Cristeta Andrada
Narrator

Sarah Mason
Interviewer

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Richfield, Minnesota

Asians in Minnesota Oral History Project
Minnesota Historical Society

Susan Mason **-SM**
Cristeta Andrada **-CA**

SM: I'm talking to Cristeta Andrada in Richfield, Minnesota on October 20, 1978. And this is an interview conducted under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society. The interviewer is Sarah Mason. Cristy, do you want to start with where you were born and what year?

CA: Oh, I was born in the United States in 1964.

SM: What city in the United States?

CA: Richfield.

SM: Right here in Richfield? Or in the Twin Cities?

CA: Yes, here, in Richfield. [Chuckles]

SM: In Richfield, okay. And what year was that?

CA: 1964.

SM: 1964. Okay. How long had your parents lived here when you were born?

CA: I don't know. About . . .

SM: Well . . .

CA: I don't know, about [unclear]. I don't know.

SM: Okay. And where did . . .?

CA: Long enough. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] And where did they come from?

CA: Manila.

SM: From Manila. Yes. And they met here and married here?

CA: Yes, they did.

SM: And you were the second daughter, is that right?

CA: Yes.

SM: Yes. What kind of Filipino organizations and so on do you take part in or belong to?

CA: The Filipino Minnesota . . . no, wait a second. The Fil-Minesotan.

SM: Fil-Minnesotan.

CA: And the Fil-American.

SM: Fil-American. Those are two different organizations?

CA: Yes, they are.

SM: Yes.

CA: The Fil-Minnesotans are so like . . . they're sort of close to young people but they're in between.

SM: Oh.

CA: And the Fil-American are the oldies.

SM: I see.

CA: And then the Cultural [Society for Filipino-Americans] are the youngest.

SM: Oh, they're the newly . . . new immigrants from the Philippines?

CA: Yes, sort of, I guess.

SM: Okay. And your whole family belongs to these and takes part in a lot of this.

CA: Yes. I can't . . . I can't be a member yet, because I'm too young. But other than that.

SM: I see. How old are you now?

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CA: I'm fourteen.

SM: Fourteen years old. So you've always lived here in Richfield and gone to school here and so on?

CA: Yes.

SM: And what are you, in junior high school now?

CA: Yes.

SM: Yes. Well, are there other Filipinos in your school? Filipino Americans?

CA: Mmmm. No, I don't know of any. Most of my friends are all American.

SM: Are they? It's . . . they're all . . . and then do you have some Filipino-American friends outside of school?

CA: Yes.

SM: I see. But at school they're all American or Caucasian.

CA: Yes.

SM: I see. So you've always just had a lot of friends easily there or have you ever had any indication that people were racially biased at your school?

CA: No, not really.

SM: So you've been real accepted and . . .

CA: Yes.

SM: That's nice. Do you like school?

CA: Well, I like it, yes, because I get to see my friends more. But I don't get to see them during the summers, so I guess it's sort of fun going to school.

SM: Oh, yes. What are some of the activities at school you like?

CA: I have . . . I joined afterschool tennis.

SM: Yes.

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CA: Because I never knew how to play it and then I . . . and then I became in that, and then I'm in student council at school.

SM: Yes.

CA: And I'm in choir, and that's afterschool choir, they just meet during our activity hours and we just sing during that.

SM: Yes.

CA: And then I'm in a quartet that we sing.

SM: I see.

CA: Yes.

SM: And do you invite your friends over sometimes, and go over to their houses and so on?

CA: Yes. Yes. We do a lot together.

SM: Yes. And you've never felt that they thought you were any different or . . .?

CA: Yes, sometimes they act a little strange sometimes. [Laughter] When we're doing something different.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, are there any kinds of values that your parents have that wouldn't be true of your friends' parents?

CA: I don't know. I guess they . . . they like to do a lot of things with their kids. I mean, like lots of parents don't like to bring their kids a lot of places, you know, like to parties and junk like that.

