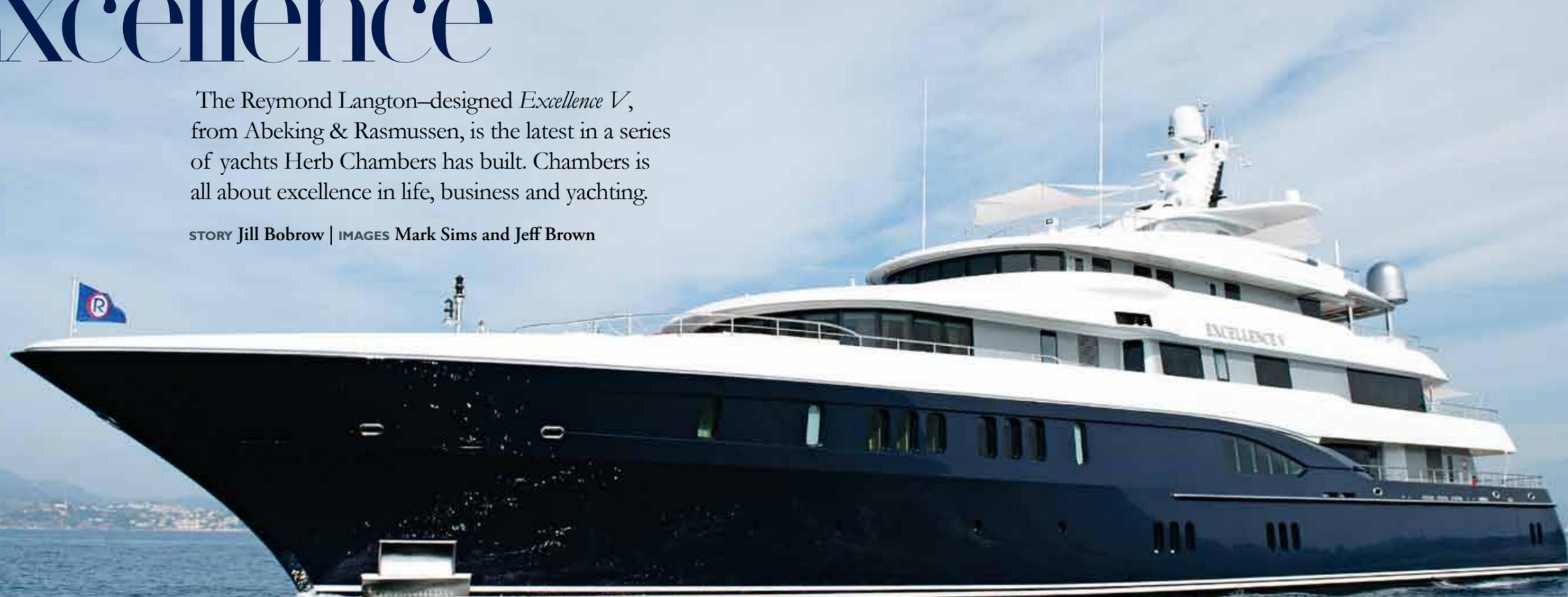


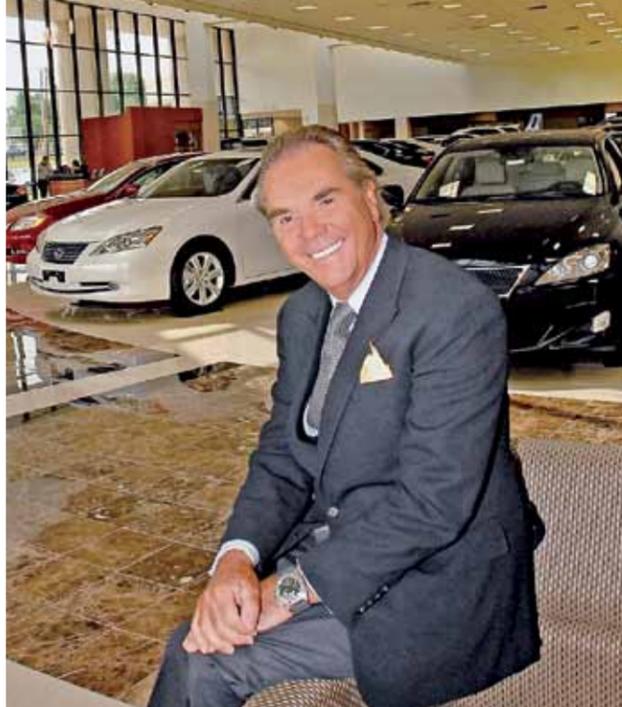
HERB CHAMBERS AND HIS YACHT

A Profile IN Excellence

The Raymond Langton–designed *Excellence V*, from Abeking & Rasmussen, is the latest in a series of yachts Herb Chambers has built. Chambers is all about excellence in life, business and yachting.

