REMEMBERING
DR. GERALD M. KRAMER
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DR. GERALD M. KRAMER
More than a teacher, 
a paradigm for life.
Message from the Dean
Jeffrey W. Hutter, DMD, MEd
Dean and Spencer N. Frankl Professor in Dental Medicine

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Dear Alumni and Friends,

It is difficult to believe that it has been more than 13 years since Dr. Kramer passed. His legacy continues to impact residents and patients at the Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine (GSDM) every day. For the last 50 years, the department has been an internationally recognized leader in the profession, and his spirit and philosophy live on at GSDM.

Since becoming Dean it has been a priority for me to honor the legacy of Dr. Gerald M. Kramer, which was later placed in the Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine. This will be our inaugural event as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine. This will be our first symposium during Alumni Weekend 2013 and I trust it is my fervent hope that those impacted by many ways alumni choose to support the School, will become an enduring tradition.

As we look to our proposed new building and the efforts in building the Department of Periodontology at GSDM, a profound influence on our School. For the last 50 years, the department has been an internationally recognized leader in the profession, and his spirit and philosophy live on at GSDM.

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I had the privilege of hosting a Periodontic Alumni Reception in honor of Dr. Kramer during the 2009 American Academy of Periodontology Annual Meeting in Boston. Mrs. Sylvia Kramer and her son Lloyd, daughter Leslie, and granddaughter Maria graciously attended and accepted a plaque in honor of Dr. Kramer, which was later placed in the Periodontology Department.

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Dr. Kramer might come together to help us place his name in the new facility. Indeed, while our proposed new facility is about the next exciting chapter, we must recognize and always show gratitude for those leaders, such as Dr. Kramer, who brought us to this moment.

Dr. Kramer practiced periodontics for 50 years and received virtually every honor awarded in the specialty. Indeed, the American Academy of Periodontology recognized his contributions to the advancement of dentistry with the Gold Medal, and his clinical excellence with the Master Clinician Award. We now honor Dr. Kramer with this memorial publication, which contains remembrances and reflections from many of our devoted periodontic alumni. I thank each of the contributors and the Chair of Periodontology, Dr. Serge Dibart for commemorating Dr. Kramer in this way.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey W. Hutter, DMD, MEd
Dean and Spencer N. Frank Professor in Dental Medicine

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It gives me great pleasure to write to the foreword to this inaugural event as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine. This will be our inaugural event as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine. This will be our first symposium during Alumni Weekend 2013 and I trust it is my fervent hope that those impacted by many ways alumni choose to support the School, will become an enduring tradition.

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Dean and Spencer N. Frank Professor in Dental Medicine

Chair of Periodontology

Dr. Serge Dibart

Professor and Chair of Periodontology

Director of the Advanced Specialty Education Program in Periodontics

Dr. Gerald Kramer

REMEMBERING DR. GERALD M. KRAMER
C. Gerald M. Kramer (Mal, as he preferred) was not only an outstanding role model for me, but also a close friend. He was both creative and inspirational and lived life as a renaissance man who cherished his family and friends. He was able to be open to new and diverging thoughts and always a willing candidate for debate. A skilled surgeon and a dedicated educator, Mel was never completely satisfied and instilled his curiosity in all of us. Every student desired to emulate this elegant individual who ran the race like few others.

Myron Nevins

“My every student desired to emulate this elegant individual who ran the race like few others.”

Nevins, DDS, PERIO 67

to emulate this elegant individual who ran the race like few others. His tenure as Chair of the Department of Periodontics at the Boston University School of Graduate Dentistry was exceptional in his devotion to the residents and the faculty. He was always available and the first to help professionals or personally. He himself never stopped being a student. We practiced and taught together for thirty years, co-edited the International Journal of Periodontics & Restorative Dentistry, and founded the Institute for Advanced Dental Studies. His energy was motivational. It is so appropriate that he is included in the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the School where he gave so much of himself.

—Myron Nevins, DDS, PERIO 67

If we are lucky in life, we meet one or two BIG people...

The end of 1979: A “famous” periodontist comes to our periodontal program to give a full day presentation. Primarily a researcher, the presenter begins to offer clinical therapeutic guidelines. Dr. Kramer politely dissects and invalidates these treatment suggestions. The next day, Dr. Kramer explains to us that, while the speaker was his guest, his first obligation is to his students. As a teacher, Gerald Kramer was unique.

