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EULESS

Euleless throws a party for recyclers.

Mulch appreciated, O Christmas tree

By **RICK ROSEN**

Staff Writer

rrosen@dallasnews.com

Now that Christmas is over, it's time to get rid of that fresh-cut tree before it becomes a fire hazard (if it hasn't already).

You could leave it at the curb for the trash collectors to take to the landfill. Or you could recycle it instead. And you might receive a gift: free mulch made from the trees you and your neighbors recycle.

Not all area cities give their residents a choice about recycling; they collect trees at the curb and cart them off to the landfill.

But many offer residents a site for Christmas-tree recycling, or collect the trees curbside to recycle.

And a few of these cities, after chipping and shredding the trees, return them to residents as free mulch. (Residents will have to shovel it themselves.)

Remember to remove all tinsel, decorations, nails, tree stands, etc., from the trees before collection. Bring a shovel and containers for the mulch. And because the mulch is for each city's residents only, it is a good idea to bring proof of residency.

TRY RECYCLING: A noble end for that noble fir

On Jan. 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., bring live Christmas trees to Midway Park, 300 Midway Drive. Residents can bring a bag to fill with mulch, and there will be a tree-mulching demonstration. Residents don't have to wait until Jan. 12 to recycle trees. They can bring them to the park any time through Jan. 12. For information, call 817-685-1650.



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SPORTS | HIGH SCHOOL

Second time around

The Dec. 22 Class 5A Division I state championship victory by the Trinity Trojans of Euless was a masterpiece of fundamental football and true grit, a grind-it-out running game and a defense that would not yield.

It is no small tribute to coach Steve Lineweaver and this team to say that, in a keenly calculated way, they did what they had to do to bring home their second championship trophy in three years.

The Trojans' 15-1 season showed that same grit all the way. The school that made the "Haka" dance a symbol of its pride and determination has a right to be proud of this achievement. That pride is shared by the communities that surround the school.

Congratulations to the Trojans, their coaches and their school for a job well done.

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OBITUARIES

RIC WILLIAMSON | APPRECIATION

Out in front, taking the heat

"Headstrong but always cordial," Williamson stuck to his beliefs despite opposition, doing what he thought he had to do.

By **GORDON DICKSON**
 gdickson@star-telegram.com

Ric Williamson was remembered by North Texas colleagues Sunday as a cool customer under pressure.

He didn't seem to mind being the frontman for the state's plans to relieve gridlock by building toll roads — and the target of many anti-toll-road groups, including one that created www.firericwilliamson.com.

Williamson often brushed aside questions about whether his health or his many critics would force him to step down as transportation chairman.

He logged tens of thousands of miles traveling the state in his GMC Jimmy, at-



Trevino

tending transportation-related meetings large and small. "He was headstrong but always cordial," said Oscar Trevino, North Richland Hills Mayor and chairman of the Regional Transportation Council, which conducts long-term planning for the Metroplex.

"He was a dominant figure in transportation, and he traveled all over the state. He didn't delegate that responsibility. He was comfortable making statements he felt he had to make. He didn't back down at all. He didn't get all red-faced."

Firm convictions

Williamson strongly believed that injecting competition and market forces into the state's highway system would drive down the cost of building and maintaining roads. He spoke in big-picture terms, often shocking listeners with long-term predictions. He was fond of saying that in fewer than 50 years, the Dallas-Fort Worth and San Antonio areas would form a single megaregion and that it was his generation's responsibility to plan properly for that explosive growth.

He vehemently defended the Transportation Department's attempts to lease roads to private companies, many of them foreign-owned, saying he wanted investors — not taxpayers — to assume the financial risk of paying back debt issued on toll roads.

But Williamson also reluctantly compromised this year when he went along with the RTC's desire to have the North Texas Tollway Authority, not a private devel-

oper, build and collect tolls on Texas 121 north of Grapevine.

"In the long run, he came around to our way of thinking," Trevino said. "He understood what the region wanted, and he backed the region on it."

