

# Brentsville Neighbors

Preserving Brentsville's History



March 2011

Welcome Neighbors!

March is always a month of change. Winter into Spring is perhaps the most obvious to us who are tired of being stuck in the house. Change can take the form of many things and with our newsletter there is another change. You may not have noticed it right off but look again at the banner at the top of this page. In all previous issues we have used the phrase "Information About Brentsville Shared Among Neighbors." Now we have changed it to "Preserving Brentsville's History" because that more accurately describes what we are attempting to accomplish. Like change, our town's history can take many forms—stories, pictures, artifacts and virtually anything that tells something about Brentsville no matter how old or how new. We welcome your help.

In the FLASHBACK section of last month's newsletter the pastor was mistakenly identified as Albert C. Will. Actually his name is Albert C. Winn and I do apologize for this mistake. Thank you Gladys for pointing out this error. In a future article we hope to have more information on Dr. Winn (as he is now known)

who was very prominent in the Presbyterian churches of both Prince William and Fauquier counties.

In this issue we are bringing the complete story written by Martha Breeden which was published in the award winning BDHS publication, *Rhapsody, May 1994, Volume 3*. This publication is a collection of literature and artwork created by the students. We hope you enjoy this original work. Next month we will return to the normal format with personal reflections on memories of Brentsville.

And finally, we are informed that quality glass (secure) cases are now available for use in the courthouse visitor's center. Mike Riley is asking anyone who has items of interest that can be loaned for this next season to please contact him on 703-365-7895 or [mriley@pwcgov.org](mailto:mriley@pwcgov.org).

Very best wishes,  
Morgan

## This month:

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# FLASHBACK

## Where WILD Things Live

### BRENTSVILLE

The ladies of the Brentsville Kensington were entertained at the home of Mrs. Gibson near Bristow last Thursday. After a short business session, a very pleasant social hour was spent during which very dainty refreshments were served by the hostess, assisted by her daughter, mfrs. Perry. The society was glad to have Mrs. R. S. Arey with them again.

The following students are on the honor roll for the month of February. Advance grades, Miss Owens, Teacher—Cassius T. Keys, 94; Kennie H. Keys, 92; Aleine E. Keys, 90; Leafie Holsinger, 89; Nelson Bradshaw, 89; Spicer Keys, 87; Bennie Breedon, 85; Verona M. Counts, 85. Primary Grade, Miss McKay, Teacher—Murray Bradshaw, Mary Buck, Ashby Davis, Alma Holsinger, Clara Holsinger.

Mrs. Walter Lisky is suffering from rheumatism.

Dr. Bell still continues quite sick at the home of his daughter, Mrs. J. W. Hedrick.

Mrs. Pearl Pierson was called to Woodbridge this week by the illness of her uncle.

Messrs. John Donovan and James Smith spent several days visiting the Valley of Virginia.  
(Too late for last week)

Quite an enjoyable surprise was given Mr. W. E. Varner and family last Wednesday night when quite a large party of young folks gathered there and spent the evening playing games and making merry. Light refreshments were served.

Mr. Hugh Bell, of Washington, spent a short time here the first of the week.

Mr. Rucker Cooksey, of Indian Head, Md., made a short business trip here this week.

Miss Florence Owens and Miss Minnie Smith spent Sunday with Miss Daisy McKay.

Miss Norene Shipp, of Washington, spent several days here visiting friends recently.

Mr. and Mrs. Hollis Brown delightfully entertained a number of their friends at their beautiful home near Bristow last Saturday evening in honor of their house guest, Mrs. Evler of Harrisonburg, Va. Music, games and dancing were enjoyed until the late hour when dainty refreshments were served by the hostess. Among the guests were Misses Daisy McKay, Florence Owens, Mamie Brown, Pearl Brown, Minnie Smith, Alma Teel, the Misses Herring, Mrs. Paul Cooksey and Messrs Garland and Leo McKay, Ernest, Kruff and Joe Brown, Clifford Hedrick and Paul Cooksey.