STORY Jill Bobrow | IMAGES Mark Sims and Jeff Brown





ABOVE: Owner Herb Chambers at one of his dealerships in Massachusetts

HERB CHAMBERS, SIPs A CAPPUCCINO IN THE MAIN salon of his new 197-foot (60-meter) motoryacht, *Excellence V*. Dressed in a well-cut suit and a perky pink shirt—his boyish features framed by college-professor eyeglasses—he is the picture of a happy man. His yacht had just arrived the night before in Boston Harbor, his home port. He is a bit of a legend in this land of New England Patriots and Red Sox. In fact, if you live in Massachusetts, chances are you or your next-door neighbor bought a car from one of his dealerships. As I drove down Interstate 93 and the Mass Pike to meet him, I noticed the Herb Chambers Company nameplate on half of the automobiles on the road. His successful car business was a second career.

Chambers grew up in the largely Irish immigrant Boston neighborhood of Dorchester. After high school, he did a tour of duty with the Navy before getting a job repairing copy machines. In the mid 1960s, at the age of 22, he started his own business, A Copy, which he grew into the United States' largest distributor of photocopiers and office equipment. He eventually sold it for a very substantial amount of money.

I first encountered Herb—30-some years ago in Old Saybrook, Conn.—aboard his 82-foot Broward called *A Copy*, which I featured as the opening boat in *Classic Yacht Interiors* (okay, the boats appeared alphabetically). I have no idea why my co-author Dana Jinkins and I chose to put *A Copy* in a book primarily about sailboats, but when we were looking for likely subjects, we met Chambers on the dock and he was as forthcoming and friendly then as he is today. *A Copy* is long gone, and to say that Chambers

has “traded up” is a bit of an understatement.

The Raymond Langton-designed *Excellence V*, delivered to Chambers from the Abeking & Rasmussen shipyard in Bremen, Germany, in the summer of 2012, represents the latest in this man's conscious quest for attaining the definition of his yacht's name. Herb has had a great relationship with the shipyard, as evidenced by his building three large yachts there within 10 years. Chances are his next will be an A&R as well.

Chambers is all about excellence. In the mid 1980s, he went to a car dealer in New London, Conn., to buy a Cadillac El Dorado. As a lover and purveyor of cars, he felt something lacking in the car establishments and recognized a need for a different approach. He bought his Cadillac but also bought that dealership. He and



THIS PAGE: Inside and out, the main deck is designed for entertaining. Whether it's a large party or a small group of friends enjoying cocktails on the aft deck, there's room for everyone to comfortably lounge in these salons



Confucius share the same golden rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” He was determined to treat customers with respect and honesty. Last year, the Herb Chambers Company sold approximately 50,000 cars through his various dealerships in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Like many men, Chambers has a passion not only for cars but also for airplanes and boats. Not given to braggadocio, he mentions his personal car collection, which includes a McLaren F1, a Ferrari Daytona Spyder and a Bugatti, only when prompted. One can easily envision this guy simply driving a Mini Cooper. Chambers is completely unpretentious. He reminds me of another car dealer, serial yacht owner—and nice guy. Naturally, the two are good friends. No doubt there is a lot of “car talk” between them, but there is also a lot of “yacht

talk.” Chambers credits his friend with some astute observations about small, imperfect details on *Excellence V* that needed rectifying during the build—little things like a control panel out of sync.

Chambers surrounds himself with good people. Captain Ray Shore has been with Chambers since 1989. Shore is the consummate professional—unflappable, excellent at his job, a captain who commands the respect of his crew as well as that of the owner of the boat, but one who is also gentle and soft spoken. All the *Excellence* yachts have been successful charter boats attracting repeat clients, not just because they are enamored with the yacht's amenities, but because of Captain Ray and his diligent and highly trained crew. Shore was involved with some aspects of the *Excellence V* build and he had a chance to test her functionality in the Med this summer.



