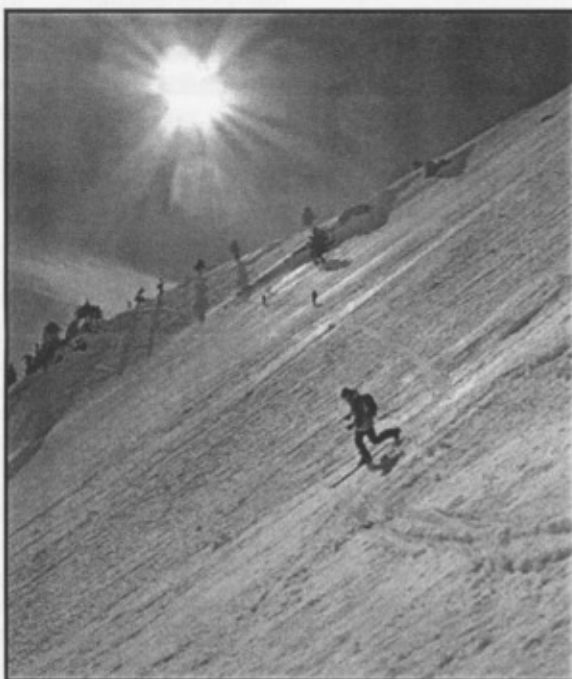


January Baldy!!

On the weekend of Jan 5-6, a good size winter storm moved through the LA Basin. Another one came on Tue. On Wed morning the clouds lifted, the air was cold and clear. Los Angeles looked at its best: A smog free city with a white mountain chain in the background. The highest peak visible is Mt Baldy, our favorite ski mountaineering terrain.

After a good storm it is the best time for a local ski trip. Since one cannot schedule such events I simply e-mailed an impromptu trip plan for the weekend to our active skiers. Bahram Manahedgi, Mark Goebel and Alvin Walter agreed to join. In the last moment Mark had a conflict, but to our surprise, Heiko Knapp joined us on the mountain. With two SMS leaders and the Outings Chair's blessing this looked like a scheduled SMS trip. We met on Sat, 7:30am at Manker Flat and hiked half an hour later up the road and trail to Baldy Hut. We met many hikers and a few skiers on the way.



It was not worth skiing up the trail since in spite of a reasonable coverage the snow was hard packed in the morning, badly postholed and intermittent at a few places. We reached the hut before 10am and took a break for water, snacks and talking to people. A party of 20 people was expected to stay Sat night in the hut, thus a busy place.

After a cool morning it turned into a fine day with spring-like temperatures in mid January. The snow in the Bowl softened as we skinned up to the West Ridge. Higher up the snow became hard packed. Careful edging was required in some places. There were still some pretty rimed trees although not as gorgeous as we once

saw in 1993.

As we passed the last trees the summit plateau was covered with wind slabs and icy spots. A cool wind kept the snow frozen.

At noon the summit looked like a meeting place for LA's mountaineers. The view was very nice but most lower peaks had poor snow coverage. We had lunch, took pictures and then speculated where the best descent would be. We skied on sastrugi down into the saddle between Baldy and West Baldy, where we found softer snow on sun facing slopes. We got some nice turns in, then traversed back onto the West Ridge.

By now the snow had softened so much that turning became a workout. Skiing released a lot of snowballs but not enough for a slide. Heiko headed up for another run while we were content with one mush run. We took another break at the hut and then hiked down the trail.

Two others skied down the trail through mush and rocks, which requires later a lot of p-tex for their scratched-up skis.

We thought the hut and the summit were busy places, but when we reached the road it looked like Disneyland. There must have been thousands of people playing in the snow along Baldy Road. Both sides of the road and the center strip were packed with cars and the traffic slowed down to a crawl. Snow and spring weather are not only a skiers delight. Everyone had a great day in the mountains. Thanks to Alvin, Bahram and Heiko to share this nice ski trip.

