

# PIERMONT NEWSLETTER

*Published by the  
Piermont Civic Association*

VOL. IV, No. 3

November, 1970

## CONTINENTAL CAN SELLS MILLS, KEEPS PIER

As part of a broad program to sell off nearly all its northern paperboard operations, The Continental Can Co. announced on October 23rd that it has agreed to sell its Piermont operations to Federal Paperboard Corp. -- a smaller company headquartered in Montvale, N.J. The sale will have a great effect on the long term development of industrially zoned property in Piermont, as well as the waterfront areas on and adjoining the Piermont Pier. Most of the unimproved land remains under Continental Can ownership.

Terms of the sale, which must be approved by stockholders of both companies before it takes final effect, are relatively complex.

\* The newer folding carton plant (see tax reduction story below) will be sold outright to Federal Paperboard, along with the land that the plant occupies.

\* The older paperboard and egg safety plant will be leased to Federal, with its ultimate disposition to be decided in future years. Continental Can, therefore, will keep title to those lands and buildings.

\* The rest of the land on the Pier remains under Continental Can ownership. However, control and responsibility for the land will now be in the hands of Continental Can's corporate headquarters in New York City, instead of its paperboard division, as in the past.

In New York, Continental Can real estate officers will say only that the company is not now considering development of the unused portion of the Pier, but they are open for suggestions for putting it to some kind of recreational use at least temporarily. Apparently, the company has not yet decided whether it will sell the property, hold it as an investment, or keep it for future development for its own use.

The long and short term use of the Pier will be critical to the future of Piermont. It is by far the largest and most valuable piece of undeveloped land in the Village, and it is the largest piece of undeveloped riverfront on the west bank of the Hudson between New York harbor and Poughkeepsie. Without question, it is the best river property on the lower Hudson in terms of its potential for recreational uses, particularly for boating and fishing. (That's not local boosterism -- the Hudson is blocked for development along most of its length by Penn-Central railroad tracks or parklands.)

Furthermore, incredible as it may seem, the Hudson is beginning to get cleaned up. New York State is nailing polluters, as both industry and local citizens in Piermont have found out. We have new sewers, and the mill had to build a \$2-million primary treatment plant. As a result, even the blue crabs were back in tasty force this year. Cleaner water can only mean that the land is getting more useful and valuable.

The Piermont government can have something, but not everything, to say about how the Pier land is developed. The Village's waterfront zoning law is not rigid -- the Pier could be used for just about anything. According to the

CONTINENTAL CAN SELLS....con'd.

zoning law, any development is subject to approval by the Village Board; but according to real estate lawyers queried by the Newsletter, the Board's veto powers are very limited, since the land borders heavy manufacturing and has been used in the past for such things as railroad terminals, ferry service, and loading troop ships. About the only things it can't be used for are operations that are heavy polluters, thanks to new State and Federal laws.

The best protection the Village can hope for is to have the land developed by a suitable owner. But getting any agreement on what is suitable is almost impossible. Some residents of the Village would like a park, some want a marina, some would like apartment or other residential developments, while others favor light industry to help with taxes.

The important thing for Piermonters to realize is that it is getting closer and closer to the time that some major development is going to take place on the Pier. It is almost incredible that it hasn't happened sooner, since such financially fertile land, only 25 miles from New York City's Times Square, is not likely to lie fallow for long.

17% VILLAGE TAX REDUCTION FOR CONTINENTAL CAN

About a month ago, the Village lost a five year fight it has waged to keep what Mayor DiFrancesca and previous Village Boards have considered a vital Village right: to determine fair tax assessments. The Board has now agreed to reduce the full value assessment of the Continental Can property by \$900,000 -- from \$5,537,520 to \$4,637,520. That means a \$20,000 a year reduction in tax bills at current tax rates for the mills and property, regardless of ownership.

The action means that the Village tax rate will have to go up sharply next year to make up the \$20,000. Village residents and property owners other than Continental Can Co. and Federal Paperboard Corp. will have to pay about 65% of the \$20,000 difference, or about \$13,000. It will be even more if Village expenses continue to rise, as seems likely.

Here is how the tax break for Continental Can came about: When Con Can built the new folding carton plant and power plant, its assessment went up by the approximate value of the new buildings and improvements. The company applied for a reduction, as is its right under the law. Orangetown granted the company a reduction, excessive in the opinion of many, and the Village of Piermont refused to go along.

