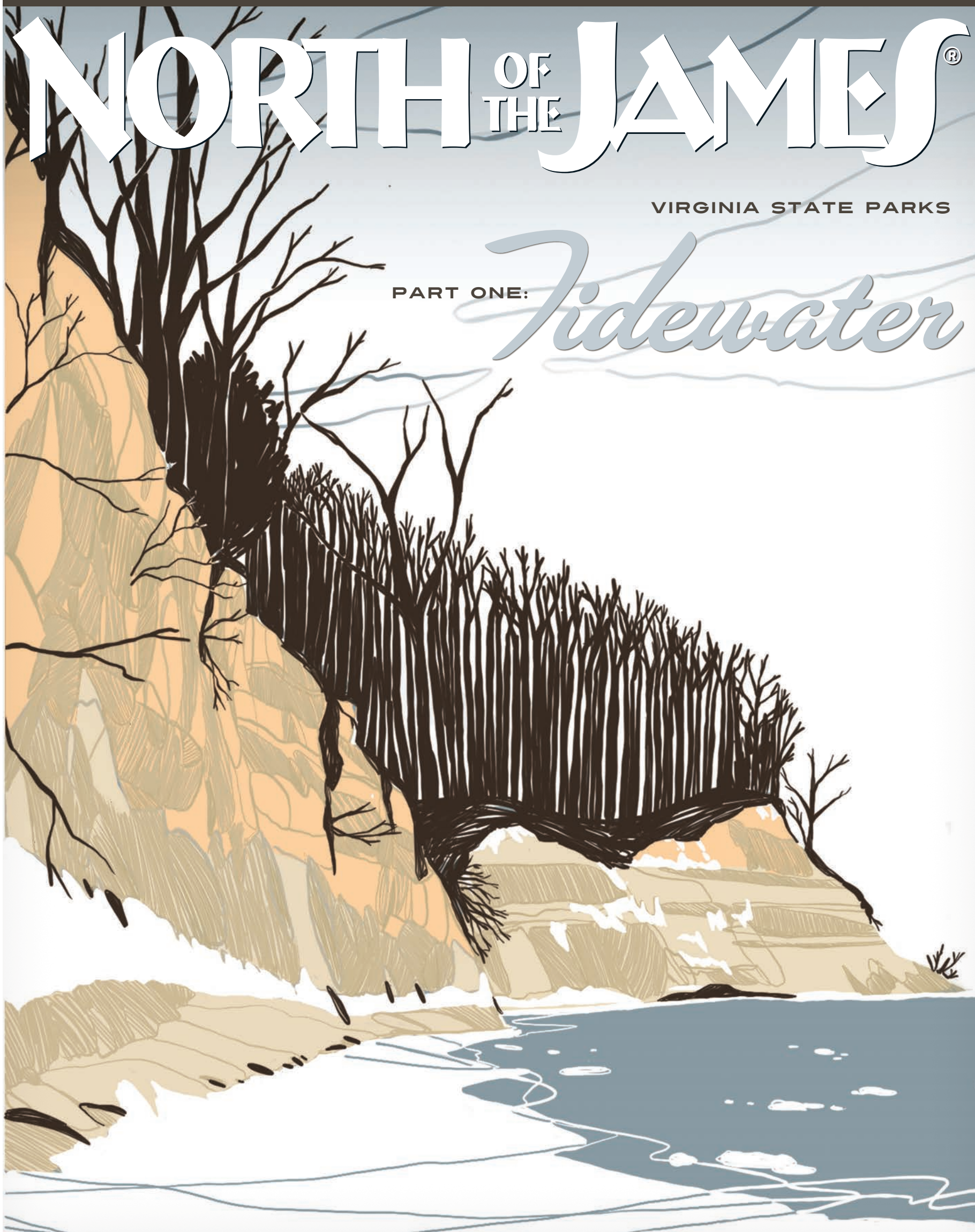


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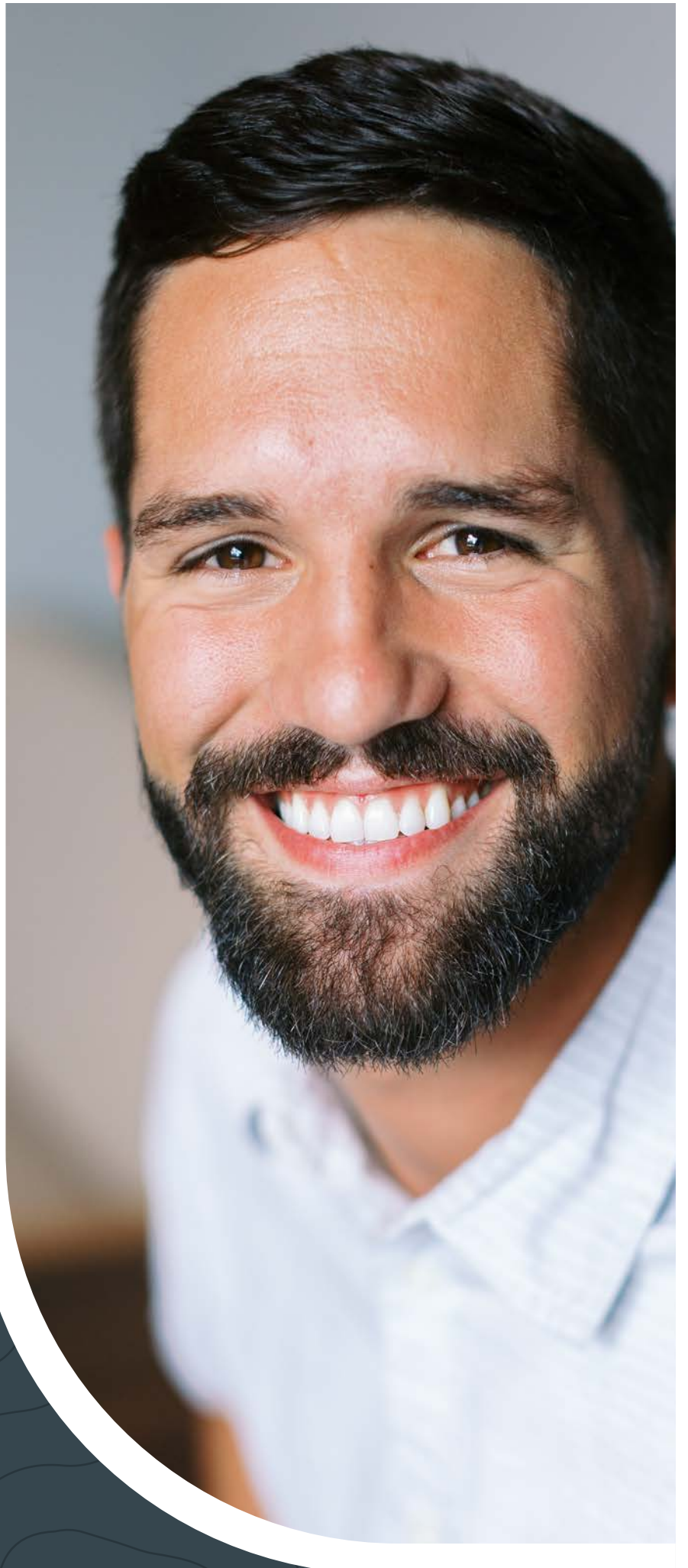




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COVER IMAGE:

Horsehead Cliffs at Westmoreland State Park.
Illustration by Catherine McGuigan

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HIDDEN HISTORIES

The Battle of Bamber Bridge

by JACK R JOHNSON

“The general consensus of opinion is that the only American soldiers with any manners are the Negroes.” —George Orwell

IN 1943, THE RACE RIOTS in Detroit made headlines in the United States, while quite another battle of racial tension drew to a bloody close in Lancashire, Great Britain. The so-called battle of Bamber Bridge was hardly mentioned in the U.S. Press at the time. It didn't involve US troops battling German or Italian fascists, but rather white U.S. troops battling black U.S. troops.