Reiner Stenzel

MUGELNOOS STAFF

EDITOR
MUGELMAILER

John Anderson
Pat Holleman

EDITOR'S NOTES

Back again for another ski season. Let's hope for more snow, earlier snow, and later snow. One more powder run in the trees in winter. One more bluebird day in May. You and your friends, sitting on the rocks, in tee-shirts, eating treats after a two-hour skin up on a windless morning. Some jokes, some Goldfish crackers. Quiet. Then the click of boots into bindings, jackets zipping up. Finally, the crackling sound of corn snow under your skis. One more indescribable feeling: joy-spirit-freedom as you head down that mountain.

John

NEXT ISSUE

The January issue deadline is January 1, 2008. All letters, photos, slides, or articles should be sent to Mugelnoos editor, John Anderson, 21717 Evalyn Avenue, Torrance, CA 90503. Materials can be sent by IBM disc or e-mailed to jay-deeay@yahoo.com. Electronic photos and articles are preferred and appreciated.

MEETINGS

3rd Tuesday each month – November through May (except December) 7:30 PM, Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium 4730 Crystal Springs Drive, Los Angeles, CA. Newcomers welcome!

SMS WEB PAGE

The link is: <http://angeles.sierraclub.org/skimt/>
Check out the web page for the latest SMS news

Mugelnoos Renewals Due!

To renew, send a check for \$15 made payable to "Ski Mountaineers" to the Mugelmailer: Pat Holleman, 1638 6th St., Manhattan Beach, CA 90266-6347. Don't forget to update your email address in order to receive the most recent notices for programs and trips.

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Calendar of Events

All trips sponsored Ski Mountaineers unless otherwise indicated.

Sep 07 - May 08 Fridays Ski Mountaineers

Private: Conditioning bike ride: Meet every Friday after work at 5.30 p.m. at the Nature Center in Burbank. About 1 hour up the fire road in the Verdugo hills, watch sunset, chat and drink a beer, ride down, go home or to your nightlife activities. Please call Heiko on Thursday or Friday to confirm the bike ride. Organizer: Heiko Knapp, 310 999 9538

Jan 26 Sat OCSS, Nordic Ski Touring Section, Wilderness Adventures I: Snow Valley Backcountry Ski Tour:

Moderate 4+ mile day ski in the San Bernardino Mountains. Beginners or novice skiers with some prior ski experience welcome! Route will depend on participants skill level. Part of route may be in pre-existing tracks, but recent snowfall, rutted trail, or aesthetics may require breaking new trail. Metal-edged, backcountry skis & backcountry boots highly recommended. Rental skis should be available at nearby Rim Nordic ski center. Bring winter clothing, water, lunch. No snow or likely blizzard cancel trip. Send e-mail (keithwmartin@sbcglobal.net) or phone leader w/experience level/conditioning for trip details in the 2 weeks before trip. Leader: Keith Martin, Co-Ldr: Mark Mitchell.

Jan 26-27 Sat-Sun OCSS, Nordic Ski Touring Section, Wilderness Adventures O/I: Winter Weekend at Keller

Hut: Join us at our own Sierra Club cabin in the San Bernardino Mtns. Ski or Snowboard at Snow Valley located across the street. Guided XC Ski/Snowshoe if conditions warrant. Potluck Dinner Sat night. Includes free introductory snowboard lesson with Fran (equipment available for rent), lodging & Sat night Happy Hour. Send 2 sase or email, phones, \$20 SC#/\$25 non-member (OCSS) to Asst Ldr/Reserve: Dave Black, 28142 Soledad #J, Laguna Niguel, 92677. Ldr: Fran Penn, Assts: Virgil Talbot, Kim Breul.

Feb 19 Tues Monthly Meeting Meet your ski friends, discuss trips and be entertained by slide/video program. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium (4730 Crystal Springs Dr, Los Angeles).

