

Reviews

Collapse and Recomposition

Seriously Not All Right: Five Wars in Ten Years. Ron Capps. Schaffner Press. 279 pages. \$25.

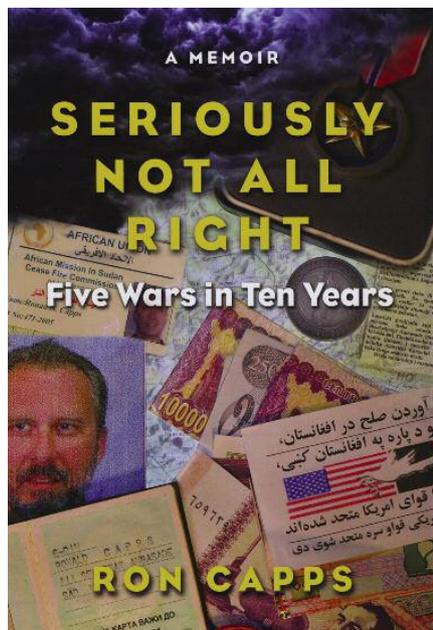
By Gen. Carter F. Ham
U.S. Army retired

A decade of war. An era of persistent conflict. These are oft-used phrases that attempt to offer a bumper-sticker definition to the current global security environment. In his memoir, *Seriously Not All Right*, Ron Capps steps away from the strategic and operational character of the past 10 years and describes war and conflict in an intensely personal way.

Capps has the credentials to do so. As both a U.S. Army soldier and foreign service officer with the U.S. Department of State, his personal journey will resonate with readers of varied backgrounds and interests. His assignments led him to Kosovo and Serbia, Central Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan. Each of these regions of the world is unique, of course, in a geo-strategic sense but uncannily similar when viewed in terms of human suffering and his personal experience. His vivid descriptions capture the maddening bureaucracies of the Army, the State Department and the United Nations. Amidst the chaos of conflict and the impersonal nature of big gov-

ernment, he finds a cohort of extraordinary characters who strive to make a difference in the lives of the innocent and the disadvantaged. His is a compelling narrative of the conflicts of our time.

Capps' most significant contribution, however, is his forthright revela-



tion concerning his personal struggle with post-traumatic stress. His story will ring true to many who have shared his feelings of anxiety—sometimes of inadequacy, both personal and professional—and an abiding

sense that they are “seriously not all right.” Those who have loved or cared for someone who experienced these same feelings will find Capps’ honest style will resonate with them as well. His personal struggle helps all of us more thoroughly understand this highly complex issue. Caregivers, families and leaders will benefit by learning from his experiences.

Perhaps most importantly, Capps continues to invest himself in seeking to help those wrestling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As the founder and director of the Veterans Writing Project, a nonprofit group, he is helping many veterans address their PTSD and other concerns through writing. His mantra, “Every veteran has a story,” has encouraged veteran writers through their curriculum, *Writing War: A Guide to Telling Your Own Story*.

This book is well worth reading, and the Veterans Writing Project will be of interest to many combat veterans who do, indeed, have important stories to tell.

Gen. Carter F. Ham, USA Ret., began his Army service as an enlisted Infantryman in the 82nd Airborne Division. He most recently served as commander, U.S. Africa Command, and is now a senior fellow at AUSA.

The Consciousness of Waging War

Head Strong: How Psychology is Revolutionizing War. Michael D. Matthews. Oxford University Press. 275 pages. \$29.95.

By Lt. Col. Stanley J. Wiechnik

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have rekindled interest in the impact of war on soldiers’ mental health. Since at least World War II, we have

been trying to determine which recruits were best suited for which position. *Head Strong: How Psychology is Revolutionizing War* presents an overview of the history as well as the current state of how psychology is being used to increase soldiers’ ability both to train for and endure combat, helping them find the capacity to reach their full potential.

