

FORTRESS FOR FREEDOM

388th Bombardment Group (H) Association



8th Air Force, 3rd Air Division, 45th Combat Wing
Station 136, Knettishall England, 1943–1945
333 Total Missions



306 Combat Missions, 19 Aphrodite Missions, 5 Chowhound Missions, 1 POW Mission, 2 Revival Missions
388th Bombardment Group Headquarters

Station 136 Weather Detachment, Fersfield Air Base (Aphrodite Project), 434th Headquarters Squadron, 860th Squadron, 684th Squadron, 434th Air Service Group, 1211th Quartermaster Company, 1284th Military Police Company, 273rd Medical Dispensary, 1751st Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Company, 2019th Engineering and Fire Fighting Platoon, 452nd Sub Depot, 29th Station Complement, 587th Postal Unit, 877th Chemical Company, 214th Finance Detachment
560th Bombardment Squadron, 561st Bombardment Squadron, 562nd Bombardment Squadron, 563rd Bombardment Squadron

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388th Bomb Group



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From the President's Desk

...And Others Duties as Assigned

This past year while I was President, we were “riding the wave” with COVID and political winds, and trying to navigate for the benefit of the Association membership. While I was serving as 1st VP, we struggled with the issue of what to do about the 71st Annual Reunion. As COVID grew worse, we reluctantly realized it probably would not be safe to meet, and even if we tried, the transportation and accommodation arrangements could not be assured, given the magnitude of the pandemic. Terry Woodford-Thomas and her family stepped up, along with our British counterparts who are Trustees of the Knettishall Memorial in England and they produced an outstanding “virtual” reunion which I believe is still posted on our 388th website. It was a solace and consolation to many who couldn’t travel, and a first-class production. Thanks to Cindy Hays, our 2nd VP, for keeping our website up and operating.

At the recent 72nd Annual Reunion of the 388th BGA, the membership present ratified the board’s earlier decision to appoint David L. Miller as First Vice President, to try to assure our continued line of succession as the Bylaws require. David was one of the earliest 2nd generation members to become President of the 388th, and we were delighted that he agreed to accept the position for another term. I have enjoyed working with him and all of the other board members over this very difficult year. Our newest members had come into the Association, falling in love with the veterans, widows, and families, and jumped right into the fray. Special thanks to Kim McDonald Klein, who continued as Reunion Planner for most of this stressful time of isolation and ever-changing rules, destinations, and events to be planned. When Kim had to leave in the final days prior to the meeting due to her other commitments, Heidi McKinney, our Secretary, stepped up and we finished strong in Savannah. Terry Woodford-Thomas and Ben Forrest, Jr. got married to each other—and they think that theirs’ is the only marriage to come from their association with the 388th.

“Old timers” like Henry Curvat-Corporate Agent, Rick Thompson incoming 1st VP, James Zographos-Director-at-Large, continue to be fountains of good advice and occasionally, strong opinions,



which are always appreciated. Cindy Hayes-2nd VP, Dick Henggeler- Historian, and Steven Butner-Newletter Editor, continue to be the quiet servants, maintaining communication networks for the Association. We need more volunteers like Betty Curvat, Terry Woodford-Thomas, Christy Wammack, and Judy Frasier to step up and tell us what your strengths are, and how you think you can help improve the Association

I am personally grateful to the folks who are willing to recycle through the leadership, like Tom Dennis who returned to serve as Treasurer so that Rick could step back into the First VP role, and David who agreed to take on the Presidency after a hiatus. The promise I made to David is that I will try to take on any "other duties as assigned" in my current position as Senior Director, but mostly, I said I would try to follow in Ben Forrest, Jr's example as our outgoing Senior Director, which will be to encourage David as he leads us, and to complete any other chores he asks me to do.

Thanks for the opportunity to serve, and I hope to see you in 2022 at the 73rd Reunion.

Ruth Castleberry

Happy Birthday James!



Honoring Our Heroes

On the occasion of our 72nd reunion of the 388th Bomb Group Association (last year's was virtual; all others have been gatherings), we want to honor all our veterans and their families.