The small village of Bamber Bridge did not share the United States' attitude toward black service men. Blacks were not shunned, or told that they couldn't mingle with whites. According to author Anthony Burgess who lived in Bamber Bridge, the US Army's segregationist attitudes were out of step with the locals, who appreciated blacks, especially the ladies who wanted to learn the new 'jitterbug' dance. When U.S. military authorities demanded that the town's pubs impose Jim Crow type segregation, the landlords responded with mocking signs that read: "Black Troops Only."

This didn't go over well with the white troops, and especially not the white MPs.

On June 24, 1943, a group of Black servicemen were 'drinking up time' at Ye Olde Hob Inn and stayed a little past closing time. Two MPs passing the pub noticed that one of the African American troops, Private Eugene Nunn, was improperly dressed (as he was wearing a field jacket), and attempted to arrest the soldier. But they faced new solidarities: a white British soldier challenged the MPs: "Why do you want to arrest them? They're not doing anything or bothering anybody."

Nunn backed away and a crowd surrounded the two policemen. One of the MPs drew his gun when another soldier advanced on him with a bottle in his hand, they fought and the MPs retreated. As they left the Inn, the Black soldier threw the bottle and hit the windshield of the MPs' jeep.

Thinking that was the end of it, the Black soldiers began walking back to their station at Adams Hall. But that



wasn't the end of it. The MPs were angry that the soldiers hadn't been arrested and had sent a bottle smashing against their windshield. They caught up with the soldiers strolling to Adams Hall and tried to arrest them again.

The Black soldiers resisted, throwing bottles and cobblestones. An MP fired a shot to stop one of them throwing a cobblestone, hitting Private William Crossland in the back. It proved fatal.

Under fire, the Blacks ran to Adams Hall and the MPs went for reinforcements. Rumors spread at Adams Hall that a serviceman had been shot in the back and that the MPs were gunning for Blacks. Up to 200 men then formed a crowd in the area of Adams Hall. The MPs showed up again, this time with an armored vehicle sporting a machine gun. When the Black soldiers saw this, they armed themselves with rifles.

After that, all hell broke loose.

Miraculously, only four soldiers were wounded, but Crossland was dead. One British resident said that the firing went on until 3 am.

According to the BBC, in total, "Thirty-five soldiers were accused of mutiny, seizing arms, rioting, firing upon officers and MPs, ignoring orders and

failing to disperse." Seven were found not guilty, and the remainder received prison sentences from 3 months to fifteen years. Seven men received sentences of twelve years or more.

General Ira C. Eaker, placed the majority of the blame for the violence on the white officers and MPs because of their poor leadership and the use of racial slurs by MPs. To prevent similar incidents, he combined the Black trucking units into a single special command. The ranks of this command were purged of inexperienced and racist officers, and the MP patrols were racially integrated.

Although there were several more racial incidents between Black and white American troops in Britain during the war, none were on the scale of Bamber Bridge.

Meanwhile, stateside, reports of the incident were heavily censored. Newspapers only disclosed that violence had occurred "in a town somewhere in Northwest England." It wasn't until years later, in the late 1980s when a maintenance worker discovered bullet holes from the battle in the walls of a Bamber Bridge bank that the real history of the incident became known. **NJ**

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COVID-19 Teens

by CHARLES BRANDON RAPP MCGUIGAN

C OVID-19 HAS changed the way we live. Teenagers and young adults have been affected in unique ways. For one thing, graduations have been held differently during the pandemic. Many seniors attended outdoor graduation ceremonies, even in school parking lots. Other seniors had graduation parties with their family and friends, while social distancing. Many young people have been following all the protocols to ensure their health and the well-being of others. They have been wearing masks when in public, staying six feet apart from other people, and properly washing their hands.

Recently, I interviewed a few of my friends, most of whom have graduated from high school during this crisis. They were following all necessary precautions during the interviews conducted on my front porch, and told me about their experiences and their perspectives during these unprecedented times. They also told me about their plans for the future.

They included Josie Arthur, who received her high school diploma from Appomattox Regional Governor School in Petersburg and will be attending Emerson College in Boston this fall; Henry Johns, a homeschooler who just finished high school and will taking a gap year; Jefferson Miles, a recent Community High School graduate, who begins his freshman year at Virginia Military Institute later this month; Nicholas Erickson, who graduated from Douglas Southhall Freeman High School and plans to take a gap year working at Patient First before attending Virginia Commonwealth University in the fall of 2021; and Willa Johns, a rising sophomore who is homeschooled.

Here are their responses to a number of questions I asked them:

Q: What have you been doing since school let out because of COVID-19?

Josie: “When it was colder, I would run a lot. I’m not a very good runner, but I would do it for exercise. But now it’s really hot, so I don’t really feel like doing that anymore. I’ve been writing songs and drawing. Sometimes I do yoga, or I’ve gone to the river to swim.”

JOSIE ARTHUR



Jefferson: “I’ve been trying to stay in shape a lot and I’ve been going on runs when I can. I’ve been working out. But just like everybody else, I’ve been really doing a lot of staying inside, watching TV, and reading.”

Nick: “Mainly I’ve been just playing a lot of chess with my grandpa. Other than that, not much.”

Willa: “My schoolwork kind of stayed more regular since I don’t have to go anywhere to do it. But once I finish my schoolwork for the year, I’ve just been doing a whole lot of nothing.”

Henry: “I have been staying more inside. I haven’t been going out in public spaces a lot. It’s been very quiet for me at my home and I haven’t done a lot. So, yes, my habits have changed, but no, I haven’t really done anything, if that makes any sense.”

Q: What precautions have you been following during the pandemic?

Josie: “Mostly social distancing and every time I go out to just go to a store with my mom, I’ll wear a mask. If we’re walking outside or talking outside then we’ll just be six feet apart, not touching.”



HENRY JOHNS

Jefferson: “I’ve been trying to keep my interaction with my people down as much as possible and when I do interact with people I keep a mask on, use hand sanitizer, cover my face—common courtesy things.”

Nick: “I’ve been wearing the masks, I’ve been staying six feet apart, I’ve been trying not to be around or be super close to anybody. I’ve been using a lot of hand sanitizer. I’ve been very careful when I go into stores.”

Willa: “I’ve been wearing a mask when I go out in public spaces where it’s crowded. I’ve been social distancing with people. If I need to go in a store or someone’s house, I wear my mask.”

Henry: “I have worn a mask in public when I am in enclosed spaces, and when I am close to a person such as inviting them into my home especially, I ask them to wear a mask. Also, I wash hands after touching things as in groceries that are coming out from the car, from inside grocery stores where obviously people can touch them. And they might have the virus. So, it’s always good to wash your hands after you’ve been in public spaces.”

JEFFERSON MILES



Q: What was your graduation like?

Josie: “It was actually really fun. I honestly liked it better than what it would have been if it was normal. We didn’t do it online. At least my school didn’t. We had this parking lot thing. So, half of the students came in the morning and then half of the students came in the afternoon. And everyone would park their cars, there would be a family in a car and there was this little stage that they built. It was really cute, and people would honk congratulatory honking if their kid was on the stage or something. I actually liked it a lot.”