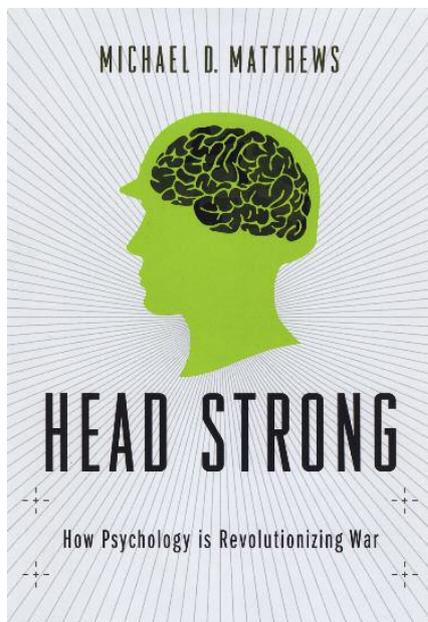
In spite of the fact that the book is relatively short and an easy read, it

covers a broad swath of both time and subject matter. The coverage begins at World War I in the early days of psychology as a science and then moves on to World War II, during which psychologically based questionnaires helped determine which soldiers were best suited for which jobs. The book also covers modern times, in which psychology is being used to help soldiers deal with the stress of war. In ad-

dition to those areas already mentioned, the book covers the story of how the Army switched from a reactive, treatment-based approach to the stress of combat to a proactive, preventive approach whereby psychology is used to help soldiers steel themselves for the impact war can have on them.

The wide swath the book covers is both its strength and its Achilles' heel. The book is written for a general audience. As such, it includes long passages describing initial training of both enlisted soldiers and officers that most experienced members of the military will find tedious. It covers areas of history that provide context but do not seem directly connected to modern issues.

Nevertheless, it provides a basic understanding of just how important psychology is to a modern Army, covering a wide range of topics related to psychology and mental capacity. It starts with the process of selecting and indoctrinating soldiers and airmen into the military. It follows through with chapters on training civilians to be soldiers and to survive the hardships of war. It goes on to look at the impact of war on humans. It addresses the idea



of building better leaders and, finally, looks at where the future of psychology may have the greatest impact on the soldier of the future.

Leadership training is perhaps the area in which this book can have its greatest impact. The author instructs at West Point, and the book feels like an introduction-to-military-psychology text. It would make an excellent introductory text for young military officers.

It is an ideal text for ROTC students; it is easy to read and understandable even for a first- or second-year cadet.

On the back dust cover of the book, there is a comment by retired Maj. Gen. Robert H. Scales. He notes that this book is the first (and at present, the only) source for understanding the human dimension in regard to military training and operations. This is an important point because without it, one might dismiss this book as overly broad and simplistically written.

Head Strong may not be a classic in military history or redefine doctrine or tactics, but it fills a niche and offers the right reader an important perspective on the roles psychology, cognition and brain physiology play in terms of what it means to be a soldier and a leader.

Lt. Col. Stanley J. Wiechnik serves in the Office of the Chief, Army Reserve at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. He enlisted in the Army in 1982 and received his commission in 1993. He deployed to Afghanistan as a company commander and Iraq as a battalion executive officer. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Indiana University and Vermont Law School.

The Big Red One on Omaha Beach: Revisited

The Dead and Those About to Die—D-Day: The Big Red One at Omaha Beach. John C. McManus. NAL Caliber. 384 pages. \$27.95.

By Col. Cole C. Kingseed

U.S. Army retired

Seventy years after D-Day, Omaha Beach remains a powerful symbol of extreme adversity and ultimate victory. In the latest examination of this pivotal battle, John C. McManus' gripping tale of heroism and courage under fire demonstrates that victory in war results from leadership throughout the ranks far more than reliance on technology, firepower and materiel. Dedicated "to the soldiers of the Big Red One, no matter the generation," *The Dead and Those About to Die* is the story of the Army's 1st Infantry Division on its bloodiest

day of a long and bloody war.

