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... over the years my decisions on what and how to travel would be changed by the relationship with my wife Ligia. This dynamic was best reflected by the symbol of “Yin & Yang” where a balance is struck between two opposites.

Despite the Spanish influence, wine has not been a popular drink in Guatemala. In the last few years, however, wine culture is developing among Guatemalans. From *vinotecas* (wine-tasting houses) and wine aficionados to a winery in La Antigua, it seems that the time is right for wine to grow in popularity.
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From the Publishers

There is not much to say this month. Same as last month. We hope everyone is staying home as much as possible. Most businesses are still closed. Several restaurants offer take-out and delivery service.

We have some beautiful and touching photos from the Photo Contest Portraits of Guatemala. Author Mark D. Walker shares some of his ideas and adventures in The Yang of Travel: Traveling Solo. Chef Amalia shares some wine tips and a recipe for a Tamarind Martini. And we have a poem of hope from David P. Carroll.

Here’s hoping we all get through this soon. Stay safe everyone.

— John & Terry Kovick Biskovich

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I began my global journey in the early 70s as a Peace Corps Volunteer training in Ponce, Puerto Rico. What better way to see the world and learn a new language than join the Peace Corps? A lifetime of travel would change me radically as well as those around me. But over the years my decisions on what and how to travel would be changed by the relationship with my wife Ligia. This dynamic was best reflected by the symbol of “Yin & Yang” where a balance is struck between two opposites.

The one life lesson I’d come away with as a Peace Corps Volunteer was the importance to stay connected to the “little guy,” the marginalized majority of the population which are traditionally ignored. After only a week as a volunteer living with a middle-class family and another Peace Corps Volunteer, I confronted my trainer, Zapata, about the need for a change and he simply replied, “Well you asked for it.” With that I was banished to one of the poorest communities in town, Punto Bravo where my real education on living in Latin America began. Although I didn’t realize it at the time, I’d agree with a passage in Theroux’s, Ghost Train to the Eastern Star, “Luxury is the enemy of observation, a costly indulgence that induces such a good feeling that you notice nothing. Luxury spoils and infantilizes you and prevents you from knowing the world…”

My Monumental Trek Through Latin America

After the Peace Corps I’d embark on my most ambitious trip through eleven countries, over 15,000 miles, over a five-month period. Oh, did I mention I had recently gotten married?
You’re going where? For how long? And we’ve got a month-old baby? Obviously, my new Guatemalan wife, Ligia, was unimpressed with my plan to fulfill a dream I’d held since joining the Peace Corps: to use my ability to speak Spanish to travel throughout Latin America. The power of the “Yang” just would not let me rest. I had to remind her, “Pero mi Amor,” (but my love), we discussed this many times and you knew that was my intention, “verdad” (true)?” “Of course,” she responded, “but we didn’t have a baby girl.” She got me there, the new baby was not part of my initial travel strategy at all. “Well love, just let me make this one trip and I’ll be back to study hard and get a real job with medical insurance ... sound good?” “Deveras?” (really?). Definitely, “no tengo pena” (don’t worry). With that we hugged, and I gave thanks that I’d found a woman willing to put up with my wanderlust.

Of course, Ligia’s family was appalled that I’d leave, and even her friends thought that she was crazy to let me go. But in 1973, I headed out alone with only a backpack, and saw almost all the major countries. I followed most of the rules of the road or the “Essential Tao of Travel” as Theroux referred to, with my own spin:

- Go alone
- Travel light
- Bring the “Latin American Handbook”
- Go by land
- Walk across national frontiers
- Keep a journal
- Read local newspapers and a novel from the best writer in the country
- Don't eat street food unless you have a local guide or friend with you
- Make a friend and spend time with old ones who are already there
- Hire a taxi driver to give you on a city tour and tell you where to and where not to go

I used buses, trains, ferries, planes, and the back of trucks to make the trip, relying on the “South American Handbook,” (published in London), to provide detailed information on each country. The most I ever paid for a hotel was $2.35 in Lima, Peru. I focused solely on visiting as many historic and scenic sites as possible.

