

Newsletter

Winter 2006

vol. 9, issue 1



Sunflower Chapter
of the American
Historical Society
of Germans
from Russia

Music of Galen Schmidtberger makes our Christmas bright

by Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

"SORRY I'M LATE," joked Galen Schmidtberger when he began his concert at our December meeting. "On my way here I dropped my watch in some sheep dip, and it killed all the ticks!"

For the rest of a fast-moving half-hour or so, Galen entertained us with songs, jokes, and true stories related to our Volga German people and heritage. He also surprised us with his knowledge of foreign languages when, in addition to German and English, he sang in Russian and Spanish to honor our ancestors' hundred-year stay in Russia and the decision of some to relocate in South America instead of North America.

But Galen was only part of the entertainment at our annual Christmas meeting. When Leona Pfeifer began her folklore presentation by saying, "The reason I'm up here again is--," her friend Celly Schumacher couldn't help shouting from the back of the room, "Because you like it!" (Oh, how we all love to give Leona a hard time!) After the laughter died down, she continued with her usual excellent commentary on a selection of Volga German proverbs. These included:

- *Die Weihnachten steht von der Tuer.*
- *Der Apfel faellt nicht weit von Stamm.*
- *Was er nicht wass macht er nicht hass.*
- *Morge und Morge, nur nicht heute, sagen alle faule Leute.*

Leona also translated a poem written on a souvenir plate from Germany.
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Dad recalls, "My German brogue brought much ridicule and laughter, which for a thirteen-year-old boy was hard to take...."

For part 3 of our continuing biography of Lawrence Weigel, see page 3.

Next Meeting

SOCIAL...12:30
MEETING...1:00
PROGRAM...1:30

Feb. 26

"Klabber, klabber Eier aus
Oder schlag ich loch im Haus."

Yes, it soon will be time for *Fasenacht*, and to get us ready for it, Leona W. Pfeifer will give a talk on Volga German Lenten customs at the next meeting.

Plan to attend and bring a friend! See you in Munjor on the 26th.

ATTENTION, EARLY PLANNERS:
Our spring meeting will be on May 7

Dolores Pfannenstiel kicks up her heels with Galen Schmidtberger during one of his accordion numbers at the December meeting.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It looks as if 2006 will be a busy and exciting year for our chapter. Our Fasnacht meeting will be Sunday, February 26. Please bring all your memories from this time of year when you were a child. I'm sure your memories are a little different from mine. I remember stores closed at noon on Good Friday and no unnecessary noise in the house. No banging of hammers, no radio, no TV, basically going to church from noon until three and dying Easter eggs later in the afternoon. Nowadays, people are busy shopping for Easter on Good Friday, and there are basically no signs that our Savior suffered and died during the hours of noon until three. What do you remember?

Our chapter has been in contact with Larry Weigel, the son of Lawrence Weigel, to arrange an agreement to sell copies of his dad's work, which was at one time recorded on cassettes and LPs. Larry has agreed to let the Sunflower Chapter be the distributor for new recordings of these items. The remastered CDs that Larry is producing and the chapter is distributing will come in a series of five recordings. *Volga German Humor* is the first, which many of you already know about. If not, Sister Alice Ann has a nice ad in our newsletter about this CD, which is now available for your purchase. In time for our upcoming meeting, we will have the second CD, which will be about Volga German customs. Larry has also given our chapter the go-ahead to take Lawrence's Ellis County Star articles and reprint them in the Hays Daily News, hopefully one a month. Jeremy Dannebohm and Leona Pfeifer are overseeing this project. Jeremy and I will also look into reformatting these articles for reprint. Lawrence was very proud of his Volga German heritage, and what better way to preserve his work than to bring it back into circulation for a new generation?

Kevin Rupp's Genealogy Update

Over the past year many new documents have become available from the archives in Russia. With our contact in St. Petersburg, Russia, we have been able to obtain the 1857 censuses for Zug, Luzern, Obermunjou, and Beauregard. We also have been able to obtain the 1834 census for Pfeifer, and Rosemary Larson has gotten the 1850 census for Pfeifer

and the 1834/1850 ones for Kamenka. Many of these books were not available for research until this year. For a complete list, look at my website, www.volgagerman.net.