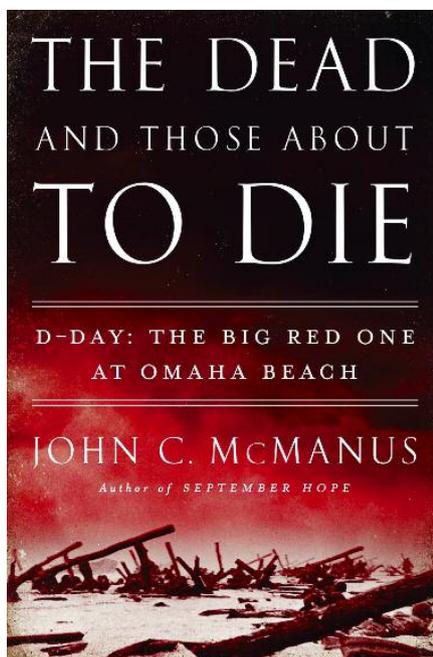
Why another book on D-Day? McManus believes that the 29th Division and the U.S. Army Rangers at Pointe du Hoc have overshadowed the Big Red One's role at Omaha Beach. Relying on myriad primary sources, including after-action reports, combat interviews, unit histories and historical narratives, McManus has produced a superb combat narrative. Moreover, his painstaking research serves as a model for future historians, and his outstanding notes clarify many of the mysteries surrounding the events of one of the most pivotal battles of World War II. In addition, well-placed maps sprinkled throughout the text enhance the reader's comprehension of how the Big Red One succeeded in overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles at Omaha Beach.

In compiling his battle narrative, McManus seeks to build upon the "foundation that ... other accomplished historians have established ... with the goal of improving upon our knowledge and understanding of the battle for Omaha Beach." He succeeds in describing the carnage that greeted the 1st Infantry Division when it stormed ashore on D-Day. The German accounts are particularly chilling. Stated Pfc. Hein Severloh, "There was blood everywhere, screams, dead and dying. Wounded moved around in the bloody watery slime, mostly creeping, trying to get to the upper beach to get some cover."

According to McManus, only two senior officers in the division played significant roles on Omaha Beach: Col. George Taylor, commanding the 16th Infantry Regiment, and assistant division commander Brig. Gen. Willard

Wyman. Experience taught Taylor that “the beach was death and inertia is the mortal enemy of success.” Taylor galvanized the regiment and led it forward against the enemy defenses. Not as flamboyant as Taylor, Wyman established the division advanced command post and organized the initial beachhead. Both contributed immeasurably to ultimate victory.

Overall, McManus characterizes “Bloody Omaha” as a soldier’s battle. He meticulously describes the actions of 1st Lt. Jimmie Monteith, Tech. Sgt. 5 John Joseph Pinder and Pvt. Carlton Barrett, all of whom received the Medal of Honor. Other heroes include Tech. Sgt. Philip Streczyk of F Company, 16th Infantry Regiment, and his platoon leader, Lt. John Spalding. Spalding and Streczyk landed in the initial wave of assault troops and made the initial penetration of the German defenses. In the words of Army commander Gen. Omar N. Bradley, every man who landed at Omaha Beach was a hero.



Capt. Joe Dawson followed Spalding’s platoon in the second wave of assault troops. Dawson commanded G Company, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment. He quickly assessed the situation and discovered a path

through the enemy defenses. When the ramps went down, Dawson reminisced, “There was nothing I could do on the beach except die. ... I felt the obligation to lead my men off [Easy Red], because I felt the only way they were going to get off was to follow me.” In many accounts, Dawson was the first commander to reach the bluffs above Omaha Beach. Some historians credit Dawson’s success to blind luck because he landed in the right place at the right time, but McManus dismisses such claims: “What Dawson accomplished was the product of not just good fortune, but also courage, know-how, and resolve.”

Despite inadequate aerial and naval bombardment to destroy the enemy defenses, the failure of intelligence that did not identify the presence of an experienced enemy battalion at Omaha Beach, and the confusion resulting from landing nonfighting men before the beach was able to absorb them, the Big Red One achieved what most observers thought impossible by day’s

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² Lead story.

³ Winner of the 2013 AUSA/Army Capabilities Integration Center (ARCIC) writing contest.

end. The cost of victory was horrific, but as dawn arrived on June 7, the division began expanding the nascent beachhead.

How had the 1st Infantry Division succeeded? McManus attributes the victory to the Big Red One's combat experience, commanding general Lt. Gen. Clarence Huebner's insistence on training his division to a winning standard, the soldiers' faith in their respective leaders and, most importantly, the human factor that was inculcated throughout the ranks. The 1st Infantry Division "possessed a culture of personal accountability at the basic human level." The personal relationships among the soldiers and their leader "produced courage within those who were in a state

of shock, frightened out of their wits, or simply confused about what to do next."