Selfless visionary

Michael Morris, transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments, said Williamson "had a strong commitment to his principles and absolutely no tolerance for folks who were operating in a self-serving mode."

"I think transportation is in good hands because of his leadership. You'll see dividends over the next 50 years because of his efforts."

Williamson embraced his role as a lightning rod, believing that the state would be in better shape long-term if today's residents frankly discussed the economics of transportation.

"I don't think it bothered him at all," Morris said. "Leaders who fully comprehend their responsibilities, especially a person with these strong principles, they don't get shy when things get hot. When there's controversy, I think it almost recommends them."

GORDON DICKSON, 817-685-3816

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RIC WILLIAMSON | 1952-2007

Key figure on Texas transport issues

Ric Williamson was a chief crusader for the Trans Texas Corridor, a proposed system of free and toll roads.

By **JOHN MORITZ** jmoritz@star-telegram.com

AUSTIN — Ric Williamson, one of Gov. Rick Perry's closest friends and advisers and his hip man at the Texas Department of Transportation, died early Sunday of an apparent heart attack.

He was 55.

Mr. Williamson, a seven-term state lawmaker from Weatherford, had had two heart attacks since being appointed to oversee one of the state's largest bureaucracies during a period of intense controversy and this year expressed concern that a third one might prove fatal. Still, his death at a hospital near his home in Weatherford sent shock waves through the Capitol communities that had been largely dormant during the holiday season.

"Anita and I are heartbroken at this sudden loss of a confidant, trusted advisor and close personal friend of ours for more than 20 years," Perry said in a statement. "Ric's passion to serve his beloved State of Texas was unmatched and his determination to help our state meet its future challenges was unparalleled.

"He will be missed beyond words."

House Speaker Tom Craddick, who had



Williamson

Williamson did what he thought was right and took the heat for it. **SB**

served with Mr. Williamson during his career in the Legislature from 1985 until 1998, said, "He dedicated his life to public service, and I have fond memories of the time we served in the Legislature together."

Political beginnings

Mr. Williamson, who in the private sector operated a natural gas production company, was a conservative Democrat in 1984 when he first won a seat in the Texas House, representing a largely rural district west of Fort Worth anchored by Weatherford. He arrived at the House just before his 33rd birthday as Texas was reeling from a slump in the oil industry that strained the budget.

Along with other conservative Democrats and many of the then-outnumbered Republicans, Mr. Williamson pushed for steep cuts in state spending in an effort to hold the line on new taxes.

During that period he befriended Perry, another rookie lawmaker with similar West Texas roots and conservative Democratic leanings. Both would become Republicans as their careers advanced.

Perry was elected agriculture commissioner in 1990 and lieutenant governor eight years later. In December 2000, he ascended to the Governor's Mansion as George W. Bush prepared to become president.

Within a few months of taking office, Perry named Mr. Williamson to the transportation commission and made him chairman in January 2004.

Ambitious plan

Leading the commission, Mr. Williamson became one of the chief crusaders for Perry's ambitious Trans Texas Corridor, a system of toll and free roads intended to ease urban congestion.

The plan's toll roads plan generated the most controversy, with critics denouncing the state's contract with a Spanish company to build and operate the roads. Critics also said the plan would involve massive taking of private land.

During the 2007 legislative session, Mr. Williamson often butted heads with some lawmakers who had expressed reservations



Online exclusive

To sign a guestbook for Ric Williamson, go to

www.star-telegram.com/obituaries

over the pace of the toll road building plan.

State Sen. John Carona, R-Dallas, who leads the Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee, said in January that Mr. Williamson's abrasive style was undermining his effectiveness.

Mr. Williamson, Carona was quoted as saying, "has worn out his welcome in many communities across the state. I think it would be in the best interests of the state that he step aside."

Carona and Mr. Williamson would later mend fences, and in a statement the senator praised his one-time adversary.

"In over 20 years of service to Texas, during a time of conflict and sweeping change, Ric Williamson exemplified courage, commitment and dedication," Carona said. "His ability to see far into the future, coupled with his command of process and the here-and-now, ensure his place in our history books when the story of 21st century Texas is told."

