

# OTHER SCENES

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

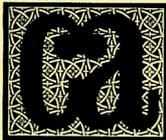
IT'S theoretically possible, I suppose, to devote space in every issue of a newsletter to recounting some of the problems you've encountered since the last issue. It's not a habit I want to get into but I do feel a certain amount of explanation is necessary for the delay in getting these issues out.

As I sit here in my apartment in New York, early in February, I'm still living a totally schizophrenic life: officially managing editor of the Los Angeles Free Press, a job I've agreed to fill until the end of March, I've spent the past ten days catching up on the scene (and my mail) back home.

Half of OTHER SCENES #1 have gone out, the rest sit unmailed in Hollywood awaiting my return with the addresses. My (book) publisher, Arthur Frommer, had agreed to run the names and addresses of all my subscribers through his slick IBM-type addressograph machines but halfway through the operation his partner saw a copy of the first issue and hit the roof. The result was that he returned the unprocessed ones and I now have to figure out some alternative mailing system. I never in my wildest dreams planned on making any money out of this operation in the first year and events like this are the reason why.

Incidentally, about one-third of the checks that were sent to me were refused by my bank on the grounds that they were made out to "Other Scenes" and not "John Wilcock" and ne'er the two could meet until I went downtown and registered as a business.

Meanwhile, I was getting flak from subscribers who thought not unreasonably that biweekly



## THE MAGAZINE OF COMMUNICATION ARTS

Apart from being one of the most visually attractive magazines, Communication Arts (usually condensed as above) frequently becomes quite visionary. One of its features last year dealt with a comprehensive survey of the future — a collage of opinions by special-

ist thinkers in such matters as automation, population control, scientific breakthroughs, space progress, war prevention, weapons systems.

Their predictions included the following developments for the next century:

Breeding of intelligent animals (apes, cetaceans, etc.) for low-grade labor

Widespread use of robot services for refuse collection, household slaves, sewer inspectors, etc.

Widespread use of computers in tax collection

Economically useful exploitation of the ocean bottom through mining

Widespread and socially widely-accepted use of non-narcotic drugs for the purpose of producing specific changes in personality characteristics

Use of telepathy and ESP (extra sensory perception) in communications

Communication Arts, a bi-monthly, is published at 3975 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, Calif. 94303, and costs \$2 per beautiful issue.

us still are. And so far as I'm concerned as long as people remain offended by WORDS we have a long way to go before we'll accept certain things about our fellow human beings.

Dirty comic books are funny. At least I think so and so did almost all the other people who brought them to my attention — AND most of the people to whom I showed them. OTHER SCENES is, after all, my newsletter and if I'm to start getting critical comment about the kind of stuff I print in it before I've hardly started, god only knows how I'll ever finish even the first year. (Yes, of course, I'm glad to get your letters and comments — even critical ones — but I do reserve the right to use MY taste and MY selectivity and not have to apologize for what I print.)

In my reply to Miss Paxton I suggested that some of the people who thought that certain written and printed material was obscene apparently didn't see anything obscene in countries dropping liquid fire on each other. And, I added, as long as that continued I really wasn't going to get warmed up about comic books.

As a matter of fact, we'd better get one thing straight right now: I am not in the pornography business. Sex is a fascinating subject and I love to write about it, talk about it and practise it. But I'm basically a newspaperman and there are a lot of other fascinating facets to this society. At EVO I evolved this formula: pot, art, religion, politics, sociology, revolution, sex, humor, and those are basically the ingredients I shall be dealing with in OTHER SCENES. I have always been interested in pushing the boundaries and in exploring the what's-to-come aspects of society and so it follows that at some point or other I'll get into current sexual mores (including, perhaps, the time I was almost consulted — about how to organize an orgy, presumably because I'd once written a magazine piece on the subject).

The truth is that I haven't entirely decided what's to appear in this newsletter yet. I'm experimenting as I go along and we're learning all kinds of things together. With OTHER SCENES I'm trying to give you an insight into my day-to-day life — the things that interest me, the places I go, the creative people who catch my attention. I'd like the remain as flexible as possible, from every point of view, and produce a series of surprises for you. The only restriction so far is that I must limit myself to something (paper? fabric? material? film?) that will travel — sealed — in an envelope for only 5 cents.