McManus closes his story with a chapter called "Meaning" that is as gripping as his combat narrative. He carefully describes the postwar careers of many of the soldiers who distinguished themselves on D-Day, illustrating the fact that long after June 6, every veteran carried the emotional scars from that hellish beach. Many survivors who first breached the German defenses, including Spalding, met tragic ends. Others, like Dawson, lived long and productive lives, but no one escaped the memory of what occurred on Omaha Beach.

Was victory at Omaha Beach worth the cost of 1,500 casualties in the 1st In-

fantry Division and its attached units on June 6, 1944? McManus thinks so, and so does war correspondent Don Whitehead, who accompanied the Big Red One on the longest day. Though the victory at Omaha was staggering in its cost of human lives, it "turned the key that unlocked the door to victory in Europe." That seems to be a fitting epitaph for the events of D-Day.

If you choose a single book on D-Day to read this commemorative year, select *The Dead and Those About To Die*. It is that good.

Col. Cole C. Kingseed, USA Ret., Ph.D., a former professor of history at the U.S. Military Academy, is a writer and consultant.

An Impressive—Yet Little Known—Officer

Exposing the Third Reich: Colonel Truman Smith in Hitler's Germany.
Henry G. Gole. University Press of Kentucky. 415 pages. \$40.

By Brig. Gen. Harold W. Nelson
U.S. Army retired

Henry Gole must have grown tired of hearing "Who was he?" while researching and writing *Exposing the Third Reich*, but he has produced a fine biography that answers the question definitively.

Col. Truman Smith was a Yale graduate who entered the Army through membership in the socially elite 12th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard. When Guard units were activated to guard the border with Mexico, he answered the call. He was recognized as a young man with great potential, earned a Regular Army commission, led an Infantry company in the 3rd Infantry Division with great distinction in the Meuse-Argonne campaign and remained with the U.S. Army of Occupation in Germany after the Armistice. Having proven his capabilities as an Infantry officer, he was then lured into military government, where he thrived. He became assistant military attaché in Berlin as the American Embassy was being established.

Smith finally returned to the U.S. in 1924 and served briefly as a peacetime company commander in the 18th Infantry. He escaped garrison duty by earning a seat in the advanced course at the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, followed immediately by a year at the Command and General Staff College. He then returned to Fort Benning as a faculty member and became one of "Gen. George C. Marshall's Men"—a handpicked group of innovative officers who improved every aspect of the learning experience at the Infantry School while building relationships with a mentor who would carry many of them to great heights before their careers ended. He then attended the Army War College, where he studied strategy and mobilization. Then, it was off to Hawaii for a relaxing interlude as a battalion commander before being ordered back to Germany for attaché duty.

Gole—and most modern professionals—can't help pausing to wonder how Smith's next decade might have turned out if he had been allowed to proceed on the Infantry track. But, then as now, no one could guess what the future might bring, and in 1935—when Smith went back to Berlin—the Nazis were consolidating their power. He was the officer tasked with interview-

ing an obscure right-wing politician named Adolf Hitler in 1922. He was also the officer Marshall had sent to Germany from the Infantry School to visit divisional maneuvers in East Prussia in 1931, and he had written his War College paper on "Germany and Hitler."

Smith was a marked man. The fact that he was independently wealthy and could afford the unreimbursed expenses that went with the job made him a desirable candidate. Having an attractive, outgoing wife who spoke French and German—and had joined him in Germany on his first tour—may have been a factor as well.