I only brought what would fit in a small backpack including a Maya-woven long-sleeved shirt, which was cool in the summer and warm enough in the winter — and it never needed to be ironed, the “Latin American Handbook” and picked up a “Ruana” — a short poncho while traveling through Quito at 7,000 feet where I was freezing. Laptops and iPhones didn't exist at that time.

After saying good-bye to Ligia and her family, I began my trek through Central America, I was
forced to fly from Panama City to Cartagena, Colombia, since the dense jungle and swamps had prevented the completion of the Pan-American Highway, or any other roads, for that matter. From there I took a bus through the capital, Bogota, and headed for Cali. Though the modern city of Bogota, at an elevation of over 8,000 feet, was the third highest in Latin America, I wasn’t attracted to it. Instead I was more interested in visiting Cali, considered the “salsa” capital of the world, and home, supposedly, to the most beautiful women on the continent.

Upon my arrival in Cali, I began chatting with the first cab driver I met. An enterprising young man, Carlos wanted his children to learn some English, so he invited me to his home where I chatted away with his two young children, Carlitos and Marta. I ended up staying for a few days. Dinners often included my favorite food, “patacones” or “tostones,” which are green plantains cut, smashed, cooked in oil, smashed again and cooked one final time and salted. We became fast friends and I’d see him again at the end of my journey.

From Cali I took a bus south into the highlands of Ecuador, which included an unforgettable train trip on one of the old steam engines from the capital of Quito to the coastal port of Guayaquil. From there I headed to Peru. The three local delicacies I enjoyed in Lima included “pisco sours,” which contain Peruvian pisco with lime juice, syrup, egg whites, and Angostura bitters with lots of ice. Another was “escabeche de pescado,” a baked fish dish with lots of onions, and the last was “ceviche,” which is raw fish with onions and lots of lime. I was able to read several of Mario Vargas Llosa’s many novels, like The Story Teller, which was about the pre-Colombian peoples in the Amazon. Llosa, a Peruvian writer, politician, journalist, essayist, college professor, and recipient of the 2010 Nobel Prize for literature is one of Latin America’s most influential writers.

Before leaving Peru, I got a haircut in Arequipa because I knew that the “militares” would be wary of any longhairs with backpacks. When we reached the border, the “militares” pulled a number of passengers with long hair off the bus.
and cut it themselves. This was not pretty, as the young soldiers were obviously more familiar with submachine guns than shears. Although I joke about this now, I and my fellow trekkers were petrified by these young, barely trained “soldiers” toting dangerous weapons. After safely crossing the border, I caught a bus which, careened south into Chile through the Atacama Desert, one of the driest in world.

I arrived in Santiago in 1973 shortly after the Chilean military, with the assistance of the CIA, staged a coup to overthrow Salvador Allende. (The resulting assassinations and disappearances were dramatized well in the movie Missing with Jack Lemmon and Sissy Spacek.) So, I was off the streets before the curfew.

Although restaurants in Santiago are incredibly diverse with a strong European influence, I was looking for a cheap restaurant which I found. Unfortunately, some “mariscos” (seafood) must have harbored some bacteria and that plus an excess of wine, resulted in my waking up the next morning deathly ill with food poisoning. I ended up in a local hospital, in a room filled with beds behind curtains. When one of the nurses asked if I had medical insurance (which I didn’t), I showed her my Peace Corps Guatemala identification card (which had expired), and fortunately for me, they didn’t probe any further. The local Peace Corps office covered several days in the hospital. This would be the only time during the five-month journey when I’d fall ill, but it did provide an opportunity to reflect on my trip and appreciate how much I missed Ligia and my daughter. I began thinking about heading north, toward home. At this halfway point in my initial overseas travel experience confirmed Theroux’s belief that when traveling alone in remote and cut-off places, you learn a great deal about the world and yourself: the strangeness, the joy, the liberation and truth of travel, the way loneliness is the condition of a traveler.

I couldn’t help but wonder how the baby was doing and appreciated Ligia’s willingness to allow me this last big travel fling — (well almost last). I was close enough to Argentina to remember the words of Jorge Luis Borges, “With time we appreciate that someone who is capable of loving you with all your defects without trying to change you is able to bring you happiness,” making this a bittersweet moment.

