assassination, then remained for a time to advise LBJ, whom he didn’t much like. He was convinced that JFK would not have gotten us into the Vietnam morass; on the contrary, the president regretted having increased the number of advisers to South Vietnam and was preparing to significantly reduce it. One of the qualities he admired most in all three of the political Kennedy brothers was their ability to constantly grow intellectually, morally, and politically. I haven’t seen much evidence of such growth in any administration since that time.

This is a wonderful book. It’s a great read, written in precise and elegant prose – the kind of

beauty in language that was heard in so many of the old speeches – and with amazing insight and 80 years of accumulated wisdom. It took this master craftsman – no, artist – of prose six years to write this book after suffering a serious stroke in his early 70s, and it's reflective of his strength of character that he was determined to finish it, weakened and nearly blind but still clear thinking. His object was twofold: to inform history of this important figures role in it and to finally say all that he needed to say about JFK's greatness to enable him to close the long chapter of his grief at the loss of his president and friend. His object was more than satisfactorily accomplished.

***The Classical World: an Epic History from Homer to Hadrian* – by Robin Lane Fox**

At least once a year I like to read some history on the classical age, and this book by a distinguished Oxford scholar is one of the best I've come across. Most of the time those histories that deal with the endless warfare of that time become exhausting to me, but Fox intersperses the wars and endless murders with abundant material on cultural developments, social affairs and customs, and individual biographical sketches to more than offset the incipient tedium. For example, he's not afraid to mention the adult Greek aristocratic male's sexual appetite for young boys or their committed relationships to male lovers – from Achilles to Alexander to Caesar Augustus. The book is written with the Emperor Hadrian as the central character or image, history seen through his eyes, since he presided over the final important stage of the classical era. Fox's prose is very readable, his sources are abundant, and his insights and opinions informed and wise.

***Touch and Go* – Studs Terkel**

Having read most of Terkel's books, I've wondered if he'd ever get to writing an autobiography or memoir. When it finally came out, I rushed to buy it. As with all his work, I found it a good read. But I don't think it'll stay with me the way most of his work does. Being a die-hard left-winger myself, I've always sympathized with his perspective, so I enjoyed reading about his own development in New York City and his move to Chicago, where he eventually found his broadcasting career periodically threatened and even interrupted by the blacklisting gangs of the late 40s and 50s. Terkel graduated from Columbia Law School but preferred community work, acting, and radio broadcasting to the practice of law, and he built up quite a following in Chicago and beyond. I think his oral histories on the Great Depression, work, music, death, and so many other vital topics will endure, so it's good to know more about the man. And his prose is wonderfully readable.

Recommended by Keith Longberg:

***Dark Star Safari; Overland From Cairo to Cape Town*, by Paul Theroux © 2003, 485 pp.**

This book will give you information about Africa and many of its countries that you are unlikely to get anywhere else. If you have taken a trip to Africa and have been in the bush to see the fuzzy or colorful animals, you are very unlikely to have seen the real Africa and its people, its problems, the corruption, etc., as they are clearly described in this fascinating book. The author's observational and descriptive skills are extraordinarily sharp, his background knowledge from having lived and taught there thirty-some years earlier, and his friendships from those days, as well as his contacts with other writers and leaders give him the ability to provide a uniquely rich account of his experience through the heart of the African continent.

Paul Theroux has written thirteen non-fiction books detailing his travels in many countries. He is my favorite adventure writer. He is not a travel writer. He doesn't tell you where to go, how to get there, where to stay or eat, what to see, etc. He doesn't have a lot of respect for tourists who visit African countries to see the animals (or especially to hunt them) and have no interest or seek no knowledge of the people and the conditions under which they live. He is also serious reservations about entrenched donor agencies, whose programs supposedly offer aid to poor countries, as he believes that much of such aid causes more problems and prevents locally initiated solutions. The funds of such agencies are routinely confiscated or siphoned off by corrupt local officials, and the benefits have little of their intended impact, the goods often sold to enrich the few local officials at the top, undercutting the need for self-reliance. The aid flowing for many years has little lasting impact on the ground. If you have a serious interest in countries on the African continent, their governments, their social conditions, or have taken a trip there as a tourist, or if you just want to read a remarkable true adventure story, I highly recommend this book.