Jefferson: “It was interesting. We had a two-part graduation. So, the ceremony itself was online and there was a nice slide show that was organized by our school. Then, in the following days students went to pick up their diplomas at the school in waves and got their pictures taken. Things like that.”

Nick: “My graduation was definitely way scaled down. It was spread out. One of us at a time would walk across a little riser on the football field. Our name would be called through the little speaker system they had on the football field and they only have about

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COVID-19 STORIES

ten of us go up at a time. It was in sections; it was split off into time blocks.”

Willa: “Actually, I didn’t have a graduation, sort of party or anything. Cause it’s never really been something that we’ve super celebrated whenever we go into the next grade. We usually have a tiny, little pizza party. But that didn’t happen this year.”

Henry: “My graduation was very quiet. I didn’t have a lot of people to talk to about it. It was really just my family. I had a lot of people come over to see me, just a few at a time. We didn’t have a big party. It was very nice to just see everyone and to be appreciated for graduating. But there wasn’t much to do really because there wasn’t a big party. So, it was more of a relaxing time talking to an individual person.”

Q: Did you do online learning?

Josie: “I did. My school had an option where you could opt out of some of your classes for the semester. I’m a senior, and I really wasn’t learning that much so, I opted out of most of my classes. I did have to continue to take English, History, and AP Environmental Science.”

Jefferson: “Seniors were not required to do online learning. I had to take a few tests just to solidify my final grades online. But I didn’t have to take any online classes.”

Nick: “Yes, we did do online learning.”

Willa: “Yes, I usually use a lot of online learning resources with my school because I’m homeschooled.”

Henry: “Yes, I did do online learning for a lot of my second semester of my school year at North Star.”

Q: How have you been occupying yourself during this crisis?

Josie: “I watched movies, TV shows, and I go on TikTok a lot, which is fun. Also, I been trying to be active and creative for the most part.”

Jefferson: “I’ve been playing a metric ton of Xbox, so many video games, and I been doing odd jobs around my dad’s house and my mom’s house. Really, anything you can do inside; I been doing it.”

Nick: “I’ve been mainly playing a lot of chess with my grandpa. I’ve been trying to learn a lot about chess and trying to become better at the game. I also have been trying to find a job during this crisis. So, that’s been keeping me pretty busy.”

Willa: “I’ve been doing a lot of reading, roller skating, and drawing a lot. Which has been fun so I can improve

NICHOLAS ERICKSON



a bit more. I have been writing letters to my friends that live far away.”

Henry: “I have been having a lot of an online presence in my own little communities that I have found online. Not much to do with the pandemic. But I have been keeping myself occupied.”

Q: What is your passion, how have you been spending your time working on it?

Josie: “I actually recorded a song the other day and I was really proud of it. So, that was cool. Maybe, it’s like a silver lining of everything.”

Jefferson: “Since probably fourth grade I’ve played trombone. So, I’d say that’s probably one of the biggest and most consistent passions I’ve had, along with any social activities. I just really enjoy communicating with my friends, spending time with people, going out and doing things. It doesn’t have to be anything specific.”

Nick: “I’ve been writing a lot of music with my friend Connor. Me and him have been writing. We probably spent around ten hours so far. So, I definitely have spent a lot of time during this pandemic working on music.”

Willa: “Definitely roller skating and drawing. Those are my two really big things.”

Henry: “My passion at the moment is Magic: The Gathering. It’s a card game. I’ve been having a fun time collecting them, and spending money that I got on my graduation and my birthday.”



WILLA JOHNS

Q: What has the corona virus taught you about yourself and the world at large?

Josie: “This is kind of sad, but it’s taught me that our current government is kind of inefficient, and a lot of people are disadvantaged because of the way the system works.”

Jefferson: “It taught me how much I rely on everyday human activity that you sort of take for granted. Being out of school and not being able to go visit your buddies or see family takes a toll. There have been a lot of examples where people from all across the world have come together, and supportive of each other and trying to make sure we handle this virus as one. It’s also taught me that sometimes ignorance just cannot be fixed. Some people are just stupid.”

Nick: “It’s taught me that when it gets tough and you have to completely change what you’ve been used to and what you been doing that I personally am a lot more adaptable than I thought, and everyone around me has been super adaptable as well. So, I guess it taught me that there are some people that can adapt to drastic change and kind of thrive off it to be honest. My mom, for instance, has started selling jewelry online during this pandemic and sustained herself through it.”

Willa: “It’s taught me that I’m really dependent on human interaction outside of my family. I didn’t realize

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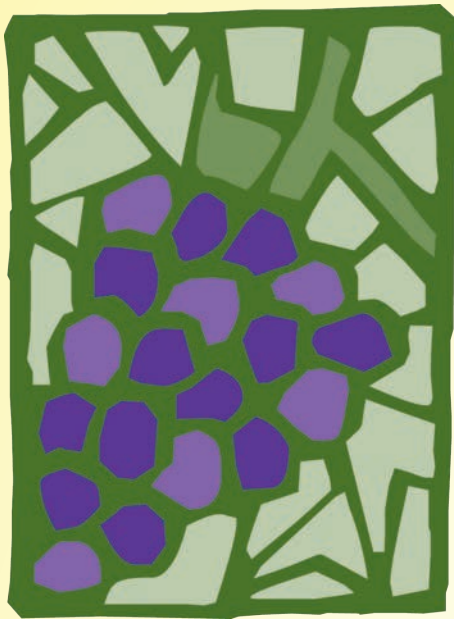
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how much of an extrovert I was until I couldn't hang out with people. The world continues to disappoint me of how it handles crises, how there are people out there protesting against wearing masks for a pandemic that could kill you. It's so infuriating to me."

Henry: "It has taught me that I really need to be among people that I care about and people that I am familiar with to feel confident in myself. It really dampens my heart a lot when I can't see the people I like too often. It's also taught me that the world is a very messed up place."


Q: What has your response been to the Black Lives Matter protests?

Josie: "I personally was really behind the movement. I attended a couple of protests and I thought it was a really good experience and I hope that there will continue to be protests and I really hope that we get to make some change."

Jefferson: "I am in full support of them. I've been to a few of them. I wish I could have been to more. But during these times, it's hard to maintain the balance between safe and support. I think it's great that so many people, especially young people, are fighting for change that should have happened years ago. It makes me proud to be from Richmond to see everything that's going on, to see nightly protests. We've got the monuments down, signing petitions, and everything, getting George Floyd's murderers held accountable, fighting for Breonna Taylor."

Nick: "I've been very happy to see it and I've gone down to the protests and I protested. I definitely support the Black Lives Matter movement. I've been signing petitions and trying to make a change."

Willa: "Wholeheartedly agree with it. It's super exciting for me. I think that now that everyone is kind of out of work a little bit or working from home it's easier for people to go out and protest. I've gone to the protests in Lakeside, and I'm also trying to organize a little protest for teens and young adults my age to skate and do a little protest."

Henry: "I'm really excited that all of this stuff is happening at once. Far too often, the Black Lives Matter movement has been brushed under the rug and not many people have appreciated it. With the presidential election just around the corner and the monuments being taken down in Richmond, things have been moving forward a lot faster than they would have in the past." 

WHAT'S NEW

NORTHSIDE Dental Co Opens in Northside



One of Northside's newest neighbors opened its doors for the first time last month during the COVID-19 pandemic. The space at the corner of Westwood and Hermitage had been undergoing extensive renovation for months. The result is a 3, 400 square foot elegantly

designed suite of dental offices, with Chelsea Tolbert, DDS at the helm.

