



the fifth wheel

JULY 2020

[HTTP://WWW.CORVAIR.ORG/CHAPTERS/LVCC](http://www.corvair.org/chapters/lvcc)

ESTABLISHED 1976

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We're Doing a Teleconference!

Lehigh Valley remains in Pennsylvania's "Green" zone and that restricts our ability to conduct an in-person meeting without a lot of fuss about social distancing. So we're doing a teleconference instead. It will be on the fourth Wednesday of July - that's July 22 - at 7:30 PM. All members of LVCC are invited! See Page 9 for complete information and instructions.

The Fifth Wheel is published monthly by Lehigh Valley Corvair Club Inc. (LVCC), a chartered chapter for the Corvair Society of America. We accept articles of interest to Corvair owners for publication. Classified advertising of interest to Corvair owners is available free of charge to all persons. Commercial advertising is also available on a fee basis. For details, email our newsletter editor, Allan Lacki, redbat01@verizon.net.

The Amazing Story of XP-777 Chassis #3

XP-777 was the Chevrolet project number for three experimental Corvair prototypes. The first was the Corvair Monza GT. It was followed by two sisters that went by the name Monza SS. All three were built in 1962.

Unlike the Monza GT, which had its engine in front of the rear axle, the Monza SS sisters had their engines in the rear. This was a more-practical layout for serviceability. For a while, Chevrolet executives thought of putting the car into production, so this was an important consideration.

Aside from their power trains, they shared nothing with production Corvairs, although several of their styling cues, such as the pointed nose and concave tail, influenced the design of the second-series Corvair.

As a matter of corporate policy, General Motors prohibited its divisions from engaging in racing, but this did not stop insiders such as Zora Duntov and Jim Musser from building racing prototypes in GM's secret fabrication shops.

And so it came to be that Musser set up the second Monza SS – Chassis #3 – for the track. It was equipped with a three-point roll bar, coil-over shock springs, and according to Musser, an experimental 3-liter engine with modular cylinder jugs and two triple-barrel Weber carbs.

True to GM's policy, it was never entered in any racing event, but it was taken out for testing at Riverside Raceway. Bill Krause, a race car driver and Maserati distributor, was the driver. According to Jim Musser,

“At the time Krause was racing a Birdcage Maserati. Krause lapped several seconds faster in our car and in fact came within a second of Penske's record in his Cooper Special.”

Musser's story is backed by Roy Lonberger who worked for three years in Chevrolet's styling studios. According to Lonberger, Bill Mitchell was the instigator.

“He (Bill Mitchell) ordered the third chassis to the protection of the secret warehouse studio and commissioned Chevy R&D to build a racing version of the modular motor, and install it into chassis #3. In parallel, Mr. Mitchell ordered a “repair” SS body be built from the original molds, and added an integral roll bar, cut down windshield, and an aero-dam beneath the nose. Assembled into a racing car configuration, the car was shipped to Riverside Raceway.”

Your author was not able to find any high-resolution photos of the race-prepared Monza SS, but Jim Musser uploaded a silent film of it going through its paces at the track. It's a bit grainy, but you can see the video on the Dean's Garage website.

Like so many GM prototypes, the Chassis #3 Monza SS was eventually relegated to a remote warehouse where it sat for a while. At some point, the Monza SS body was removed. Then, in 1966, the bare chassis was pulled out of storage and put to good use. Bill Mitchell needed a chassis for the Astro I show car. Chassis #3 was chosen.

Roy Lonberger has a special interest in this development. His styling sketches served as the basis for the Astro I bodywork. Roy explains:

“I was temporarily assigned to the secret Warehouse Studio located off the grounds of the Tech Center across 12 Mile Road, in a nondescript warehouse; and later when I was moved to Studio-X for six months to head up a program for Mr. Mitchell and Pete Estes for Chevrolet.”

A particularly brutal snow storm between Christmas and New Year had all but closed Styling. Those of us who made it to work found ourselves confronted with few designers and support people. Some tried to return home. I stayed until the storm passed. During that time, I decided that I wanted to create an extremely low aerodynamic race car - one that I could put up on the wall and hopefully use as stimulation for the upcoming mid-engine Corvette program that would be happening after the holidays. So I created several illustrations and put them up on the wall.