I boarded an old steam engine train south to Puerto Montt and from there crossed through the spectacular “Lake Region” into Argentina and eventually its capital city, Buenos Aires. After a week, I boarded a hydroplane for the quick trip across the Río de la Plata to Montevideo, and from there into the tiny country of Paraguay. Along the way, I stopped at the most spectacular, single feature on this journey, the Iguaçu Falls, located at the intersection of Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Paraguay. As I stood before these mighty falls and soaked in the
thunderous roar, I had to agree with Eleanor Roosevelt, who, on seeing the falls, declared, “Poor Niagara.” Niagara Falls, which I’d seen as a child, was a third of the depth of Iguaçu Falls.

I hung around the majestic falls for several days, watching the abundant wildlife and constant mist coming off the massive falls. One evening, while gazing over to Brazil and studying a map of the region, I realized, I couldn’t say I had been through Latin America if I hadn’t seen Brazil. Since it covered almost half of South America, I gave myself three weeks to see as much of the country as I could. Who knew what I’d find?

From Iguaçu, I headed for San Juan Bautista, Paraguay, to visit the home of Zapata and Luz, my former Peace Corps trainer who I met in Puerto Rico and his wife. Before I left Puerto Rico, Zapata told me that he was returning to the field as a Peace Corps volunteer, and when I went through the Paraguayan capital, Asunción, I stopped by the Peace Corps office and found his site location. I took a bus to his community and walked to his home. From a distance, I saw his imposing figure, complete with his cowboy hat and Ray-Ban sunglasses. Luz was as tall and slim as I remembered, with a beautiful round face and brown eyes. They made an impressive couple. They’d both adapted well to the local community and introduced me to several friends from small ranches close by as well as some of the largest landowners. San Juan was a rural community whose economy depended totally on agriculture.

A Vietnam vet, Zapata had been injured on the front and received a Silver Star. To him, the torture, brutality, and napalm he saw, as well as the shrapnel that mutilated innocent villagers, were all realities of war. He didn’t condone the war but understood its laws. He believed that if one hostage could provide beneficial information that might save one American soldier, he should be tortured — whatever it took to get that information.

One evening, over the traditional tea, mate, I told Zapata, “Isn’t it a shame that the U.S. is
always used as a model for so many developing countries while our country suffers from the destruction of our moral fabric, rising levels of alcoholism, drug addiction, and mental illness? In reality, Latin Americans could certainly teach us some important things about human relations.”

Zapata didn’t accept this line of thought. “Most Latin Americans would accept the problems in your country over the poverty and lack of jobs and opportunities they’re facing in their own countries.”

One day we visited one of the “finqueros” (large farms) he worked with. With over 5,000 hectares (almost twenty square miles) and 2,600 cattle, I was expecting to find a big hacienda. Instead, I found a modest home, a tiny Toyota, and no electricity. Zapata informed me that President Stroessner was one of the wealthiest men in the world because he’d made the country his fiefdom, which included controlling all modes of communication and the economy.

When I questioned the United States’ support of a brutal dictator like Stroessner, Zapata countered with, “It’s pragmatic. Our military was allowed to construct El Pozo Colorado, a military base in the Chaco where nobody can enter, and it’s strategically located between Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Bolivia. The base was used to train anti-guerrilla groups. Bottom line,” Zapata summarized, “money talks and bullshit walks.” Obviously, our worldviews were worlds apart, although we were both part of the same organization, and Zapata certainly helped me appreciate how things work in Latin America. But our differences of opinion would not change his graciousness as a host.

The United States and USAID, as well as the Peace Corps, were all suspect to the locals, based on the strong relationship between Stroessner and the U.S. government. Between 1962 and 1975, the U.S. provided $146 million to the military government, and their officers trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas. Stroessner provided refuge to such dictators as Anastasio Somoza, the dictator from Nicaragua. Three to four thousand people were murdered, and 400 to 500 more disappeared. Years later, the military’s complicity with the drug cartel would be revealed.