Outfitted with the latest in dental technology, including i CAT™ 3D Imaging and portable Nomad x-ray systems, Northside Dental offers a unique patient experience. From the moment you walk in you'll notice the differences. The reception lobby offers a deluxe coffee bar, Netflix-enabled patient TVs, and even an iPad game room.

"Our goal is to design an experience where every patient feels comfortable and welcomed as they receive excellent care from Dr. Tolbert," says Katelin Heim, office and patient experience manager.

NORTHSIDE Dental offers a full range of dental service from cosmetic and restorative to general and emergency, keeping patient comfort and safety foremost in mind. "I would hope that patients would describe my patient care as compassionate, gentle, thorough, and kind," says Dr. Tolbert. "We hope to surprise and delight patients at every turn in so they will enjoy coming to visit us."

With patient and staff safety their top priority, NORTHSIDE Dental is following every protocol to combat COVID-19. They ask patients to brush and floss before their appointments, and that only one patient enter the offices at time; family members should wait outside in the car. If an adult accompanies a child, the adult must wear a face mask at all times during the appointment.

Staff are taking all precautions to ensure patient safety. Dental chairs are completely disinfected after each appointment, and staff wear PPEs that can include face shields, masks and disposable gowns. Staff are disinfecting door handles constantly, hand sanitizer is available throughout the offices, and if a patient happens to use a pen, they are welcome to keep it.

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On MacArthur: Demi's Reopens, Dot's Expands Outdoors



Jimmy Tsamouras recently reopened his Demi's Mediterranean Kitchen in Bellevue. The hours have changed somewhat from five to nine Tuesday through Thursday and five till ten on

Friday and Saturday. "People seem excited that we've reopened," Jimmy says. "We're also considering opening at four on some days to do a Spanish-tapas-happy-hour-type thing." They

are following strict protocols. "We're asking everyone to wear a mask when they get up and go to the bathroom," says Jimmy. "No one is able to sit at a table until the chairs and table tops have been completely sanitized."

Not long ago, Jimmy created an outdoor dining space at his other restaurant across the street—Dot's Back Inn. "The people at Samis Grotto let us use their sidewalk," says Jimmy. "We were able to put six additional tables out there. We're very grateful for that. We've been very fortunate to have loyal customers. We thank you guys for that, very much. With everything going on, we seem to be doing okay." 🍷

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Tidewater

EBB AND FLOW

THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS DISEASE has crimped much of what we once took for granted, including annual summer vacations. Typically, our family meanders from place to place over a couple weeks (sometimes three or four), staying in Airbnbs, camping when necessary, sleeping in the Honda-CRV when options run out or funds dry up, sampling local culture and cuisine whether sophisticated or crude, and generally getting lost in small acts of discovery.



Editor's Note: For the next three issues North of the James explores Virginia's natural beauty with visits to nine of her state parks. Each cover story will feature three parks from one of the three main physical regions that describe our state—Tidewater, Mountains and Piedmont. This first installment is Tidewater.

THIS YEAR, we satisfy ourselves with what will amount to be a series of day trips to places where we are able to easily follow the protocols recommended by experts informed by science and research, and not by buffoons taking their cues from conspiracy theories and willful ignorance. These trips had to meet three criteria. Each destination had to be a reasonable roundtrip distance from our home so that we could leave early in the morning and be home by midnight. Secondly, those destinations had to be remote enough that social distancing could be practiced. And this, too: each place had to offer natural splendor.

Virginia is fortunate to possess a vast array of public lands that protect our environment from the greed-driven hordes who mine our mountains and flatten our forests with impunity, from those who value profit over stewardship whether to extract ores or fossil fuels, or to lay waste the land for planned communities of putty-colored vinyl.

Virginia is often hailed as having one of the best state park systems in the country. We (the people that is) now have thirty-eight parks in our state, spanning every sort of terrain from the mountains to the coastal plain, for a grand total of more than 70,000 acres that include over 600 miles of trails for hiking and biking. Like our national parks, these spaces belong to everyone no matter who they are. On these public lands, devoid of corporations and gated opulence, you will not find one "No Trespassing" sign. In fact, you're invited to trespass because these lands were made for you and me.

From the time they were both very small children, Catherine and Charles, both great travelers, were always up for a daytrip to any state park in Virginia. The one we visited most frequently, particularly when they were both very young, was Westmoreland State Park. We would try to hit it on a spring tide, which has

nothing to do with the season. These tides occur twice each month around the time of a full moon or a new moon. It is when you experience the lowest tides, and the highest tides. Low tides were what we were looking for, and the very best of them were generally in the late winter when the wind blew out of the southeast. These were the times when the shoreline below the massive Horsehead Cliffs on the Potomac River were exposed as much as a quarter of a mile. You could walk across a plain of clay and sand, bent at the waste, scanning the riverbed for fossils, many of which were 14 million years older. Among the Chesapeake jefersonius (Virginia's state fossil) and glyceris (another common shell found in Virginia fossil beds), we would also find the vertebrae of prehistoric whales and dolphins, and occasionally the massive teeth of *Carcharodon megalodon*, the ancient ancestors of today's great white shark, though they were significantly larger, measuring as much as 65 feet in length. I once found a black tooth of this predator of predators that was the size of a slab of pie. We would later learn at the visitor's center that this entire area from the Miocene through the Pleistocene, was a shallow arm of the Atlantic Ocean, and served as a sort of nursery for whales of the era, which attracted the megalodons and their enormous appetites.

That was then.

YORK RIVER STATE PARK *96 miles roundtrip*

In early August, my son Charles and I began the first of three trips over the ensuing two weeks to state parks in Virginia's coastal plain. The first was York River State Park, which, along with several great spots for fishing, has an abundance of biking and hiking trails that snake their way through the forests and the lowlands of this pristine area near Croaker on the banks of the York River.

We prepare the night before by first filling five dis-

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN



View from the 360-foot fishing pier on the York River, looking southeast.

possible plastic bottles with water, and setting them in the freezer. By morning each is rock solid, which we use in our two small coolers instead of ice. These bottles serve a dual function. They keep our provisions cool—fruit, sandwiches or wraps—and as the day progresses and the heat increases, they melt into the coldest water imaginable to replenish our stainless steel bottles and provide constant hydration.

We don't leave the house until mid-day—after all,

the trip down to Croaker is only about 45 minutes. Shortly after arriving at the park, we hike a trail that runs roughly along the York River, up to Fossil Beach, then back down to Taskinas Creek. York River State Park is one of the most perfectly preserved estuarine ecosystems on the entire East Coast, where freshwater meets saltwater, forming a vast incubator for marine life, and there is no development or industry nearby. It is so pristine, in fact, that it was

designated as a Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Threading their way through marshlands, river shoreline, and heavily forested areas, more than thirty miles of bike trails and hiking trails, even several equestrian trails, allow you get up close and personal with the environment.

By the time we arrive, the temperature is well into the nineties and the humidity high, but the air is sweet and pure, and my son and I swallow it into our lungs like nectar, then grab our fishing gear—two rods and terminal tackle—along with one cooler that contains drinks and bait, and make our way down to the shore of Taskinas Creek. On a floating dock from which you can launch kayaks and canoes, we look up the creek and can see scores of fish hitting the surface. When we look the other way, toward the mouth at the York River, the piscine cavorting is even more rambunctious. So we decide to fish in that direction.

I strip out one squid, and filet it in thin strips, about a half-inch wide, then slice one tip with a sort of swallowtail that will mimic bait fish—a shiner or a mummichog. After baiting the hooks on a pair of top-and-bottom rigs, we cast into midstream, and even before the half-ounce sinker hits the bottom, there is a strike. One after another, Charles and I reel in fish after fish, gently removing the barbed hooks and returning the fish to their home. They're all relatively small, just palm-sized, and each of work of



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art—these white perch that fatten up in the marshy creeks before heading back out to the open water of the York.