Despite a great deal of pressure from the Can Company, the previous Village Boards and the Mayor held fast to their original increased assessment, believing it fair in view of the costs the plant imposes on Village operations and its depressing effect on adjacent land values. However, the difference between the assessment levied by Orangetown - \$4,200,000, and that of Piermont - \$5,537,520, was so great that the company took the case to court in a lawsuit. Since the Village could not afford a long, drawn-out suit (which it might very likely lose to the kind of legal resources a multi-billion dollar corporation can bring to bear), it chose to use delaying tactics, hoping at least for a good compromise settlement.

But with the change in the political makeup of the Village Board after this year's election, (an event followed by the appointment of trustee George Kline who is employed by the tax board in Orangetown) Continental Can significantly increased the pressure to have its Village tax assessment brought into line with the Orangetown judgement.

Mayor DiFrancesca, realizing that the Village had to take some action, says he attempted to arrange a compromise settlement that would have at least stretched the assessment reduction over a five-year period. That would have given the Village

## TAX REDUCTION, cont'd

a chance to plan for the change in revenues and perhaps find alternate sources of funds.

The final showdown came at a meeting of the Trustees and Mayor with Continental Can real estate representatives in October. "The Board has said they would try to support me, and I think we could have worked out a better deal," says the Mayor. "But at the meeting, the Board caved in in three minutes. They blew it. They promised in their campaign to lower taxes in the Village, but I don't think this kind of reduction -- which will result in an increase for residents -- is what most of the voters expected."

Trustee Philip DeLorenzo says the settlement had to be made in the way it was because the \$93,000 in taxes the plant was withholding "was like a gun at the Village's head. They wanted to take us to court and the difference between the State's assessment and the Village's was very clear. The Can Company wanted us to reduce the full value assessment to \$4.4-million, but we wouldn't stand for it. We got \$4.6. This case has been hanging around four years and the longer we waited to settle it the worse our bargaining position got, until the Can Company was able to stop payment of its taxes and force us into an agreement."

The Board looked into the possibility of adding the value of the new pollution control facilities on the plant property to the tax rolls. But the facilities were built to comply with the Clean Waters Act, and are immune from taxes.

## PIERMONT TEEN CENTER

The Piermont Teen Center is back in business again, after a four month long, on-again-off-again struggle, during which every step forward was followed immediately by a new crisis. Now the cliff-hanging seems to be over. After listening to strong arguments on the desperate need in Piermont for teenage recreation, the Village Board voted at its September meeting for \$1100 in emergency funds to open the center and keep it operating. Emergency funds were necessary since all but \$96 of the money budgeted this year for youth activities was expended on the summer pre-teen program.

Since emergency funds cannot be used for salaries, the Center Committee applied to ROCAC for funds to pay the full-time director. ROCAC has agreed to pay \$2,000 from October 31, 1970 to November 1, 1971 to the director chosen by the Committee. Rotary has contributed \$200 to the Center and with the Thrift Shop support averaging about \$75 per quarter, the Center should be able to operate even under the increased financial burden of those costs formerly covered by the school district.

While working out these problems, the Center Committee went ahead optimistically with plans for the day-to-day operation of the center. This year will see greater stress on the contributions and responsibilities of the teens who use the Center. Work committees have been set up, and stricter enforcement of the rules can be expected, since the teens themselves will act as judges. Preliminary discussions indicate that they take a far harder line toward misconduct than do the adult advisors and they are determined to eliminate some of the problems which caused criticism last year.

Officers elected for this year are Al Bartley, Gary Sbordone, and Diane Goswick. Judges, who will hear misbehavior charges and decide on penalties, are Jeffrey Gathers, Walter Trask, James Adams, Crystal Adams, and Chris Cooper.

A dynamic director is vital to the Center's success, and in the person of Sam Wilson, the committee thinks it has found him. Mr. Wilson came to the South Orangetown School District this year with a fifteen-year record as teacher, coach, and administrator in the south. He has coached almost every school sport but baseball, including girls' basketball and track. He is currently coaching JV

football at Tappan Zee High School, and has already achieved a high popularity with the students there. As director, he will serve at the Center four nights a week and at any of the dances and trips that the committee hopes to organize for weekends throughout the year.