Fast forward a decade: As Program Chair of the South Shore District of the Massachusetts Dental Society I hold my breath and ask Dr. Kramer to give a full day presentation. He graciously accepts the challenge of postulates, and enabling creative thinking. Except for the missing bath house, there appeared to be little difference between Phaedo, Protagoras, and others interacting with Socrates in the Dialogues, and exploring life and treatment philosophies with every day, every day, every day...

As a philosopher, Dr. Kramer encouraged the challenging of postulates, and enabled creative thinking. Except for the role of the periodontist as the treatment quarterback.

As a moralist and role model, Gerry Kramer was unsurpassed.

A former colleague tells me the next day that this thought was an unusual case to show, as it was a treatment which would rarely be utilized. I explained that the message of the case was not the treatment rendered, but rather the thought processes involved and the role of the periodontist as the treatment quarterback.

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**Dr. Gerald M. Kramer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born in Gloucester, MA, to Tillie and Louis Kramer</td>
<td>June 11, 1922</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married Sylvia Sher</td>
<td>January 21, 1945</td>
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<tr>
<td>Studied periodontology under Henry M. Goldman</td>
<td>1944–1946</td>
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<td>Served in the Navy Dental Corps, World War II</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received DMD, Tufts University School of Dental Medicine</td>
<td>1950s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Professor of Periodontology (The Boston University School of Graduate Dentistry (now GSDM) was founded during this period, in 1963)</td>
<td>1958–1961</td>
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<td>Assistant Professor of Periodontology (GSDM was the BUAM Department of Dentistry at this time.)</td>
<td>1961–1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor of Periodontology</td>
<td>1966</td>
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<td>Professor &amp; Chair, Department of Periodontology</td>
<td>1967–1979</td>
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<td>Founds the Institute of Advanced Dental Studies, Massachusetts</td>
<td>1971–1977</td>
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<tr>
<td>Founds the Institute of Advanced Dental Studies, Japan (now the Japan Institute for Advanced Dental Studies)</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>The “Dr. &amp; Mrs. Kramer Scholar Award for Excellence” is established.</td>
<td>1995–2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passed away.</td>
<td>May 18, 2000</td>
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In an attempt to describe Dr. Gerald Kramer’s impact on his students, colleagues, and friends, one would have had to know him—not too dissimilar from those who lived during the era of John F. Kennedy or when osseointegration was new and Professor Ingvar Branemark changed the practice of dentistry. He was a unique individual and falls into the category of leaders, both in our profession and in other aspects of life. His contribution to our field was more than the sum of his achievements in that it transcended his time at Boston University and his life.

He had a unique style that embedded itself into the DNA of his students and those who had contact with him. His quest for excellence in dentistry had a ripple effect that instilled enthusiasm into those students and their professional lives. When one thought of his appearance, hypnotic dialogue, and energy, it became a catalyst for those who followed him.

I was privileged to have a long-term interaction with him and it had an unquestionably positive effect on my activities in the profession. There have been only a few who stand out as iconic people, whose personalities and contributions have impacted on my life. I place Dr. Kramer in that category and will always cherish my long friendship with him.

—Burton Langer, DMD, PERIO 66

My first impression of Dr. Kramer was at our class orientation. I specifically recall how articulate he was and how fashionably he dressed. After his welcome and introduction to our group, he addressed root anatomy by asking us how it was relative to periodontal involvement. When we were unable to answer correctly, with chalk in hand he “drew us the root” involving the bifurcated maxillary first bicuspid. He emphasized that we would not “walk through” his course. He expected us to carry a creditable case load working hard for certification.

The other memory I cherish is the day he called me into his office. I entered a little tentatively but he quickly put me at ease. We talked briefly and then I just asked if he was inviting me to work for him in his office in Swampscott. He said “yes” and it was the beginning of an extraordinary learning experience and lasting friendship.

—Thomas F. Holmes, DDS, PERIO 71
Michael Stiglitz, DDS, PERIO 72

Walt Whitman in “O Captain! My Captain!” states: 

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done.

By any measure, Dr. Kramer was an extraordinary individual. Whether as a practitioner, teacher, lecturer, author, department chair, board member, editor, friend, father, or husband, he touched the lives of countless people who have admired, respected, and loved him. And throughout all those roles, there has been one constant theme: Excellence. He pursued it for himself, and he instilled it in those of us fortunate enough to have studied with him. His influence on our lives is vast and deep. In fact, for many of us he has always seemed larger than life.