Feb 23 Sat OCSS, Wilderness Adventures, Ski Mountaineers TI: Mt. Pinos Backcountry Ski Tour: Moderately strenuous 4+ mile, 500' gain to panoramic vista. Ski from end of Mt Pinos Highway to summit at Condor Point. Possible side trips to Inspiration Point, other destinations, or just playing may add a few miles + a few 100 feet elevation loss & gain. May ski lower on mountain if conditions warrant. Part of route may be in pre-existing tracks, but recent snowfall, rutted trail, or aesthetics may require breaking new trail. Intermediate X-C skills required & metal-edged, backcountry skis & backcountry boots highly recommended. Bring winter clothing, water, lunch. No snow or likely blizzard cancel trip. Send e-mail or phone leader w/ experience level/conditioning for trip details in the 2 weeks before trip. Leader: Mark Mitchell, Co-Ldr: Keith Martin

Mar 14-16 Fri-Sun Natural Science

O: Winter Ecology Workshop at June Lake: Join us for two days of xc skiing, tracking, and naturalizing in the spectacular Mammoth-June Lake area. Intermediate ski touring ability required. This trip satisfies the Natural Science requirement for the I-rating. Fee of \$60 includes naturalist instruction, breakfasts and trail lunches, and accommodation at local Sierra Club members' homes on Fri and Sat night. Reserve a place by Mar 1st, by sending sase and \$60 check payable to Sierra Club Natural Science Section to leaders Ginny and Jim Heringer.

Mar 18 Tues Monthly Meeting Meet your ski friends, discuss trips and be entertained by slide/video program. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium (4730 Crystal Springs Dr, Los Angeles).

Apr 4-5 Ski Mountaineers

TI: Onion Valley Ski Tour. Meet Saturday Morning for weekend ski at Onion Valley on Sierra Eastside. Camp at Upper Gray and ski Kearsarge and Sardine Canyon. Intermediate and above, climbing skins, metal edge skis, beacon, shovel, etc. Ldr: Tom Marsh, Co-Ldr: Randy Lamm

Apr 15 Tues Monthly Meeting Meet your ski friends, discuss trips and be entertained by slide/video program. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium (4730 Crystal Springs Dr, Los Angeles).

Apr 25-27 Fri-Sun Ski Mountaineers

TI: Rock Creek Introductory Ski Tour: Car camp, ski slopes of beautiful Little Lakes Valley and surrounding area. Intro SMS day tours aimed at intermediate or better skiers with some backcountry experience. Metal-edged skis & skins required. Send experience, contact, rid share info to Ldr: Mike Seiffert. Co-Ldr: Lorene Samoska

Apr 26-30 Sat-Wed Ski Mountaineers

TI: North Lake Loop Tour: Classic ski touring starting at North Lake, Paiute Pass, Alpine Col., Lamarck Col. Layover in Evolution Basin. Experience skiing with pack, climbing skins, metal edge skis, beacon, shovel, etc. Ldr: Tom Marsh, Co-Ldrs Randy Lamm, Reiner Stenzel

May 20 Tues Monthly Meeting Meet your ski friends, discuss trips and be entertained by slide/video program. Newcomers welcome. 7:30 pm Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium (4730 Crystal Springs Dr, Los Angeles).

THE BACKCOUNTRY DAYPACK

When you head into the mountains for the day, even on a benign bluebird day, you should assume that you will have to spend the night on the mountain, and that night might be spent in bad weather. You need to be prepared. The question to ask is, "How comfortable would I be if I had to spend the night out, in the snow, up high in inclement weather?", and plan for at least a modicum of comfort.

You read the stories of the mountaineering disasters. What you don't read about is the incident that would have resulted in death to the unprepared but instead resulted in a safe, clean exit from the mountains by the prepared person. To survive, you need to be warm and dry, have food and water, a means of communicating with rescuers, and some basic first aid gear and knowledge to deal with injuries. The only reasons you will get caught out are that (a) you or someone in your party has been injured, (b) you gauged the weather wrong and it got worse, a lot worse or (c) you miscalculated the time required for the trip and couldn't get back before dark.

Every one has their own idea of what should go into a backcountry skiing daypack. Here are some thoughts compiled from my own experience plus those of other SMS'ers, Lou Dawson, Allen & Mike's Really Cool Backcountry Ski Book, and numerous others..

I am assuming here that I am going to Baldy on a February day. We had fresh snow. It has had a week to settle down. The skies are clear. No wind. I head out from Manker Flat with my SMS pals.

Daypack

I use a Backcountry Access Alp 40 daypack. It holds 2850cc of gear, about right for a daypack. It has several features I really like: no hydration bladder, but instead, a bite valve tube that connects to a screw top that fits a standard one liter Nalgene bottle. The Nalgene bottle sits inside the pack, wherever you want to put it. The feed tube with the bite valve runs through one of the pack straps to keep it out of the way. I find it very easy to remove and fill the Nalgene bottle at a creek along the way or remove it and use it later around camp for various chores.