SM: Oh, yes.

CA: And I always get to go if I really want to.

SM: Oh, that's a big [unclear].

CA: And on trips, you know, like people, they don't like to bring their kids along. I mean, we always like to . . . we get to go, like we got to go to Europe when my mom and dad went. So that was kind of nice.

SM: Oh, did they go to Europe, too?

CA: Yes.

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SM: And you've had several trips to the Philippines, haven't you?

CA: Mmmm, three times, I think. Yes.

SM: Three times. Do you know what years those were?

CA: I went in 1969 when I was about five years old.

SM: Yes.

CA: Oh, wait. I only went two because . . . and we went in 1976 for the family . . . we went to visit again and that was it.

SM: Yes. Do you have a lot of cousins there around your age?

CA: Yes, lots of people I don't know.

SM: [Chuckles]

CA: Because I remember when we got off the plane and I was kissed by all these people and I was trying to figure out who was who. And then there were all these strange people and I started laughing because I didn't know who was kissing me or not, if they were a relative.

SM: [Chuckles] You hoped they were, hmmm?

CA: Yes. [Chuckles]

SM: So your relatives in the Philippines seemed to be really excited to see you and your family?

CA: [Chuckles] Yes. Yes, and then we were excited to see them just the same.

SM: Yes.

CA: So it was sort of neat.

SM: So there is a really warm family feeling in your family.

CA: Yes.

SM: Do you think that's more so than your Caucasian friends or . . .?

CA: Yes, I guess so. I don't know. I mean, it might be different for some families.

SM: Right.

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CA: I don't know if that everybody just really as close as we are, I guess. Everybody's always really close.

SM: Oh, that's interesting. Yes. So then your parents always take you along when they go somewhere.

CA: Yes, they don't like to leave me at home anyways.

SM: [Laughter]

CA: And I don't like to be at home by myself anyhow, so I guess they don't have a very big choice.

SM: Do you have a lot of relatives here, too, in Minnesota?

CA: Yes, my aunt and uncle live next door.

SM: Oh, and so you see a lot of them.

CA: Yes.

SM: Do they have children your age, too?

CA: Yes. My cousin is a year older than me and then my other cousin's in [unclear] who's just going to graduate this year.

SM: Oh. Have they always lived here, too, or have they been . . .?

CA: Well, they used to live in our house and then . . .

SM: Oh.

CA: And then . . . then they . . . the people next door that used to live next door, they moved. And they sold the house to my uncle.

SM: Oh.

CA: So they got a new house.

SM: Well, they're practically like brothers and sisters then, your cousins.

CA: Yes, they are. Like we like to spend vacations with them and stuff like that.

SM: Oh, I see. Do you go on trips together someplace?

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CA: Yes, like this summer we went to Island View, and we spent it with them. That was really fun.

SM: Oh, where is Island View?

CA: In Duluth. Oh, no, Island View is Brainerd.

SM: Oh, Brainerd. I see. And do you have meals together often or . . .?

CA: Yes, like once in a while [unclear] and invite them over for a Sunday and then they'll invite us the next Sunday.

SM: I see. So you really are . . . that's your mother's sister?

CA: Yes.

SM: I see. Well, so you've always spoken English, I'm sure.

CA: Yes.

SM: But do you speak any Filipino languages or . . .?

CA: Not really, I don't know . . . I know a couple words maybe, but not that many.

SM: Can you understand a little of what's going on?

CA: If it's about me. Yes, if it's about me then I can. I can tell if it's about me, but I don't know what the [unclear] is, sometimes, you know, if they talk about you.

SM: Yes.

CA: Because they can't say your name in Filipino, they'd have to say it, the right word.

SM: Isn't Cristeta a Filipino name?

CA: Well, I mean, it's going to have sound my name because there's only going to be one person in this whole house that has a name like that.

SM: Oh, yes.

CA: So or like Tita, they'll say something.

SM: Yes.

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CA: So that's something different.