Men from all over the country served in the 388th. People from every state and many nationalities served: names such as Zographos (currently our BGA Board's Director at Large), Young, Worms, Vecchio, Ucalde, Targonsky, Soo, Robinson, Quinn, Peeples, O'Sullivan, Nagorka, Mayberry, Liljedahl, Kilroy, Jones, Ingebritsen, Hoffman, Gutierrez, Fisher, Evans, Dell, Cotton, Bolino, and Abramowitz.

The 388th was located in the East Anglian country-side between the villages of Knettishall and Coney-Weston. It was called Knettishall because that village was not on maps of England, so Army security forces thought that would increase the anonymity and security of the base. Members of the new Army Air Corps were being trained in the United States to fly the Flying Fortress, use 50 caliber guns, navigate the ship, handle the Norton Bomb-sites, arm and drop the 500-pound bombs designed to destroy the enemy's war-related industries and military targets, radio their positions and otherwise maintain contact with each other, other planes, and base.

Ground crew members learned their duties as well. Mechanics specialized in parts of the plane-propellers, engines, radio, etc. Some were parachute riggers, MPs, radio operators, typists, members of the base band (The Gremlins), aircraft controllers, cooks, medical staff, weather forecasters, security specialists, post office operators, armament specialists,



administrators, welders, drivers, and many more who created a small town with all necessary supports. Over 1,400 people served as ground support crew during the war, including at least 15 women. Most were nurses assigned to the base hospital; some were Red Cross volunteers. On any given day there were 2,000-3,000 personnel stationed at the base.

Ground crew members were not safe from being killed on duty. One ground crew assembled near the runway for "their" planes to return. One plane was badly damaged and returned to base, but sadly crashed landed and slid into the tent where the men were sleeping, killing them. Another group of 4 men were Killed on Duty due to an automobile crash, and others crashed while riding on a Victory Flight at war's end. Apparently 14 passengers overloaded the plane caused it to go down, killing all 17 people onboard, possibly because someone grabbed one of the exposed cables in the fuselage. At least 60 ground crew members were documented as flying in combat missions, but the actual number was probably much higher. One was flying with the squadron which landed in Poltava, Russia. Because their raid was so deep into enemy territory, they were planning to refill their planes, spend the night, and then return via an alternate route over the Mediterranean. Unfortunately for the flyers, they had picked up a German fighter which followed them and then returned at daybreak with bombers to destroy the planes on the ground. The entire squadron was destroyed, stranding the crews until they could hitch rides back to base.

Crew members were trained at various locations across the US. Flight crews were assembled in the US, and at least one plane crashed in Soda Springs, ID during training, killing all the 10 crewmen aboard. Some ferried a B-17 across the Atlantic to report to the base. At least one plane, flown by the Kamholz crew crashed into the Atlantic and all 10 crew members were killed on duty. It appears that other crashes occurred during training, but they were classified and information on them was not released until 1999, and is still sketchy.

Of the first 10 planes sent to England, the Kamholz crew was lost over the Atlantic, 7 did not complete 25 missions and 2 were salvaged. Of the 2 that did complete more than 25, the Quarterback made 54 missions, but then was salvaged for the Aphrodite Project, and the other was salvaged after 40 missions.

As crew members flew a plane to England, a few were immediately relieved of "their" plane as soon as they reported for duty, and the crew members were divided up to become replacements on other experienced crews who had some crew members injured or killed during sorties.

Originally, crews had to fly 25 successful missions before they could rotate home; then the number rose to 30, and ultimately to 35, because, the flight crew believed--"the brass thought too many were surviving." Ironically, nearly 1,900 (64%) of the crewmen didn't complete 25 flights-many because they crashed, and others because the war ended before they met that milestone. A few reported to the hospital, with no "Wounded in Action" notations in their files, which might suggest that they proved emotionally unable to cope with the fact that on average 1/2 of the planes that took off every day did not return. Looking at the overall average, each plane flew nearly 28 missions, which were flown by 13 different crews. There were at least 207 crashes of 388th B-17's.

