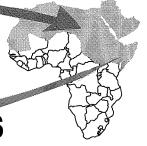


MICHIGAN COMMITTEE ON US. - ARAB RELATIONS



NEWSLINES

November 1993

The Newsletter of the Michigan Committee on U.S. - Arab Relations

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Outreach on the Middle East for middle school students.

Greetings From The Editor

I hope you will take the time to read this newsletter and to share any part of it with others in your community. If you have friends, neighbors or colleagues, who would like to receive the newsletter, send us their addresses, and we will put them on our mailing list.

Putting together a newsletter always takes time, but the task is certainly made easier when committee members send us materials. Any reader of this newsletter may send appropriate material, and we are especially interested in your ideas for future issues. Please keep in mind that our deadline for the winter issue will be February 1. We plan to publish two newsletters each year, one in October-November, the other in February-March.•

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A Seeker of Knowledge and a Seeker of Money Never Meet

- (Arab Proverb)

Meet
Mark D.
Baker,
Secretary
General
of the
1994
Midwest
Model
Arab
League



Student delegates at the Midwest Model Arab League

The Model League of Arab States provides a forum for students, not only interested in the affairs of the Arab world, but also excited about the politics which surround the Arab realm. The League has given me an opportunity both to increase my knowledge of the nations descended from Arabia and to meet others enraptured by the people and culture of the Arab world. While I am no expert on Arab affairs, my interest in the Middle East did lead me to enroll in a program to one of the more volatile regions of the world, Palestine and Israel.

The "Great Lakes Jerusalem Program" is run through Earlham College. Last fall when my fortune led me to the Holy City, it was under the auspices of Professor Tony Bing, also of Earlham College. This year, however, Laurie Engle of Hope College (and my advisor on the Model League) is leading the program. Our group was based in Jerusalem, but we traveled as far north as the Golan Heights and south to Mizpe Ramon and Gaza. In all we spent some four months studying the conflict from both perspectives, Palestinian and Israeli. I lived in two Palestinian villages: Kharbata and Yasuf. To balance the experience, we spent a week in Kibbutzim, for me that was Bet Ha'Emeq.

My interests really began to ferment in High School. I was blessed with attending Cranbrook/Kingswood Educational Community, where we had a wide diversity of students from around the world. The student body contains many Jewish students, a number of pupils of Arab descent (including both submitters to Islam as well as Christian Maronites) and, to sweeten the mix, a few peers of Persian (Iranian) descent. I was able to enjoy politically and emotionally charged debate, every bit as exciting and enlightening as the headlines of the morning New York Times, and just as current. These passionate debates, as well as many stories and remembrances amongst my friends and peers, engendered a healthy curiosity and reverence for the Middle East. The kernel of interest planted at Cranbrook/ Kingswood has inspired me to apply to the Peace Corps, aspiring to a position in Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania or Yemen. In the Corps I hope not only to do a service to mankind, but also to enjoy Arab and Islamic culture firsthand for an extended period of time. I do have one very selfish request of my time in the Peace Corps, I would like to learn to speak Arabic. The little I learned in Palestine only whetted

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BAKER - continued from pg 2.

my appetite, I feel it is the most beautiful language I have heard, or may ever hear. During the past three months I have been reading and ingesting the Qur'an (interpreted and translated), I would very much like to be able to, if not read the Qur'an for myself, at least hear a recitation and understand the cantor.

The Model League of Arab States has provided an outlet, a place to learn more about the history, culture and people of the Arab world. It is not only a classic learning tool, the Model gives the participants an opportunity to role play. We prepare resolutions, study the countries the League administration assigns each school, and then as a single school group representing one Arab state, we enter the League. Resolutions in hand, speeches on lips, we fight for our nation's, our people's best interests. This is the best learning tool of all. We as college students and delegates from Yemen, Palestine or Algeria, learn to appreciate and understand a little better why the people in those nations so many miles and ideologies away why they feel the way they do. Why they are passionate, why they hold their beliefs so close to their hearts, why they love what they love, and why they hate what they hate. For one cold weekend in February, on the campus of Calvin College, a miracle takes place. American college students become foreign nationals and diplomats from nations many have never seen. •

A New Program In Cairo

- Carla Koontz

The Christian College Coalition, an association of 85 Christian liberal arts colleges and universities, opened its Middle East Studies Program in Cairo in September. The semester long program (starting each September and again each January) kicked off its initial semester with 14 students.