SM: Well, do you have grandmothers in the Philippines or have they died?

CA: All of them are dead.

SM: I see. Did you ever know them at all?

CA: I knew my mom's grandmother because we [unclear] with her in 1969.

SM: Your mom's mother?

CA: Right, my mom's . . . yes, mother.

SM: Yes. Okay.

CA: And then my grandfather, we met him when we went back in 1976, but also met him in 1969. And yes, they were all . . . they were grandparents I met.

SM: Yes.

CA: I didn't get to meet them very long, because we didn't stay there very long.

SM: Oh, yes. They were quite elderly by the time you . . .?

CA: Yes.

SM: Hmmm. Did you get a chance to talk with them a little bit?

CA: Not really. She didn't say too much. [Chuckles]

SM: Did he speak English, too?

CA: Yes, he did.

SM: Oh, yes. He was a governor.

CA: He came and visited us.

SM: Oh, he came over to the United States.

CA: Yes, I think in about 1969, yes, he came back after we left.

SM: Oh. That was nice.

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CA: And then he came back. But then he had to go back again to the Philippines because there was this parade that was going and he had to . . . he wanted to be there.

SM: Oh, what parade was that?

CA: I don't know. It was a special one though because he wouldn't have wanted to go back. He had so much fun in the snow.

SM: Did he really?

CA: He came in the wintertime.

SM: Oh.

CA: And then they went to Washington, D.C. and they left us. I wasn't very big. [Unclear] did come in 1959 or something like that.

SM: Yes. Oh, that . . . he lives in a . . . where there isn't snow, I take it.

CA: Yes.

SM: Oh, yes. Hmmm.

CA: It's cool though.

SM: Do you think of some Filipino values that you're really . . . could identify with. Well, you mentioned the family. What about . . . well, do you think of some others?

CA: Well . . .

SM: That are part of the culture of the Philippines that . . .

CA: Our talents, I guess.

SM: Your what?

CA: Our talents.

SM: Your talents?

CA: Yes. Because we all went to dance and stuff like that.

SM: Talent shows and things or do you just have . . .?

CA: Yes. The [unclear] is sort of like a talent show for the youth.

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SM: I see.

CA: So, you know, the younger kids there where they get their chance. And we started to get them participating more.

SM: Oh, so your group does quite a lot of that then?

CA: Yes.

SM: Every year you get [unclear]?

CA: The [unclear] will be held on December 16th, so that's sort of after the Philippine honor that we're having.

SM: Oh, December 16th?

CA: Yes, my mom's the . . . sort of the director. She'll be there.

SM: Oh, I see. So and this would be all Filipino-American kids in it?

CA: Yes. And they just . . . they participate and not the grown-ups. They just have the kids show their talent. And then it's sort of like a story, it tells a story all the way through it.

SM: Oh, yes. So this also gives you a chance to be with other Filipino-American kids.

CA: Yes, and then we have a . . . we have, I think, it's sort of like a Fil-Minnesotan Junior Club that we put together.

SM: Oh, I see. Yes.

CA: We had a Halloween party for that, so I got to meet some new people.

SM: Yes. Some that have come recently to this country?

CA: Well, like people that I haven't really met. I met most of the people because of the groups, because I always go. So they always know me, so their kids really get to know me.

SM: Yes.

CA: But then, some groups, you know, like in the Fil-Minnesotan, we don't see them as often. So then I met some of the kids that I haven't met yet.

SM: Yes.

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CA: So now that I . . . I guess my mom likes to bring me along so I get to meet other people than just my American friends and stuff.

SM: Well, sure. Yes. Well, you really have a dual heritage then in a way.

CA: Yes, I do.

SM: Do you think that's a big advantage for you?

CA: Yes, I think it is.

SM: [Unclear].

CA: Because lots of people, I know they don't get to do a lot of things like I do. Like one of my friends asked me, "Do I go have a lot of parties a lot?" And I go, "Yes, I just . . . I just like it. I think it's cool. I can dress up and show them that I can . . . I don't have to be just . . . mmmm, different, I don't have to wear my blue jeans. I can always dress up and look different."