The formal dining room is the perfect spot to hold a business meeting over a five-star meal or celebrate a special occasion

Chambers spent time cruising aboard, and the yacht also had a very successful charter in Croatia. Following the charter, *Excellence V* zipped across the Atlantic at the end of August and hosted a series of swank soirées and nonstop guests in Newport, Nantucket and Boston. Shore says she is a great party boat with many places for guests to congregate.

Shore is nonplussed by the yacht's schedule since delivery. He has worked for Chambers aboard his last three yachts. He ran the 127-foot *Excellence*, then the 156-foot *Excellence II*—both Feadships. In 2001, when Chambers launched the 188-foot Donald Starkey-designed *Excellence III* at Abeking & Rasmussen, Shore took over that boat. Now logic would have it that there is an *Excellence IV*, but in fact, there is not and here is why: "One day when I was on *Excellence III*, the Abeking guys came over and presented drawings

for a new boat they had in mind for me. They showed me a huge yacht with a plumb bow, but I'm not crazy about that look. I am more into classic lines," Chambers says. "At the time, the boat I was excited about was *Pelorus*; in fact, she seemed to be haunting me, and every time I looked out my window she was anchored next to me. So I sketched out a drawing of a boat with traditional bow and extended stern, the proverbial sketch on a napkin, and within days, I signed a contract to build a 78-meter *Excellence IV*. Then a few serendipitous things happened: I had an offer from another yacht-owner friend of mine to assume ownership of my boat when it was under construction. He was quite sincere and persistent, but at the time, I was not interested. To cut a long story short, midway through the build of *Excellence IV*, it came to my attention how limiting a 78-meter yacht could be. George, the dock master in

Nantucket, said to me, 'Well, Herb, I guess we won't be seeing you here.' I said, 'Why not?' He said, 'With a 78-meter, you won't fit on the dock.' So, I said, 'Okay, but I can be anchored in the harbor.' And then he said, 'Oh no, you'd have to sit way out in the outer bay.' Then Captain Ray informs me I'd have the same problem in Capri and in Gustavia in St. Barts. These are all favorite places of mine and I started thinking twice about such a big boat."

Excellence IV was half built when yet another customer came along and made Chambers an offer he *didn't* refuse. As he still had *Excellence III*, he could cruise and charter her while he built a new boat that could go where he wanted to go. *Excellence IV*, meanwhile, became *Eminence*.

Chambers elaborates further on whether size matters: "Let's

face it, a lot of boats are big for big sake. Why did I need such a big bathroom or enormous bedroom? I have everything I want on *Excellence V* and have not sacrificed any comfort or amenities whatsoever. If you stretch the bow and stretch the stern to add length, you've got nothing but metal, no living space. I wanted the highest volume possible, but did not want the boat to look boxy. We played visual tricks with the exterior curves and smoothed the deck out front to hide winches and anchors, and kept it clean. I am pleased with the way it all worked." Chambers says the boat exceeded his expectations when he took his first trip on board.

Chambers had history with the yard, so it was easy to work with them. He had an extensive spec written going into the project. Pascale Reymond, of Reymond Langton Design, had worked



THIS PAGE: Although the color palette is muted in general, bright accent colors in the art and the accessories make sure *Excellence V* is anything but dull





The master suite is a peaceful retreat with impressive 180-degree views



ABOVE: Exterior salons are as inviting as interior ones, and the luxurious staterooms ensure guests travel in style and comfort no matter where the currents take them BELOW: The master suite looks out over the bow; every guest suite has large windows for plenty of natural light



for Donald Starkey when he did *Excellence III*, and so she knew Chambers' taste. She then carried on with *Excellence IV* after he relinquished ownership and was hired with Chambers' blessings by A&R to be the designer on *Excellence V*.