I was fortunate to have studied with Dr. Kramer from 1970 to 1972. In the spring of 1972, Dr. Kramer delivered his “Top of the Mountain” address to the graduating class. In his speech, he thanked us for taking him through an arduous two-year journey to its pinnacle where, he said, “The view is most beautiful.” This remark from Dr. Kramer is so indicative of his great generosity of spirit: He thanked us! And in his address, he continued to instill in us the determination to pursue excellence.

A complete résumé of Mel’s life would fill an entire journal, so let me mention just a few of his accomplishments:

- Diplomate, American Board of Periodontology
- Professor and Chairman, Department of Periodontology, Boston University School of Graduate Dentistry (renamed Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine), 1967–1979
- Director, American Board of Periodontology, 1972–1978
- Co-Director, Institute for Advanced Dental Studies
- Co-Editor, International Journal of Periodontology and Restorative Dentistry

But this list of professional accomplishments does not fully capture the man. To do so he has to know his personal qualities as well. Many stories have filtered back to me about Mel’s humanitarianism. Countless former students, friends, and colleagues have sought him out through phone calls, letters, and faxes seeking help, advice, or just a shoulder to lean on. When I would ask how he continued to respond to so many appeals, his response had always been, "They are family, and we take care of family.”

As if these accomplishments and personal qualities were not enough, Mel was also a devotee of music, the arts, and literature—a true renaissance man! He was an avid tennis and golf player while in the Navy. And as we all know, he had a wonderful sense of humor.

The Prophet, Gibran speaks of friendship: “When you part from your friend, you grieve not; For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.”

As if these accomplishments and personal qualities were not enough, Mel was also a devotee of music, the arts, and literature—a true renaissance man! He was an avid tennis and golf player while in the Navy. And as we all know, he had a wonderful sense of humor. It has been said of a teacher that, “If he is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.” Dr. Mel Kramer accomplished this as a teacher and as Chair of Periodontology at the Boston University School of Graduate Dentistry. Four hundred and seventy-two students came to Boston, all from different backgrounds, all with different reasons for wanting to study periodontics. But our shared desire was that we wanted to study with “The Man.”

“The Man,” Dr. Gerald Kramer, is a giant among us. With elegance and style and class, and always with that unmistakable, inimitable Boston accent, he has taught us, nurtured us, inspired us, and made us strive to be better than we ever thought we could be. His contributions to the periodontal profession alone would be enough to forever ensure his legacy. But we, his students, colleagues, and friends, are his living legacy, as well. That legacy will live on as each of us passes down to succeeding generations the ideal he instilled in all of us: Excellence.

In The Prophet, Gibran speaks of friendship: “When you part from your friend, you grieve not; For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.”

—Michael Stiglitz, DDS, PERIO 72
To speak historically of the origin of the Boston University School of Graduate Dentistry and not mention the inspiring career, the leadership, and the personal charisma of the remarkable academician and clinician, Dr. Gerald Kramer, would be naïve. From 1967 to 1979, during his tenure as Chair of the Department of Periodontology, Dr. Kramer mentored more than 200 periodontal residents, many of whom went on to become national and international leaders in periodontics. It is evident that it was not by accident that this superstar was chosen by the School’s Founding Dean, Dr. Henry M. Goldman. Dr. Kramer’s careful selection of his talented clinical instructors, lecturers, researchers, and authors elevated the periodontal department under his leadership to exemplify, at that time, the most highly sought after certificate in periodontics in the world. Each class had 18–20 residents with notable academic and personal résumés and diverse personalities. He took great pride in selecting individuals whose psychological, intellectual, and emotional characteristics would complement each other in a learning environment in a positive way. As a result, his students went on to become leaders in periodontics at the national and international levels.

Dr. Kramer’s great wisdom was on display at his introductory lecture when he challenged us to strive to be role models of clinical excellence combined with academic prowess. Above all, he inspired us to strive for continued growth in order to ensure a rewarding and remarkable career. It was not acceptable just to practice periodontics, he said, adding the quote from Jean Giraudoux, “only the mediocre are always at their best.” He demonstrated the art of being a good listener to your patients, reminding us “never stand up and look down at them, but to address them eye-to-eye.”

By his own example, Dr. Kramer encouraged us to understand a patient’s personality and profession in order to facilitate utilizing metaphors from their own lives to help them understand complex treatment plans. His motto was “show human kindness at all times.” He advised each of us to broaden our horizons by developing knowledge of art, history, and literature, and to travel and experience other cultures.