In a column published in July, *Texas Monthly's* Paul Burka described the blunt-spoken Mr. Williamson as "the most hated person in Texas, public enemy No. 1 to a million or more people," having tried in vain to put the brakes on the frenzied dash to build privately run tollways.

But Burka, whose career covering Texas politics dates back more than 30 years, also described Mr. Williamson as a visionary who possessed "the most inventive mind that has passed through the Legislature" in modern history.

In the same column, Mr. Williamson told Burka that the strain of being in the Transportation Department hot seat was taking a toll.

"Since I've started this," he said, "I've had two heart attacks, and I'm trying to avoid the third one, which the doctors tell me will be fatal."

Funeral arrangements were pending Sunday. Survivors include wife Mary Ann; daughters Melissa, Katherine and Sara; and two grandchildren.

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TRANSPORTATION | NORTH TEXAS

All aboard — and make sure those thinking caps are on

Things have to change in North Texas, and especially in Tarrant County, if we don't want to spend much of our waking lives stuck in traffic.

By B. GLEN WHITLEY
Special to the Star-Telegram

First, I want to wish everyone in Tarrant County and North Texas a safe, happy and healthy New Year.

As we welcome in 2008, and the hope and promise that this new year brings, one issue should be of particular interest and importance to all who live and work in the Metroplex: improving regional and local transportation.

Since I became an elected county official more than a decade ago, improving transportation has been a personal priority, and for good reason.

If we don't find better and more streamlined ways to travel quickly and efficiently across North Texas, we risk diminishing our quality of life and the economic vitality of our region. Congested roads and inadequate public transportation result in the loss of valuable time with family and friends, excessive burdens on business and industry, and the degradation of public health by worsening air quality.

Figuring out what transportation improvements should be made, when and where to make them, and how to pay for them is no easy matter.

According to the North Central Texas Council of Governments, our region is growing so quickly that it is now ranked fourth for urban populations after New York, Los Angeles and Chicago by the U.S. Census Bureau. The council of governments is us-

ing those census figures to expand its metropolitan planning area and expects population in the 12 core Metroplex counties to increase by 50 percent or more by 2030.

This tremendous growth will only intensify our transportation crisis. We can expect more crowded roads, more time sitting in traffic and increased frustration in our ability to move from place to place. It is essential that we plan and act now to resolve this problem.

Even so, state and federal dollars to pay for transportation projects in Texas are drying up. If North Texas is to continue to prosper, we must think innovatively to find funding solutions. Fortunately, we have begun to do just that.

Consider the Texas 121 toll road program that makes about \$3.1 billion available for local transportation projects. While other parts of the state face severe cutbacks in transportation funding, our toll roads are creating a revenue source to relieve congestion.

But that is only a start. We need to aggressively consider passenger rail options, rapid-bus programs, additional high-occupancy vehicle and toll lanes, park-and-ride lots and sustainable development projects that require less travel to accommodate daily life.

Things have to change in North Texas, and especially in Tarrant County.

Currently, in Northeast Tarrant County there is no way to



Traffic at the Chapel Hill Shopping Center at Hulen Street and Interstate 30 in Fort Worth on Dec. 21. STAR-TELEGRAM/RODGER MALLISON

travel by public transportation on Grapevine Highway, Davis Boulevard and Interstate 35W, and no way to travel in an east-west direction across Loop 820, Texas 114 and Farm Road 1709. We could certainly use less traffic on those roads. To the west, the Summerfields neighborhood would like more than one bus a day for its community.

Arlington plans to start bus service to and from downtown Fort Worth in the spring and appears to be supportive of the proposed rail transit initiative through the city.

In southwest Fort Worth along Hulen Street, Bryant Irvin Road and increasingly on U.S. 377, traffic can really back up. The Southwest Parkway will alleviate some congestion in that area, but what about I-35W when it becomes a parking lot as it passes downtown Fort Worth? Or the often-congested parts of Texas 183 and Loop 820?