***The Last Lecture, Randy Pausch*, ©2008, 206 pp.**

Randy Pausch was a professor of computer technology at Carnegie Mellon University, married, and the father of three children, who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The prognosis gave him just a few months to live. The book is, in my opinion, a celebration of the present, of life and love and family. It's a story of his and his wife's work to make every moment memorable and precious and meaningful for the entire family as well as for their friends and for the people who would one day read this account of Randy's heroic, and uncomplaining, remarkable fulfillment of all that was possible in the time he had left. There was none of the "why me" or "how unfair" groveling, or reaching for divine intervention that one might expect from a person facing an early death. It's a book about having a healthy attitude and living, accepting life as it is and enjoying it, being productive, and instructive while you can. This is a short book you can read in one sitting. I will surely read this book again and again. I have loaned my copy to close friends and have given some copies to others.

***Who's Afraid of a Large Black Man, Charles Barkley*, © 2005, 236 pp.**

Charles Barkley was the winner of two Olympic gold medals as a member of the USA men's basketball team (in 1992 in Barcelona, and in 1996 in Atlanta), also a stand-out NBA player and winner of the MVP designation in the NBA in 1993. He was a professional basketball player with the Philadelphia 76ers, the Phoenix Suns, and the Houston Rockets. The game has evolved into an entirely different game today from the game that I knew and loved to play as a young student, and I no longer have the same interest in the game. But this book isn't primarily about basketball. It's about having healthy social attitudes, helping others, especially young people, being honest, and showing respect for self and others, and being a good citizen. Barkley is now 45 years old. He acknowledges mistakes he has made and shows how they have helped him learn and grow to become a better person. He is very frank and demonstrates a lot of self-confidence and integrity. He was a winner of an Emmy Award as a color commentator on basketball and has been a studio pundit for Turner Network Television for its coverage of NBA games. This book should be required reading for all high school and college athletes and their coaches as well. Charles Barkley is a person I respect a lot, and he has a message for young people that is helpful, compelling and most credible.

Now the Hell Will Start; One Soldier's Flight from the Greatest Manhunt of World War II,
Brendan I Koerner, © 2008, 331 pp. plus notes and index.

I bought this book expecting to read an exciting personal adventure tale, something I always enjoy, regardless of the motivation for the adventure. I did find that story here, but there was in addition something I like just as much, probably more; historical facts and stories that have been overlooked in the historical record for most of us. If something is embarrassing to some entrenched geo-political perspective, it has a good chance of not making it into the history books. This book tells of the efforts of a segregated US Army battalion that was sent to Burma (now Myanmar) to build the Ledo Road across the mountains of Northern East India, and across jungles in Burma for hundreds of miles as a way of appeasing Chinese dictator Chiang Kai-shek, who is described in this book as a “peanut” for both his physical and mental characteristics and a dictator and appeaser of Chinese communists. This is an image of Chiang Kai-shek I have never encountered before, I must say.

Once the Ledo Road was well underway at a huge cost in material and lives of black American soldiers, it became obvious that the road was both unnecessary and impossible to maintain. It became unnecessary because strategic airstrips made it obsolete and the jungle rapidly reclaimed the right of way, nearly as quickly as the road was constructed. Nevertheless, once the decision to build the road had been made, the US government was unable to concede that it had made a serious blunder and continued to pour funds, material and lives into the project anyway beyond all reason. Sound familiar? The clear implication presented here is that the army troops engaged in the labor were blacks, and it was better to have them in the jungle of Burma working under brutal conditions than having them on the battlefield with live ammunition. I doubt if this story turns up in school history books in this country. Traces of the Ledo Road are now difficult to find as it has been reclaimed by the jungles. I found this book to be an informative and interesting historical account of a pathetic chapter in American history.

King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa—
By Adam Hochschild ©1999; 400 pp.

I was reminded of this book, which I read several years ago, as it was mentioned in the book *Dark Star Safari* (see above). This book details the incredible story of the exploitation, subjugation, mutilation and slaughter of as many as ten million Africans in the Belgian Congo in the late 1880's because of the greed and brutality of Belgium's King Leopold II. He had laid claim to the entire territory of the Congo as his own private property, which even the US government officially recognized it as such! One has to wonder how could such brutality and mass slaughter could go unreported, and unknown to most of the world for many years? Local Congo individuals, men, women, even small children were treated worse than slaves for the sole purpose of exploiting the ivory, rubber and other products that were shipped back to enrich King Leopold. If they didn't produce enough, they would be beaten or have a hand or foot cut off, or just killed. Certainly I had never read of any of this in history books in high school or college. How could history be so silent on such an astonishing event? Could it be because the victims of the crimes were only minority people? Is that being cynical or just factual? This book details events of state sponsored and sanctioned mass murder, enforced labor and brutality that is hard to imagine in a civilized world.

We should not be ignorant of historical events, or they could be repeated again. I recommend reading this book, although it is a very upsetting account, and it may get your blood boiling. That would be good.

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