His early passing at age 77 left an overwhelming void in the many careers he had originally inspired. His legacy left each of us reflecting on the meaning of raising family and of acting as a responsible citizen. Through his mentoring and strong example, his students continue to remember him today. As we have grown older and realize our own mortality, we can think back on his many words of wisdom that first inspired us to excel. I am privileged to share with so many esteemed colleagues the great impact he had on our lives. Dr. Gerald Kramer was, without question, an exceptional periodontist, teacher, friend, husband, and father.

—Roger J. Wise, DDS, PERIO 73, ORTHO 77

“Dr. Gerald Kramer was, without question, an exceptional periodontist, teacher, friend, husband, and father.”
Dr. Kramer changed my professional life. He was unsure of myself when I came to the United States. He offered me psychological support and I gained a great deal of confidence from what I learned from him.

He has been a wonderful teacher, not only for me, but also for many of his students who learned his approach on how to treatment plan a case; how to approach a patient psychologically; to perform accurate and delicate surgeries; and to evaluate the treatment.

In addition, he demonstrated to all his students the importance of great teamwork, taught us how to strive for optimal treatment—fighting for no less than the best.

His approach to life on a personal basis is similar to his approach in teaching, something which his students appreciated and were keen to imitate. This made him a great teacher and a great man who has influenced many, if not all, of his fascinated students.

—Giano Ricci, MD, DDS, PERIO 74
Words alone cannot accurately describe Dr. Kramer. As his student starting in 1973, he was much more than a professor to me. He became an inspiration, an advisor, and a life teacher to me and many other students. He stimulated my passion, pursuit of perfection, and devotion to my profession; through his dedication, he was able to render generations equally devoted to their careers as he was.

He was able to instill within us love for our classmates and instructors, as opposed to competition. The relationships he helped create amongst us are still ongoing to this very day, filled with all the good old memories and feelings, sustained for over 40 years. We formed tangible bonds so strong that every time we meet it feels like it was just yesterday, all thanks to Dr. Kramer.

My relationship with his family, Mrs. Sylvia Kramer and his daughter Leslie Kramer, are an extension of my deep love and respect for him. These relations continued even after he had left us, because he is still in all of our hearts.

Dr. Gerald Kramer’s legacy is that he created a turning point in the history of dental therapy, changing the concept of restorative dentistry into periodontal-restorative concepts applied in clinical practice. It comes as no surprise that professionals respect and admire him for revolutionizing and pioneering the profession we have today.

—Yousri Said, DDS, PERIO 76
Steven P. Perlman, DDS, PEDO 76, DHL (hon.)

I am probably one of the few professionals outside of the Perio-prosthetics world that was fortunate enough to have Dr. Kramer as a mentor. He cared about the underserved population, especially people with intellectual disabilities. He instilled excellence, compassion, and caring for our patients that we treated together. No one brought more dignity to the profession than he did.

—Steven P. Perlman, DDS, PEDO 76, DHL (hon.)

“...no one brought more dignity to the profession than he did.”
I once thought that the moment I was accepted into the BU Periodontal family occurred in the Boston cold of December 1974 while I was being interviewed by an elegant, distinguished gentleman who seemed more a U.S. Senator than a dentist. That man was, of course, Dr. Kramer. He asked us what made what model I thought I could succeed in surviving the rigors of periodontal training at BU. I felt thinking too much, almost offhandedly, answered “Why wouldn’t I, I’ve always been able to accomplish whatever I want.” I’m not quite sure why that answer escaped from me. The truth be told, I was not so self-assured at that stage. Early during my periodontal career I was teaching at a local hospital dental residency program. While I was teaching I was a member of the class of 1977, and among the most compassionate and quality care practitioners based in clinical and academic research, but at the same time he also made it clear that this was a family and that we would always be part of it. It was important to understand that there was an art to periodontics. Along with this passion, I desitny’s Family. It is a privilege and an honor to have been taught by one of the Masters of Periodontics. Dorno Argiati, Mahal and Thank You for everything you have done for me, Dr. Kramer. I try to live up to my high standards every day in my practice and the Your humble student, —Glenn Fujinaka, DDS, PERIO 77

I have the opportunity to learn from a master of both.
I trained with Dr. Gerald Kramer. There is nothing that makes me prouder to say.

I met Dr. Kramer when I was a junior dental student at Penn—in 1973. I spent a day in his office in Swampscott, arranged by one of his hygienists who was a friend of my wife. I can remember the day like it was yesterday.