The pack has a few other great features: It has two side

access pockets, one for a shovel which, when collapsed, stays completely out of the way, and another for the shovel handle (which I also use for a set of collapsible probes). Additionally, the entire main compartment is accessible by a zip pocket from the side which makes it easier to rummage through to find something. All these compartments zip tight and keep everything secure.

Finally, the pack has dedicated ski straps on the side for carrying skis in an "A-frame" pattern. The upper straps connect together with Velcro, making it easy to get skis off and on, a benefit when you need to change configurations from walk to skin or vice versa and the group is leaving without you because you are so slow to deal with your gear.

I love this pack. It is the best ski mountaineering daypack I've ever used.

Clothing

To stay warm, you need a means of keeping in all the body heat you generate in and keep water out. When you need it, you need to be zipped up with very little skin exposed.

Waterproof shell Jacket. There are several different types of waterproof or water resistant materials used today. I use either an Arcteryx gore-tex waist length mountaineering jacket in winter or a Marmot Precip jacket for spring conditions. Both are waist length, which I find better than longer jackets should we have to rope up. Longer jackets get in the way of harnesses and ropes. The jacket is always in the way of your rope connection, etc. Both jackets have pit zips, which are wonderful when you start out skinning in cool weather and find twenty minutes later you are getting warm. A key part of staying warm is not to let moisture (sweat) build up around your body. Pit zips can let moisture out while keeping your core warm.

Waterproof shell pants. The key here is to have pants that go on and off easily without removing ski boots. Mine have zippers the full length of each leg.

Mountaineering/Ski pants. My system is to wear a pair of lightweight but sturdy ski/mountaineering pants and

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layer over or under those. I have two pairs, several years old Cloudveil which fit over ski boots and Black Diamond climbing pants which require gaiters.

Base Layer Long underwear. On this February day I would be wearing or take along some lightweight Patagonia capilene or a merino wool bottoms and zip-tee long sleeve top.

Wool has long been the “go-to” fabric for warm insulation because it will keep you warm when it gets wet. If you don’t know about the properties of cotton, down, wool, and polypro I suggest you research it elsewhere. In recent years polypro took over the base layer world as it didn’t itch and could be made in various thicknesses. Wool was the itchy stuff of hunters and outdoor workers.

About four years ago Icebreaker out of New Zealand appeared on the scene with a line of merino wool long underwear. The guys at Mammoth Mountaineering raved about it. So, after getting a tax refund one April I bought a set. Icebreaker clothing comes from merino sheep in New Zealand, much as cashmere wool comes from the Cashmere goat. The superfine merino wool feels to me almost like cashmere, the best feeling fabric on the planet. It does not itch. Somehow it feels warmer than polypro. Now the big dog manufacturers have jumped. It is widely distributed.

On 90% of the mornings when hiking or skinning I will have a base layer of a polypro tee shirt but no long underwear. The long underwear bottoms stay in my pack unless I need them to stay warm later. I will get plenty warm skinning, even in freezing weather, and will be warm going up with shells over minimal clothing.

I prefer zip-tees for anything long sleeve. You can zip the top up to keep in warmth, and unzip it to let heat out.

Headgear. To stay warm, you need to keep your neck and head protected. The head and the neck have a great deal of surface area. Blood going to the brain has to pass through a relatively narrow and uninsulated neck. The head and neck act as big radiators unless covered.

My headwear system consists of:

Balaclava

I consider this the real essential. This piece covers the head and neck in one garment. You can now buy really comfortable merino wool balaclavas from several

manufacturers.

Neck Gaiter

I carry a thick fleece neck gaiter for even more neck insulation. The neck gaiter takes up the extra space.

Warm Cap

Mine is Ragg wool with some sort of polypro lining to keep the itch away. Ragg wool is grey and has coarse fibers. I don’t know if “ragg” is a type of sheep, a manufacturer, whatever. Wikipedia had no listing for “ragg wool.” Anyway, there are lots of options in hats. Take one along.