After the holiday, when Mr. Mitchell had returned from his vacation, he strode into the Chevy-2 studio, walked to the middle of the room without looking at anything, turned right, then looked up at the wall of sketches - my sketches for the super low race car. He stopped, looked, paused, said a few profanities, and then demanded who had done the sketches. In the back, I meekly raised my hand, where upon he ordered me to grab my stuff and come with him immediately. I did not know what to think, but the thought of being fired crossed my mind.

We jumped into his Silver Arrow Riviera and drove out of the Tech Center to the Warehouse studio. On the way, he confided that he wanted me to create my sports car for a running racing chassis that had been developed by Frank Winchell at Chevy R&D.

He staffed the studio with two modelers and one Tech-Stylist, and charged Larry Shinoda to make sure everything was completed on time and to guard the gates to the warehouse from other GM executives. It was to be a secret project.

Racing Chassis #3 with the modular motor became the running chassis for

(Continued on page 5)

Chassis #3 Monza SS at Riverside



Project XP-777 Chassis 1, 2 and 3



Chassis #1 is the basis for the Corvair Monza GT. Larry Shinoda and Tony Lapine did the styling.



Chassis #2 underpins this Monza SS. Front fender and headlight treatment reappeared on the Chaparral 2.



Chassis #3 underpins Chevy Astro I. Styling by Roy Lonberger.

the Corvair Super GT car, later to become the Astro I."

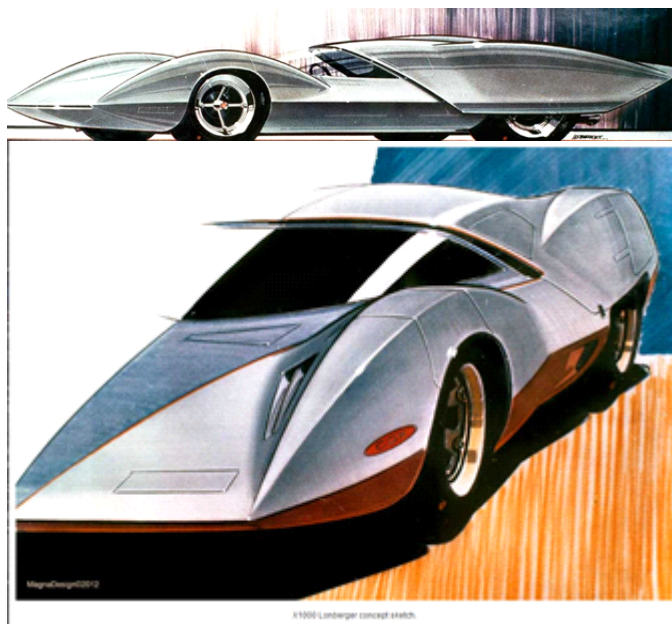
After doing the show circuit, the Astro I was put away, just like its predecessors. Bill Mitchell originally wanted the Astro I to be a race-ready vehicle. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line, much of the hardware had been stripped out of Chassis #3 and so, in the end, the Astro I turned out to be simply a "roller", without a working power train. But even though it was emasculated, it was not forgotten.

The story of its recovery and restoration is told in an article named, "Astro I Rescue" authored by Pete Koehler and published in the April 2016 issue of the CORSA Communicque magazine. The Astro I, still underpinned by Monza SS Chassis #3, is currently on display in the GM Heritage Center in Sterling Heights, Michigan.

Sources:

- Emails between Roy Lonberger and Allan Lacki, July 15-17, 2020.
- Dean's Garage. An Interview with Roy Lonberger, Part 2 <http://www.deansgarage.com/2012/an-interview-with-roy-lonberger-part-2/#comments>
- Dean's Garage. XP777 Monza GT Chassis 3 at RIR <http://www.deansgarage.com/2016/xp777-monza-gt-chassis-3-at-rir/>
- Eyes On Design at the General Motors Technical Center, Jim Musser <https://corvaircorsa.com/monzap11.html>
- Virtual Vairs post by James Rice regarding "The Monza GT and Monza SS". <http://www.vv.corvair.org/pipermail/virtualvairs/2016-October/139307.html>

Roy Lonberger quotations are presented here with his permission. Shown below are a small sample of Roy's sketches that served as the basis for Astro I styling.