As we neared Richmond that evening along 64 we could see two massive fronts of clouds colliding, one from the east, and the other from the west. By the time we reached Richmond, those clouds had merged into a dark, angry purple, and the winds were strong enough that they pushed us sideways as if we were under full sail. As soon as we exited on Chamberlayne, the rain came down in sheets.

When we talked about our trip to the York River the following week, Charles remembered hitting a snag when I went up to the car to fetch drinking water and sunscreen; it was getting very hot late that afternoon.

“I loved the scenery down there on that dock,” he told me. “I loved the marsh grass and the trees and there were many fish jumping up in the water. But, sadly, my line had to get cut.”

“That happens to everyone who goes fishing,” I offered.

“Really?”

“Absolutely. As a matter of fact when I would fish at Grandview Fishing Pier many years ago, almost every time I

went I’d lose one rig, sometimes two or three. And an older man once told me that before you can catch a single fish you need to pay your taxes.”

“What taxes?” Charles asked.

“The rig that I snagged and lost. It was as if the water was demanding payment before she would surrender a single fish.”

“That’s a great line,” said Charles. “I’ll remember that one.”

FALSE CAPE STATE PARK

**268 miles roundtrip by car;
12 miles by foot or by bike**

Just a few days after our trip to the York River, Charles and I headed down to the most southeasterly tip of Virginia, which is home to the least visited state park in the state. And there’s reason for this, too: the only way you can get there is by foot, by bike, or by water.

We took the roundabout way down, across the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge-Tunnel, which carries you over and under Hampton Roads, and then back onto 64 and the Indian River Road exit. This road quickly becomes a two-lane country byway that sweeps by Stumpy Lake and winds through rich farmland, then spills out on the head-



The dunes stretch as far as the eye can see, many of them thirty feet tall, riding down to False Cape.

waters of Back Bay and into the seaside village of Sandbridge. Just below this quiet beach community we enter Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and the environment changes completely. For one thing, there is not a single house, and there are no other cars. Thirty-foot sand dunes replace the beach houses on one side of the road, and the other side is skirted by a canal of dark water that’s alive with fish and turtles, and flanked by spatterdock and water

hyacinth. In the parking lot at the visitor’s center there are less than a dozen cars and not a human being in sight.

Our first leg of the journey would be over the dunes and to the wide sandy shore. We fished for a little over an hour, wading out to the first sand bar and then casting into deep water on the other side of the second line of breakers. I caught two croakers—a deuce—on one rig, but that was it. I held the hardhead firmly, careful to

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squeeze the spiny armor of its gills, which can inflict a nasty cut, worked the barb out from its lips, kissed the fish on its forehead and released it in the surf which quickly sucked it and its comrade back out to sea.

A couple years ago, Charles and I caught half-a-dozen floor mat summer flounder at this very spot. And before that, Catherine and I hit a blue run here in early October and took a cooler of Taylor blues back to Richmond where we smoked them over hickory chips—the best eating fish there is. Once, I caught a 140-pound bull shark in the surf, which I released. Another time, we found a giant sea turtle (probably a loggerhead) dead and maggot-ridden, shell-down in the sand. In years past, we would often encounter family groups of wild horses, descendants of Spanish mustangs that had gotten stranded on this isolated strip of Virginia when Spaniards still ruled these seas. Now those wild horses are restricted to North Carolina, which is just ten miles to the south; the horse were apparently wreaking havoc with the indigenous plants. More than twenty years ago, several days before Thanksgiving, when Catherine was still a baby, her mother, Joany, and I found a large wooden rib made of

black oak with a single spike of bronze, the remnant of an English tall ship that had probably run aground in the eighteenth century (this is where the Graveyard of the Atlantic begins). It took me an hour to flip it back, end over end, to our car, which groaned under its load. After the trip home, the shocks of that poor car were shot.

After finishing up on the beach, Charles and I returned to the car, refilled our water bottles, and rode our bikes down a hard-packed gravel-dust dike road. The water impounded by those dikes come suddenly alive in the dead of winter, serving as a stopover for millions of birds, from tundra swans to snow geese. It's a crucial link in the Atlantic Flyway, and is a birder's paradise.

Along the dike roads we spotted several red-winged blackbirds, a few tree swallows, some purple martins, numerous catbirds, and a single indigo bunting, its feathers a color of blue unmatched in nature; a blue so rich it makes your heart skip a few beats.

Among the other wildlife we saw were rabbits in great abundance, along with bull frogs, five-lined skinks, and painted turtles and mud turtles and elegant sliders. Three years ago, we had seen a five-foot long cottonmouth mov-

ing across the still waters of one of the canals. I'd never seen one swimming, and it blew me away. They seem to float on top of the water, as if inflated beach toys, and they move quickly. We watched for a good twenty minutes, at a safe distance, watched it swallow a large frog whole, and then an otter came along and tried to play with it. The otter wasn't afraid in the least.

"There's a fox," Charles yelled, and sure enough there was a fox crossing our path just as we entered the maritime forest. We dismounted and watched the fox move through brambles and brush, and we could see it join another fox.

It is roughly five miles from Back Bay to our destination—False Cape State Park. Within these woods there are a number of large mammals afoot, including bobcats, coyotes and wild boars. And though we encountered none of these beasts, we did see one tiny fawn who had absolutely no fear of us.

The air through these woods has a tar and turpentine tincture to it produced by the loblollies and scrub pines that grow here. But there's also a sweetness intermingled with this scent: It comes from the bayberries and the live oaks, all of which seem to be sculpted by the wind. Shortly after we entered False

Cape, a light drizzle began to fall, so we turned around, and pedaled as hard as we could to get back to the car. When we entered the car we were soaked to the bone, and as we pulled onto Sandpiper Road and passed through Sandbridge, a searing sun parted the clouds and we sundried in our seats, and by the time we reached Richmond we were both bone dry. As we pulled up in front of our house, the heavens opened and rain fell in waterfall sheets. The moment we were out of the car, before we could make it to the front door, we were again soaked through and through.

FIRST LANDING STATE PARK 212 miles roundtrip

Our final trip to Tidewater state parks seemed eternal. We arrived at First Landing State Park shortly after noon with the intention of fishing from the shore there in Lynnhaven Roads at the very mouth of Chesapeake Bay. We'd been here many a time before, and the water is calm and clear, with no real breakers, just a steady slosh of surf. You can wade almost a quarter mile out and still be in waist-deep water. It's a great place to fish and to swim. A lot of other people that day had the same idea and



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it was packed, and we are sticklers for social distancing, so we turned around and drove over to 88th Street at the far north end of Virginia Beach. Here people were socially distanced in the extreme, and there were few of them. We inched our way into Fort Story, within view of the Cape Henry Lighthouse, and began fishing. There was a constant wind from the southeast, and even with six-ounce pyramid sinkers it was impossible to hold the bottom. But we did get strike after strike, and some fairly big ones, but we weren't able to reel in a single fish.

We headed back over to First Landing and began bike-riding through the deep woods of the maritime forest there which has the same smell as its kindred woodland down in False Cape. There are same kind of pines and myrtles and live oaks, but there are also massive cypress forests, and many of the trees are festooned in Spanish moss, the furthest north this plant Indigenous people called "tree hair" is found.