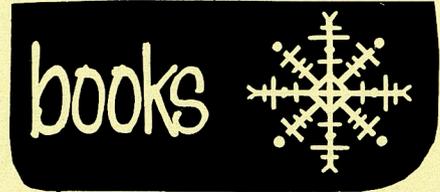
But apart from that I have no taboos about shape, size, substance or anything. So your "newsletter" hopefully might sometimes be something really weird. I'm co-operating with two different art directors (one in L.A., one in N.Y.) to turn out something imaginative and maybe if you're patient we'll come up with it.

Next year I'm contemplating sending everybody a viewer and doing the newsletter on microfilm. Do you have any views about that?

Cheers  
John Wilcock



JON KELLERMAN  
+  
Bob Elias  
SATYR, UCLA student quarterly



## Passed-over Paperbacks

...being a random selection from some of the interesting but somewhat neglected books that are currently available....

WIFE-SWAPPING has become something of a lurid joke in America — a subject for discussion by sex and crime-filled weekly tabloids, or an occasional shocked headline in the hypocritical, moralistic suburban press. It has occurred to very few people that the subject could actually be taken seriously by anybody not depraved or perverted.

But if we are to judge by letters printed in the slick magazine, "Mr.," partner-swapping (as it should be more accurately described) is prevalent in almost every town and city in this country. Now many of the letters are gathered together in a book, "WIFE-SWAPPING: A Complete 8-Year Survey of Morals in North America" (Counterpoint, Inc., N.Y., 95¢), and they have the ring of authenticity. Most of the couples, it seems, went into it gingerly, ended up confirmed fans of a system which allowed sexual experimentation without guilt and — apparently — which strengthened rather than weakened the marriage itself. A highly interesting paperback.

COLOR IN YOUR WORLD (Collier Books, 95¢) was published five years ago but doesn't seem to have been very widely publicized. It purports to tell you your character via your color preference. "Blue, red & green are the colors most people prefer, and in that order. Red is positive; blue, tranquil; and green, a balance between the two." Just a new method of fortune telling, but more interesting than most.

John Phillip Lundin's WOMEN (Lancer Books, 95¢) is a curious mixture of sexy confession and perceptive social comment, as for example: "More than any other country, America bases its moral code upon the ethics of sex, and so the various churches concentrate upon their function of withholding, granting, distributing and

regulating it... The preachers, not daring to talk about little things such as cutthroat competition and charity — there might be wealthy clients in those expensive front-row pews — talk about 'sin' as if there were only one kind, the kind for which many of their churchgoers are too old."

Some critics have made a case for Jasper Johns' flags marking a turning point in art — the start of a new era which came to be labeled pop. A series of essays, mostly by curators and dealers but some by critics, about this post-1960 era, are gathered together by Gregory Battcock in an anthology called THE NEW ART (Dutton, \$1.75). One of the essays in this anthology is by Alan Solomon who said, in 1963, about Jasper Johns:

"The flag is the kind of image so frequently exposed that we have literally become blind to it. In the context of painting we ask ourselves whether we have ever really looked at it; a moment of hesitation follows about whether the artist is really serious or not (the banality of the new images always raises this question). We might then wonder whether it is even legal to paint a flag. Short of obscenity it is hard to think of a situation which could be more unsettling to us than the conflicts presented by this image."

It was such a simple life 94 years ago. If by some rare chance a family didn't know how to entertain itself in a quiet evening at home, they had only to turn to DICK'S 100 AMUSEMENTS, an invaluable source of information about how to dress up a giraffe, baffle your friends with string games and frighten the gullible with what appeared to be a decapitated head. Dick Higgins' Something Else Press, for god only knows what reason, has reprinted this little 19th century classic. It costs \$2.25 from 160 Fifth Avenue, NYC 10010.

# THE UNDERGROUND: A LOOSELY ORGANIZED COLLECTIVE

Like so many other over-used words, "Underground" means too many different things to different people. If it is still used by people who are Underground themselves (by any definition) this is mainly because no other word conveys so simply a whole class of people and their activities.

In its simplest sense, the Underground is the loosely organized collective of artists, writers, creative people whose work, while appreciated by each other, is not yet acceptable by the Establishment. Sometimes even AFTER such recognition the aura of the Underground hangs around a former hero — Bob Dylan is the best-known example; Allen Ginsberg, still an anarchist despite what are virtually "diplomatic" credentials, is another.