Estate Sale for Dan "Junkman" Heckel, by John Sweet

I am in the process of helping Monique dispose of the parts that Dan had. I picked up a load of the parts last weekend and will be listing them here and on Ebay. For those of you that did not know Dan, he was a rebuilder and supplier of many unique parts. There also will be 2 of his cars sold which I will be listing on Corvair Center. They are a 66 Corsa Turbo Convertible and a 66 Corsa 140 convertible. Here are some of the parts I am liquidating for her.

Rebuilt Alternators 37 amp externally regulated \$65
 Rebuilt 61-9 Starters with solenoid \$85
 Rebuilt 1960 Starter with solenoid \$90
 Pair Rebuilt 65-9 Drive Shafts \$120
 Rebuilt 65-9 Blower Housings \$79
 Rebuilt 60-9 Idler Pulleys (correct length) \$55
 Blower bearing 65-9 (standard size) \$35
 60-4 Blower Bearing \$30
 60-9 Idler Bearing \$30
 All prices plus shipping. More to come

John's Corvair Parts. Stoneboro, PA
 js189@zoominternet.net.
 Phone: 814-336-9033

Corvair Preservation Foundation Acquires a Copper-Cooled Engine

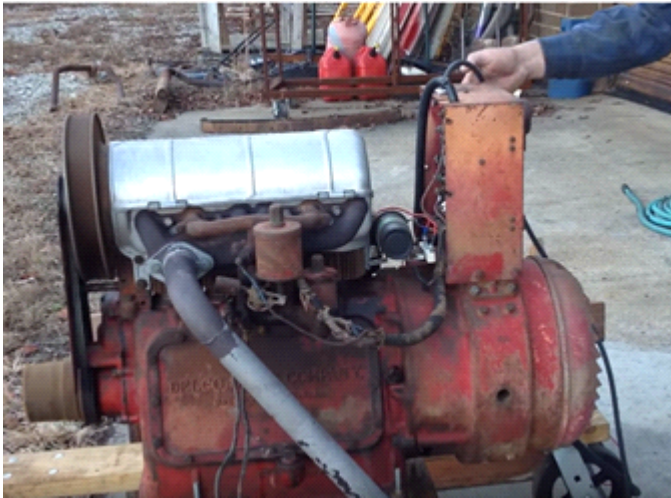
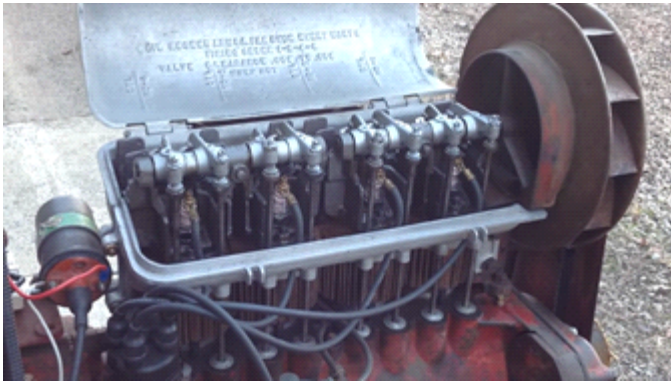
Corvair was not the first Chevrolet with an air-cooled engine. It was preceded in 1923 by the ill-fated Series M Chevrolet designed by Charles F. Kettering, head of General Motors' R&D department.

Kettering reasoned that copper transfers heat ten times more effectively than cast iron and so the Series M engine had copper cooling fins electro-brazed to the cylinder jugs rather than the usual cast-in iron fins. To distinguish it from other cars with air-cooled engines, Chevrolet referred to the Series M engines as "copper-cooled". In theory, it was a wonderful idea, but the car was introduced to the public before the engine was fully developed.

The few that were sold to the public had problems in the field. Instead of blowing cooling air down into the engine, the blower on the copper-cooled engine sucked air up from the bottom, thus coating the valve train with any dirt and dust kicked up as the car traversed the many unpaved roads of that era.