Many 388th crew members literally achieved the impossible, including evading fighters which tracked them like wounded ducks after Germany's flak defenses disabled them. On one such mission, 2nd Lt. Charles G Neff (Bombardier/Navigator) took over control of his plane after the Pilot and Copilot were disabled by flak. His story is recorded on a U Tube interview at www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4hOZybOk. Basically, the plane had discharged it's load of bombs over Berlin and was struck by flak, disabling the cockpit officers. It went into a rolling, spiraling decent and Lt. Neff had to get up to the cockpit from the Bombardier's station below it, fighting the g-forces, and walking on the sides and ceiling of the plane to get there as it rolled. After tending to the disabled pilot and removing him from the seat, he got help from the ball turret gunner to bring him his charts and clean blood off of the instruments while he stabilized the plane. He had to determine what systems were still working and which ones were inoperable, calculated a way back to



England with the compass and using radio stations on the ground, and put on the auto pilot to hold the plane steady as he calculated the next course correction in his head. When they returned to Knettishall it was so late that they had already been reported as MIAs, their belongings removed from their barracks, and everyone had gone to bed. Because of the severe damage the plane had suffered, he landed the plane while the autopilot was still engaged, a feat that most of the engineers and Boeing designers said couldn't happen. Both the Pilot and Copilot survived, and Mr. Neff himself was awarded a purple heart for a wound that he suffered during this flight. He went on to finish his tour after a hospital stay, flying a total of 33 missions, and training a number of bombardiers to become lead bombardiers for their squadrons. Upon finishing that responsibility, the Army Air Corps determined him to be "too disabled" to be qualified to fly again.

Besides the heroic flight crews, the ground crews did amazing work to keep the fleet of about 400 B-17s assigned to the base. Although in theory each crew had a plane assigned to them, many couldn't return their planes in pristine conditions between barrages of flak and fighters taking potshots at the ones who lagged behind the formations. They often returned to base with engines shot up, and holes everywhere from flak attacks. In a different bomb group one plane had shot up so badly that they decided to bail out, but the plane became uncontrollable. The tail gunner used the cords from his own parachute to tie the tail to the fuselage to stabilize the plane. It did not completely restore control of the plane, so he literally bet his life by crawling back into position to try stabilize the tail, allowing the pilot to get them at least into friendly territory. By God's grace, they were able to land, and as the ground crew were trying to remove the plane from the runway, the whole tail fell off.

Aphrodite was a classified mission which took a whole Bomb Group and dedicated those assets to destroying the Nazi U-Boat Pens in France and along the North Sea. It was approved by Major General Jimmy Doolittle, and was considered to be the primary objective for both the Air Corps and the Navy. The premise was that old, war weary B-17's would be refurbished and repurposed to become flying bombs themselves. The old bombers were stripped down, removing about 12,000 pounds of what was determined to be nonessential equipment to meet mission objectives. Even the canopy was removed so that it would be easier for the pilot and copilot parachute out of the plane, hopefully landing in water, and being picked up by friendlies. Equipment was installed to allow the planes to become drones; remotely controlled by guide planes to fly into the 20 U-Boat pens scattered across the French, Norwegian, and German coastal areas.

Of the top-secret missions flown, there were disappointing results. There was only one known U-Boat sunk in a Pen, and it was swamped by a rogue wave after a bomb dropped short of the pen and created the tsunami effect which flooded the bunker. Most bombs either hit other military targets or created civilian casualties, but some exploded in the air due to problems with the remote detonation mechanisms. Eventually, the project was cancelled.

When the war in Europe was over, the crews who were still on active duty boarded any ship available to return to the states, while the 38 planes in good enough shape to go back to the states were sent home to be refurbished in anticipation of moving to the Pacific Theater of Operations for what everyone assumed would be an attack on Japan. With the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, that assignment was rendered unnecessary, and most of the 388th crew members were discharged.