Chambers has only good things to say about Abeking & Rasmussen. As with his car business, he is a firm believer in loyalty and trust. He feels that he had a tight spec and that the yard followed it. He made only five to six trips to Abeking and did not have an owner's rep there until six to eight months prior to delivery. "If a yard wants to take advantage of you, there are one thousand ways they can do that," he says. But his relationship with Hans Schaedla was strong and he wasn't worried. The feeling was mutual. "We were very happy to have built the third yacht for Mr. Chambers. It has always been a pleasure to work with him and we have had a

good relationship from the first day on," Schaedla says.

Arguably, *Excellence V* is the largest-volume 60-meter yacht in existence. Chambers says volume is really the important factor. He makes an analogy to a condo or villa where one isn't interested in how long the unit is—what really counts is the square footage. With his current boat he has six cabins and can charter with up to 12 guests, and with the 78-meter yacht he was virtually dealing with the same number of cabins. *Excellence III*, which was only 10 feet shorter with a 34.7-foot beam, was 500 gross tons less than *Excellence V*, which has a 42-foot beam and is 1,600 gross tons.

In addition to volume, Chambers wanted a happy boat. He wanted it to be uplifting—no dark woods or heavy drapes. He wanted sycamore, maple and other light woods and lots of big windows. The result is a casually elegant contemporary ambience

with rich fabrics and bright accent colors in an overall muted palette: Ferrari-red bar stools, cobalt-blue and tangerine-trimmed accent pillows, colorful paintings and eye-catching sculptures. The focal painting in the main salon/dining area is a painting he commissioned many years ago in St. Barts: It is a scene of young people dancing on Shell Beach. In fact, one of his buddies coveted the painting, so Chambers surprised him with a giclée print of it for his new boat. Other paintings, such as the one behind his desk in his study of a man with a jaunty hat and folded arms, was bought on a whim, also in St. Barts, because he thought it was fun. Reymond and Andrew Langton know Chambers well and added many touches he may not have specifically requested but that they knew he would appreciate, such as hand-stitched leather handrails, reminiscent of a Bugatti.

The true pièce de résistance is a bas-relief nickel-over-wood panel that extends the height of the center stairwell in the formal foyer of the yacht. It is an Art Deco depiction of the story of transportation. Chambers had seen the same treatment but different theme on Lürssen's *Kismet*. From the lower deck's submarines and steamships, the theme moves upward to cars and locomotives, then to cable cars and finally to airplanes and zeppelins. "Andrew and I really enjoy working with Herb," Reymond says. "He has pushed us and challenged us on all three yachts, and with *Excellence V*, which ended up being as high as *Excellence IV*, we had a major challenge to keep her sexy and sleek. Also, Herb has a very keen, active mind, so we could not rest on our laurels of having known him for 14 years; we had to exceed his expectations and do something we had not done before."



ABOVE: Hidden expansions like this fold-down balcony provide even more space to the already expansive interior

THE BOAT

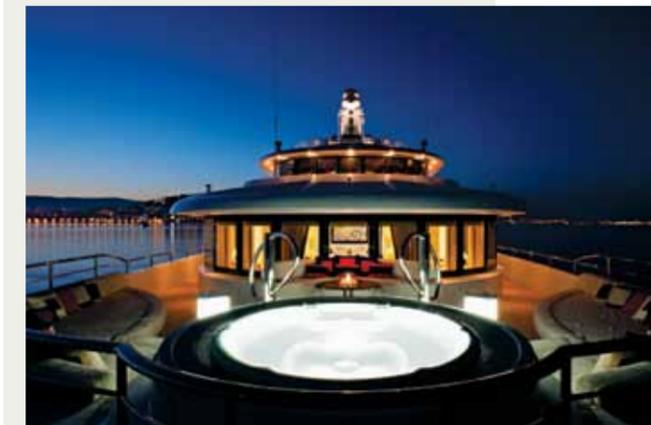
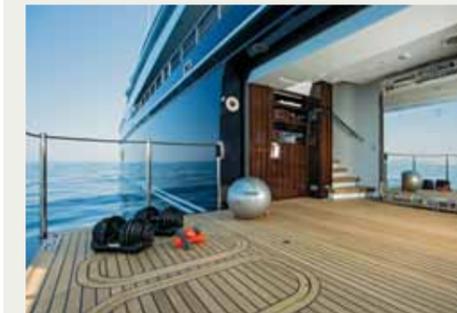
Excellence V has five decks. On the main deck is the main salon, formal dining area and five guest cabins—the current thinking on many new builds is to give the guests a deck flooded with light rather than relegate them to the lower-deck level. The guest cabins comprise two twins, two doubles and a VIP—all with large windows, generous interior space and handsome ensuite bathrooms. The upper deck is the owner's domain, with a contemporary study and forward master suite with panoramic windows and access to a private sunbathing area. The master is one level higher than on *Excellence III*, putting it at the same location as the sun deck on *Excellence III*. Also on this level is an additional guest cabin, should a charter guest require a room for children or a supernumerary such as a nanny or bodyguard. The upper salon aft has an inside/outside feel with full-length glass doors open to the ondeck seating and bar area. One deck up is the bridge deck. The forward end is Captain Ray's domain and aft is the main alfresco dining space. Here there