To make matters worse, drivers lugged the engine, meaning that the blower didn't spin fast enough to draw sufficient air

(Continued on page 7)



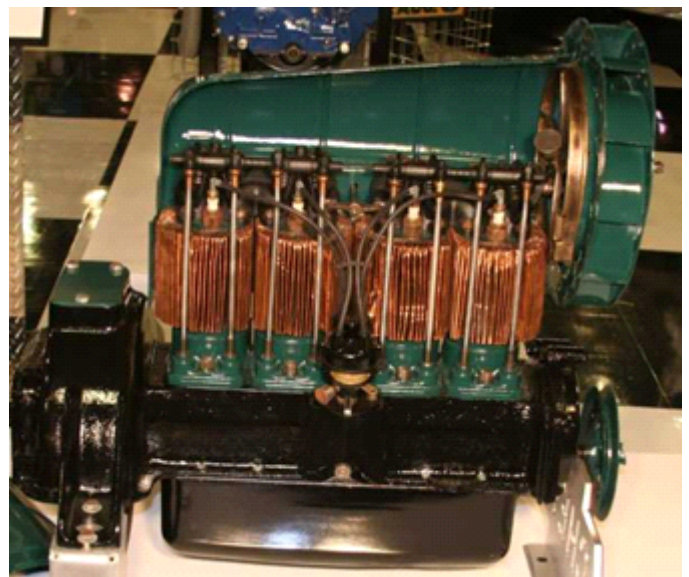
THE COPPER-CHEVROLET-COOLED MOTOR



\$880
F.O.B.
Plant, Mich.

1923 Superior Chevrolet Utility Coupe, Copper-Cooled

Left: Copper-cooled engine from a Delco-Light electric generator set. Right: Copper-cooled engine from the ill-fated 1923 Series M Chevrolet.



RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH, FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 1920

DELCO-LIGHT

Electric Light and Power When and Where You Want It

Delco-Light is the complete electric light and power plant. When you install Delco-Light you get bright, clean, safe, electric lights in every room of your house,—in every part of your barn and outbuildings. You get electric power at the house,—to pump the water, to run the washer, wringer, cream separator and churn. You get electric power at the barn,—to turn the cornsheller, the grindstone and the fanning mill,—all of this, bright, safe, electric lights, and dependable electric power, at the touch of a convenient button.

Delco-Light pays for itself by the work that it does. Delco-Light is the electric light and power plant for you to install; it is dependable, durable and efficient,—recommended and endorsed by more than 60,000 satisfied users throughout the world. This is your guarantee of its satisfactory operation. Write us today for your copy of the new Delco-Light catalogue, giving valuable information and further complete details.

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Suburban Lighting Corporation
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A Complete Electric Light and Power Plant for Farms and Country Homes. No Oil—No Gas—No Coal—No Batteries. No Bells—Only One Place to Oil—Thick Plates, Long Lived Batteries.

RUNS ON KEROSENE

across the cooling fins. The engines overheated, the cylinder barrels warped, and the engines lost power. The problems were so prevalent that Chevrolet recalled all the Series M cars and promptly scrapped them. Only two are known to exist, one being on display at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

But that's not the end of the story. Before joining Chevrolet, Kettering ran the Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company. Established in 1909, it's primary business was manufacturing electric generator sets. This was in the days before the federal Rural Electrification Administration extended the grid out into the countryside.

But farmers and their wives wanted to enjoy the benefits of electric lighting, tools and appliances and so they bought Kettering's generator sets by the thousands. There were other competitors, but Kettering's generators were the most popular. They were sold under the "Delco-Light" trade name.

General Motors bought Delco in 1918 and kept on selling Delco-Light generators all the way up to 1947. Most of them were powered by one-cylinder air-cooled engines that ran on kerosene.

But a four-cylinder unit was also offered and aside from the crankcase and a few other details, it was essentially the same copper-cooled engine that Kettering designed for the 1923 Series M Chevrolet. Although it made a terrible automobile engine, it worked fine as a stationary unit. Some were even used in GM manufacturing plants as pony engines.

It's impossible to find a Series M engine today. But a few four-cylinder copper-cooled Delco-Light generator sets still exist. You can see a couple of running examples on YouTube.