SM: [Chuckles] [Unclear] yes.

CA: [Chuckles] Sometimes I come to school dressed up and they go, "Wow, where'd you get that dress," you know. Because, you know, they don't usually see you in a dress, you know. [Unclear.]

SM: Oh, yes. So most of the kids wear jeans all the time?

CA: Yes. [Chuckles] [Unclear]

SM: But sometimes you wear a dress.

CA: Yes, once in a while I'll pop up with a dress.

SM: [Chuckles] Oh, weren't your jeans clean or something?

CA: [Chuckles] Yes, they'll say, "What are they in the wash or something?" And we start cracking up.

SM: Oh, do they envy you a little bit [chuckles] for having all these other activities?

CA: I don't know. Yes. I don't know. Lots of . . . I think lots of my friends are sort of . . . sometimes I like to go out with them a lot more than I do my Filipino friends because I don't see them as often so I don't know how to call.

SM: Oh, you know them better, you're saying?

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CA: Yes. So I think sometimes I envy them sometimes but I guess they could envy me if they knew a little more about my culture and stuff like that.

SM: How do you envy them? I mean . . .

CA: I don't know, they get to do a lot of things, like they . . . well, like if I go out on a Saturday night with my parents they could ask me to go out someplace. And then I couldn't go out because I'd tell my mom and dad I couldn't.

SM: Yes.

CA: So then you sort wish you'd do that with them, especially if you go to a boring . . . [unclear] place.

SM: [Chuckles] So you think they have a little more independence or just a little different set of activities?

CA: A different set of activities.

SM: Because you're about as independent as they are.

CA: Yes.

SM: Yes. Well, you seem to be very American. Do you think of any ways you are different from them in terms of what you really think is important in life?

CA: I don't know. Not really, I don't think. Yes, I don't know. I mean, maybe one thing different is my food, I guess.

SM: Oh, yes.

CA: That's something different. They don't eat . . .

SM: You have different tastes. [Chuckles]

CA: Like when I had my friend stay over one night, this morning . . . this one morning, and she stayed over and then she ate breakfast with us.

SM: Yes.

CA: And I took out rice instead of taking out toast. You know, most Americans eat toast for breakfast.

SM: Yes.

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CA: And she goes, "Rice for breakfast?" And she goes, "Oh, what the heck, I'll try it." And she tries it and she said, "Hey, this isn't so bad."

SM: [Chuckles] Oh, that's neat.

CA: So we had rice and eggs for breakfast and she thought that was okay.

SM: Oh, you put the eggs on the rice then?

CA: Yes. Well, we eat the rice and eggs together.

SM: Yes. They're a good combination.

CA: So then, you know, and she . . . and I go, "You can have toast if you want, you know." Because we always . . . we have toast around the house, too.

SM: Yes.

CA: But I'm so used to having rice. So that . . . she . . . she got used to it. I mean she's really . . . she really liked it.

SM: Yes. Maybe she really likes it. [Chuckles]

CA: Yes, she didn't mind. Yes, really liked it.

SM: And does she like . . . any of your friends particularly like Filipino food or . . .?

CA: Hmmm. I don't think I've had any of my friends really taste Filipino food.

SM: Oh, yes.

CA: Yes. And stuff like that. I can't . . . well, I've got a Filipino American friend that tasted it, but she always eats Filipino food, so . . . that doesn't make a difference.

SM: Yes. Yes. Let's see. There was something right on the tip of my tongue . . . .

[Brief recording interruption]

CA: . . . and what do I get?

SM: Hmmm. Have you ever had to fill out some forms at school about what your national or ethnic background is?