Thinking outside the box,

the council of governments' Regional Transportation Council is considering ways to use revenue from managed lanes to provide private-sector buses for areas outside the reach of the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, the T, to relieve congestion and improve air quality.

Trains don't have it any better than cars. A stone's throw southeast of downtown Fort Worth, trains regularly get backed up at the busiest at-grade rail intersection in our nation. The Tower 55 crossing adds to our air pollution burden and harms national commerce. Transportation officials with the council of governments are working on a solution.

We can only resolve our transportation problems through a combination of measures that include new freeways, toll roads, car pools and additional mass transit that includes significant increases in bus and rail service.

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A loss for the Lone Star State

This past weekend, we lost a great Texan. Ric Williamson loved Texas and would stop at nothing to do what he felt was best for our state. His passion resulted in transportation issues being a top priority instead of taking the back burner to other issues, as they had for so many years. He was unfaltering in his loyalty to his friend and governor, Rick Perry. Even after two heart attacks, he refused to leave public service as long as there was work still to do. It would have felt wrong to have printed this message and not to have mentioned Ric. It was an honor to know and work with him. He will certainly be missed!

— B. Glen Whitley

The same is true for improving air quality. Only by thinking innovatively and employing a variety of clean-air measures can we trim local air pollution. We must take cars and trucks off the road, reduce overall energy consumption, replace dirty diesel engines with cleaner-running ones and cut industrial emissions wherever possible.

In addition to a half-cent sales tax to fund passenger rail — proposed in the last legislative session but not adopted — one measure I think should be considered is to ask that a certain percent of gas tax funds raised in the state be distributed according to where the tax is collected.

In transportation, a large percentage of every dollar raised locally should be spent locally. We need to be assured that the state does not divert dollars raised for transportation needs to other areas.

Folks, we really have no choice but to act now.

By the end of January, we have to meet and outline our priorities. By March, we must have identified areas that need research and documentation. By June, we need to begin to identify possible solutions; by

September, we need a rough draft of what we need to accomplish in the short term and long term.

That *we* includes all of our state and federal legislators, representatives of our municipal and county governments, area chambers of commerce, industrial and business leaders, and community and neighborhood organizations.

Everyone must get on board.

The Regional Transportation Council, the Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition, the Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition and the North Texas Commission are all called to this task. This is for all of us, and we all must participate actively and be at the table.

Our region must be in agreement, operate by consensus and speak with one voice as we go into the next session of the Texas Legislature.

We must start this month. Please join me in this New Year's resolution.

As the conductor says, "All aboard!"

B. GLEN WHITLEY IS THE COUNTY JUDGE IN TARRANT COUNTY.

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OBITUARIES

Rick Lyle



Rick was the former General Manager at Softball World.

EULESS — Rick Lyle, 52, passed away peacefully at his home Monday, Dec. 31, 2007.

FUNERAL: 10 a.m. Friday at Lucas Funeral Home, 137 E. Hill St., Keller, with Michael Orr of the Church of Christ officiating. Interment: Bourland Cemetery. Visitation: 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday.

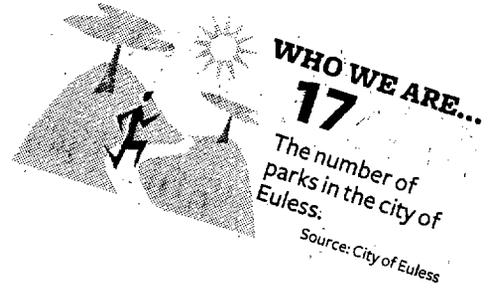
SURVIVORS: Wife, Marcia; son, Jason Lyle and wife, Lori; daughters, Jennifer Colburn, Jessica Howard and husband, Richard, and Mandy Smith and husband, Jason; grandchildren, Boomer, Jacob, Cooper, Casey, Bryant, Regan and Siara; and faithful companion, Abbi.