There is one vital element still needed - adult volunteers. Many people spoke eloquently for the Center's life and worked hard to see it begun. They are still needed to keep it going. Volunteer chaperones are needed each night. Last year, the goal was one night every two months, and many came more often. Some never came. The more adult help is available, the more activities can be offered, and the stronger a community effort it becomes. Anyone who would like to sit in for an evening, or who would like to become part of a regular project like the girls' club, tutoring, or crafts, is urged to contact the Committee Chairman, Brian Holihan at EL-9-4509.

### THE PIERMONT STATION

Orangeburg's railroad station now houses a library, the Blauvelt station is a thrift shop, and in Sparkill the station is empty most of the time. But the Piermont railroad station is still lived in and tended by a man who was born there and by the woman who was for so many years stationmistress, telegrapher and Western Union operator for the village.

Actually, for Tom Kelly and his mother, Belle, the station set on the side of Ash Street Hill is really a summer home, but they want to make their summer last as long as possible. The building isn't winterized, and currently it has only a space heater, installed last year, to add some warmth to nights and days growing rapidly colder.

Mr. Kelly says he hates to leave Piermont. He worries about vandalism to the building (last winter all the windows were broken) and to his garden. But most of all, he misses the village in which he was born and where he grew up -- rolling hoops and playing marbles around the station. He attended the local elementary school and Tappan Zee High School on Hudson Terrace before he went away to college in Albany.

"Piermont was a very different place then," he said, speaking of the days when tracks stretched on the Erie right of way and -- at its peak -- 43 daily commuter trains raced along them. If people wanted to go anyplace out of Piermont, they took a train. There were regular shopping jaunts by train to Nyack, and children hopped a Saturday afternoon train for a movie spree in the theatre which now houses the Tappan Zee Playhouse.

In the days when radios were still a rarity, Mrs. Kelly posted the baseball scores she received over the telegraph on the station's bulletin board. "Everyone climbed the hill to see how the Yankees were doing," Mr. Kelly reminisced. Now, Mr. Kelly -- whose father came from an old Piermont railroad family and was himself a telegrapher for the Nyack station -- tends his lush garden and watches the changes that have slowly overtaken his village.

"Piermont is still a little oasis," he says, but he is pessimistic of its chances to resist suburbanization. He feels it would be nice if the old railroad bed could be preserved by the village as a hiking and bicycle path, adding with a wry laugh "but people don't walk anymore. They hop in the car to drive around the corner and buy a pack of cigarettes." And he grimly foresees the day when a rash of building and "what people call progress" will turn the village into "another Fairlawn, New Jersey."



MR. KELLY TENDING HIS GARDEN

Both Mr. Kelly and his mother are sticking by their home, which they bought after the railroad service finally dwindled from six daily trains to nothing. Mr. Kelly pampers his colorful garden, which brightens the turn down Ash Street to Hudson Terrace, and he loves the station. "It was always my mother's dream to return here -- mine, too," he said. "This place has great sentimental value for us."

#### NOTES FROM THE MEETINGS OF THE VILLAGE BOARD

\*Salvage A committee consisting of two Village officials and two other residents has been named to work out a possible program for salvaging glass bottles, aluminum cans and waste paper. Its members are Trustee Bartlett H. Rhodes, Commissioner of Sanitation and Roads; John Hickey, Village Board Superintendent; Stanley S. Jacobs, of Route 9-W; and John G. Goddard, of 430 Piermont Avenue.

The proposal, which had been discussed at the October meeting of the P.C.A., was offered to Mayor DiFrancesca and the Village Board in a letter from Mr. Jacobs and Mr. Goddard. Commissioner Rhodes met informally with the letter writers and then proposed at the Oct. 27 meeting of the Village Board that a feasibility study of the recycling of such waste materials be made. The four member committee is now studying how this may be done.

Such a salvage operation would require the cooperation of householders and would have the double purpose of easing Piermont's problem of solid waste disposal -- which has been aggravated by discontinuance of the Continental Can dump -- and at the same time provide salvage money for youth groups, civic improvements, or other projects. Householders would separate used bottles, aluminum cans and newspapers from their other trash.