is a sports bar with large-screen TV and a huge shaded area with curved conversation couches. From this aft deck, sculptural stairs take you to the upper sun deck. Forward of the superstructure is a convivial seating area perched on high with great sweeping views and a dayhead. It must be noted that on this yacht you never have to go far to find a dayhead. On the sun deck, an amazing waterfall splashes down the back of the superstructure, disappears for a minute, then reappears in the glass-fronted pool, which has sun pads on one side and bar stools on the other.

The lower deck contains the beach club on the starboard side, with a glass, sandblasted shaded bar, seating area and pull-down teak



ABOVE: Exterior decks provide a plethora of lounging and activity spaces to be sure guests can make the most of their time on the water



ABEKING & RASMUSSEN EXCELLENCE V

LOA: 196ft. 10in. (60m)
 LWL: 177ft. 8in. (54.14m)
 BEAM (MAX.): 42ft. (12.8m)
 DRAFT: 11ft. 2in. (3.4m)
 HULL MATERIAL: steel
 SUPERSTRUCTURE MATERIAL: aluminum
 ENGINES: 2 x MTU 16V 4000 M53R,
 2,005 hp

GEARBOX: reversible gears, Reintjes, ZF
 or equivalent
 PROPELLERS: 5-bladed fixed pitch
 GENERATORS: 2 x MTU 8V 2000 M40A,
 360 kW, 1 x MTU 8V 2000 M50A, 308 kW
 SPEED (MAX.): 15.50 knots
 SPEED (CRUISING): 13 knots
 RANGE @ 12 KNOTS: 4,400 nm

FUEL OIL: 114 tons
 FRESHWATER: 26 tons
 STABILIZERS: at-anchor fin stabilizers
 NAVAL ARCHITECTURE: Abeking & Rasmussen
 EXTERIOR DESIGNER: Reymond Langton Design
 INTERIOR DESIGNER: Reymond Langton Design
 CLASSIFICATION:
 Lloyd's Register of Shipping, MCA

*Original dimensions are provided in the metric system



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
The curving central staircase surrounds a glass-walled elevator; on the wall is the detailed transportation-themed nickel-over-wood bas-relief; the bridge contains everything an experienced captain could ask for; Chambers' personal style shows through in details all over the yacht



beach club just above water level that is big enough to accommodate lounge chairs. Forward is a cinema with a 102-inch TV screen, nine reclining chairs and beanbags for kids. The gym is to port, and this deck is also home to the professional galley, the domain of two five-star chefs. While there is a dumbwaiter accessing all deck levels, the chief steward admits he prefers to carry service items up and down the stairs. Tenders are deployed from the stern of the boat.

The foredeck is clean and void of activity. At first Captain Ray was not convinced of the covered foredeck but then he got used to it. "Who wants to look at a safety boat or WaveRunners on the foredeck," he says. He is also quite happy with his Raytheon integrated bridge system, his wing stations, and bow and stern thrusters. He goes on to note that the boat handles like a dream. The engines are a little farther apart than on *Excellence III*, providing greater maneuverability, and he notes that the retractable stabilizer fins work well at anchor. He is extremely proud of *Excellence V*'s engine room. "We pushed for more

stainless and it is quite the showpiece."

Excellence V is a testament to an owner who expects nothing less than excellence. In spending time with Chambers, I see that his life philosophy and the way he lives have yielded results. The magic formula for excellence is loyalty, respect and trust, coupled with choosing the best, surrounding yourself with good people and, oh yes, hard work.

Excellence V—happy boat, happy owner. ■



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