Source: The Manassas Democrat – Brentsville News – March 3, 1921

### Common Blue Violet

*Viola sororia sororia*

Violet family (Violaceae)

This is a native perennial plant with the leaves and flowers emerging directly from the rhizomes, and forming a basal rosette. A typical mature plant may be 6" across and 4" high, with the flowers slightly higher than the leaves. The leaves are individually up to 3" long and 3" across (excluding the long petioles), and vary in color from yellowish green to dark green, depending on growing conditions. The flowers are about ¾" across, and consist of 5 rounded petals. There are 2 upper petals, 2 lateral petals with white hairs (or beards) near the throat of the flower, and a lower petal that functions as a landing pad for visiting insects. The flowers of this form of *Viola sororia* are medium to dark violet. The inner throat of each flower is more or less white, from which slightly darker veins radiate outward along the petals (particularly the lower one). There is no noticeable floral scent. The blooming period occurs from mid- to late spring, and lasts about 1-1½ months. During the summer, flowers without petals produce seeds, which are flung outward by mechanical ejection from the three-parted seed capsules. The root system consists of thick, horizontally branched rhizomes; there is a tendency to form vegetative colonies.

This wildflower will adapt to lawns, especially if they are not mowed too often during the spring or cut too low. Natural habitats include moist to mesic black soil prairies, open woodlands, woodland edges, savannas, and wooded slopes along rivers or lakes. In developed areas, it can be found in lawns, city parks, moist waste areas, and along hedges or buildings. Sometimes the Common Blue Violet is grown in flower gardens.

The flowers are not often visited by insects but sometimes they attract bees (e.g., Mason, Halictid), skippers, Syrphid flies, and other insects. The seeds have soft appendages that attract ants, which are in part distributed by them. Various upland gamebirds and small mammals occasionally eat the seeds, including the Wild Turkey, Bobwhite, Mourning Dove, and White-Footed Mouse. Wild Turkeys also eat the leaves and fleshy roots. Although it is not a preferred food, White-Tailed Deer, Cottontail Rabbit, and livestock occasionally eat the foliage of violets.

The flowers and young leaves of violets are edible, and can be added to salads in small amounts. The taste is bland. This is the most common Violet.

Source: [http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/savanna/plants/cm\\_violet.htm](http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/savanna/plants/cm_violet.htm)



**Where WILD things  
live..**



**Common Blue Violet**

*Viola sororia sororia*

(See Page 2)

Photos above and below taken by Mike Riley,  
January 2011



Elaine Visger, Ben Payne and Peggy Breeden, Christmas 1952 in Brentsville



Artifacts found by Harry Visger in the "Breedon Lot" now in the collection of his son, Rick Visger.  
Photos courtesy of Rick Visger.



1816 Large Penny



1859 Seated Liberty Dime



1863 Indian Head Penny



1915 Buffalo Nickel



Early large penny with hole



U.S. General Service coat button



# SPIRIT OF THE WHITE STALLION

by  
Martha Breeden



*“I’m runnin’ through the forest. Somethin’ is chasing me. I don’t know what. I’m runnin’ fast as I can, but it’s gettin’ closer. Suddenly, I trip and fall. Knowin’ the end is come, I look up to see my finish. Instead, on the trail behind me is a beautiful white stallion.”*

The first thing I remembered when I woke up was the dream. Ever since I come to live with Grandpa, I’d had it every night. The nightmare is always the same. I’m runnin’ through a forest, tryin’ to escape some horrible ghost. As I fall and look up, it’s gone replaced with the white stallion. I don’t know what it means. When I ask Grandpa if he can tell me, he just shrugs his shoulders and says, “In time you will understand.” That makes me madder than a wet polecat ‘cuz I want to understand now.

After my folks died, I went to live on my Grandpa’s Colorado ranch. As my only livin’ relative, he was obligated to take me in. The people in the small town of Sulley Gap, a day’s ride away, said Grandpa knows more local history than anyone. They also say he’s the best storyteller in these mountains, but I’ve never heard a one. I guess he resents having a girl complicatin’ his life. If I were a boy, it’d be different.

It’s not that I haven’t tried to talk to him, ‘cuz I have. Every evenin’ after supper, Grandpa ‘n I sit in the cabin to pass the hours ‘till bedtime. Grandpa sits in a furred chair by the fire, carvin’ somethin’ from an old piece of hickory. When I ask him why he uses such a hard wood, he just mumbles somethin’ about laziness and doin’ a job right. Every time I try to ask him ‘bout his cabin, he spouts some piece of history.