Sun Cap

Bluebird days mean sun protection. I tend to be a gear head, so while most people get along fine with a cheap baseball cap, I wear the now extinct Sequel Desert Rhat hat which looks like a baseball hat with a removable neck-covering cape on the back.

These hats were made in America. Sequel stopped making them three or four years ago when the hats became very expensive to make in America. The guy who owned the company decided to shut it down rather than have the hats made in China. I did not find any internet source for these hats. But, not to worry. Thrifty Mark Goebel uses a bandana under his baseball cap as a neck cape. Works great.

Extra gloves

Mark Goebel never goes out without extra gloves. I normally have a pair of lightweight gloves for skinning and spring skiing, but carry a pair of mittens as my spare gloves. I figure that if I have to spend the night on the mountain, I won’t be moving and it will be cold.

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Mittens are warmer generally than fingered gloves because the mass of body heat from the hands is contained within one closed compartment rather than being dispersed like a radiator into fingered gloves. Mine are wool mittens covered by a separate Gore-tex shell.

Nylon Cord

I carry 30' of 7mm accessory cord for various uses: setting up a tarp, hanging food, tying gear on pack. It's heavy enough to belay if you need it.

Avalanche Beacon

Winter trips require avalanche beacons. Mine is a digital Backcountry Access Tracker DTS. Digital (vs. analog) is the only way to go. Check any source. I got rid of my analog beacon after I was last in my avalanche class to find a buried beacon. The digital takes you right to the buried signal without much practice or training. Don't trust the guy with the digital beacon to find you if you are the one buried. Oh yeah, fresh batteries every season.

Probe Poles

I carry a separate set of probe poles, shock corded together for quick opening and assembly. While my Black Diamond ski poles will screw together to make a probe, if I am caught in an avalanche, I may lose the poles. If I am caught and lose the poles, I can pull out the probe poles and continue on to help locate my buried partners.

Snow Test Gear

I have a slope meter to measure slope angles (check your avalanche class notes on why you need to understand slope angles), a cheat sheet of snow types and pit digging techniques.

Essentials bag

I keep a small nylon bag in my pack that has stuff that goes with me any time I go into the mountains. It contains:

Swiss Army Knife. Not the biggest, and not the smallest either. I use the lightest one that has a saw blade. If I need to build a fire, I want to be able to cut wood.

Sierra Cup. I use the titanium version rather than steel as its lighter. I take this along to use to melt snow if I run out of water.

Fire starter. If I need to stay warm, I need fire, now,

without fail. I carry stick matches in a waterproof case with a striker carried inside the waterproof case as well. If I remember, I replace the matches every year with fresh ones. I also carry a cheap lighter from the liquor store. This year I am going to add a windproof butane lighter. They have instant, very hot flames. The caveat is that I don't know how they work at 13,000 feet. Google "windproof lighters" and several websites will pop up selling economical windproof butane lighters.

Next you need some tinder. I use Tom Marsh's suggestion: a wad of cotton gooped up with Vaseline carried in a film can. Works great.

So, assuming I'm below the tree line, I can cut some small, dry sticks with my saw blade on my Swiss Army knife, light them with my cotton and Vaseline tinder and windproof lighter. In twenty minutes I'm warm.

Mountain Watch. My Casio mountain watch has an altimeter and barometer built in. Its heavy and old school. There are a number of cool smaller watches out there today (Suunto, Polar). The altimeter is handy for helping determine where you are on the topo map.

First Aid Kit. Someone in your group should have a first aid kit. I just carry one assuming nobody else will have one. The easiest place to start is with a pre-packaged kit. Adventure Medical sells several really good kits through REI. I carry one of their ultralight kits with a few modifications: Spenco 2nd Skin Blister pads. I have a terrible problem with blisters on my heels, especially early in the season after long skinning uphill. Bahram Manahedgi introduced me on to this great product. I also carry some muscle relaxers and extra naproxen. If this stuff doesn't work, call for the helicopter.

Flashlight. The go-to piece today is one of the LED headlamps. REI carries several brands. I change the batteries (AAA) at the beginning of each season. I also carry a single AAA battery mini-mag light for backup.