I am in contact with a Glassman family that has ordered from Pleva their family chart from
(continued on page 6)

On September 10, 2006, we will have our annual breakfast at the VFW. Mark this on your calendar because we will need many of you to help us.

On October 21, 2006, our chapter will host the Kansas Round-Up. I will be calling on you to help out in many ways for this event. Details will be worked out in March, so I should have more to tell you at the spring meeting, which is set for Sunday, May 7.

Have you noticed a new face in the crowd? Jeremy Dannebohm has recently joined our chapter. He is related to the Herrmanns from Liebenthal. Jeremy's expertise is in public relations, which of course makes him a shoo-in to be our public relations man. The Christmas article published in the Hays Daily News was his work, and we thank him for giving our chapter the exposure we need to bring in new members.

Speaking of new members, we are still looking for some! I would like each of our current members to bring in at least one new member this year. How hard can that be? Each of us knows so many people that there is no reason why our chapter should not be bursting out the walls of Munjor. (Ha!!!) I am looking for any suggestions from our current members on ways to get new members to join. Let me know what we can do differently that might help. (Just remember that belonging to the chapter only and not the national organization is not an option.)

Well, in the words of good Father Blaine as he was giving his homily at St. Joseph's Church one day, "I think that's enough!"

--Kevin Rupp

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

EEK! I always knew the day would come when Leona Pfeifer would find an error in something I wrote. In the last newsletter, I incorrectly credited Galen Schmidtberger with writing the German song "*Kleine Kinder*." Although he has done much to popularize the song in this area, he is not its composer. So thank you, Leona, and keep those corrections coming!

My gratitude goes to Frank Jacobs, Bernardine Schumacher, Judy Hoffman, and Larry Weigel for their very interesting and most welcome contributions to this newsletter.

I'm still waiting to hear from more of you! Please send in your material for *Photo Feature*, *How's Your German?*, and *Overheard*, using either my home address (1703 Henry Dr., Apt. B, Hays, KS 67601) or my e-mail address (rossiya@ruraltel.net). Do it today, before you forget, and God will reward you better than I can.

Also drop me a line if you would like to begin receiving your newsletter by e-mail. The two main advantages are being able to read it in living color and receiving it a bit sooner than everyone else does.

--Sister Alice Ann Pfeifer CSA

OVERHEARD

Here are two true stories from Bernardine Schumacher.

• My aunt Ida Dreiling married Jack Walker, an airman from Walker Airbase, at St. Fidelis Church in Victoria in April 1944. It was the custom for the bride and groom to walk up the aisle together at the beginning of Mass. She decided to have her father take her up the aisle,



and the curious older ladies who came to church to see the pretty bride gasped when they saw my grandpa with my aunt. They looked at each other and said, "She sure is marrying an old man."

• In the days before printed bulletins, the priest gave the financial report from the pulpit. After

Mass one Sunday a concerned parish member asked another member, "Who is this lady, Miss Ellaneous, that gets our money?" Naturally it was said in German and sounded more humorous.

INTERNET TIP

Study German for free! Go to www.german-grammar.de/index.htm

Tribute to Lawrence Weigel from his son

Part Three

Lawrence Weigel Jr. wrote this biography as a gift to his father while Lawrence Sr. was still alive. In Part Two, published in the last issue, we learned of Lawrence's growing-up years in Victoria, Kansas, and we left off with him as a young man leaving Kansas to study for the Capuchin priesthood in Herman, Pennsylvania.

HE WAS ONLY THIRTEEN YEARS OLD AND VERY HOMESICK. Dad recalls, "My German brogue brought much ridicule and laughter, which for a thirteen-year-old boy was hard to take. It resulted in fights and bloody noses. I was thinking in German and speaking in English, and oftentimes things did not come out good. I remember giving the singular of 'goose' and the plural as 'gooses.' After a year or so, the problem disappeared as I spoke only English on a daily basis, except for speaking German with other Ellis County boys there."

Dad fine-tuned his study habits at the seminary. He said, "Each morning six days a week we had a supervised study hour for 45 minutes before classes began and then again from 4:30 to 5:30 pm." Dad studied Greek, Latin, German, simple surveying, astronomy, and several other subjects. He participated in plays and debates and interacted with boys of all ethnic backgrounds who came from different parts of the country.