I was one of the 16 faculty members who attended the three-day orientation in Washington, DC, along with the 14 students who were leaving for Egypt.

September 3 was an extremely exciting day. In the midst of the historic Middle East peace negotiations, the students met with Avi Granot, an official at the Israeli embassy. That was followed by a visit from the Egyptian ambassador, Ahmed Maher El Sayed, who graciously answered questions and then invited the students to see him again when they returned: "I would appreciate hearing your praise and your criticism and your fresh look at Egypt and the problems we are facing. It is by listening to friends that we can advance the cause of freedom, democracy and prosperity in Egypt."

Nabil Kassis, deputy head of the Palestinian delegation, came directly to the Coalition offices after a day of fragile negotiations and updated the students on the latest developments. He indicated that ten days from then (September 3) there would be a signing if things went as planned. (Note: The signing was September 13!)

This program is an exciting one, the first of its kind among Christian colleges. It is academic in nature. The students receive 16 credits for classes in Modern Standard Arabic, Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East, Islam in the Modern World and Conflict and Change in the Middle East Today. In addition, each student has an ongoing service project involved with and learning from a local family or peer group.

The National Council on US-Arab Relations was very supportive to the Coalition in the early planning of this program, helping to make contacts and so forth. Spring Arbor College's student in the MESP gained his interest in that area of the world through participating in the Midwest Model Arab League. •

A Young American In Syria And Jordan -Stacy Grifka

Marhabah! (Hello!) Basic Arabic is one of the many things one learns after four weeks in the Middle East. Question: How does one end up in the Middle East for a month? Answer: the Malcolm H. Kerr Scholarship program. This is administered by the National Council on US-Arab Relations and scholarships are awarded nationwide to thirty high school juniors each year. They provide the opportunity to learn more about Arab culture and politics through first-hand experience.

Quneitra, Petra, Aqaba, Damascus, Amman, places most people only learn about in the news (if at all). These all became a reality last summer for our delegation of eleven Scholars and eleven professors known as Malone Fellows. Dreams can come true: standing on the bridge that crosses into Israel over the Jordan River, snorkeling in the crystal clear Red Sea at five in the morning, floating in the Dead Sea (it is impossible to swim due to the high salt concentration). What astounding natural beauty.

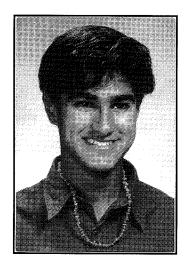
People in Jordan and Syria embraced visitors with a generosity and warm hospitality so rarely found in the world we know. One night, college-aged Jordanians spoke in detail about their Islamic faith, prayer, and practices which clarified many misconceptions. We met Syrians, about our own age, outside the Museum of Aleppo. Dressed in military uniforms, we discovered they served in the Syrian Army. Because of their age most of their military tasks consisted of community service. In the United States, females were denied admission into military service until quite recently, whereas in Syria, girls accounted for approximately half of the group we met. From the start of our trip in Washington, DC, to the end flying home from Amman, we enjoyed many hours of talks from well-informed speakers. Fear of boredom overwhelmed me at the news of briefings every day, but that fear never materialized because the ideas in the lectures peaked my interest.



Stacy Grifka with Syrian Friends

Unlike cold facts from schoolbooks, these lecturers captivated me: the population crisis, water shortages, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict all were transformed from abstract problems into issues presented in the flesh before us.

To summarize, for me this experience can have no comparison. Meeting people such as the head of religious endowments of Aleppo, Shaikh Shamie, or the Prime Minister of Jordan, His excellency Abdul Salam Al-Majali, is not a routine happening. This study-visit opportunity leaves an indescribable impact upon one's thoughts and beliefs. If a single concept could be highlighted, it would be respect and understanding for others. General Abdullah Najam of Quneitra revealed the purpose of sharing cultures to promote better relations saying, "Go back to America and speak from your hearts and tell what you have seen and learned." •



Junaid Munir

Student Enlightens Educators

- Margaret A. Purchase

Junaid Munir, a Forest Hills Central senior, spoke frankly of some of the challenges he faces daily as a Muslim student in a society that knows little about any religion other than Christianity. His point of view was well received by

twenty-three high school and college teachers and administrators along with a dozen of their students who attended an all-day seminar at Calvin College for an in-depth look at Islam.