All afternoon long, clouds had been moving in, ushered along by the wind that had made fishing so difficult. About three miles into our bike ride, we heard distant reports of thunder, so we headed back to the car. By the time we arrived, the rain was com-

ing down steadily, and after securing the bikes we headed up Shore Drive, until the rain became so torrential we had to pull over into one the municipal parks in Ocean View. We walked along the beach there when the rain lifted, but there was more on the way, so we drove all the way up the strand and picked up 64 to the west. The moment we left the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel, the sky cleared. It was sunny, it was warm, and it seemed the day was just beginning again, though it was well after four.

We decided to take another bike ride, this time in Colonial Williamsburg. There were few people on Duke of Gloucester Street, two blocks of which had been converted into an outdoor dining area. We rode up one end of DOG Street to the other, and then over Prince George Street, and Francis Street. We stopped and visited a number of gardens, and pulled over to watch four sheep corralled behind an eighteenth century home that was still standing, and inhabited.

For a couple years now, Charles has vacillated between being a vegetarian and an omnivore. Most recently he was a pescatarian, but a few weeks ago he decided to go back to his roots as an omnivore. So to top off these



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In the depths of a cypress forest at First Landing.

final hours of the trip, we stopped at Pierce's Barbecue and got a couple of pork sandwiches, no sides, no slaw, and ate in our car in the parking lot of an industrial building just up the road, a place called Vehix Discount Direct.

"That's one of the best things I've ever eaten," Charles said. He hadn't had a barbecue in almost two years.


As I picked up 64, the sun was still bright and nightfall seemed as if it would never come. Outside of Providence Forge, I looked over at Charles and he wore a

smile as broad as a full moon.

"What are you thinking, man?"

"It was just such a great day," my son told me. "All these different parts to it."

Though his smile didn't vanish, it changed. It was easy see that in the bright light of a summer evening.

"I wish that you could stay alive till a hundred and fifty so we could stay together," Charles said. "Because we like to travel and go on vacations and spend time together a lot." 

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Purple Haze With Adolph White

by KATHY BUTLER SPRINGSTON

ADOLPH WHITE was a naturalist long before he knew what one was. “I was basically a loner as a child and spent a lot of time touring through the woods and enjoying the birds, squirrels and other living things,” Adolph says. “Nature was my partner because I was a budding artist.”

He could step out into a wild world that was “like a friend I depended on,” says Adolph, who grew up in the Spring Grove community of Surry County, where his parents, Roosevelt and Ethel White, worked as sharecroppers.

“Walking in the fields or forest, I’d commit what I saw to memory. I’d take notes, or quickly sketch a scene, then run home and improve on my drawing.” Adolph would ponder the patterns in leaves, snow drifts, clouds and stars. He felt calm hearing cicadas sing in the pines.

And over the course of his life not much has changed.

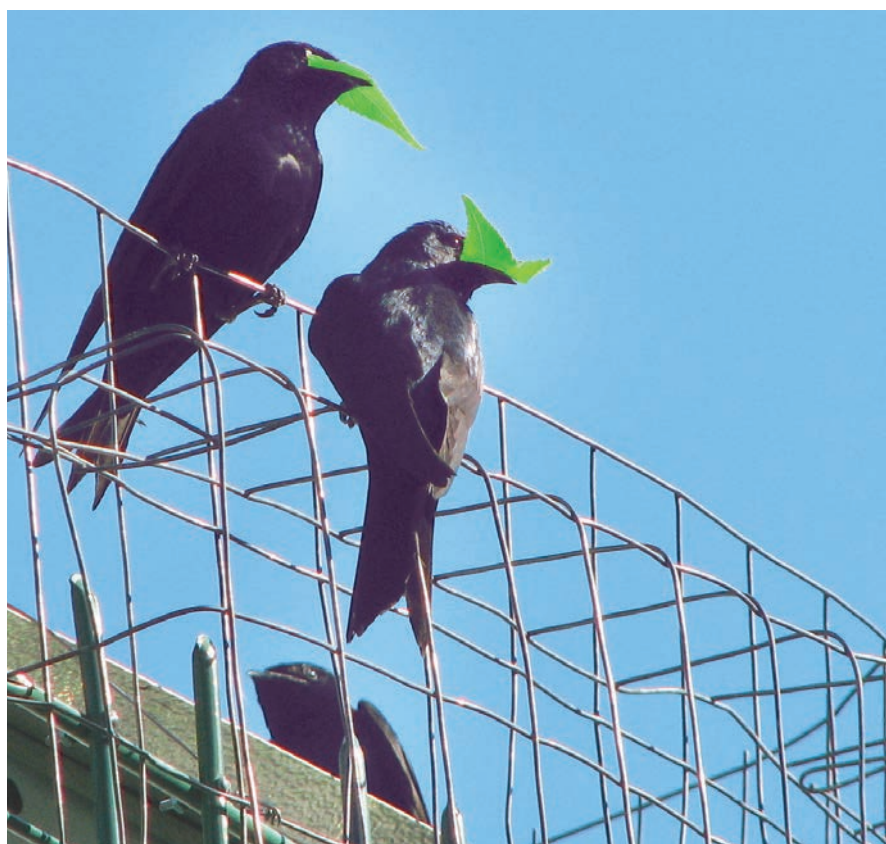
“Adolph is interested in everything pertaining to nature,” says Barbara Eck of Glen Allen, who has watched birds and explored the outdoors with him nearly weekly for about fifteen years.

Adolph, 77, reflected on his link with the environment in recent phone chats, without a clue that friends he’s made along trails and watersides were about to honor him.

The retired Richmond teacher was given a Friend of Nature Award for his “dedication to and care” of the purple martins at North Richmond’s Joseph Bryan Park, and using his “creativity to teach folks of all ages about these charming birds and so much more.” It cheers his “lifelong love of earth’s wonders” and calls him a “true inspiration.”

This surprise awaited Adolph when he joined the shade-tree social half of Richmond Audubon’s monthly bird walk at Bryan Park in early August. It came with thanks from Audubon, the Falls of the James Group Sierra Club, and Friends of Bryan Park.

“This is a heart-warming situation for me,” Adolph said, raising the framed award high for ten relatives and twenty friends to see. A hawk-print scarf had hidden it.



Martins with nesting material perch on one of White’s wire porches.

The sit-together was billed to Adolph as a “happy travels party” for the park’s southbound martins, so he smiled skyward and said, “Bon voyage, purple martins! I will protect you next year... Nothing messes with my birds!”

Guests were amused to see his iPad animation of a martin leaving a house.

Adolph’s daughter, Demetria Johnson, said, “My dad has always been in tune with living creatures.” A video on her phone shows him fifteen years ago setting up a birdhouse still used by Carolina wrens in her yard in Varina.

“Dad loves nature, and nature loves Dad,” said his son, Adolph, Jr. “We’re so busy in our society we don’t take time to look at God’s beauty.” He’s glad his father “reminds us to do that.”

Both grandsons, Keith Sutherland, 28, of Richmond, and brother, “B.J.,” 21, benefited from their grandfather’s interest in school projects. He built a coop for Keith’s incubating chicks. Adolph said, “B.J. is helping me make rain look real in iPad animations now.”

Adolph was an avid young reader with good grades. He received a full scholarship at Virginia Union University, taught two years in Warsaw, Virginia, and then became a teacher with Richmond Public Schools.

Adolph taught middle-schoolers French and English, but many say he understands bird language pretty well, especially the lingo of purple martins.

This spring, a five-year-old girl was fascinated by the martins flying in and out of holes in three elevated “doll houses” Adolph maintains in Bryan Park. She agreed their chatter sounded happy, as parents fed chicks. She ran for her family to “come see the happy birds... the purple birds.”