Among the procedures to be worked out is whether the salvage materials would be collected -- perhaps once a month -- by the sanitation crew, whose regular trash collections would be lightened by the withholding of these materials, or whether it should be collected by volunteer organizations. The finding of a storage facility is also being considered. The Glenshaw Glass Co. in Blauvelt is paying for salvaged bottles. Continental Can might be a purchaser of salvaged paper. The Civic Association, through its Environmental Committee, heartily endorses this idea and hopes that a practical program can get under way soon.

NOTES....cont'd.

- \*Sidewalks Another matter that was referred for necessary study at the Village Board meeting was a proposal to rebuild the sidewalks along Hudson Terrace from the old Erie Railroad station to Ritie Street and along Ritie Street to Piermont Avenue. Trustee Thomas A. Boyen called for an immediate start of the work, but Mayor DiFrancesca pointed out that digging could not start without an engineering study. The matter was referred to Village Engineer John Iurica. It is doubtful whether the work could be done before the ground freezes. It is estimated the repaving would cost about \$30,000.
- \*Sparkill Creek The Village Board is investigating reports that Orangetown and Rockland County want to change portions of the watershed for the Sparkill Creek. Changes in the watershed could affect the creek's flow and possibly create conditions leading to flash floods and dry periods, instead of the relatively even water flow that now exists. The Board is determined to have a voice in any proposed re-alignment of the creek, in order to make sure that Piermont is not adversely affected.
- \*Drug Advisory Committee At the suggestion of Police Commissioner Philip DeLorenzo, the Village Board has appointed a Drug Advisory Committee. The members are: Dr. G. Gordon Knight, an eminent physician and surgeon; former Mayor Rocco Memmolo; Anthony G. Barone, retired principal of the Tappan Zee High School; Msgr. Thomas F. Connelly, pastor of St. John's Catholic Church; the Rev. Donald R. Veltman, minister of the First Reformed Church; and Clarence Branch, a teacher at Tappan Zee High School and a member of the P.C.A. executive committee. The six-man group will advise the Police Commissioner, arrange instructional meetings, and keep in touch with other groups in the county concerned with the problem of drug abuse..
- \*Police Police Chief Leon Taverniere has resigned his post in Piermont to join the Orangetown force, where he will receive a higher salary. Piermont has the lowest paid police force of any in the county, with a starting salary of \$7,020 which reaches a limit of \$7,800 after three years of service. Mr. Taverniere, whose salary after ten years as chief was only \$9,800, gets a starting salary of around \$11,000 as an Orangetown patrolman.  
 Because Piermont has the lowest pay scale, it has found it difficult to keep policemen after they have gained the training and experience to qualify for the better-paying jobs elsewhere. Mayor DiFrancesca has pointed out that two out of three local policemen quit within or less than three years. Piermont, meanwhile, has paid for the six weeks police training program at Rockland Community College given every recruit, while paying the salary of the additional patrolman who must replace him during that time.  
 The Village Board now realizes that in order to attract new applicants to the Piermont Police Force it must boost salaries. It is therefore considering the possibility of holding a public referendum to approve a mid-year increase in the budget to accomodate the salary raises.

## THRIFT SHOP REPORT

When the Thrift Shop opened up this Fall it was as an agency completely separate from the P.C.A. The Thrift Shop Board of Directors (formerly the P.C.A. Thrift Shop Committee) made the move on legal advice and after lengthy consideration in order to gain independent incorporation -- a necessary step towards achieving a tax-free status. This status is obviously a benefit to the Thrift Shop, its donors, and -- indirectly -- to the organization it benefits.

The P.C.A. now has the same status with the Shop as any of the other benefitting organizations. The Shop has, however, guaranteed the P.C.A. sufficient funds to publish this and the next issue of the Newsletter. And it welcomes volunteers and the contribution of goods in the name of the P.C.A. for the support of its projects.

The Thrift Shop has proven to be an immensely successful source of revenue for about a dozen groups in the county. Its newly independent organization will not affect its operation, and continued support from members of the involved groups should bring increasing success.