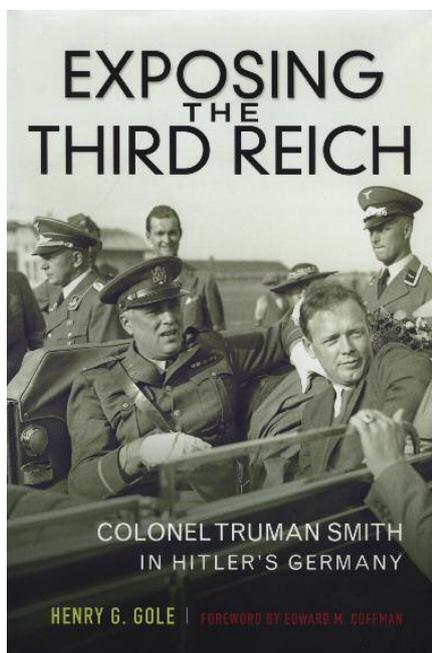
Given the title, it is no surprise that what comes next forms the heart of the book. Smith set out to learn as much as he could about German rearmament, expanded on his exiting contacts with German army leaders and traveled back to Washington at his own expense to make sure the Military Information Division (MID), the forerunner to today's G-2, gave appropriate credence to his reports. He and his staff lacked the necessary expertise and access to evaluate the burgeoning German air force, so he enlisted the help of Charles Lindbergh, who gained enviable access to production and training facilities (with

Smith in tow). Unfortunately for Smith, that uniquely productive relationship had a serious downside after Europe went to war in September 1939. Lindbergh was one of the most outspoken advocates of isolation, and journalists and politicians attacked both men.

Smith's bigger (and more lasting) problem in 1939 was a diagnosis of diabetes. That disease required medical retirement in those days, but Marshall, the newly installed Army Chief of Staff, ignored the rules and kept Smith on duty at MID. That cozy setup had to end when Marshall began relieving unfit officers in 1941, but Smith was recalled from retirement shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor and served as a special advisor on Germany until the end of the war.

His service did not end there. His contacts with "good Germans" were invaluable to the U.S. government in the mid-1950s, when the *Bundeswehr* (post-war German army) was being created. He continued to maintain contacts related to that topic until his death.

There's a lot in this book that should



appeal to readers of ARMY. Smith and his wife Kay both drafted memoirs, which Gole used effectively to give the reader her views. Some seem to think that Army wives began to matter only recently—not so, as anyone reading good military biographies knows.

The value of this book lies in what

Smith's experiences teach us for today. Many of today's officers are building longitudinal relationships with officers in foreign armies. Smith's experience reminds us that those contacts are important to our nation and that they can sometimes grow into lifelong friendships, even when interrupted by war. In addition, Smith's career reminds us that even a small, underfunded Army needs to develop specialists in a broad range of fields and offer them opportunities for schooling and fulfilling assignments—even if they can't be promoted to the highest ranks. Finally, Smith's contributions remind us that the hard work of intelligence doesn't begin when the bullets start to fly; it's every day. It's hard work, and it is usually not a path to fame and promotion. This excellent biography lets us appreciate that service.

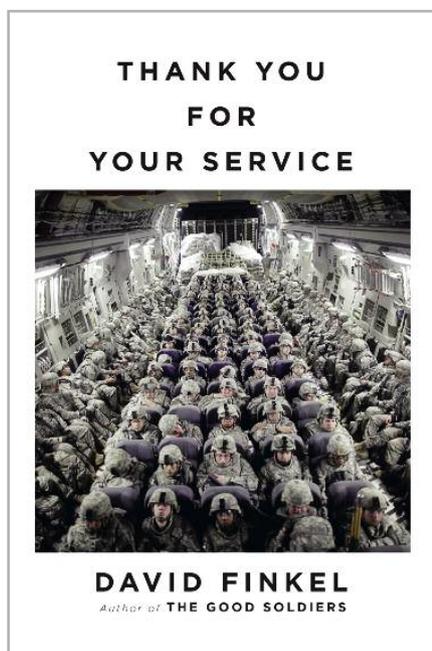
Brig. Gen. Harold W. Nelson, USA Ret., is a former U.S. Army Chief of Military History. He has served on the faculties of the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and the U.S. Army War College.

Varied Fare

Thank You for Your Service. David Finkel. Sarah Crichton Books. 256 pages. \$26.

In *The Good Soldiers*, David Finkel, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and editor and writer for *The Washington Post*, rendered a gut-wrenching account from the front lines in Baghdad during the surge. Embedded with the Army's 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment (2-16), during a grueling 15-month tour, he shared the reality of the war on the ground in Iraq. Readers experienced a sense of what those soldiers felt as they conducted patrols where snipers and improvised explosive devices claimed life and limb.