Compass. Mine has a Silva compass with a mirror. The mirror can double for signaling or to check out how my grey beard looks after several days in the backcountry. Oh yeah, practice with it once and a while. It's worthless unless you know how to use it.

Map. For Baldy I normally don't take a map, but for everyplace else, absolutely. Most of our local or Sierra terrain is covered in the Tom Harrison map series. These maps, available from all mountaineering stores, are waterproof and normally 80' contours. They are fine for most outings.

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I also have the National Geographic TOPO! Series for detailed route planning for major trips. This is a great product to use with today's color printers.

Sunscreen. There are a zillion different kinds. I use Pre-Sun, a gel that Todd Vogel of Sierra Mountain Center used.

Sunglasses. These are a must in snow country, the darker and more protective the better. Mine have about



every type of coating you can order.

Bivy Bag. If I'm caught out, I need to be able to complete close up my body to stay warm. I use a Space Emergency Bag available from REI. It weighs next to nothing and takes up a cubic inch or two of space. I've never used it so I can't say how well it works. But it does fit my "complete enclosure" principle.

Toilet Paper. A small pack of Kleenex doubles as toilet paper.

Toothbrush and Toothpaste. I carry these. If I'm ever rescued, I want sparkling teeth and no bad breath.

Food. I carry the food for the day plus an extra day for an emergency overnight. Most anything with high caloric value per ounce will work. This means generally a mix of carbohydrates and fat (fat has a higher caloric value per ounce than either protein or carbohydrate). For me, that means M&Ms with peanuts or some other such food that I normally don't touch in the city.

GPS. I use varied GPS units for ocean navigation, driving around strange cities, and in the mountains. They are great to have along in a whiteout.

Good Ideas that I don't use yet...

Here are some good ideas that I haven't adopted yet, but probably should:

33 gallon garbage bag. This can be used as a ground sheet or pack cover. The more thickness and barriers you can put between you and the snow the warmer you will be.

Helmet. Backcountry terrain may involve extensive tree skiing and skiing around rocks. It would be a good idea to have solid protection around your head. Until recently there have been no ski helmets designed for the backcountry. Typical ski helmets have been bulky and maybe a bit heavy for the backcountry skier. However, Smith Optics, Inc. has come out with a helmet this year called the Smith Variant, which looks like a bicycle helmet with more protection. The sandwich construction combines a hard ABS plastic shell and a fly-weight molded EPS foam liner. The strap system is similar to a bicycle helmet. While it is a pricey \$150 or more, it would sure be nice to be wearing one coming down through the trees on the steep Fern Creek drainage coming down from San Joaquin mountain.

Shorty Pad. A short pad, say 17" square, should really be a winter backcountry essential for the well equipped traveler. It gives you a place to sit or stand with an insulation layer between you and the snow or rocks. All insulation layers help to preserve heat. Allen & Mike have a number of uses for a short ensolite pad: splints, insulator for food, stand on it, sit on it, put it under your sleeping pad for an extra layer of insulation, and as a chess board!

For techies, Cascade Designs of Therm-a-Rest fame makes the 11"x15" Lite Seat weighing only 3.5 ounces. It uses the same inflatable-over-foam technology found in their Prolite series of sleeping pads.

Let your own list evolve over time. If you're new to the backcountry, watch what the pros pull out of their packs and when. Keep a checklist. Keep the key gear you need in a box at home so you know where it is. Get your daypack set up before leaving home. Trailheads are can be hectic. When I am properly equipped before leaving, I relax and enjoy my day more, knowing that I can spend the night on the mountain if I have to.

John Anderson



FUTURE MUGELNOOS ISSUES

- *More Day Trippers (day tours)*
- *Book reviews*
- *General Mountain Stuff*
- *Backcountry Skiing Website update*



PRIVATE TRIP REPORTS: SEND 'EM IN

"Back in the day" SMS group trips were the norm and massively well attended. Today, with inexpensive and extensive transportation and probably tighter time schedules, a lot of our backcountry skiing is done on private trips. If you take an interesting private trip, let Mugelnoos know about it. It's not much of an effort these days to type it up on the computer and email it and some digital pictures to me. We all need the beta.

RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION TO MUGELNOOS NOW.

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