Lucas Funeral Home
Keller, 817-753-6800
View and sign guestbook at
www.star-telegram.com/obituaries

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MAIN STREET



Northeast Metro Editor Sonny Bohanan, 817-685-3825, sbohanan@star-telegram.com

Ready? Bird count set Feb. 15-18

The flap of wings. A distinctive chirp.

Watch and record.

The 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count will be Feb. 15-18 nationwide, and bird-watchers in North Texas can join in.

The event is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The annual event encourages bird watchers of all ages to count birds and report them online. Their contributions help create a real-time snapshot of the distribution of birds across North America.

All levels of bird-watchers can participate, from beginners to seasoned experts.

Here's how to participate:

- Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes during the four days.
- Count birds at as many places and on as many days as you wish, but keep a separate list of counts for each day and location.
- Count the greatest number of individual birds of each species seen together at any one time, and write that number down.
- Enter the results on the GBBC Web site, www.bird-source.org/gbbc/

During the 2007 event, 81,003 checklists were submitted from across the country.

Bird-watchers recorded 613 species and 11,082,387 individual birds, according to the Web site. Texas observers recorded 1,127,453 birds in 333 species.

— Lance Murray



A cardinal rests on a traffic sign at River Legacy Parks in Arlington. Area bird-watchers will participate in a national census of birds.

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RENOVATIONS

2 cited apartment complexes are getting face-lifts

Both complexes were owned by the same Louisiana-based company that is facing financial problems.

By JESSICA DeLEÓN
 jdeleon@star-telegram.com

Two apartment complexes that faced numerous code violations, Timbercreek Apartments in Euless and the Cottages of Bedford, are now getting face-lifts.

The Cottages of Bedford, formerly called Sterling Falls Apartments, had racked up more than 600 building code violations and 99 life-safety violations in 2005. But the complex in Bedford is being renovated after getting a new name and a new owner this spring.

Timbercreek Apartments in Euless is also addressing its numerous code violations, including water damage, broken stairways and a lack of outside lighting.

Both buildings were once owned by MBS Properties in Metairie, La. The company has put up two complexes in Fort Worth and Grand Prairie for bankruptcy protection, and it could lose its 65 other Texas properties.

Sterling Falls/The Cottages, Bedford

"Have you looked?" resident Marilyn Oliver asked a visitor as she stood outside the Cottages apartment complex. "They're absolutely gorgeous. It's like a whole new complex."

The exterior walls received a coat of butterscotch yellow or mint green paint, and stone was placed on some buildings. The siding and roofing were replaced, the swimming pool was replastered, and plumbing and concrete had been repaired. Extensive landscaping was done.

"It's been a great experience, and I'm glad to see it turned out the way it has," said Melody King, regional manager for Westwood Residential, a Plano-based development/management company that began managing the Cottages

in June. The owners declined to release the cost of repairs.

Oliver said she's noticed the change in management.

"It's a lot better, too, when you call for maintenance," said Oliver, who has lived at the complex for parts of the past 10 years.

The building has come a long way in the past several years.

In 2006, the city declared 21 vacant units unsafe for occupancy because of exposed wiring, broken glass and extensive mold. That same year, the city sought an injunction in district court in Tarrant County against the building for failing to meet a deadline to make repairs.

Earlier this year, the city asked the court to dismiss the suit because the complex was working on the renovations.

SOMP-Cottages LLC of Dallas bought the building, at L. Don Dodson Drive and Park Place Boulevard, last year. The renovations began in September.

The 168-unit complex has taken on new tenants, and about 40 percent of the units can be occupied.

One-bedroom apartments now rent for between \$525 and \$600 a month and two-bedroom apartments rent for \$750. When MBS owned the property, a two-bedroom apartment could rent for \$400 a month.

The condemned units have not been reopened, said Tommy Peterson, Bedford's code and inspections manager.

Peterson said he has seen the progress when he drives by the complex two to three times a week. Because of the work that has been done, the city hasn't set a deadline for completion.

Bedford development director Bill Syblon added, "They are exceeding anything we expected them to do. The work has been very impressive."

Timbercreek Apartments, Euless

In 2005, Timbercreek Apartments lost its certificate of occupancy after the city had issued four citations.