Luz was an excellent cook and had learned all the basic Paraguayan cuisine. A typical breakfast in Paraguay consisted of bread, butter, coffee, and milk (I skipped the milk, which might carry tuberculosis). For lunch we had yucca soup with vegetables and meat, a tomato and potato salad, a sweet guayaba paste, which one ate on a piece of bread, and a cup of strong coffee. We drank mate in the afternoons, and soon I had my own silver straw and gourd. My favorite meal was pizza de Paraguay, a yucca-based crust with tomato sauce and cheese on top, baked in a bread oven.

April 30th was Día del Maestro (Day of the Teacher), one of Paraguay’s most important celebrations. Everyone in the town surrounded the basketball court, where a group played gringo rock music sung in broken English, as well as some romantic Latin music and a lot of polka, complete with dancing (that European influence again). Fortunately, my time in Crested Butte,
a ski town in Colorado with a strong Croatian influence, had prepared me for this event, and much to the surprise of the locals, I polkaed like everyone else, doing circles and cross steps.

One old guy brought out glasses of whiskey to the dance patio three times, so I chugged them and thanked him. “Gracias, Don Alvaro, muy amable” (Thank you, very kind of you). I also topped that off with some of the weak local beer. Fortunately, I was able to rise early the next morning without being “de goma” (hungover).

Although I enjoyed life in this tiny place called Paraguay, I said adiós to Zapata and Luz and hopped on a bus bound for the headwaters of the Iguaçú River, Curitiba. I trekked through Brazil for three weeks, including a thirty-two-hour bus trip over potholed dirt roads from Salvador Bahia on the coast to their new capital in the interior, Brasilia.

After a few days admiring the architectural innovations of this planned city, I returned to Curitiba, where I caught the only train going to Bolivia via the swamps filled with colorful bright pink flamingos.

In Sucre, I met Michael and Sarah Barton at a tacky hotel called “Hostel de la Republica”. They were a young British couple traveling through Latin America using the South American Hand- book. They gave me several rolls of film, since I’d depleted my supply, and we struck up a friendship. Six years later I’d catch up with them in Southern Britain on a trip with my wife.

Over the last five months, I’d crossed some twenty borders, which often proved challenging and brought Graham Green’s observations to mind: “The border means more than a customs house, a passport officer, a man with a gun. Over there everything is going to be different; life is never going to be quite the same again after your passport has been stamped.”

Usually the guards would dilly-dally for almost an hour before they even inspected anything, in an attempt to leverage a “mordida” (kickback). Since I was usually on foot, or on a public bus, and couldn’t speak the best Spanish, I had to be patient as the guards positioned themselves to get a few dollars out of the young gringo “hippie.” They would soon learn that this was like getting
blood out of a turnip—and I learned about the value of patience.

One of the last and most challenging borders would be between Bolivia and Peru, along Lake Titicaca, on my way to Cuzco and the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu. The documents office is located in a small border town, but then you have to cross the lake into Puno, Peru for the customs office. They keep strange hours, don’t work Sundays, and adhere to every imaginable “holiday,” all of which increases the opportunities to pay bribes to all the border guards. Fortunately, I’d hitched a ride in Bolivia with a knowledgeable Bolivian American businessman, who stopped to buy a bottle of whiskey before arriving at the border. He knew one of the head government officials, exchanged greetings and the whiskey, and we drove straight through. This seems a more effective way to avoid haggling with the inevitable corruption at the border stations. After four and a half months of steady travel, I realized again how much I missed my wife, Ligia, and our daughter, Michelle. I had sent an occasional postcard to let Ligia know I was still alive, but hadn’t received any mail during the trip, because Ligia’s letters probably arrived after I’d moved on. Our phone conversations had been brief. I was tempted to take a bus directly to Lima or Quito and from there fly to Barranquilla Colombia, and then on to Guatemala. I was truly lonely and wanted my loved ones around me. I wanted to return to Colorado to feel the mountain breezes and the traditional North American foods of Thanksgiving and Christmas. For months, I’d seen a lot of Latin America, met incredible people, and made some friends, but realized that my life had changed forever, and I’d need to get back and start up my new family.