That story made Adolph laugh. Then he said, “I’m excited about how the martin houses turned out. It makes me so happy.” Twenty-seven colony members were counted this year in Bryan Park.

Adolph mentioned the late Wynn Price, a city parks specialist based at Bryan, to be priceless in his assistance.

The late Jimmy Fitzgerald of Providence Forge oversaw installation of the first of the trio of multi-room nest houses. Jimmy had plenty of martin gourds and houses of his own to tend and encouraged White to take the park’s martins under his wing.

“Jimmy and I formed a perfect friendship,” said Adolph. They met one summer evening in Shockoe Bottom under a sky swirling with purple martins.



Birder Adolph White

Jimmy Fitzgerald had said the birds were “staging” — gathering to fortify themselves on insects before leaving by summer’s end on a five thousand mile flight to Brazil’s Amazon Basin.

Years ago, Jimmy Fitzgerald had invited Adolph to see his 160-martin operation on the Chickahominy River. Adolph began to help him there and research martins like crazy. Soon, Adolph was sharing information with martin spectators who came nightly to the 17th Street Farmers’ Market for six summers to see the birds sculpt huge tornadoes and roller coasters in the summer air.

The phenomenon was like Alfred Hitchcock’s movie, *The Birds*, only these birds didn’t hurt anybody, as thousands swooped just yards overhead to claim branches in a line of leafy Bradford pear trees at dusk.

But their poop on the sidewalk was a problem. Richmond officials wanted to cut down the trees in which the birds were first noticed roosting en masse in 2007. To save the trees, bird lovers in 2008 organized the *Gone to the Birds* Festival that brought revenue to the city and diners to the Bottom.

When Fitzgerald was alive, he said Adolph was a godsend for the festivals.

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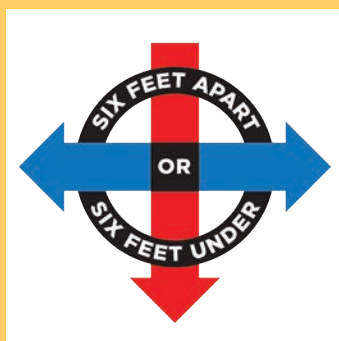
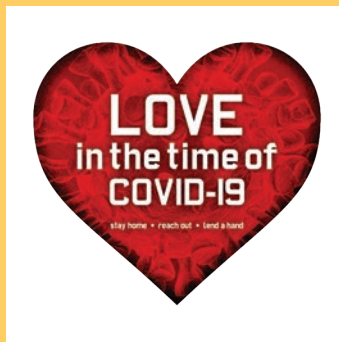
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Adolph helped at the Purple Martin Conservation Association booth, and children flocked to him to hear about the migration.

Adolph was even among early-risers hosing the sidewalks all season after 25,000 or so hungry birds left the trees in the mornings to forage.

Adolph recalled the crowd's stir as Richmond's rare peregrine falcons appeared at dusk. When a falcon caught a martin in air, the martins, already tucked in the trees, switched from a busy chatter to a "warning chorus that sounded like running water." Red-tailed hawks going into the trees to get carry-out dinner caused a louder rush.

Such exciting nights and festivals ended six year ago when the martins no longer clustered downtown.

Before the gala at Bryan Park earlier this month, only two or three chatty martins remained. Typically, Adolph sees the birds leave this pond site a few at a time until all are gone by the end of July. They then join a big group in the region preparing for the pilgrimage to Brazil. With family raising done, all can be leisurely, flying 300 miles a day. Their final destinations for fall in South America vary. They rush coming north to nab the best mates, nest sites and food. Masses can be seen on weather radar each way.

Adolph said, "Just think, martins raised at our park this year are making their first trip!"

Friends of Bryan Park president John Zuegner thanked Adolph for providing park visitors the opportunity to see these special birds raise families up close for eleven years.

Sue Ridd, the park's former Nature Center director and a Gone to the Birds organizer, said, "Some people have pets. Adolph has the purple martins."

Sue said Adolph has been inventive in protecting the martins.

For one thing, he made sure the houses don't feed hawks, especially a grab-by local Cooper's hawk. He attached "wire porches" through which large winged predators cannot reach the house openings.

Sometimes, friends said, Adolph looks like he is dancing to scare away house sparrows, nuisance birds brought to the United States from Europe in the mid-1800s, that will squash martin eggs, kill chicks and build their own nests on top of the carnage.

Adolph rode to the colony with family in July to repair baffles that keep snakes from climbing the poles.

Martins typically return to the park on

March 15, if warmth brings ample insects to eat, he said. Martin caretakers must clean the houses and open the doors on time.

Adolph takes nature photos and has ended birders' picnics with guitar music and song.

He once repaired televisions and was an information technology specialist in charge of school computer systems. Birders pick his brain for camera, tablet or cell phone tips.

An educator for 31 years, Adolph still enjoys instructing children. Teaching visiting Holton Elementary School children about Bryan's martins and having them draw together for several years "was so rewarding," he said.

At the park's Nature Center, Adolph gave many programs, using his artistic diagrams, until the center closed in 2018 for repairs. He hopes to show kids how to make nature flip-art books, maybe outdoors.

"With the coronavirus threat keeping youngsters home from school for months, parks like Bryan have been important," he said. "Bringing kids out in nature makes them less stressful, gives them exercise and a break from television, smart phones and such. It helps their outlook."

Many families in the park early in the pandemic said it was their first visit, and some were making nature lessons of their strolls, several meeting purple martins for the first time.

"Parks can acquaint and pull all types of people together," Adolph said. A 285-acre "haven," Bryan Park is attracting visitors of many ethnicities this year, as "everybody needs to get out of their houses," he observed.

"I was lucky to grow up in the country," he said. "But city kids need to come to parks, where there's something besides pavement, where they'll enjoy the shade of the trees, playing on grass and being surprised by animals."

Children frequenting parks "can see the world from an artistic point of view." They just might be inspired to "pursue careers in science and help the environment," Adolph White noted.

"When I was younger I thought the earth would exist as it was; I never thought of forests being destroyed... or about pollution."

Art and science are connected for Adolph. He teaches children to draw not just a tree, but the shadow it casts. "That's a value the tree offers us."

He wants children to learn the language of Mother Nature. **NJ**

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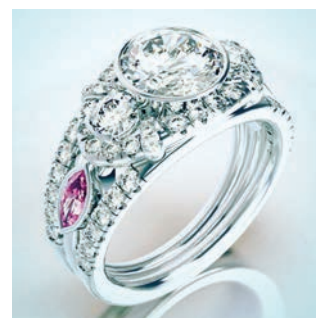
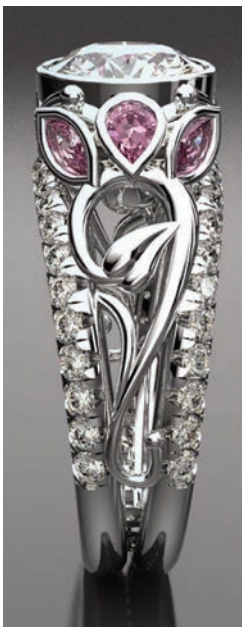
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BOOK REVIEW

Remembrance of Things Past and Present

by **FRAN WITHROW**

REMEMBRANCE IS the story of four strong Black women, each with a special power that will ultimately connect them to one other and to Remembrance, a safe haven for Black people who have escaped from slavery. Remembrance is a magical place that prevents whites from discovering its location, so people who live there can do so without fear.