“Grandpa, where’d you get that stuffed deer on the wall?” I asked once.

“The two most important tribes in Colorado were the Cheyenne and the Arapaho,” he answered.

“Well, how does that funny-lookin’ clock work?” I asked another time.

“The Cheyenne followed the buffalo migration, hunting from horseback,” he said.

“What’s that lump of shiny stuff?” I asked curiously.

“They used every part of a dead buffalo,” he replied.

Now I’m sure the Indians and their history are very interestin’ to some folks, the ones likin’ books and such, but that American history stuff couldn’t be less important to me. Sometimes, though, if I’m real lucky, I might get part of an answer.

“Gold,” Grandpa said, suddenlike.

“What?” I said.

“The shiny stuff’s gold,” he explained.

When I tried to ask him more questions about the shiny stuff called gold, he went right back to his historic facts. He seemed very knowledgeable, but that history stuff doesn’t mean a thing to me. I understand more of what the ducks say than I do Grandpa when he starts talkin’ history.

Grandpa raised horses on his mountain ranch. Big horses. I wasn’t scared of ‘em, but they were big. I soon found out that they were also very gentle, so I asked Grandpa to teach me ‘bout ‘em.

“Hey, Grandpa, teach me ‘bout horses,” I asked.

He didn’t say anythin’, just handed me a saddle twice my size and pointed to a red mare called Apple (In one of his rare answerin’ moods, Grandpa told me horses aren’t red, they’re chestnut). I looked at him to find out what to do, but he was already busy saddlin’ a black stallion called Midnight. I watched him, then walked over to Apple. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t lift that saddle onto her back. Grandpa had to come help me. I knew he was thinkin’, “I knew it.”

Grandpa lifted that saddle like it was a feather and put it on Apple’s back. Then he looked at me. “You’ll grow. Do the rest,” he said. These were the first kind words I’d heard from my grandfather.

“Maybe,” I thought, “maybe he might get to like me if I work real hard.” I finished the saddlin’ and stood on the fence rail to climb on.

Every day after that I spent outside, carryin’ saddles and practicin’ with Apple. Grandpa never said anything—just watched. Finally, one day I did it all by myself.

“Good job,” Grandpa said as he patted me on the head.

“Th-thank you!” I stuttered.

That was the happiest day of my young life. After that, we often went on long rides, me on Apple,

(Continued from page 5)

Grandpa on Midnight. He still answered mostly with borin' history when he answered at all, but he was gettin' better at talkin' to me.

From that day on, I kept learnin' 'bout horses. I learned to bridle one, how to walk one in a circle with the lead rope, and how to make one change gait. They seemed to trust me and always did what I asked. This, and Grandpa's half answers of late, gave me the courage to ask him:

"Hey Grandpa, how'd you get the ranch?"

I got more history, somethin' 'bout Congress, Christianity and agriculture. I soon found out that some things were okay to talk 'bout, others weren't.

Since I was bored by history, I stopped askin' questions 'bout Grandpa and his life. Instead, I asked him a lot of questions 'bout horses 'cuz then he answered me and 'cuz I wanted to know everything. He was proud of me. I knew this.

"My girl knows more 'bout horses than all three of your boys put together," I heard him tell Harry Jones one day in Sulley Gap.

Over the years, Grandpa learned me everything he could. Sometimes, I even learned him some stuff.

"Girl, why do you always blow on the horse's nose when you git close?" he asked one day.

"It's so's they git to know my scent," I told him.

He looked at me funny. It turns out that the Indians used to do that. That was the kind of history I liked.

One day Grandpa went into Sulley Gap to get some supplies. I stayed behind at the ranch to clean the stables. I was movin' some boxes in the tack room, tryin' to git all the rotten hay out of the place. As I was sweepin' the old hay out, I saw somethin' shiny on the floor. I thought it might've been an old bit, but when I got down on the ground to pick it up I realized I was wrong. It was a metal ring set into the wood. It looked like a door so I pulled on the ring, and it opened. I couldn't see the bottom, but there was a ladder, and bein' curious, I took a lantern and started to climb down.