Upon reflection, I would agree with Paul Theroux, “Travelers don’t know where they’re going (because that’s not the point) and tourists don’t know where they’ve been.” And traveling had reminded me that no matter how long or difficult my trek, it ended with my finding my way back. I felt I’d made my dream trip through Latin America and was ready to return home posthaste to Ligia and the baby and begin the search for work and eventually a master’s degree in something related to international development. So, I made it to Cali, Colombia in a week or so and spent a few days with Carlos and his family after which I showered and headed for the airport and my flight back to my small family in Guatemala.
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At la Antigua Galería de Arte we have always given space to Guatemalan artists that represent not only artistic qualities, but those of this rich and diverse country. And though we show established artists at the gallery, we are enthusiastic about showing the work of young and exciting artists too.

We would like to recommend the work by these young and exciting artists that have enriched our lives and we hope that their work would enrich yours as well.

Sergio Alvarado, previously a traditional weaver, has developed from impressionism a self-named style called Tipiquismo, which celebrates...
La Antigua Galería de Arte announces that following the government instructions in order to help the current situation created by the COVID-19 our gallery doors will be closed temporarily. Nevertheless, you can browse our online collection from the comfort of your home. We can organize delivery, shipping, and payment through our online platform.

Email us at: laantiguagaleria@gmail.com

La Antigua Galería de Arte anuncia que siguiendo con las instrucciones del gobierno y ayudar en la situación actual creada por COVID-19, las puertas de nuestra galería se cerrarán temporalmente. Sin embargo, puede visitar nuestra colección en línea desde la comodidad de su hogar. Podemos organizar la entrega, el envío y el pago a través de nuestra plataforma en línea.

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the rich colors and wonderful landscapes of Guatemala; the lavish lyricism of the world of Guillermo Maldonado sometimes leads us to the surreal, but always reminds us where we are; Juan Francisco Yoc lures us into peaceful contemplation through ephemeral portraits and; César Pineda Moncrieff which is a poetic artist and his themes often explore the nature of consciousness in creative ways.
“Retrato #101” La Antigua
by Francesco Nadalini
“Al trabajo” Área Sur de Salamá, Baja Verapaz
by German Velásquez
2nd Place Judges Vote “untitled”
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Despite the Spanish influence, wine has not been a popular drink in Guatemala. In the last few years, however, in connection with the foodie revolution, wine culture is developing among Guatemalans. From vinotecas (wine-tasting houses) and wine aficionados to a winery in La Antigua, it seems that the time is right for wine to grow in popularity.

In my kitchen, I use wine and other spirits not only to cook and to flambé, but also to pair with Latin American gourmet dinners. Although Guatemala is not yet a fine-wine producer, it makes great beer and award-winning rums. When looking to pair my menus with outstanding wines, I often choose Spanish, Chilean or Ar-
gentinean wines, or lesser-known wines, such as Uruguayan and Mexican.

As a wine drinker and chef in the food and restaurant environment, I am often exposed to wine and alcohol, which gives me the opportunity to experience what is new and trendy. When I attended Le Cordon Bleu, I had formal wine education as part of the curriculum and learned the protocol of wine drinking. Living in the U.S. where wine is popular, I have learned to appreciate local wines as much as Latin and European wines. In addition, I have developed my own taste and have observed that people drink what they like disregarding the “wine rules” of the past.

A casual environment also encourages people to venture into other spirits and that is just wonderful when it comes time for me to plan menus for parties and business events. Below is a food and wine and other drinks pairing scenario of a typical event I host in my kitchen. We often talk about the traditions, history and culture behind the wine and food as part of an experience for the guests’ enjoyment. This can also be a fun guide for your own party at home.

I regularly welcome guests with a glass of cava (Spanish dry sparkling wine) and pair it with entradas (appetizers) consisting of small bites of shrimp ceviche or spicy marinated queso blanco (white cheese). Sometimes I make capirihnas (Brazilian cachaça rum, lime and sugar) or pisco sour (pisco brandy with lime juice, angostura bitters and egg whites popular in Chile and Peru), or tequila with sangrita (a limey-spicy tomato juice based concoction). I also serve tamarindo and Jamaica Guatemalan indita aguardiente (sugarcane spirits mixed with traditional Guatemalan flavors) over ice or in a martini glass.