A month or two ago, CORSA member Lee Elder donated his Delco-Light generators set, complete with its four-cylinder copper cooled engine, to the Corvair Preservation Foundation.

CORSA and CPF Director Jerry Brown explains how this came about:

"A friend of mine who was helping me repair my house knows Lee Elder from a Florida Corvair club and asked me if I knew of any museum to which Mr. Elder could donate the generator. I didn't hesitate and said we will take it.

David and I went down to Mr. Elder's home and spent two days with him. He was happy to have two Corvair crazy people for company."

"Sorry to say, Mr. Elder has terminal stomach cancer. He is the one to get the credit for the donation. At a later date it will go to the Corvair Preservation Foundation. It's still in my pickup for safe keeping for now."

DIY Corvair Pushrod Tube Removal Tool, by: BorondaFarmRacing

Editor's Note: The following article was posted in the Corvair Center Forum on May 20, 2017

Here is a pushrod tube removal tool made from inexpensive hardware items. This tool fits inside the tube and grasps the interior of the tube by swelling the rubber stopper. An added bonus is that tightening the nut that swells the rubber stopper also imparts torque to the tool, which twists the tube free of the engine.

Parts List:
1/4-20 X 6" carriage bolt
1/4" ID X 1/2" OD X 1"L Nylon spacers (2)

1/4" washers (2)
1/4" ID X 5/8" OD X 3/4"L rubber plug*
1/4-20 nuts (3)**

* I found a rubber plug with a flange on it and trimmed the flange off. Rubber stoppers probably would not work because they are tapered.

** One of the nuts is used to expand the rubber plug. The other two are jammed together on the end of the carriage bolt to act as a handle.

LVCC Membership Dues

Our accounting year is from August 1 to July 31. Most LVCC members pay their annual dues at Das Awkscht Fescht, which is held during the first week in August. But Das Awkscht Fescht has been cancelled this year due to COVID-19. Therefore, it will be necessary for us to either mail in our dues or pay-up at our next meeting.

The price of LVCC membership remains very reasonable at \$15 per year, and if you are also a member of the Corvair Society of America, the rate drops even lower to \$10 per year.

On the next page, you will find a membership application. If you are already a member of LVCC, you don't really need to fill it out so long as the "memo" line on your check clearly indicates who you are. On the other hand, if any of your contact information has changed, please use the application form to tell us.



LVCC Dues are Due!



Lehigh Valley Corvair Club (LVCC)

A Chapter of the Corvair Society of America

2304 Main Street

Northampton, PA 18067

LVCC Membership Application

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Name of 2nd Adult Family Member _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

E-mail Address _____

DUES:

Annual dues for LVCC are \$15, but if you are also a member of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA), then you pay only \$10.

PAYMENT:

Please make your check or money order payable to LVCC, Inc., and mail this completed form and payment to our Treasurer, Richard C. Weidner, at the address above.

CARS:

If you are a Corvair owner, please provide the following information about your Corvairs:

Year	Model	General Condition	Color
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

LVCC July Teleconference



You Have Been Invited to a Teleconference Meeting!

Date and time: Wednesday, 7/22/20 7:30 PM - (US/Eastern)
Duration: 1 hour
Conference Call Dial-in number: United States (515) 606-5376
Access code: 838110

What's It All About?

In lieu of our usual monthly meeting, we're going to do a teleconference. It's been so long since we've had an in-person meeting, so this will be the next best thing. LVCC Prez Dennis Stamm agrees we should give it a try. All of our members are invited to participate. There is no cost. You don't need a computer to use it. The Corvair Society of America's Board of Directors has been using FreeConferenceCall for years.

It's not a video-conference. It's just a teleconference. Think of it as a phone call with a bunch of people on the line. That's what it's like. Naturally, we'll all have to watch that we don't talk over each other. Perhaps we can do a round-robin thing where each of us gets a turn to talk.

Allan Lacki a.k.a. redbat01@verizon.net

Instructions:

At the scheduled date and time, dial in to the conference. When prompted, enter the access code followed by pound or hash (#).