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CA: Yes. [Chuckles] I remember when I was taking a test and they had all these different kind of choices of what you were. And it goes, American and Jewish or something, you know, some of different . . . like Swedish, something like that. And then I was looking all over the place for mine. And they didn't . . . they had Chinese and I said, "Well, I've got sort of Chinese blood, but I don't think that's close enough." And so then I had "others" there. And I was thinking it over and I go, "Well, I guess I'm an "others" because I don't have any other choice because I'm an American but I'm a Filipino American." [Unclear.]

SM: Yes. And not an "other" American. [Chuckles]

CA: Yes. [Chuckles] So it was sort of funny.

SM: So did you say anything to the teacher?

CA: No. When I came home I started to laugh when I told my mom. That was sort of funny.

SM: They didn't have any category of Filipino?

CA: No.

SM: That's strange because that's a large group in the Twin Cities.

CA: I thought that was sort of funny.

SM: [Chuckles] That is funny. So your friends don't ask you about Filipino ways or . . .?

CA: No, maybe if we're studying it in social studies once in a while maybe they will. They might just . . . once in a while they'll bring it up. Other than that, they don't, really.

SM: What about . . . are you pretty interested in the history of the Philippines and of the immigration from the Philippines here? Do you think that's . . . you know, an important part of your roots and so on?

CA: I don't know. Sometimes I might feel a little interested in it, but not all the time.

SM: Oh, not all the time.

CA: It could be sort of boring going back to that time. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] Would you like to live in the Philippines for a number of years or study there or something?

CA: No. No. Maybe for a couple months but then I'd sort of get . . . hot. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] It's a very hot [unclear]. Is all of it hot climate or just part of it?

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CA: Oh, well, we were . . . where we stayed it was pretty hot. But I don't know about the other places. Might have been colder some places.

SM: Yes. So you feel mostly American having lived here all your life, you're saying?

CA: Yes.

SM: But you have a kind of sense of your background, too.

CA: Yes.

SM: Well, how would you compare say your view of life with say your father's? Where he had, you know, his early years, until he was older than you anyway [chuckles] he lived in the Philippines. And he must have gotten some different point of view towards life. Can you put your finger on anything there? [Chuckles]

CA: I don't know. Well . . . it might be a lot different to him nowadays than it is to . . . from when he was back there.

SM: Sure.

CA: Because it might have been rougher for him. And I think it's a lot easier for us. Because now they have the modern techniques of everything.

SM: Oh, yes. Right. Times were much harder in those days, of course.

CA: Yes.

SM: What about say family life or the role of women or girls or whatever, would there be . . .? Are there any differences now that . . . between your father and yourself on these kinds of ideas?

CA: I don't think so. I don't know.

SM: You don't have any disagreements on any of that? [Chuckles]

CA: No.

SM: What about with your mother? [Chuckles]

CA: Disagreements about what?

SM: Oh, you know, whether you should go out with boys or that kind of thing.

CA: I don't think so. No. Because she works in a junior high I guess she knows . . . [unclear].

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SM: She knows how to handle you, hmmm? [Laughter] She's a pretty wise woman, I take it. Hmmm. Is there anything else we should talk about here? Have you ever thought there was any discrimination or experienced any in the Twin Cities here or heard it from other friends that were Filipino Americans?

CA: I don't know. My mom told me about this one family that they went to go look for an apartment and the lady they called to ask if it was open, she said that they couldn't have it. And then they asked him . . . she told them that it was already taken and then one of her American friends, they asked her to go over there and see. And then she said it was open and that she could have it and tried to sell to him. So I think that's sort of a discrimination.

SM: Right.

CA: Because they didn't them to stay there because they're colored or Filipino or whatever.

SM: You think this is changing then or . . .?

CA: I think they're getting to know that . . . I mean, everybody's equal. There's nobody different except maybe their color.

SM: Yes.

CA: And maybe they stand out in the sun longer.

SM: Yes, right. Well, the white people try to get dark [chuckles] by going out in the sun.