This spring, the complex, on Airport Freeway near the split of Texas 121 and Texas 183, was making numerous repairs.

"They continue to do that work," Euless Planning and Development Manager Chris Barker said.

The property, which is in foreclosure, is expected to be auctioned off in February. Devonshire Real Estate and Asset Management in Dallas now manages the complex.

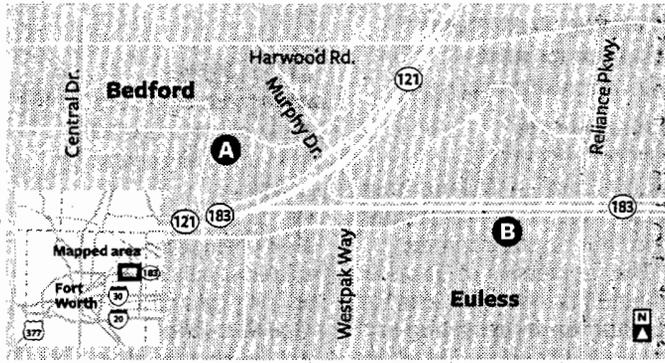
The company works with Euless code enforcement officials to see what repairs need to be done, said Charles Goolsby, Devonshire's regional manager.

Timbercreek cannot accept any new tenants until it receives the certificate of occu-

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Apartments under renovation



Two apartment complexes – The Cottages at Bedford, formerly Sterling Falls (A) and Timbercreek Apartments in Euless (B) – had faced numerous code violations before renovations began.

STAR-TELEGRAM/TIM BEDISON

pancy. In the spring, only 39 of the complex's 164 units were occupied. About 28 units are currently occupied.

This report includes material from the Star-Telegram archives.

JESSICA DeLEÓN, 817-685-3932



The Timbercreek Apartments complex in Euless is addressing code violations.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING: The city of Euless will have its 19th annual Christmas Tree Recycling from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 12 at Midway Park, 300 Midway Drive West. The city uses the mulch throughout the year to maintain city parks and medians. Residents may bring their own bag to fill with mulch for their gardens or flowers. Limit one bag per person. Residents may dispose of live Christmas trees only (with no ornaments or lights) at the designated area of Midway Park through Jan. 12. On Jan. 12, the city will host a tree mulching demonstration and will give away bags of mulch and tree saplings. Hot dogs and drinks will be available for free to anyone who participates in the recycling event. Call 817-685-1650.

REGISTRATION PARTY: The Midway Recreation Center will have a registration party from 10 a.m. to noon Jan. 12 at the center, 300 Midway Drive West in Euless. Euless residents can use the facilities for free. Personal trainers and various program instructors will be available for questions and demonstrations. The recreation center offers several programs such as martial arts, dance and swimming lessons for which residents can register. Annual memberships start as low as \$5 a year. Call 817-685-1666 for information.

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OBITUARIES

Shane Kelley Sullivan



Cole Brown is a retired Eules Fire Department employee.

KELLER — Shane Kelley Sullivan, 33, passed away Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2008, at a Dallas hospital.

MEMORIAL SERVICE: 11 a.m. Saturday at Lucas Funeral Home, 137 E. Hill St., Keller.

MEMORIALS: The family respectfully requests that memorials be sent in Shane's name to First Financial Bank, Shane Sullivan, Box 998, Stephenville, Texas 76401-0098.

Shane was a loving son, brother and grandson who will be missed by all. He will forever live in our hearts. The family expresses a very special thanks to the Parkland Hospital Burn ICU.

Shane was preceded in death by his father, Lou Kelley Sullivan.

SURVIVORS: Mother, Brenda Brown and husband, Cole; brother, Jeffrey Parks Sullivan; grandparents, Bob and Barbara Griffith and Robert and Judy Sullivan; aunt, Becky Potter Lynes and husband, Kelsy; cousins, Jordan, Hayden and Bryson Potter; and many extended family members and friends.

Lucas Funeral Home
Keller, 817-753-6800
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