As the veterans tried to maintain contact with each other, they formed 388th Bomb Group Association in 1950. They gathered annually to memorialize their deceased compatriots and to have the opportunity to share their own experiences with other survivors and family members, largely under the leadership of Edward J. Huntzinger, a former T-Sgt who served as an Engineer on two crews at the end of the war. He recognized what is today known as PTSD, and felt that sharing the traumatic experiences would help the veterans to heal emotionally and become more productive citizens and better family members. He was also a strong proponent of higher education and the 388th Scholarship is named in his honor. We continue these reunions to fulfill the mission of the Association—to remember their lives and sacrifices in the European Theater as well as those on the home front who loved them.



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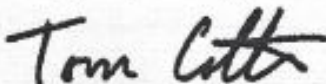
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72nd reunion of the 388th Bomb Group of the 8th Army Air Corp

Since 1950, veterans have joined together to honor the sacrifices of the 388th Bomb Group of the 8th Army Air Corp during World War II. The 388th unit earned four Distinguished Unit citations flying over 300 combat missions throughout the war and was essential to breaking the chains of Nazi tyranny. The heroes who flew in a B-17 Flying Fortress demonstrated exceptional bravery on every mission. On average, half of the aircraft that took off every day never returned.

The 388th has served in almost every American military conflict with honor, pride and distinction. I am proud to hear that the unit's legacy of excellence continues to burn brightly. I join in celebration with the members of the 388th Bomb Group of the 8th Army Air Corp on a happy and proud 72nd reunion.

Very Respectfully,



Tom Cotton
United States Senate

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Applications for the 2022 388th Bombardment Group Association Scholarship Program are now being accepted.

If you are 16-20 years old, related to a 388th BG Veteran and/or Association member, and in the college selection process, or in your first year in college, you are eligible to receive a \$1,000 scholarship. We support and encourage you to embrace your future, wherever it takes you.

The awardee selection is based upon an essay you submit on:

“The 388th: Past and Present- Answering Our Nation’s Call.”

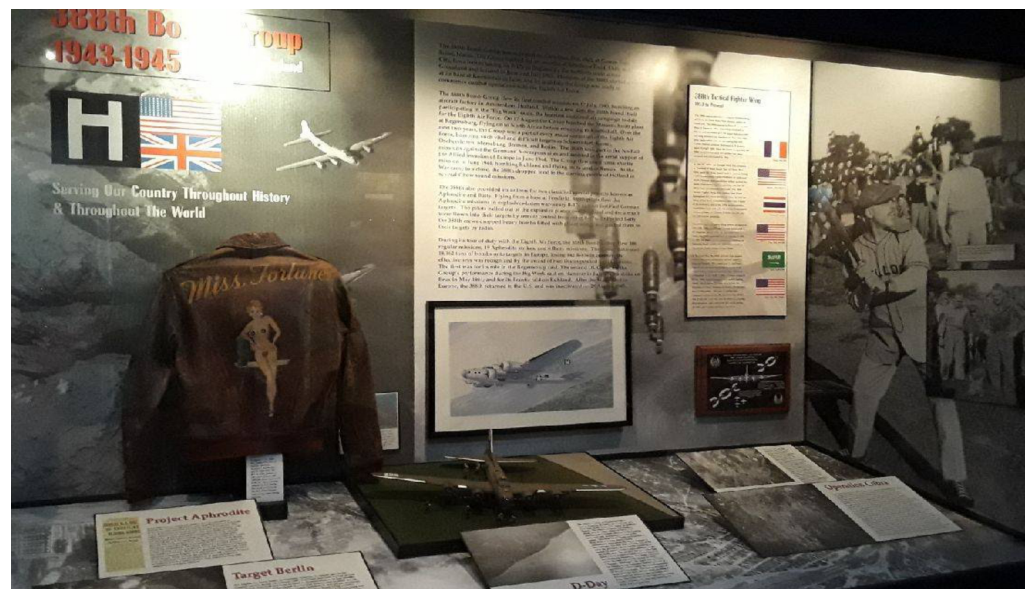
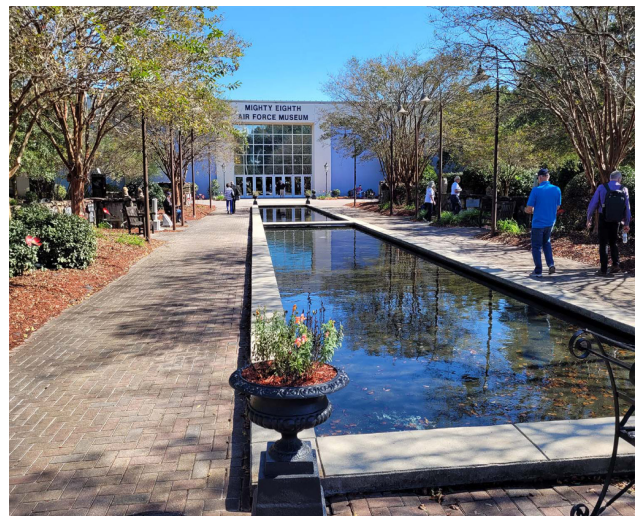
Essays will be reviewed and judged by a selection committee that includes WWII 388th veterans, 388th association members, active and retired military personnel and history teachers.