Because of the depression, he was unable to return home for the summer months. Little did he know that he would spend the next three years there without a visit home to

Kansas. He said, "It almost broke my heart." But he made the best of the situation. My dad has always looked on the bright side of life. To this day, the glass is always half full to him. He endured by studying hard under the discipline of the Capuchin fathers. He learned to write *Hoch Deutsch* (High German), which prepared him for a lifetime of researching his Volga German history. In addition, he was attracted to music education and learned how to play the baritone, the trumpet, the trombone, and the piano by ear. His teachers were Capuchin fathers of the Order of Saint Francis. All of them were college graduates, and most of them had PhD degrees. As Dad has said many times, "My education at the seminary gave me the best preparation for the rest of my life."

He loved sports and became a big St. Louis Cardinals fan during the Dizzy Dean era. So Dad and a few other Midwestern boys took up the cause for the Cardinals. They had a great time razzing the Pittsburgh boys at the seminary when the Cardinals won the World Series. Dad also played basketball.

Dad finally came home for a visit in the summer of 1933. He returned to the seminary in the fall, but started

having doubts about becoming a priest. The decision to leave the priesthood finally came when his mother wrote a letter in February of 1934 informing him that her dad (my great-grandpa Kuhn) was getting married, and she had to get out of his home.

So Dad went home to Victoria, Kansas, on the train to take care of his mom. In a very short time, he went from seminary student to common laborer with a pick and a shovel in the WPA (Workers' Project Administration) created by Roosevelt during the depression. He helped build the Fort Hays State University football stadium.

He and Grandma Gertrude rented a home with no plumbing and no electric lights. They borrowed an old kerosene lamp and used an organ crate for a table. Dad had to forego his high school diploma for now because they had to eat. He didn't have a car and hitched a ride with Joe Pfeifer to Hays for work. He earned \$2 a day and paid \$1 a day for room and board in Hays until the weekend. Dad said the happiest day in his life came when his caseworker, Mrs. Diehl, told him that if he wanted to finish high school, his mother could work with the other widows in the sewing room in Hays.

--TO BE CONTINUED

HOW'S YOUR GERMAN?

These are German nicknames that were used in Judy Hoffman's family when she was growing up in the 1950s. How many can you translate?

Schwartzkopf (for a dark-haired person)

Zwiwelkopf (for a platinum blonde)

Lange Baene (for someone tall)

Gwetsch! (for a child being corrected)

Duslich! (for an absent-minded person)

Judy also remembers how funny some names, including her own, sounded when spoken in English by her Volga German elders:

Choody (Judy)

Dordy (Dorothy)

Chosie (Josie)

LayCross (LaCrosse)

Dirty Turdies (Dirty Thirties)



PHOTO FEATURE



This photo from Frank Jacobs was taken in Pfeifer, Russia, around 1900. It represents one branch of the Jacob clan. The picture was sent to the family of Peter Jacob (died November 1931) and Anna Margarita Kippes living in Entre Rios, Argentina, at the time these people were still alive. While the Jacob grandchildren know it as a family photo, nobody recorded names on it, so they do not know who the specific individuals are. They know only that these persons belong to the Carlos Jacob branch of the Jacob clan that originated in Pfeifer, Russia.

Frank believes the photo shows Peter's parents, Michael Jacob (born 1825) and Barbara Konradi. However, when old timers at his chapter meeting in Topeka saw this print, they came to the consensus that the seated man was a Konradi, possibly a relative of Barbara Konradi. Many thought that the standing man in the right rear had strong Burghardt features. The children in the photo probably were deported to Siberia in 1941.

How DNA tests are changing genealogy

By Frank Jacobs,
Northeastern Kansas Chapter

- Using Y-DNA research, we have been able to reestablish Volga German family connections between Catholics and Lutherans of Baden, Germany, and Alsace, France. This is particularly interesting for researchers of the Russian villages of Pfeifer and Kamenka, along with all researchers who can trace their family lines back to Baden, Alsace, and the Rhineland.

- DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is found in every cell of the human body, and each person's individual DNA is as unique as a fingerprint. By examining the Y-chromosome that is found only in the DNA of males, it is possible to link descendants of Volga Germans living in the Americas today with families living in Germany, whose ancestors never left Germany.

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Jeremy
Dannebohm

A Special Message from Our New Publicity Chair

My Dear Friends,

Greetings, I hope this letter finds you well. As many of you know, the Sunflower Chapter of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia plays a crucial role in preserving the Volga German heritage of Hays, Kansas, and the surrounding area. This year is particularly exciting for the chapter because Hays has been chosen to host the 2006 State of Kansas Round-Up. In October, members of the AHSGR from all across the state of Kansas will gather in Hays to celebrate their heritage.

As I visit with some of our own people in the community, I still am finding individuals who have no clue our organization exists, yet alone what it does. More often than not, people are surprised that there is an international organization in place for the specific purpose of preserving our heritage. My instinct tells me that if we promote this group in a full campaign, more and more people will become aware and take ownership of this unique heritage. I feel that through effective marketing of ourselves and our heritage, we will see a new breath of air breathed into our already wonderful organization.

In discerning the best approach to market ourselves, we have taken on several new projects, one of which has been the sale of CDs featuring stories told by the legendary Lawrence Weigel. These CDs have been selling with great success, and we anticipate a new shipment soon. In addition to the CD sales, we have launched a column in the Hays Daily News that shares stories of our heritage geared toward specific themes throughout the year. I have received tremendous feedback on this column, and readers have enjoyed what they have read so far. We are grateful to the Hays Daily News for their support of this unique endeavor.

Now I feel it is time we take this campaign one step further and reach a different audience--namely, radio listeners and television viewers. The best way to get both audiences for a good price is by using one of the region's top-rated morning shows, which has been around for many years. Anybody who has ever awakened in the Hays area and turned their radio to 1400 KAYS has heard the voice of Mike Cooper. He is a local celebrity who is heard by well over a thousand listeners each morning. Last year, Mike was honored by the Hays Area Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to being broadcast over the radio, Cooper can be seen on television in several surrounding cities through a simulcast broadcast live on ECTV. During his show, Mike has a segment called "Community Corner," in which he visits with leaders and representatives of various organizations in the city; they discuss what's going on in their particular area of expertise. These interviews last anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes and have gotten good results for the organizations that have received this on-air exposure.

A new TV presence for our chapter could be utilized in many ways: recruitment and retention of members, sharing of folklore and heritage, promotion of our new CDs, advertising for our upcoming state convention. It is

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In discerning the best approach to market ourselves, we have taken on several new projects....

Naturally, we will welcome any contribution you are able to give, no matter how large or small....

This is truly an exciting time for the Sunflower Chapter....

New publicity chair

(continued from page 6)

my intention to have various members of our board assigned to the different months, each covering a different angle of what our organization is all about.

Marketing doesn't come without a cost. If you are able to assist us in this endeavor, it would be greatly appreciated. Anybody who knows me knows I prefer to have donations support projects rather than using money from an already tight budget. It is my intention to have the entire project funded by the generous support of individuals like you.

The cost for each month is \$50. This price is very reasonable considering the amount of coverage we would be getting. Our first scheduled visit is slated for Wednesday, February 15, 2006, at 8:30 am. The visits would continue to run the third Wednesday of each month at the same time. Getting air time on the Mike Cooper Show is premium and not easily available, so for us to be able to secure a regular spot is indeed fortunate. Naturally, we will welcome any contribution you are able to give, no matter how large or small. If we are lucky enough to get the entire year covered with funds left over, that extra money will go toward continuing the campaign in 2007 as we prepare for other exciting events. While benefactors will not be mentioned on air, we will be thanking you in our newsletter and at the chapter meetings. If you wish to remain anonymous, please add a note with your check letting us know. Regardless, you can be certain that our entire chapter will be grateful for your kindness!