Munir called attention to inaccurate textbook information, the failure to recognize Muslim holidays or the month of fasting, and his "pet peeve" at the moment—the fact that only Christians are included in baccalaureate services at the time of graduation. He admitted that it is sometimes difficult to confront teachers when they are guilty of teaching misinformation about Islam. It was his idea to invite students to the seminar, and two of his teachers were present.

The Seminar, "Understanding Islam," was sponsored by Calvin's History Department and the Middle East Education Project at the Institute for Global Education in Grand Rapids. Planning began early in January, and continued until September 28, the day of the seminar. The Michigan Committee on U.S.-Arab Relations provided funding for the speakers.

Jennifer Wigger, a student at Grand Valley State University, worked as an intern at the Institute for Global Education and besides contacting educators by phone, lent her editing expertise to designing the program and to preparing a display of media items showing both positive and negative images of Muslims. She was very enthusiastic about the project and was able to convince several people from her high school alma mater to attend. "Participating in a project like this is a great learning experience!" she was heard to exclaim on a number of occasions.

The seminar was timed to follow the Association for Interfaith Dialogue conference sponsored by Aquinas and Calvin Colleges and Grand Valley State University. The conference keynote speaker was Dr. Riffat Hassan, chair of religious studies at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, who also participated in the workshop. Dr. Hassan is one of only a handful of Muslim women theologians. She cleared up a number of misconceptions about women in Islam and participated with Reverend Marchiene Rienstra and Dr. Lillian Sigal in a panel discussion on Islam's relationship to Judaism and Christianity.

After a brief welcome, the seminar began with a fifteen-minute video, "Islam," produced by AMIDEAST. The video provided information, giving a brief summary of Islam, and served as an example of visual materials available for use in the classroom. Dr. Bert de Vries, history professor at Calvin and archaeologist in Jordan, then elaborated on the video, providing accounts of his experience of Islam in practice as well as an historical account of the spread of Islam and its interaction with Christianity and Judaism.

Dr. de Vries introduced his talk by summarizing three perspectives of Islam commonly found in the West:

- 1. Military zeal: Conquest and Crusade
- 2. Missionary zeal: Be saved or go to hell
- 3. Civic zeal: Building community together

This set the tone for the seminar, but even so there was a rumor following his talk that "they are out to convert us to Islam." This rumor was quickly put to rest by Dr. Hassan following the morning coffee break.

A planning error did not take into consideration that many teachers needed to be free by three o'clock to take care of extra-curricula activities, so the concluding panel discussion, "Islam's Relationship to Judaism and Christianity," could not be attended by some

STUDENT ENLIGHTENS - continued on pg 6.

STUDENT ENLIGHTENS - continued from pg 5.

who had other commitments. For those who could stay, it was an opportunity to witness a real miracle: three women, all theologians, representing Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, discussing a topic that in the not-too-distant past would have only been done by men.

Evaluations of the seminar by those attending gave it high marks and many indicated they would be interested in participating in similar seminars in the future. Copies of the program are available by writing to UNDERSTANDING ISLAM, Institute for Global Education, 415 Ethel SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. •

The Umm El-Jimal Project

- Bert de Vries

Umm el-Jimal, one of the largest and most spectacular archaeological sites in Jordan, is an extensive rural settlement constructed of black basalt in the lava lands east of Mafraq, a seventy-minute drive northeast of Amman, Jordan. It is located on the edge of a series of volcanically formed basalt flows that slope down from the peaks of the Jebel Druze, a mountain fifty kilometers to the northeast in southern Syria. This sloping black bedrock provided ancient Umm el-Jimal with two basic resources: the stone for construction of sturdy houses, and the water for drinking and agriculture.