Entrées of hearty and spicy or milder Mayan stews (red, brown, yellow or green) scream for either medium bodied red wines (Malbec or Carménère) or nice dry medium or lighter bodied whites (Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc). Sometimes guests prefer to drink beer. I recommend Guatemalan, Brazilian or Mexican beers, and sometimes American and European. Because I’ve been married to a Dane for many years, Danish beers have a prominent place.
in our family, and having traveled throughout Europe where wine and beer reign, I have gotten exposure to some fine drinks and spirits and developed a deeper appreciation for them.

I tend to pair “happy and sweet endings” with a fruity and floral semi-sweet and light white, like Argentinean Torrontes, or choose Guatemalan Zacapa Centenario, an award-winning rum from the Zacapa department of Guatemala. Guatemalan hot chocolate, fresh strawberries and *galletas* Maria taste delicious when paired with a very small glass of XO Zacapa Centenario, the finest of the Zacapa rums, which I encourage people to sip alongside the chocolate for a unique experience. People love what is sensational and delicious, and Guatemalan and Latin American wines and spirits have a lot to offer.

To celebrate the emerging Guatemalan wine and mixed drinks culture, here is a drink to lift up your spirit!

¡Salud!
GUATEMALAN TAMARIND MARTINI

Tamarind comes from an African tree with a pod that must be peeled first to expose the gummy brown, sweet, highly acidic pulp. Indita is a Guatemalan sugar cane liquor from a distillery in Quezaltenango which also makes award-winning Botrán fine rums, premixed bottled drinks and more. This is a simple and delicious way to enjoy a Guatemalan-style martini!

Makes 1 drink

4 oz. tamarind indita  
(Guatemalan sugar cane liquor)  
\( \frac{3}{4} \) to 1 cup ice  
Sugar for garnish (Use a bit of water around the rim of the glass to make sugar stick.)

In a martini shaker, combine all ingredients and shake vigorously for 1 minute. Or, combine in a blender and process until smooth.

Serve the tamarindo in sugar-coated martini glasses.

Amalia Moreno-Damgaard is an award-winning bestselling chef author born and raised in Guatemala City currently living in the Twin Cities. She provides individuals and companies with a taste and understanding of Latin cultures through healthy gourmet cuisine education, consulting, bilingual speaking and writing and fun culinary experiences.

Her cookbook “Amalia’s Guatemalan Kitchen-Gourmet Cuisine With A Cultural Flair” has won 9 international awards. AmaliaLLC.com
“Una pizca nada más” Ciudad Vieja
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Santa Catarina Pinula by Jaime Pérez
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Coronavirus Poem

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World today
It's different than
Before
No more hugs kissing
Our happiness gone away
Like never before
The virus has taken our
Loved ones away
Families suffering
Like never before
The fear of the unknown
Has arrived
The worry of what will happen
Tomorrow to you and me
Coronavirus on our mind's
Coronavirus everywhere
Our lives in danger
Like never before
We practice social distancing
Every day to keep the virus
At bay as we shop in different ways
Were asked to stay at home
Like never before
When will this
Virus ever go away
But I promise
I'll love and pray for everyone
Suffering
Every day.
We invite you to participate in our MONTHLY PHOTO CONTEST for August 2020 with the theme GARDENS OF GUATEMALA.

Please send ONE (1) HIGH RES photo with caption/location and your name & website for the credit line to:

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More information at: revuemag.com
Submissions entered by the 15th of July will be eligible.

Photos in this ad are from previous contests by: José Montúfar, Esgar Pixtun, Gerardo Pacheco, Lita Bilotti, Cristel Gunn, Carolina Contreras and Santiago Emilio Charuc.
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Serán elegibles las fotos recibidas hasta el 15 de julio de 2020.
“Panajachel en tiempo de Covid-19”
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