Please mail your contribution to:

**SUNFLOWER CHAPTER – AHSGR
KEVIN RUPP, PRESIDENT
2301 CANAL BLVD.
HAYS, KANSAS 67601**

In the memo of your check write, **“Radio Campaign.”**

This is truly an exciting time for the Sunflower Chapter. We must strive to promote ourselves during this especially crucial time, but we cannot do this without your support. Working through the Mike Cooper Show will be yet another way to get our name in people's ears and hopefully gain new members interested in preserving our heritage. We must get this campaign rolling immediately, so if you are able, please mail in your contribution without delay.

Thank you very much for your time and support of the Sunflower Chapter of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia. It's our heritage.

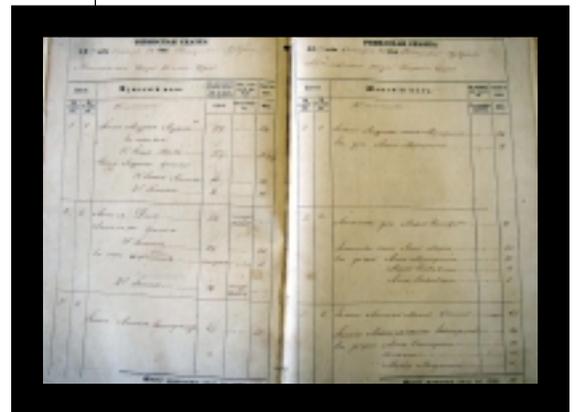
Regards,
Jeremy Dannebohm
Publicity Chair
Sunflower Chapter, AHSGR

Genealogy Update

(continued from page 3)

Rohleder, Russia, and delivery is expected in March. If you have never seen one of the Pleve charts, let me know, and perhaps we can have a whole program on genealogy. The charts are hand-drawn and contain much material, depending on the information available. Many charts contain full dates of birth, death, and marriage, plus the spouse's last name along with the village he or she was from. These charts cost about \$700-\$800 to produce, and the turn-around time can be a number of years. The Glassman chart has been on order about three years now, but I know the family will be pleased once the chart arrives.

Basic census information for a certain year depends on the number of people listed in the document. We have paid from \$300 all the way to \$600 for one village census. Selling these translated census lists helps to bring in money to obtain many new census books, but much is spent out of pocket to finance this project. Some people who do buy census records from us on a regular basis also contribute to the research fund, which helps greatly. Most census records that we look for are basically those connected with Ellis County. So far, we have had excellent luck! I am now trying to get marriage records out of the archives. These I obtain from Dr. Pleve and can take quite a while to get.



Here is a picture from the book containing the 1857 Zug census. When Paul sent me the translated information from St. Petersburg, he also sent digital pictures of all the pages from each book.

Bright Christmas

(continued from page 1)

When she was all finished, LeRoy Herrman asked, "Leona, you got all that from such a little plate?" She quipped, "Ja, that's what you call a plateful!"

Leona then explained why a scheduled guest, Jan Jensch, was not able to make the meeting, and she filled in for him by explaining the Christmas customs that are followed in Germany today. The Christmas season lasts from St. Nicholas Day on December 6 to the Feast of the Three Kings on January 6. Parents usually buy for their children Advent calendars, which contain bits of chocolate behind little paper doors for each day of Advent. All trees, wreaths, and holly used for decorations are real, never artificial. The tree is not decorated until Christmas Eve, and this is done by parents while children are told to wait in another room. Wax candles are placed on the tree branches and gifts, under the tree. Then the candles are lit and the children are called back into the room to see the pretty tree and begin unwrapping their gifts. On Christmas Day the traditional family meal consists of cooked goose, and traditional Christmas snacks include *Nuernberger* cookies and *Lebkuchen*.

Leona ended her presentation with a Volga German New Year's wish that her mother taught her. It is a little different from the one most chapter members know and use:

Ich wuensche Euch ein goldner Tisch, auf jeder Eck ein gebackenen Fisch, und in der Mitte ein Krug mit Wein. Das soll Euer Neujahrstueck sein. Heute ist der achte Tag, dass Jesus Kind geboren war, so wuensche ich Euch zum Neuen Jahr rechtviel Glueck. Lasst Euer Unglueck weit zurueck. Lasst Gott noch lange Jahre leben, und in der Ewigkeit, mit den Engeln im Himmel schweben.