The sun was shining brightly, but Dr. Kramer seemed even brighter as he brought me into treatment rooms and showed me the world of periodontology. X-rays and patient histories going back decades were brought out for me. He started my education as a periodontist right then. I applied to only one post-doctoral program and hoped he would accept me.

“He had flair and charisma and you wanted to be like him.”

Dr. Kramer was an educator, an innovator, and a showman. He loved the show. A lecture was an event, sometimes taking all day and into the evening. A demonstration surgery in the clinic would have a dozen students crowded around as he showed the difference between “good fibers and bad fibers” in a difficult esthetic surgery. He had flair and charisma and you wanted to be like him.

Dr. Kramer had a lot to share and he wanted to excite you, motivate you, and make you think. I am so grateful to have known him...

—Thomas J. Mone, DMD, PERIO 77

I had the privilege to assist both of them doing surgery and I did the translation.

I learned a lot because they had to explain to dentists who knew almost nothing about periodontology: it was a step-by-step procedure and Dr. Kramer was very educational and patient...

Dr. Habib developed a friendly relationship with Dr. Ron Nevins and they met again long after Dr. Habib had retired. He died in 2010.

Around 1980, when they published the International Journal of Periodontics & Restorative Dentistry, they asked my friend Annie and me to translate the French issue. We did the translation for three years.

—Catherine A. Dorange, DDS, DScD, PERIO 78
I will always remember Dr. K with fond affection. He was the ultimate professional and the best mentor I had in my formative periodontal career. I would never have had the professional success I had without his personal devotion to his students and the practice of Periodontics.

His words of wisdom include, “It takes a career to build a reputation, and one minute to destroy it.” He also said, “Treat each patient like they are your mother and you will do okay.”

I remember my interview with Dr. K during the application process. Dr. Steven Peiser of Providence, Rhode Island, was my in-law’s periodontist and taught in the graduate periodontics part-time. I met with Dr. Peiser in the Boston University School of Graduate Dentistry cafeteria two hours before the Dr. K interview. He told me every question that Dr. K was going to ask me. He especially emphasized having a happy, supportive wife, being able to afford the tuition, and that I was not going to practice in the New England area once I graduated. He loved to see his graduates populate the whole US and the world.

In the interview with Dr. K, he indeed asked all those questions Dr. Peiser had briefed me on. Yes, I had a very supportive wife, and yes, I wanted to practice in Southern California. When he asked me if I could afford to attend BUSGD, I just looked him straight in the eye and lied that money was no problem! He smiled really wide and welcomed me to the class of 1978.

I will never forget it. The rest is history. We all really miss him.

—Robert W. Hymes, DDS, PERIO 78
Example of a Child’s Passion

My admiration for Gerald Kramer comes from an acquaintance. He has been a symbol, a myth, and despite his success, he retained a child’s passion for his work. It’s not easy to remain as such when you become a successful man. Gerald Kramer accomplished this, and perhaps it was his greatest achievement.

I do not exactly remember when I met him for the first time, but I know that I was immediately fascinated by his personality. Gerald Kramer represented, for me, excellence. For us, he was always an example to emulate. His professionalism was a model to follow.

I believe that his greatest victory has been to convey to the students a sense of belonging. Coming from Boston University, and being a student of Gerald Kramer, left you with an indelible mark. Under Dr. Gerald Kramer’s guidance, some of the best clinicians of the world were left with one sole idea—perfection. He shaped his students with an obsession for details. Great respect was given to him by his followers as well as his opponents.

In a world without time and patience, he found the time to convey his ideas. I think he would accept my overemphasis and my rhetoric, because in the end it is justified, and above all, well deserved… “forever retaining a child’s passion.”

―Luigi Montesani, MD, DMD

―Massimo De Sanctis, MD, DDS, PERIO 83

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Dr. Kramer at the Italian Society of Periodontology International Congress

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First met Dr. Kramer in 1978. He came to Italy to give a lecture and I was so incredibly excited by his capacity of information and scientific background that it made me fall in love with Periodontology.

I remember the day in Italy when I had a very long interview with him where he suggested several things I do before being qualified to study at BU, so I studied like crazy because I really wanted to be accepted into the Perio department at BU.

Then I traveled and met Dr. Kramer at BU. When I got the acceptance, I was so happy! Although, unfortunately, I did not have him as a teacher, every day when I was in practice at BU, I always followed the special way of his teachings. He was a very special person. He had a way of delivering scientific information with such confidence; it was really fascinating. Let me tell you, I have never met another person in my life with that kind of fascination.

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