What survives above ground is an amazingly preserved Byzantine/Early Islamic (Umayyad) town nearly a kilometer long and a half kilometer wide, with over one hundred and fifty buildings standing one, two and three stories above ground, punctuated with several towers up to five and six stories. As one approaches, the dramatic skyline of somber stone at first gives the impression of a bombed out modern town. Only close up does it become apparent that this is not a modern war casualty, but an agglomerate of fifteen-hundred-year-old ruins. Inside, one is plunged into a scene of eerie beauty. Walls run in every direction, without apparent plan or order. Neatly stacked courses of stone appear to grow out of the mad confusion of tumbled upper stories. The blue-gray of basalt everywhere gives a somber and cool sense of shadow that belies the blaze of bright desert sun. Here and there pinnacles of wall extend their fingers of cantilevered roofing beams to create gravity defying silhouettes against the cloudless sky. Doorways and alleys lead from room to room, building to building. Large private houses predominate, but there are also fifteen churches from the sixth and seventh centuries, a Praetorium, a Barracks, gates and numerous reservoirs.

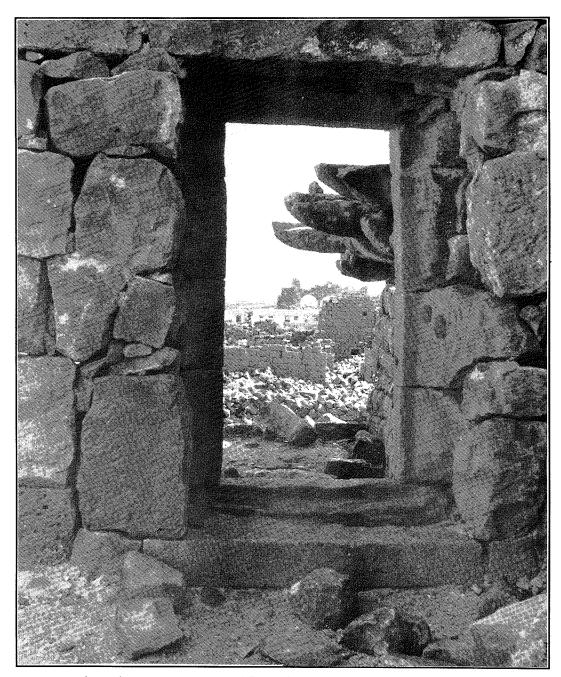
The Umm el-Jimal Project has consisted of nine field seasons stretching over twenty-two years, directed by the author. The first phase consisted of a series of campaigns that ended in 1984, and the current phase is a series of field seasons in the summers of 1992, 3, 4 and 5. The overarching purpose of the project is to seek understanding of the nature of rural life on the Arabian desert frontier during the succession of Roman, Byzantine and Early Islamic hegemonies. This all began with the study of what was visible above ground, the late antique town just described, but two major discoveries forced a backward expansion of our historical horizons. Within the perimeter wall of the town we discovered a fourth century Roman fort (castellum) ruined and abandoned as the town grew around it. hundred meters east of the town wall we found a totally ruined village, about half the size of the town, that flourished during the heyday of Nabataean and Roman expansion into the area from the first to the third centuries A.D. This field work history follows in somewhat greater detail.

The 1972-1973 season was devoted to mapping of the site, in order to fill in the details omitted from the selective architectural survey done by H. C. Butler's Princeton representative sampling, which determined that the basic stratigraphic profile ranged from Late Roman to Umayyad. In 1977 the focus was on four major structures: The Barracks. Praetorium, House XVIII and the perimeter wall. The major results were the determination that the town had continuous habitation from the Late Roman through the Umayyad periods and that there were no Early Roman/Nabataean occupation levels in the structures excavated. The fall of 1977 was devoted to the consolidation of the Barracks perimeter walls with force-pumped aerated cement.

In 1981 new work included excavation of the Northeast Church, the Numerianos Church, various water channels and the Via Nova, the Roman highway constructed by the emperor Trajan. This confirmed that the standing buildings are mainly the product of a rural agrarian culture that flourished in the Hauran from the fourth to the eighth centuries A.D. A major new discovery was the identification of the 100 m x

100 m ruined area between the Roman reservoir and the east Church as a <u>castellum</u> built ca. A.D. 300 and used as part of the Roman frontier defenses in the fourth century. In January 1983 the gate of House XVIII was cleared and its walls consolidated.