## PLANNING COMMISSION

The new Village Planning Commission has completed its organization phase and is ready to get down to the business of developing a plan for the growth of Piermont, according to Kathryn Smith, Chairman of the Commission. Since June, the Commission has been holding regular monthly meetings. A Planning Library has been established, maps have been assembled, and preliminary research into planning methods has been undertaken. The Library material is kept on file at the Village Hall; any citizen interested in studying it should contact Miss Smith who can make arrangements for its use.

The Commission has mapped its goals and areas of involvement in the Village in a general way. It is now getting down to the task of developing a viable plan for the Village. Although some guidelines will be established immediately, planning is expected to be a continuous process, developing over the years as the need arises.

There is still a need for one important member of the Commission's organization: a volunteer clerk. The clerk should attend monthly evening meetings, take notes and write a brief record of the proceedings of the Commission. Any one who is interested is requested to get in touch with Miss Smith.

## REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

The Rockland Ecological Coalition is sponsoring a paper drive on Saturday, Nov. 14 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The main deposit is a trailer truck on Main Street, Spring Valley opposite Pakula's Bakery. However, local residents may also deposit their papers at the Tappan Zee High School in Orangeburg. The papers should be clean, dry, and tied up with string.

## NEW OFFICERS FOR THE P.C.A.

At the September membership meeting of the Piermont Civic Association, the officers and board for the year 1970-1971 were elected. Our new President is George M. Bryan. Dr. Bryan is a Lamont scientist and a long time resident of Piermont. When the President is off on one of the Lamont ships, as he was in October, Robert Cone will take over as Vice-President. Mr. Cone has lived in Piermont for some time, and runs a business locally in alchemy and advertising. Margaret Holihan will continue as secretary, and Grace Radin will take over as Treasurer. The members of the Executive Committee are all original P.C.A.'ers and still active: Clarence Branch, Mildred Burck, James Hammerstein, Gerald Ikelheimer and Ted Merrill.

## SPRUCE-UP ON THE CREEK

It has been apparent from signs of vigorous activity along Piermont Avenue, as it runs west beside the creek, that there are many new owners of houses between the post office and the Sparkill line. The Newsletter did some snooping and talked to a few of these new Piermont residents in houses across from the creek.

Beginning east of Alise's delicatessen, at No. 264, we found Mrs. Lorie Bangs elated over some of the unexpectedly "juicy" discoveries she has made in her new house, such as previously covered-up hand-hewn beams and beautiful wide-board flooring.

In addition to removing layers of linoleum and uncovering beams, Mrs. Bangs, who lived years ago on Franklin Street, Piermont, has opened up fireplaces and found cabinets similar to those of the DeWindt house in Tappan.

The exterior of her house is sandstone, as in the smaller Dutch house next to it, Mrs. Bangs explained, but the stone had been "pointed" at one time by an owner in an attempt at decoration and painted several times. She hopes it will go back to being sandstone in appearance. Mrs. Bangs described her house as a classic Dutch colonial ("the third floor was added after it was built") with thick walls and recessed windows typical of that period.

She thinks that originally the house had four suites, which may indicate its use as an inn in its early days when there was commerce along the creek. More recently it had six apartments; Mrs. Bangs is planning to convert two of the apartments into a duplex for herself.

Going west along the creek toward Sparkill, the house at 82 Piermont Avenue has been bought by the Edmond Lugos. The Lugos found Piermont through friends on the street. They have been at work for several months converting their house back into a one-family dwelling. In the process of stripping walls, Mr. Lugos said he and his wife have been cheered to find an extremely well-built, sturdy house with hand-hewn beams and planked oak floors. He has been told that his house was built around 1840.

Further up the street, another Dutch house, No. 70, was bought by the Van Akens of Palisades over a year ago and is presently rented to the Richard Eboles who moved to Piermont from the city. The house had been partially destroyed by fire during the '30's, Mrs. Ebole told the Newsletter, for its insurance money. "It was discovered, and the owners were put in jail," she added. Only the thick stone walls and mammoth fireplaces were left.

Much earlier, the ground floor was a bar and restaurant with an apartment and attic overhead. The house has been remodelled, and now there are two rooms on the first floor, three upstairs, and additional bedroom space on a third floor. Mrs. Ebole said the house was very comfortable, although she regretted that it no longer retained any of its original features.





WARD SMITH AND TOM MILLER AT WORK

This fine brick house, believed to have been part of Colonel Tallman's property, is looking considerably brighter due to the extensive renovation being carried out by its new owners, Ward Smith and Tom Miller.