When I reached the bottom, I was in a big room underneath the stable! There was a bed, a table, and a chest. I was awful curious and wanted to find some history to tell Grandpa, so I cracked the lid and took a gander. Inside were some old Indian clothes, a couple of old ladies' dresses, two rings made of the shiny stuff Grandpa called "gold," and a book. I thought I'd find some history in the book, so I opened it and began to read: *The Journal of Miss Elizabeth Denning*. The book was a lady's journal!

Bein' starved for female attention, I eagerly kept readin'.

*April 12, 1896 – Today I was taken from the wagon train by an Indian hunting party. They are filthy savages who do not even wear clothing! They have taken me to what appears to be a winter camp and gave me to the Chief. His son has taken an interest in me, and even now sits watching me. I shall escape or die trying.*

*December 20, 1896 – The Chief's son, Cloud Dancer, has paid ten horses and a handful of colored beads to wed me. The women motion that this is an expensive offering and a great honor. Tonight after we wed, I shall kill him with the knife I stole from the cooking fire. The Chief will put me to death and the torture will be over.*

*December 21, 1896 – Cursed female strength! When I stabbed Cloud Dancer, the knife penetrated no further than his ribs. He laughed at me and smiled. I moved to turn the knife on myself, but he stopped me, smoothing my hair and grunting in his strange language.*

*December 25, 1896 – My first Christmas out West, spent with savages who don't celebrate the holiday. Each day I miss Mother even more.*

*January 1, 1897 – A new year. I shall spend every moment trying to escape this horrible situation.*

*January 1, 1898 – Another new year. I shall spend it with my husband. He is very gentle and caring and I have made great progress with him in spoken language. I—*

"Girl, where are you?" I heard Grandpa call.

Oh no, Grandpa's home!" I gasped.

I put everything back where I got it and hurried up the ladder. I didn't want Grandpa to know 'bout my new secret place. I couldn't wait 'til I could go back and keep readin' 'bout Cloud Dancer and his white wife.

\* \* \*

Some months later, I heard Grandpa yell from the barn, "Girl, I'm goin' to town. Do you want to come?"

I thought quickly, "No. I have a cartload of things to do today," I answered. If I stayed home, I'd have another chance to read Elizabeth Denning's journal.

"What do you have to do?" Grandpa bellowed.

"I have to take a bath, wash my clothes, sew some new breeches ...," I said, making things up.

"It's up to you," Grandpa replied.

I was countin' on Grandpa to run from all those "women's things" I'd mentioned. He didn't let me down. As soon as Grandpa had gone from my

# When WAR Came to Brentsville

## A SPIRITED DASH INTO THE ENEMY'S LINES

Sergeant Mickler, of the Beaufort Troop, South Carolina cavalry, Company B, was sent by Colonel Butler, with General Hampton's permission, out of our lines, to act as scouts, and do whatever damage they could to the Yankees. He had command of a squad of picked men from the regiment, and some few from the First North Carolina cavalry. He has been all along very successful in keeping the authorities well apprized of the movements of the Yankees in the section of country to which he was sent, and varying the monotony by capturing, from time to time, squads of Yankee cavalry, helping thereby to arm, mount, and equip our hard-riding regiment.

But the handsomest affair that they have yet been engaged in, occurred in the little town of Brentsville, Prince William County. Two of the squad were sitting in a house, near a high road, unsuspecting of danger, when, on looking out of the window, one of them observed a squad of seven Yankee cavalry coming up to the house. They managed to slip out of the house unobserved, mounted their horses bare-back, hunted up Sergeant Mickler, and reported the fact to him. He immediately took five others, all of the same regiment, and went in pursuit, and came suddenly in sight of the Yankees as he turned a street in the village of Brentsville. He charged the seven with his squad of six, but being obliged to get through a brush fence the best way they could, only three, who were well mounted, succeeded in getting through in time to take part in what followed. These three were Sergeant Mickler and Private Schoolbred, of the Beaufort Troop, Company B, and Color Sergeant Sparks, of the Brooks Troop, Company K.