In 1984 further work was done on churches and the Roman <u>castellum</u>. However, major focus shifted to activities outside the walls of the Byzantine-Umayyad town. These included the completion of a walking



Umm el Jimal. Doorway on second floor of Byzantine house. (Photo by Bert de Vries)

survey of terrain within 10 km of the town, and the excavation of cemeteries and reservoirs east of the town. The major discovery of the season was the Nabataean/Roman village buried under the moon-scape rubble adjacent to those reservoirs. Field dates indicate that the village began in the late first century A.D., at the time of the last Nabataean expansion into southern Syria, flourished in the

UMM EL-JIMAL – continued on pg 8.

UMM EL-JIMAL – continued from pg 7.

second and third centuries, and was destroyed during the turmoil that rocked the Roman empire late in the third century. The presence of this Nabataean/Roman site does much to explain the lack of earlier occupation layers under the Byzantine town. The numerous Nabataean and Greek tombstone inscriptions reused secondarily in the town must have been robbed from the cemeteries of this earlier village.

In 1992 only surface work was done. This included architectural study of four Late Roman and Early Byzantine structures (three houses and the Praetorium) and detail mapping of the <u>castellum</u> and the Nabataean/Roman village, which has enabled not only accurate mapping, but also GIS computer imaging, begun this past year. The 1993 season is focused on consolidation and site development, including the stabilizing of the high walls of the Praetorium, and preparation of House 119 as a museum-resthouse. The successful completion of these plans depends totally on major development

funding. Should such funding not be made available, these plans will be turned over to the Department of Antiquities for future implementation. The 1994 season will be devoted to extensive excavation of al-Herri the Nabataean-Roman village, and the study of sixth century burials outside the later town in an effort to relate pathological information from the skeletal remains to the known occurrences of disease that plagued populations on the eve of Islam

Funding and support for the project has been provided by a number of small grants and major contributions from the Department of Antiquities, ACOR/ASOR (American Center of Oriental Research/American Schools of Oriental Research), NEH, the Kyle-Kelso Fund, the Ambassador Foundation and Calvin College, its institutional base. The project also serves as a field school for students enrolled in archaeology courses at Calvin and Ambassador Colleges, who participate as junior field staff members. •

Umm el Jimal, Manger of Umayyad stable in foreground, Byzantine Barracks in background. (Photo by Edwin Orogo)



MCUSAR Welcomes Professor Charles D. Smith

Charles D. Smith has been appointed chairperson of the Near Eastern and Asian Studies Department at Wayne State University. Formerly a professor of history at San Diego State University, Smith has also been a visiting professor at the University of Virginia, the Virginia Military Institute, and George Mason University, and was the National Endowment for the Humanities Visiting Professor of Humanities at Virginia Commonwealth University in spring 1993.

Smith is the author of two books, ISLAM AND THE SEARCH FOR SOCIAL ORDER IN MODERN EGYPT (1983), and PALESTINE AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT (second edition, 1993). He has done extensive research in Egypt and Tunisia as well as in European archives and was a fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jersualem in 1982. A member of the executive committee and vice-president of the American Research Center in Egypt, Smith is also a member of the Middle East Institute and the Middle East Studies Association. Often consulted on Arab-Israeli affairs, Smith was recently interviewed by MTV/London for a broadcast to the Middle East on the Palestinian-Israeli "Declaration of Principles." Nonetheless, his attempts to convince his daughter that Madonna wanted his autograph proved unsuccessful.

Smith views his new post as a major opportunity to create a viable program in Near Eastern studies at Wayne State. By adding a number of new courses to the undergraduate and graduate curriculum, especially in Middle East history but also in languages, he hopes to increase the number of undergraduate majors and to enable graduate students to pursue advanced degrees in Near East Studies and in history, the latter in conjunction with WSU's department of history.

As an enhanced department, Near East Studies should be able to hire a specialist in Arabic literature in the 1994/1995 academic year for Fall 1995; there may also be an opening in medieval Islamic history, a vacancy caused by the departure of Jacob Lassner who accepted a chair in Jewish Studies at Northwestern.