Contact Terry Woodford-Thomas for information and an application today! 388scholarship@gmail.com or 314-662-5820.

**The deadline to submit application and essay is
May 31, 2022.**



2021 Reunion - Savannah, GA

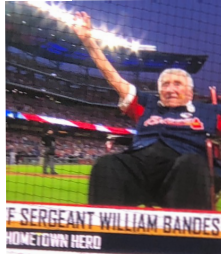




TAPS

WILLIAM BANDES

William Bandes, 97, of Milton, Georgia and formerly of Pembroke Pines, Florida passed away June 5, 2021. Beloved husband of the late Sobelle Bandes; loving father of Jon Bandes (Rhonda), Linda Rothman (Charles) and Cindy Furman; dear brother of Joyce Goodman; cherished grandfather of Paul Rothman (Allison), Lauren Bandes, Alicia Bandes, Brittany Furman-Harleston (Brett Harleston), James Furman, Hanna Furman and Jacob Furman; adored great-grandfather of Jaren Rothman, Aidan Rothman and Shiloh Harleston.



AUGUST C. BOLINO

(Age 99) August C. Bolino, of Silver Spring, Maryland, passed away at his home on October 5, 2021. He was the beloved husband for 63 years of the late Thora G. Johnson, whom he married in 1951; father of Bradlee A(Deborah), Douglas K(Rosemary), Gregory N(Debra), and the late Jacquelyn; grandfather of Anthony, Nicole, Kristjan, Matthew, Nicholas, and Olivia; great-grandfather of Emily Katherine and Jamie Page; brother of Hazel Shiner, of Revere, Massachusetts, Philip Bolino, of Falmouth, Massachusetts, and the late Rose Aloisi, formerly of Saugus, Massachusetts. A native of East Boston, Massachusetts, August Bolino spent his first 20 years in that state. He was a 1939 graduate of Mechanic Arts High School (now Boston Technical). Since there were few jobs available in that Depression time, he signed on for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), where he worked on constructing a forest ranger station on Mount Manadnock in Vermont. Returning



to Boston, he worked at the Chelsea clock Company and the Charlestown Navy Yard as a machinist. During this time, he attended Northeastern University in the evening division. On August 31, 1942, he was sworn in as a cadet of the Army Air Corps. He graduated from navigation school at Selman Field, Louisiana. His next assignment was to Rattlesnake Bomber Base at Pyote, Texas, where he met his crew on a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress. After some training missions, they were sent to the 388th Bomber Group at Knettishall, England. He flew 30 missions, including two on June 6, 1944, D-Day. On one of his missions, the 388th Bomb led the 8th Air Force and, while over Belgium, the lead plane was shot down and his airplane, "Wolf Wagon," took over the lead. For "meritorious service," he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. After completing his military service, he used his GI Bill benefits to enroll at the University of Michigan, where he obtained his MBA degree in 1949. He completed his academic program at Saint Louis University, where he was awarded his Ph.D. degree in 1957. He began his teaching career at the University of Washington, and he also taught at Idaho State University, Saint Louis University, and the Catholic University of America, from which he retired as Professor Emeritus in 1990. In 1962, he moved to Washington D.C. to serve in the Kennedy Administration as head of a research division in the Manpower Administration. Two years later, he accepted a position in the U.S. Office of Education as Director of the Manpower Evaluation Branch and as an Assistant to Commissioner of Education, Francis Kepel. In 1976, Bolino was elected Vice President of Ellis Island Restoration Commission, and from 1979-81, he served as a consultant at the Department of the Interior, where he helped plan for the restoration of Ellis Island. His book, The Ellis Island Source Book, is considered the most authoritative publication on the history and restoration of Ellis Island. He has also written books on economic development, manpower policy, and human capital. Of his 12 books, the most recent are Thomas Angel. American, (2001), Brother Brigham's Trial (2002) and