It is no accident that so many current Underground heroes are poets: Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, Ed Sanders, Tuli Kupferberg, Gerard Malanga, Michael McClure. The poets, sensitively attuned to the fast-changing nuances of our society, are the first to put into words what so many others feel. Their language is a kind of code and usually it screams for revolution in unequivocal terms that would get them all hustled off to jail were it written in the prosaic prose that John Q. Public is used to.

The poets cry for change and if they are good poets, they articulate society's needs, especially the needs of the young people who resent the traditions and rules laid down by their elders. They may be older, the young people say, but if they are wiser why have they left us to inherit a world so full of death and disaster?

## AVOID "SELLING OUT"

For any creative person with integrity the constant struggle is to avoid "selling out." The pressure to make a living, to temper one's art to what is saleable is tremendous at any level, especially so for somebody who is young and does not see the concomitant pitfalls.

Of course an artist wants acceptance. Of course he is only too happy to stop grubbing around for recognition in tiny group shows on the lower East Side where his friends drink the cheap punch at opening parties and offer him only good wishes. Naturally his life becomes easier if he is adopted by a glossy gallery on upper Madison Avenue and given not only supercalifragilistic shows but also serious reviews in the art pages and sometimes interviews on television and com-



missions to design department store boutiques.

But in return he does have to produce. It is no longer enough to create when the muse strikes. A gallery owner (the French equivalent, "marchand," is so much more applicable) is a hard-headed businessman who has to pay the rent regularly on a piece of expensive property and, artistic temper aside, the artist must produce — enough for an annual show, at any rate. How much of current art is "forced art" and how much grows naturally? And is there a difference? These are dilemmas that the genuinely creative mind tries to avoid as long as possible even if it necessitates remaining in the Underground rather than grabbing the first commercial offer that comes along.

## FORMS BEING CHANGED

There have been an increasing number of these lately. The mass communications media has (belatedly) realized the extent of the current revolution in the arts. All the traditional forms have been and are being changed. In music, pioneers such as the late Edgar Varese and time-space experimenters such as John Cage have taught us that the mechanical sounds of this electronic age, and even silence, possess musical content. Currently such "far out" jazz exponents as Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, are mystifying the traditional jazz buffs with their cacophonous sounds although, once again, it is mainly the unfamiliarity that bothers traditionalists whose Western ears tag Oriental music with the same far-out indictment.

What came to be termed as Pop Art and at first regarded as a fad, has reshaped the very essence of what the man in the street regards as art so that he is now almost literally shockproof. The boundaries of what is accepted as "art" have become so wide that it is difficult to see how they could ever become constricted again. Just as the commercial artists and the draughtsmen have moved to take their places along-side painters, so (as Time magazine pointed out) in sculpture the draughtsmen and the construction workers have begun to display their wares — in the same galleries. And now, with kinetic and neon sculpture, the engineers and electricians are mov-

ing in as well.

Writing has always had its word-wizards who were less interested in the semantic or grammatical content than in the mood that a patchwork of words could evoke. In our times, James Joyce was the forerunner of this movement but present-day examples are William Burroughs who in some of his works cuts and pastes fragments together as the mood takes him, and the French author who packaged the loose pages of his novel in a box with instructions to shuffle before reading. What was he saying — that his story is a series of chance incidents to be understood at random rather as life itself? Lately, some widely disparate writers, in different parts of the world, have shown a tendency to write in a kind of code, a telegraphese or symbolic shorthand that incorporates internationally known scientific terms, symbols, abbreviations. It is a mid-century esperanto that seems entirely appropriate for an increasingly international society.

In theatre, always the most backward of the arts where innovation is concerned, there have been more and more attempts to break out of the frame imposed by physical limitations. A dramatic performance must take place somewhere and for reasons of efficiency, economy and — unfortunately — the performers' own dignity, it has found itself confined, by and large, to a theatre. Formality and dignity are the enemies of art, of creativity, and most artists (but regrettably few actors) know this. A captive audience, scrubbed and polished and shown where to sit, is WATCHING something creative and not participating in it. In a sense it is no more involved than if it is a crowd watching a baseball game or a heavyweight fight. It is engaged to a minor degree but its vicarious identification with what is going on is a shabby substitute for the truly transcendental experience enjoyed with COMPLETE artistic involvement such as might happen during a symphony concert or the all-too-rare theatrical performance.