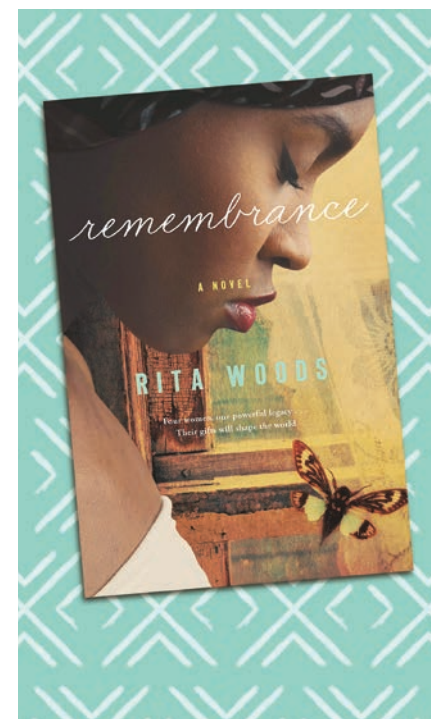
Debut novelist Rita Woods, a family physician, has created a compelling tale, filled with authentic dialogue and accurate historical portrayals that enrich both her characters and the story itself. The saga sprawls across centuries, from the 1790's to the present day, and spans geographical areas from Haiti to Louisiana to Ohio. Covering so many locations and such an extended time frame might be daunting for some authors, but Woods handles it with ease.

We are first introduced to Gaele, originally from Haiti, who now lives in present day Ohio. A nursing home aide, she is inexplicably drawn to one of her charges, a mysterious old woman who won't talk, prefers to watch the news rather than "Dancing with the Stars," and whose real name is unknown.

Margot lives in Louisiana in the 1850's. Though she is a slave, her cherished grandmother, who is a healer, and her little sister help make life tolerable. But when she and her sister are torn from their grandmother and sold to pay a debt, life becomes unbearable. She and her sister run away, desperate to find a better situation elsewhere.

Abigail loves her strong husband Hercule and her two young sons. Their life of slavery in Haiti in 1791 is heavy with toil, but their tight-knit family brings Abigail joy. All that changes when Hercule is murdered. Abigail is forced to leave her precious sons behind and accompany her mistress to New Orleans. The loss of her family might have done her in; instead she embarks on a new life far different from any she could have imagined.

Winter was a baby when she came to Remembrance, and she has never



known life as a slave. When slavers inexplicably appear in Remembrance and kidnap her, she will need all her wits, as well as her special power, to survive.

The further I read into this book, which blends historical fiction and magical realism in a masterful way, the more deeply enthralled I became. Woods ties the lives of these women together in an ingenious way, slowly and carefully revealing their relationships with one another. Her descriptions of the tragedy of slavery are perfectly executed, and her skilled hand at building suspense around the inevitable fate of Remembrance keeps the reader hooked.

I'm not a fan of books that wrap things up in a nice tidy package: that's not how real life is, so I appreciate the way Woods deftly pulls the story together, leaving the reader to imagine what lies ahead. I don't know how she had time to write a novel as well as practice medicine, but I hope she is hard at work on another one. **NJ**

Remembrance
By Rita Woods
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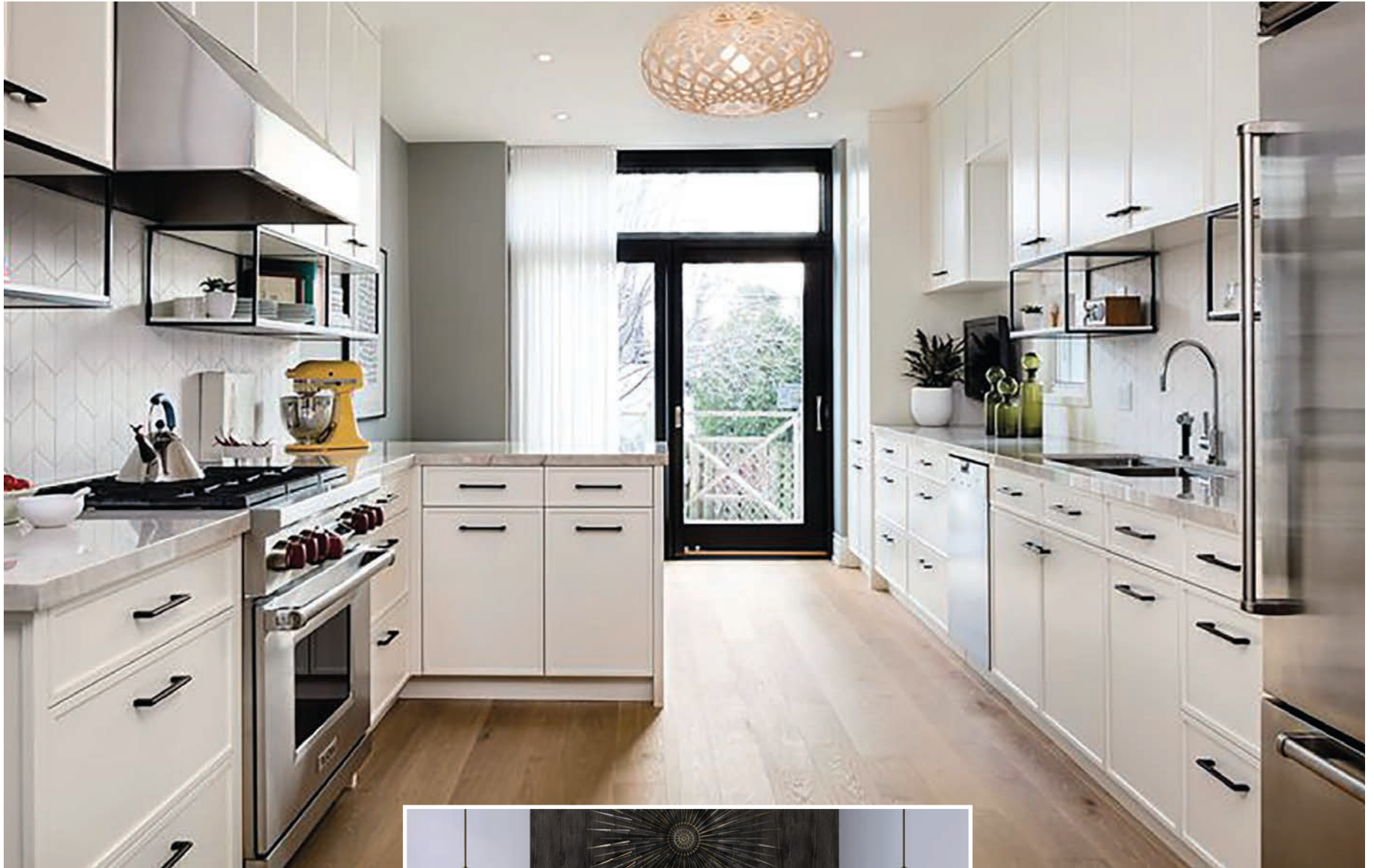
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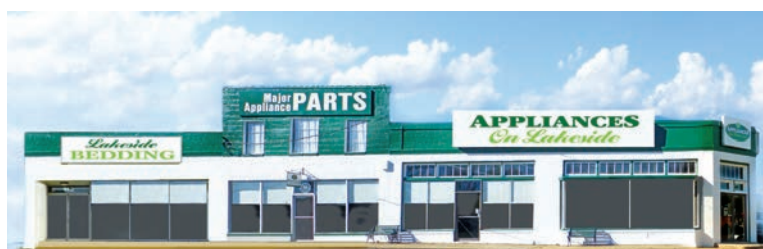


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