CA: Yes, I know. [Chuckles] And then they still are discriminating against blacks, so I guess that, you know, I don't think it's very fair. Because they want to be different colored when they go out in the summertime, they want to get a tan. And then I stay in the house as long as possible so I don't get darker. [Chuckles]

SM: [Unclear] Well, is this something that worries you? I mean, you aren't worried personally about it or do you think it's something you should work on in terms of the general population [unclear]?

CA: Oh, I think it's nothing I have to worry about. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] Yes. You haven't had . . . personal experience, but . . .

CA: Nobody yet. Well, if they did, I'd call them snow white anyways.

SM: [Chuckles]

CA: That's not fair.

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SM: [Chuckles] That's a good way to deal with it, I'd say. Yes. But if . . . you know, if something came up, you would be interested in working for more social justice along these lines or something, right.

CA: Yes.

SM: What about . . . do you think Filipino Americans can get the same kinds of jobs most people can get if they have the same education and . . .?

CA: Yes. I don't know, if you are a doctor in the Philippines, you couldn't work here, I guess.

SM: Is that a problem for them to get licensed here?

CA: I think it is.

SM: For doctors coming from the Philippines.

CA: [Unclear] exams.

SM: Oh, yes. Are they fair [unclear]?

CA: That's not fair.

SM: The exams, are they graded fairly?

CA: I don't think it's fair because if they were a doctor there they must be able to be a doctor here.

SM: Right.

CA: I don't think it's going to be any different.

SM: Yes, that's for sure.

CA: People are going to be sick, they're going to be sick! [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] Right.

CA: They can't change any different.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, what kind of work would you like to do when you're grown?

CA: A carpenter.

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SM: Really? Well, that's great. [Chuckles]

CA: But I'd sort of like to be a stewardess but I get sick on planes, so I guess that one's out.

SM: [Laughter] Where would you go to get the training for this? Vocational school?

CA: I don't know.

SM: Or from another carpenter maybe.

CA: Yes, probably.

SM: Oh, that will be interesting to see if you do it. Have you done some carpentry?

CA: Well, I like to fix things in our house.

SM: Do you? Are you the one that fixes stuff here?

CA: I fixed our piano bench but it fell apart.

SM: [Chuckles]

CA: So my mom had to go out and buy a new one.

SM: Oh, I see. Well, is there anything else we should cover that we've missed that you think of? Do you read these Filipino papers much?

CA: No.

SM: Or when you did subscribe you didn't read those? Not as much as your parents. And they quit subscribing to those. [Chuckles]

CA: Did they? Oh, they did. Hmmm.

SM: Well, are you interested in what's happening over there now with the Marcos regime or . . .?

CA: No.

SM: Have you read any papers at school on that or something?

CA: No. Not [unclear].

SM: Any of your friends interested?

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CA: I don't think so. I write to my god-sister though.

SM: Your god-sister. Is she in the Philippines?

CA: No.

SM: Oh.

CA: She lives in Cottage Grove but I have to write to her anyways. She's sort of my [unclear].

SM: What?

CA: I get that wrong. [Unclear] means god-sister in Filipino, but we call her egg soup because we don't know how to spell [unclear].

SM: [Chuckles]

CA: So we just spell it egg and soup. [Chuckles]

SM: Egg soup. [Laughter] Do you write to your cousins in the Philippines?

CA: No. Because I don't know how to spell too well. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles]

CA: When I get a lot of help though, I guess.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, thank you very much, Cristy. Anything more you'd like to say?

CA: No.

SM: What about your sister Tita? Does she feel the same way about these things?

CA: I think she's going to be a lot of different things from me. Because she's more sophisticated.

SM: [Laughter]

CA: And I guess she knows how to spell better, too. She probably writes to my cousins more often.

SM: Is she more involved in Filipino activities or interested in them?

CA: Yes, I think she is. She's in a dance . . . she was in dancing folklore.

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SM: Oh. So and two sisters might, you know, have a different point of view on . . .

CA: Yes.

SM: Yes. Well, thank you very much.

CA: You're welcome.

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