## A PIGEON HOLE

The theatre of the absurd, a minor breakthrough, was followed closely by improvisational theatre in which attempts were made to truly involve the minds of the audience and not

merely their eyes and superficial emotions. But always the gap remained — the physical separation between the watchers and the watched — the stage raised above and separated from the audience. So along came the Happening, surely one of the most misunderstood terms in the whole realm of the arts. "Happening" has become a pigeon-holing generic term for something that cannot be pigeon-holed, and it makes about as much sense for somebody to say they've seen a Happening and don't like Happenings as it would be for somebody to say they've read a book and don't like books. Whose Happening have they seen? And what was that particular artist trying to say? And can it be put into words anyway?

An artist, a writer, some creative person has a vision — something he wants to say or some mood he wants to express. So he hires a hall, or a studio, or a gallery or maybe even sets something up in his apartment and invites his friends to come along and see (i.e., take part, be there). If it's Robert Whitman he might have beautiful girls wandering around changing the color of their dresses like the leaves announcing a change of seasons; if it's German artist Wolf Vostell he might have everybody scrimmaging in a swimming pool squirting each other with brightly colored paints; if it's French artist Jean-Jacques Lebel there will certainly be some nudes, and some bitter comments about the political establishment; if it's Al Hansen there will be a thousand different ingredients in keeping with Hansen's opinion about "the complete absence of anything interesting in more conventional forms of theatre."

## COLLAGE CINEMA

Ambiguous as the term is, "Happening" is used because it is a convenient label, but it should always be understood to mean everything rather than something. By its very nature a Happening is something unpredictable, rather than something that can be described. In San Diego, a group of Happenings people ran onto the beach at dawn with pots and brushes and began to paint the waves; in San Francisco, members of the "audience" were picked up in a truck and driven around town past prearranged points where "things" took place.

Because of the loose form of Happenings they have attracted participants from all the arts and

have acted as an experimental area for painters, sculptors, theatrical types, writers, musicians, lighting technicians, and filmmakers. The filmmakers are the new elite of the Underground and many painters (Robert Breer, Carmen D'Avino, Al Leslie) have successfully combined both techniques. One of the things that seems to be happening in cinema is that for the first time film is being treated not merely as a medium to tell a coherent story (i.e., photographed theatre) but now stands tall as a medium in its own right with FILM ITSELF and not merely its content viewed aesthetically, with its mood more important than its message. In a sense the collage, a centuries-old art form, has come to cinema with such pioneers as Norman Rubington in Paris, Bruce Conners on the West Coast, and Stan Vanderbeek in New York mixing up every kind of visual artifact to produce something that could only have been born in the mid-20th century.

All these people are folk heroes of the Underground and they will remain so for as long as the mass media persist in judging their work (if they bother to review it at all) by the static standards of another generation. It is easy to understand, of course, why a man who has made a living out of telling his readers what art is, or what good music is, cannot adjust to some new definitions. But it is equally clear that as long as there are artists, they will always force the critics to make new definitions. Indeed, the first requisite for a good artist is that he be able to make people see things differently if not with HIS eyes then at least with an expanded vision of their own.

An artist is a leader, however small his following, and the very substance of art is revolution, and a questioning and sometimes overturning of the values of the society which nurtures it. So-called "antisocial" behavior is often the most constructive of all social behavior because it is an affirmation of the individual's right to exist individually in a collective structure.

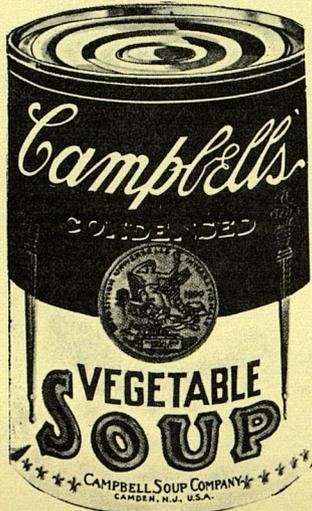
## "CAN BE"

The intellectual's obligation to society approximates that of the artist: to present to it a vision of something that can be rather than what is, assuming of course, that the "can be" is based always on a mutual respect for each other's freedom. Morality has very little to do with people's sex lives and the conditions in which they live, despite what the averagely smug bourgeois citizen might think about "beatniks." True morality implies a tolerance for other attitudes and modes of life, not necessarily an endorsement of them. The major immorality is in insisting (by coercion, blackmail, or law) that others live and think as you do.