The Yankees tried their best to get away, keeping up a determined running fight at the same time. Only one of them succeeded in making his escape; our gallant little party of three succeeding in tumbling five of them from their horses in the streets of Brentsville, three of them dead, and two wounded. They captured, moreover, one of them unhurt.

The Yankees fought with pluck to the last, but the vigor and vim of the attack was too much for them. They were Michigan men, and were quite indignant at being called "Yankees."

Private Schoolbred particularly distinguished himself, killing, according to a confession of his comrades, two, and wounding and taking prisoner a third, a Yankee lieutenant, lately promoted for gallantry. He saved his own life, and took the lieutenant by his admirable self-possession. He was riding almost side by side with the lieutenant, and had shot every barrel of his pistol, when the latter, observing this, turned on him with a fresh pistol, and, putting the muzzle close to him, exclaimed: "Now, I have you, you d\_\_d rebel." Schoolbred, with great coolness, threw his empty pistol at him, and, with great good fortune, struck the pistol pointed at him, and knocked it out of the hand of the Yankee. He then drew another pistol and shot the Yankee, who, rolling off his horse, cried out: "I am wounded; I give up."

Source: MARGINALIA; or, GLEANINGS From An ARMY NOTE-BOOK. By "Personne," Army Correspondent. Columbia, S. C. 1864, Pages 41 & 42

sight, I raced to the barn. I moved the boxes from where I'd hidden the door and pulled on the ring. It didn't move! Grandpa had found out 'bout my secret place and nailed the door shut.

"There must be somethin' in that book he doesn't want me to see," I thought to myself.

Determined to open the door, I got Grandpa's hammer and pried up the nails. As I climbed, I wondered what Grandpa was tryin' to hide. I opened the chest, took out the journal, and continued readin':

*March 15, 1898 – I cannot imagine myself without Cloud Dancer. I was successful in teaching him English, but have learned little Cheyenne. I just cannot make the guttural sounds necessary to communicate in their language. The camp will be breaking soon to hunt the buffalo. I haven't told Cloud Dancer, but I am with child.*

*March 17, 1898 – Upon hearing the news of our child, Cloud Dancer went to see his father. I heard yelling, and when my husband returned, I discovered why. Cloud Dancer refused to endanger our child by migrating with the tribe. We were to remain here after the others had left.*

*December 21, 1898 – With every passing day, I understand more fully what Cloud Dancer gave up by leaving the tribe and his heritage. The months have been hard, but we have survived. I feel my time drawing near. I do not wish to worry Cloud Dancer, but something is not right. I fear for my baby.*

*December 30, 1898 – Our child will be born any day. We have decided to raise him in both cultures. He shall be named John for my father, and Cloud Dancer will give him an Indian name when it appears. A girl shall be named Mary, for my beloved mother.*

I was turnin' the page when I heard the ranch dogs start to bark.

"Oh no," I thought, "Grandpa's home!"

I put the book back and climbed up the ladder quicker 'n a beesting. I didn't have time to nail the door shut, so I just covered it up. Before Grandpa could find me in the tack room, I climbed on top of Apple bareback, and raced out the back openin'. By the time Grandpa had reached the ranch, I was ridin' down from the mountains as if I'd been there the whole time.

I didn't get a chance to read the book again 'till summer had turned to fall. Grandpa went on a huntin' trip. He said he'd be gone for a couple days. When he left, I ran to the stable. The door was exactly as I had left it. I guess Grandpa believed my little show. I almost jumped down the hole. I wanted to know 'bout the baby. I opened the book to the next

page. It was different writing. All it said was "January 2 John." They had a boy. I wondered why Elizabeth hadn't written 'bout it. Then a thought just came to me. She'd thought something was wrong. She'd been afraid for the baby, but maybe she died. I don't know why, but I cried. I cried for Cloud Dancer and the little boy who would never know his ma.

That seemed to be the end of the journal. I flipped through the rest of the book. Something caught my eye, so I stopped. The same hand had written in the back of the book. "John, Spirit of the White Stallion" was scrawled across the page. Cloud Dancer had found the right name for little John.

I put everything back where I found it. I stopped on the ladder to take one last look at my secret place. I'd learned everythin' it could tell me. In the tack room, I nailed the door shut. Grandpa would never know I had gone back to the big room under the stable.