Finally, Smith views his position as a means of establishing links with the Arab community in the greater Detroit area. Working in conjunction with members of that community and with colleagues like Aleya Rouchdy and Barbara Aswad, he hopes to create support for the creation of a Center for Arab Studies that might eventually be formed at Wayne State.

A veteran of California freeway driving, Smith has been appalled by the aggressiveness of Michigan drivers, especially their tailgating and their willingness, perhaps their desperate need, to change lanes without signals at an average of 75 mph. Equally a veteran of southern California winters, Smith has grown increasingly apprehensive as sub-freezing temperatures attacked him in mid-October. Although he received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in the late 1960s he had forgotten the nature of Michigan winters.

Climatic specters aside, he is delighted to return to Michigan and to be involved in the expansion of a Middle East program. He looks forward to meeting like-minded scholars at other universities in the state in the near future. •

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict A Curriculum Unit For Secondary Schools

Ron Stockton, former director of MCUSAR, has prepared a 160-page curriculum unit on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for use in secondary schools. The work was sponsored by the US Institute of Peace and the University of Michigan Center for North African and Middle East Studies.

The unit has five lessons, The Partition of the Arab World, The Roots of Zionism, The Roots of Palestinian Nationalism, Five Key Turning Points, and Scenarios for the Future. Each unit has appropriate documents, maps, tables and discussion topics. There is also an update on the recent accords. Approximately a quarter of the unit covers the lessons and the rest consists of background briefing notes for teachers. The teachers notes address the most controversial and difficult aspects of the conflict: the refugees of 1948, who started the 1967 war, Zionism and racism, and so forth.

The unit has been recommended by the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, Americans for Middle East Understanding, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, the Presbytery of Detroit and Ecumenical Middle East Study Tours. It is also being recommended by the Michigan Humanities Council. It is quite appropriate for discussion groups or general readers wanting to know more about this difficult topic. The unit is available from the Center for North African and Middle East Studies, University of Michigan, 144 Lane Hall, Ann Arbor. Price: \$10.00 •

Atlas Review

Atlas of the Middle East, Central Intelligence Agency, January 1993, may be purchased from: Document Expediting Project, Exchange and Gift Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20540-4200. Price: \$25.00.

If you have even a passing interest in the Middle East, this atlas is a must for your school or personal library. Educators have long overlooked the CIA as a premier source of atlases and maps. This agency has access to excellent data and its cartographers are some of the very best in the business. Using the latest in computer technology and cartographic design, the agency has produced a first-class atlas at a very reasonable price.

PART TWO provides an individual assessment of each of the nations of the Middle East. Each nation is given two pages of map space. Along with the traditional physical map of each nation, there are

three separate supplementary maps depicting population density, economic activity and land use. Administrative divisions of each nation are illustrated and a bounty of additional information is included.

Perhaps of equal importance is the provision of maps and data for the Occupied Territories. At the end of the map section is a very useful segment with national facts for all of the countries.

The true prizes in this publication are two superb maps that come as attachments to the atlas. One is a Middle East Reference Map and the other is a stunning depiction of Middle East Oil and Gas deposits. These maps alone are worth the purchase price. •

(Texas Committee Newsletter, October 1993)

• ANNOUNCEMENT • ANNOUNCEMENT •

MIDWEST MODEL

The 1994 Midwest Model League of Arab States

March 3-5

at Calvin College, Grand Rapids

Regional colleges and universities are invited to send delegations.

Michigan Colleges attending for the first time are eligible to receive a one-time only

\$250.00 grant from MCUSAR to help defray the costs of attending.

For further information contact MCUSAR or the National Council on US-Arab Relations, 1735 Eye St., NW, Suite 515, Washington, DC, 20006 (tel: 202/293-0801)

MALONE PROGRAM

The National Council on US-Arab Relations will focus on Michigan this year in selecting a group of ten Malone Fellows to travel to Egypt and Syria for the month of July 1994.

For further information contact MCUSAR.

GRANTS PROGRAM

The Michigan Committee has some funds available to support outreach programs on the Middle East in 1994.

For further information contact MCUSAR.

James Goode

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