The rebel, therefore, fills an important function in that he helps to keep society mobile, challenges or upsets the status quo ("the only constant is change") and always by his example promulgates the notion that there are alternatives.

It is my belief that nothing is holy; nothing is above challenge and examination; and that the most firmly entrenched ideas, institutions, and individuals are most in need of it. That is what the Underground is all about, and that is why, whatever its label, there will always be an Underground.

— Reprinted from ASPEN



# Poem for Warner Stringfellow

Detective Lieutenant,  
Detroit Narcotics Squad,  
who has been single-handedly responsible  
for busting me on two separate occasions  
for possessing & selling marijuana

and who stumbled into my new apartment last night  
by accident  
over a year since the last time he saw me  
& two years to the day after he first busted me --

Warner you are living in another century, this new one started  
while you were running around in circles  
chasing dangerous criminals  
to keep the city safe from marijuana  
& people like me -- "I know what you are,"  
you told me last night, "and when I get you again  
you ain't gettin off so easy. I'll  
DROWN you

you worthless prick" you said

But it won't be so easy "next time," Warner,  
if there is a next time,  
because this whole new thing is getting  
so far out of your clutches  
you don't even know what it is --  
except you can sense it  
with what senses you have left, you know somehow  
that things ain't what they used to be, that this world  
is changing so fast  
you haven't even got a place in it no more

Your old-time power & control have no place in this world,  
Warner, & as long as you keep trying to hang onto them  
you'll just get farther & farther behind  
until you die, Warner, until you're dead.  
Not too long ago, Warner,  
I would have given anything  
just to get my hands around your neck  
and choke you to death

But that time is past, there's no need of it, you'll die anyway  
any thing will, when it stops growing  
& there's no more need for it  
in the world --

There's no need for you now, Warner, tho it may take 20 years  
before you or the people you have made it your life to lie to  
find out your uselessness & criminality --

You can't make me a criminal, Warner,  
you should know that by now, & your prisons & courts  
don't scare me any more, I know what you are  
& I don't hate you any more, I won't let you trap me  
in that tiny little bag of yours, I won't respond  
the way you have to have me respond  
because it's too late for that now, Warner,  
it's just too dam late for those games,  
the whole fucking UNIVERSE

is right there in front of our eyes  
& it's all I can do  
to stay open to it now  
while it's still "my" time

Even the 6 months you got me in your prison, Warner,  
only made me stronger & less afraid  
of the puny fear traps  
that are your only tool -- what're you gonna do,  
Lieutenant Stringfellow,  
when you have to try to arrest  
all the people younger than I am  
who smoke marijuana every day  
& don't even care about you at all. when you come to bust them  
all they'll do is laugh in your face, you're so funny, you come on  
like someone on your tv set, all that 1930's shit,  
or 1950's, the century changed  
at 1960, you're as out-of-date

as the House Un-American Activities Committee  
who tried to scare the young cats in 1966  
& these cats showed us wearing Revolutionary War costumes  
laughing at you --

it's 19 sixty-six, Warner,  
there is no thing to fear  
except your jails, & they'll fall soon  
they're fallen now, they don't mean anything any more

& even if you kill us all off that's no big thing Warner,  
we just get born again  
more & more aware of what's really happening in the universe  
but it's too late to kill us all, you missed your chance  
in 1959, before the whole thing really started

you've been playing that funny shit for 2000 years  
& all you've got is a gun & a badge & a house in a nice neighborhood  
& a car & a tv set

& you can't even talk to your own kids  
they just don't wanna hear it, you send them to psychiatrists  
& they go over to somebody's house & smoke reefer  
listen to the FUGS & John Coltrane & Sun Ra  
& don't even think about you until they have to go home