That night, I dreamed the dream. It was exactly the same, 'cept for one thing. This time, when I turned to see the white stallion, there was a young Indian brave ridin' him. I knew who it was. It was Elizabeth and Cloud Dancer's son, John, Spirit of the White Stallion. We looked at each other for a moment, then he turned and rode off.

When I woke up, I suddenly understood everything, just like Grandpa told me I would. The ranch was Elizabeth's and Cloud Dancer's. They were my ancestors, Grandpa's, too. I couldn't wait for Grandpa to come home so's I could tell him he was right. I'd found out on my own, without him tellin' me.

Two days later, Harry and his boys came to the ranch. Harry had Grandpa tossed over his saddle. He had been killed by a mad grizzly, the monster from my dream. 'Cept, this time, it was Grandpa who died not me.

I felt like a bear cub abandoned by its dam. What would I do without Grandpa? How could I run the ranch alone? More than that, I missed the ole coot. I'd never git to tell 'im he was right. I'd never git to tell him goodbye. Lord, how I wished for some of that borin' history right then.

After Harry and his boys left, I thought back to my dream. Why had it been different? Then I realized. 'Though Grandpa was gone I was not alone, my dream'd proven that. John, Spirit of the White Stallion'd come to let me know they'd always be there for me. He took the place of Grandpa.

Tomorrow I'll go to Sulley Gap to buy a book. I think I'm goin' to have some stories to write down soon.



# F e e d b a c k

Another great issue....and you know why I especially liked it....because I got to see what Jennings looks like now and got to read his article. Good photo of him! My earliest and best memories of PEOPLE in Brentsville are of you and Jennings. You will always feel like family to me. Jennings and I were in the same grade at school as you know and I have many fond memories of time spent with both of you. I can only hope I will be lucky enough to be 'cousins' in the next go round.

One of the memories that stands out was Jennings, Donald Carter and I riding our bikes to Nokesville early one morning...it must have been summer time...I guess we made it there and back...I think we were in the fifth or sixth grade. I just remember the excitement of tagging along with them. I look forward to the Brentsville Newsletters as it gives me the opportunity to 'time travel.'

(not so strange a concept out here in California you know)

Julie Webster

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As always, a great newsletter... thank you so much for perservering through the power outages and computer crashes. I really enjoyed your intro about life in the days before electricity — it reminded me so much of my grandparents' house. I also always like the section on local civil war history. The poem about the last Confederate veteran reminded me of attending the re-enactment of First Manassas that took place on the 100th anniversary of the battle (Jul 1961.) I was only 10 at the time, but I remember it as a truly major event. I'm pretty sure that at that time, there were actually a handful of Civil War vets still living — men of age about 110 or so, who had been drummer boys during the war.

Mike Simpson

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I (and others like me) are not the reason for the demise of the printed word. I don't like trying to read stuff on the computer screen and I don't have one of those fancy electronic devices for reading stuff. I asked for the electronic version of Brentsville Neighbors to help you save \$\$ and to make a minor contribution to the environment, but it doesn't work. And, it's all your fault!! Every month there are so many interesting articles I want to file for future reference or share with someone, I end up printing all but the last page. Of course, this issue is no exception. We haven't seen J.C. for years, so I couldn't wait to show his article and photo to Jim. Please tell him, "Thanks for the walk back in time," from folks who went there with him as we read his article.

Elaine Yankey

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Just wonderful Morgan - and even for a Civil War buff like me I was captivated by that butterfly!! Ain't Mother Nature great.

Paul Spencer

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I enjoy the news letter and have planned to write to you about my enjoyment. As you know, my time in Brentsville spanned from 1936 to 1964 when I went to Africa, and visits took place only when relatives still lived in Brentsville. I saw the road go from river gravel to gray state gravel and last but not least, black top. My Great Grandfather was the original store owner and his kids ran the store before the Counts and Shoemakers. From pictures that you have, your friend was able to do a drawing of the original store and house.

You have added history to Brentsville that I never knew. Thank you and keep up the good work.

Bill Wade

# **Brentsville Neighbors**

## **Preserving Brentsville's History**

Contact us on:  
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**IN GOD WE TRUST**

**Brentsville Neighbors  
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