New windows and doors have been installed in the spacious rooms, walls are being replastered and floors sanded. On a recent Sunday, workmen were busy on the first floor where a fire burned in the large fireplace. Mr. Miller spoke of his interest in a change in the zoning of the area, which at present allows for light industry, to residential, in view of the increasing interest in the neighborhood and its early houses.

We'll journey down along the Creek in a future Newsletter to report on the activities of new owners on the creekside and fill in on some of those we missed in this report.

## PIERMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Christmas came early this year to the Piermont Library, when it was visited by Santa Claus in the form of Alan Rich (Music Critic of New York Magazine and a neighbor from Grandview). Mr. Rich gave the Library over 200 records, mostly classical, ranging from standard works to interesting, less known selections. Why not stop in to see this magnificent collection and fill your home with music this Holiday Season? Records circulate for one month, so you will have plenty of time to enjoy them.

Evidence of the approaching Christmas season is even more visible in the displays and programs the Library has planned for November and December. In November there will be on display gifts that can be made by children, or adults for that matter (at a minimal cost). Materials needed will be listed next to each item, along with books to explain how to actually do it. On Saturday, November 28th, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., we will hold a Christmas Workshop for children at the LIBRARY, so that they can learn how to make the gift that has caught their eye (bring materials needed) and come home with a gift ready to go under the tree at Christmas.

The Wednesday Morning Story Hours for pre-schoolers continue at 10:30 a.m., under the guidance of Paula Scholz. Because of popular demand, a second Story Hour for pre-schoolers has been set up on Monday afternoons at 2:30 p.m. Stories are told by Roberta Bennett, a professional Story Teller, who has just moved to Piermont.

The Wednesday Afternoon Programs at 4:00 p.m. for school children also continue at the Library--either a special Film Program planned by Phyllis Brunson or a Story Telling-Folk Singing Hour with Pat Smith telling stories and Gaby Bruno playing the guitar. For the specific program for each Wednesday, please consult bulletins that are posted in the Post Office, Tappan Zee Bank or brought home (hopefully) by your children from the Tappan Zee Elementary School.

The staff at the Piermont Library is looking forward to this Holiday Season and hopes that you and your family will join them for the fun they have planned.

FROM THE EDITOR

If the contents of this Newsletter indicate anything, it is that a lot of change -- both tangible and intangible -- is all about us. The Thrift Shop, which got its start with the P.C.A., is now independent -- a change, but beneficial to all concerned (at least some of whom are local organizations who count on supplementing their income from the Village with additional funds from the Shop). Another area: change along the creek is restoring a place of historic interest and great beauty. And what about the creek -- will it change? We can make sure that we have suitable planning to keep it as lovely as it is now. Another drastic change: the Pier. We can plan for its inevitable growth, again with an eye to what is best for Piermont, both aesthetically and financially (they need not be mutually exclusive). We all want to avoid the suburbanization that frightens Mr. Kelly; yet we must realistically face the pressures of our geographic location and our financial needs. We can plan for our people, our senior citizens and our youth and their recreational needs; and we can plan for our environment, which is rapidly being changed the wrong way. We can plan our change. It is a tremendous task for the Village Board. They should have help when they want; hopefully they will be able to call upon an informed Planning Board, to establish an alert liaison with the County (in order to keep track of its plans), and to look for cooperation with the P.C.A. in the harnessing of citizens' energies in many areas, from recreation to preservation -- even to spreading the news.

THIS ISSUE was produced by the Newsletter Committee of the Piermont Civic Association: Robert Bradbury, Rosemary and Bob Cone, Cynthia Crippen, Charles Grutzner, Margaret Holihan, Lisa and Ted Merrill. Grace Meyers was a special reporter. Bob Cone took the pictures and Lisa Merrill was the editor. The committee always welcomes new members or special feature writers. Please contact any of the above people if you want to join.

The PCA NEWSLETTER is published for all of Piermont and anyone else who belongs to the PCA.

The PCA always wants new members, their ideas and their participation. It costs only \$1.00 to join -- per person, per year. Just fill in the form below and mail or bring it to the next PCA meeting. Mailing address: PCA, Box 365, Piermont, N.Y. 10968.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

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