The Kid and the Clipper (2006). These are listed in his Who's Who in America biography. He was the recipient of several awards: In 1949, he was given the Silver Medal for service to the Alpha Kappa Psi business fraternity; on June 6, 2000 he was presented with a plaque from the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior for "Championing public access to records documenting all the immigrants who first set foot on America soil at Ellis Island in their quest for the American Dream;" and on May 10, 2001 he was given a Diplome from the French government for his participation on June 6, 1944 in freeing France from German occupation. Professor Bolino served as President of the AAUP Chapter at Catholic University, President of Recreation Associates, Inc., President of Chapter 12 of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors and President of the 388th Bomb Group Association. Bolino was involved with several hobbies over his lifetime. He was always interested in art and painting, and as a teenager he won a summer scholarship to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which featured charcoal renditions of Greek statues. As an adult, he completed several oil paintings, mostly landscapes and portraits of his family. He also collected pocket watches and was elected President of Chapter 12 of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors. In addition, he had large collections of American coins and baseball cards -the last of his beloved Boston Red Sox.

NELSON KASTEN

Lt. Col. Nelson Kasten, 98, of Viera, FL passed away on December 20, 2020. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

Nelson was born on July 14, 1922, in New York City, NY, to parents Julius Kasten from Poland and Frieda Schneider from Romania.

Nelson started his Air Force career in



World War II as a navigator-bombardier. After arriving in Europe in late 1944, and because of his radar expertise and training, he was assigned to the lead airplane on all 8th Air Force bombing missions during the final months of World War II. After his career in the Air Force, Nelson started a construction and management business, wherein he built dozens of multi-family housing units and managed their operations. In 1989 he "re-retired" to Florida.

Throughout his life, Nelson was active, interested, and involved in many things including computers, stargazing, politics, traveling, golf, photography, good food, and good movies. He was a private pilot and frequently flew the family in his single-engine Cesna 172's to destination vacation spots.

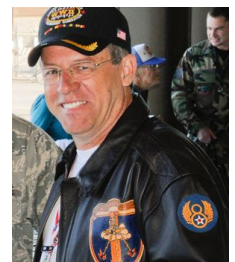
His interest in a variety of subjects made him a wonderful conversationalist and his family and friends will remember his deep, meaningful conversations and spirited chatters dearly. Nelson was truly "young at heart."

In his swimming laps and lifting weights. He lived an honorable, distinguished, and orderly life and was a good friend to so many. He will be remembered best, however, for his endless love, care, and compassion.

Nelson is survived by his wife Betty Jean Kasten; children, Nelson Stuart Kasten, David Fletcher Kasten, Daniel Aaron Kasten, Pamela Sue Norris, Patricia Ann Williams, and Tina Louise Perdue; grandchildren, David Kasten Jr., Andrew Kasten, Michael Kasten, Julian Kasten, and James Kasten; great-grandchildren, Gabriela "Ella" Kasten, Benjamin "JB" Kasten, Nathaniel later years, Nelson remained active and in peak physical condition.

ALAN REESE

Alan Reese passed away August of 2021. Beloved friend, past President and lifetime member of the 388th Bomb Group Association.



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388TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL

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☐ (☒ box if you have prior military service.)

Please fill in known information above, Squadron through POW information, for relative.

RENEWAL and DONATIONS: ☐ Annual Dues (\$20.00) ☐ Donation

UPDATE CONTACT INFORMATION (*make changes above for update*) ☐ Address ☐ Email ☐ Phone

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