In his most recent book, *Thank You for Your Service*, Finkel follows the lives of some of those same soldiers as they and their families deal with the physical and psychological wounds from the war. All agreed to participate with the understanding that every-



thing would be "on the record," and most of the book is based on events

the author personally observed. What ensues is an honest, heartbreaking assessment of the real cost of war, both to the soldiers who fight it and the families they come home to.

Finkel objectively conveys their experiences as they deal with the lingering and debilitating effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, physical injuries and the accompanying suicidal ideations via the multiple bureaucracies that treat them. The main story line is about a 2-16 Infantry NCO who left his third deployment to Iraq early due to a "mental health evacuation." He was the one everyone relied upon, but he left Iraq a broken man. Other soldiers in the book are also struggling, along with their families. For them, the trauma, nightmares and sense of loss or feelings of inadequacy are often contagious.

Finkel intricately tells the stories of these soldiers to convey the challenges of all combat veterans, including a few from wars long past. As they negotiate the myriad Department of Veterans Affairs appointments, inpatient rehabilitation and therapy

programs, Warrior Transition Units, and more, the reader gets a sense of all that is required to make them well and truly bring them home. The reader also realizes that many are able to deal with their experiences, reintegrate into civilian life and resume

their lives with almost no challenges.

This is a captivating book fueled by the honesty and challenges of these combat veterans and their families, chronicled by a talented author with unfettered and intimate access to their lives.

—Col. Alexander K. Kose, USA Ret.

Briefly Noted...

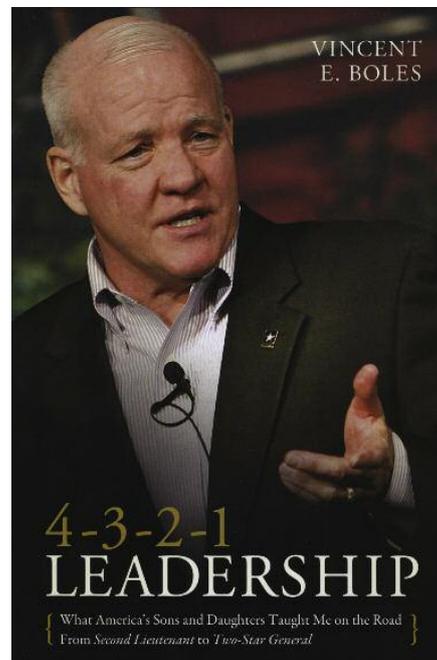
4-3-2-1 Leadership: What America's Sons and Daughters Taught Me on the Road From Second Lieutenant to Two-Star General. Vincent E. Boles. Blooming Twig Books. 250 pages. \$26.95.

If an Army thesaurus existed, Maj. Gen. Vincent E. (Vinny) Boles, USA Ret., would be listed as an antonym for the term *toxic leader*. Even from a brief glance at his book's foreword and preface, it's easy to gauge his level of passion for leadership, which he carried over into his post-Army career as a motivational speaker and consultant.

Thirty-three years living a life of organization and structure enabled him to

amass a wealth of leadership and knowledge, and he shares a great deal of this in his book. His no-nonsense approach is evident in the layout, but his tone is conversational and in no way off-putting, making for a very effective delivery of his key points. He provides detailed explanations of why these principles have worked for him and why they can work in any organization, military or otherwise, if properly applied.

Particularly interesting is the reason he gives as to why he joined the Army in the first place: "to run away from what I did not want to do." It is impressive how readily he admits that he



had no "visions of grandeur" during his early days in the Army, but he realizes they did wonders to shape the outcome of his life. Some retired officers reflect on their early lives and recall dreams of serving in the Army at a young age. Boles is not one of them. He looked at fulfilling his ROTC commitment as a great way to "get away" for four years, as he did not want to mop floors at the family restaurant, much less inherit it and be responsible for running it someday.

Military personnel will be able to relate to Boles' stories of Army work and life, but he is careful not to overwhelm civilian readers with a volume of unfamiliar terms. After all, he didn't write this book exclusively for the military community. Boles learned countless lessons on leadership during his three-plus decades in the Army, and he does us a great service by putting them all into one volume and sharing them.

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