Optional Video and Screen Sharing:

I imagine most of us will simply join our teleconference by way of telephone. But apparently, we have an option to join the video and screen sharing session. The only people on your computer screen are those who log onto their computer and click online meeting link. I've never tried it, but a couple of guys on the CORSA Board of Directors have done so and they say it works.

Online meeting ID: [redbat01](#)
Online meeting link: <https://join.freeconferencecall.com/redbat01>



Calendar of Local Events



CORONAVIRUS UPDATE! *If you plan to attend any of the events below, please contact the organizers to see if they are still "on". Almost of all the listings include contact information, so give 'em a shout.*

Saturday, August 1, 2020 :::: NECC Motorsports at Pocono Raceway

The Northeast Corvair Council Inc, a.k.a. NECC Motorsports, is excited to announce we've locked in a full day of performance driving at Pocono Raceway's North Course on Saturday August 1st! The North Course offers unique challenges at Pocono, including a long stretch on the banked NASCAR oval to generate lots of speed before ducking back into the twisty infield road course. We'll be practicing social distancing as required by Pocono Raceway so bring your face mask as well as your helmet!

CANCELLED Friday to Sunday, July 31 to August 2, 2020 :::: 56th Annual Das Awkscht Fescht

From the Das Awkscht Fescht website: at <https://awkscht.com>. It's with heavy hearts that we make the announcement that this year's Fescht has been cancelled. It's only after careful consideration and much debate that we have concluded that this decision is the best way to go, in the interest of safety and well-being of our many visitors, participants, vendors, and volunteers that make the Fescht possible. We're disappointed as well, but rest assured, we will see you in 2021.

CANCELLED Sunday August 9, 2020 :::: 44th Annual Collectors Car Show & Flea Market

Location: Macungie Memorial Park, 50 North Poplar Street, Macungie, Pennsylvania 18062. Registration begins 8 AM. Show time: 10 AM to 3 PM. Price: \$15. All makes, models and years welcome. 50 trophies, top 35 and 15 special awards. Independent judging. Auto and household flea market. Dash plaques to first 250 cars. Food. 50/50 drawing. DJ. (610) 227-5312 1stpamustang@gmail.com gbaxter34ford@gmail.com <http://www.firstpamustang.org>

RESCHEDULED to Sunday August 23, 2020 :::: 18th Annual Silver Creek Father's Day Car Show

Location: 2943 Route 212, Springtown, PA 18081. Time: 8 AM to 3 PM. Rain or shine. Price: \$10 day of show. Food, entertainment, 50/50. Voting 12:30 to 1:30 PM. Trophies at 2:30 PM. (No Corvair class). SilverCreekAA@gmail.com. www.silvercreekathleticassociation.com

Saturday, September 19, 2020 :::: Corvair Day 2020

Location: Eastern Museum of Motor Racing, 100 Baltimore Road, York Springs, PA 17372 *GPS Address for Latimore Valley Fairgrounds (a part of EMMR), 314 Latimore Valley Road, York Springs, PA 17372. Time: 9 AM to 3 PM. Pre-registration price: \$12 if you register before August 31. Gate registration price: \$15. Food: hamburgers, hot dogs, drinks, and much more. Silent Auction. 50/50. Free dash plaques. Door prizes. All proceeds from this event go to Salvation Army of Harrisburg, York, and Lancaster counties and Sgt. Mac Foundation. This is a Corvair-only event.

RESCHEDULED to Saturday September 26, 2020 :::: 34th Annual NNL East Model Car Show

Location: Wayne PAL Building, 1 PAL Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470. Time: 9 AM to 4 PM. Model car show, scale marketplace and cottage industry expo. Presented by the Tri-State Scale Model Car Club. This year's theme: Known Survivors - Original old customers from our youth. www.nnleast.com

RESCHEDULED to Sunday October 11, 2020 :::: 6th Annual Red Coffin Memorial Car Show

Location: Lyons Community Park, 15 Park Avenue, Lyons, PA. Time: 9 AM to 3 PM. Price \$12 day of show. Dash plaques for first 100 registered. Food, music, door prizes, Chinese Auction, raffles, flea market, 50/50. For more information, call Marie Gift at (610) 921-2611 or visit www.readingfairgroundsracing.com

LVCC Officers

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