Lasset uns beten

A few of you have asked that we print German prayers from time to time. Here, then, we begin with the Sign of the Cross (*Heilige Kreuzzeichen*) and the Our Father (*Vater Unser*).

Im Namen des Vaters und des Sohnes und des Heiligen Geistes. Amen.

Vater unser der Du bist im Himmel, geheiligt werde dein Name, zukomme uns dein Reich, Dein Wille geschehe, wie im Himmel also auch auf Erden. Gib' uns Heute unser taegliches Brot, und vergib' uns unsere Schulden wie auch wir vergeben unseren Schuldigern, und fuehre uns nicht in Versuchung, sondern erloese uns von dem Uebel. Amen.

DNA tests

(continued from page 4)

The significance of the latest DNA research conducted among Germans from Russia is that it provides information not found in the 1600 church books (where these books still exist) and Kuhlburg's migration records. We know that church records were lost when much of the German countryside was destroyed during the Thirty Years War. During that same time, 1618-1648, the population of the German Empire dropped from 21,000,000 to 13,500,000--and this does not even account for population losses of the previous century due to wars of religion.

In Bowenian family therapy, there is a major focus on geneograms, with a particular interest in *cutoffs*. Most cutoffs are gaps in ancestral records resulting from immigrations, deportations, wars, and major population dislocations. The cutoff generation, especially when traumatized by their experience, often denies any previous association with the family and country of origin. Most of us know families, for example, in which the grandparents did not want to remember or discuss what had happened to them in Russia. This phenomenon is amplified even more when the avoidance is institutionalized in religion and law, as it was in the Treaty of Augsburg. This treaty of the 1550s assigned the people of a respective German territory with the religion of its governing prince. If the prince was Lutheran, for example, then all his people had to be Lutheran. This same practice was reaffirmed at the close of the Thirty Years War in 1648.

Through DNA testing, we have found one Lutheran study group in Alsace that shares the same surnames and ancestry as the Volga Germans of Catholic Kamenka. I personally have matched the family lines of Nicholas Jacob with a Reeb family that was cut off during the time of these wars of religion, and I have found the Jacob surname in both Alsace villages and *Bergseite* Catholic Volga German villages. (The year 1200 was when surnames started being used in the Alsace region.)

Other current Volga German descendents of these villages also have taken up this line of research, including Domes, Rebs, Schmidts, Uberts, and others. Eventually, a mapping of DNA from one direct descendent male of the first patriarch of every Plevé chart would be desirable, if the respective family so chose. But such analysis does not guarantee results. Common descendents may not, as of yet, have contributed to a DNA database. However, over time, as more data on Volga German DNA lines are collected, more ancestral connections will be found tying individuals to specific regions not documented in Russian records. Our data is stored at the University of Arizona and can be shared with other DNA research organizations, if authorized by the donor. The data is collected at www.familytreedna.com.



Volga German Folk Humor

NOW AVAILABLE ON CD!

**A humorous talk given
by Lawrence Weigel at
the 1989 AHSGR
Convention in Lincoln,
Nebraska**

Please send me the Lawrence Weigel CD *Volga German Folk Humor* at the cost of \$15 plus \$3 postage and handling.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

With a check payable to SUNFLOWER CHAPTER, clip and send this form to SUNFLOWER CHAPTER * 2301 CANAL BLVD. * HAYS, KS 67601.

Copyright 2005 Larry Weigel
All proceeds go to the AHSGR Sunflower Chapter

**THANK
YOU!**

This is the first in a series of CDs to be produced by Larry Weigel, son of the late Lawrence Weigel, reknowned Volga German folklorist.

In *Volga German Folk Humor*, Lawrence tells funny stories about "Der Mister" from Russia, the Lutheran minister, the cabbage and barrel tale, the state representative, the chandelier, the contractor, the good schmelling stuff, the Pfeifer fights, the arrival of the bishop in Munjor, two old men at a funeral, two men in the tavern in Schoenchen, the stolen pig, and the blue holy water. You can tell by the laughter that the crowd loved it. The recording is finished off with some good old-fashioned Volga German music played on Lawrence's beloved keyboard organ.

SUNFLOWER CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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website: www.volgagerman.net



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