& what a drag that is, Warner, going home to their atrophied parents  
who are dying in their living room chairs  
watching BATMAN on tv  
& dancing the frug with Jackie Kennedy in their dreams  
What kind of life have you got, Warner,  
when you have to sit & think about me  
for over two years, and I'm 25 now, what're you gonna do  
with all these fucking kids  
who are crazier than I am  
& don't care what you do, you ain't nothin to them, & in  
four years Warner, half the U.S. population  
will be under twenty-five years of age

You're HOOKED, Warner Stringfellow, you're strung out  
you've shot so much of that dope in your head  
that shit Harry Anslinger & Hoover sold you  
but all it is is JUNK, Warner,  
& you can't keep selling people junk forever  
they get hip to you, they don't want any more of it  
they've had enough, they want something REAL, Warner,  
& you just ain't got it to give to them

They don't care about titles no more, Warner, a lieutenant  
ain't nothing but a cop, & a cop ain't shit  
They wanna see who WARNER STRINGFELLOW is,  
& what he does with himself, that badge & title  
ain't gonna fool nobody no more  
not like it has, they'll do like I do &  
call you by your given name, that's all  
any man needs, you won't get me Warner, even  
if you lock me up again, because you're the one who's trapped  
in all that Aristotelian bullshit, the world is  
not black & white, it's  
all colors Warner, all you need to do  
is open your God-given eyes and see it  
& I hope you do,  
you're a man too,  
all of us are,  
and every man is made to be free

I love you like I do any natural-born man  
but you got to BE a man, Warner, not a cop

you got to open yourself up or be  
shut off completely  
as you are now  
from the world of human beings

Come on out of that jail, Warner,  
let your criminals go, you've just trapped them  
in your silly bag, & there's no need for those games,  
we're all lovely & free Warner  
we're all human beings, & nothing you can do  
can ever change the universe

I get up to change the record, Eric Dolphy  
OUT TO LUNCH, it's seven in the morning & the world  
changes too, it moves farther  
away from where you are, my wife turns over in bed  
she's probably dreaming about you -- you put her in jail too,  
Warner, but only overnight, & you took her man away  
for six whole months -- we celebrated our 1st anniversary  
while I was in your jail, & it only made us stronger  
& more together than before--you see  
how puny your bullshit punishments are. And now  
we'll bring our own baby into the world  
& see what it can do for you, even tho you want to  
wipe out its father  
even before it's born

& my wife feels sorry for you Warner,  
just to show you what you're up against with us,  
she really won't play your silly hate games---  
that poor man, she says, he must spend all his time  
thinking of how he'll get us--doesn't he have  
anything better to do with his life?

And what can you do with her, Warner,  
shoot her? Or lock her up? The problem is  
what're you gonna do with your self, Warner Stringfellow?  
Let me leave you with that. What will you be in 5 years,  
Warner, an Inspector? Like poor stupid Jimmy Fike  
at the House of Correction? Why don't you  
quit playing games, Warner, & grow up to  
be a MAN like the rest of us

(This is the story you wanted me to write about you,  
Warner, the one you  
asked me about again last night,  
& it's the best I can do--  
I hope you can hear it

Love all ways  
John Sinclair  
Detroit

Seized in  
Raid  
DOPE RAID  
John Sinclair  
I plead  
not guilty  
for Dope  
THE  
18, 1965



ITEM: John Wilcock's OTHER SCENES, Issue #2, February 1967

Notes: "This issue, #2, written, published and printed at Los Angeles, California, in late February 1967 with the assistance of Betsy Cawn, Joel Hack, Art Kunkin & staff of the Los Angeles Free Press" – Including a "Poem For Warner Stringfellow" by John Sinclair, on his bust on marijuana charges by the Detroit Police.

From the OTHER SCENES INVENTORY REPORT  
an archive of John Wilcock's Other Scenes

"The International Newspaper!"  
"John Wilcock Takes Trips!"

See all available issues at: <http://www.ep.tc/otherscenes>

Support the archive by purchasing the comic book biography of John Wilcock, including a history of Other Scenes itself, titled: "John Wilcock, New York Years, 1954-1971" by Ethan Persoff and Scott Marshall (link below for that)

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Additional information on John Wilcock is being added posthumously by friends of John at <https://johnwilcock.net/>

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