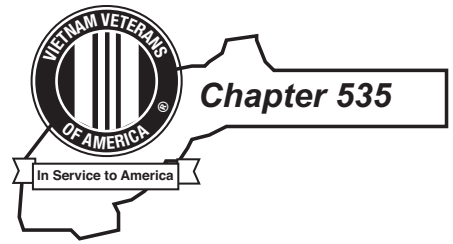




# INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA  
**CHAPTER 535**



Chapter 535 Web Page [www.vva535.org](http://www.vva535.org)

*"It Feels Good to Get Involved"*

Volume 25 Issue 6

*In Service To America and the Gold Country*

June 2015

## **President's Message**

## **VA Pharmacy Update**

### **HASC Wants Pharmacies to Match Meds**

The House Armed Services Committee wants the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments' pharmacies to offer the same medications, at least for some prescriptions. Legislation introduced this week calls for the formularies of both departments to match medications for pain management, sleep disorders, psychiatric conditions and other illnesses "determined appropriate" by the DoD and VA secretaries. Committee aides said lawmakers are looking to ensure continuity of care and treatment when troops move from active duty to veterans status. Concerns over the two departments' discordant formularies have been raised by veterans and advocacy groups.

Few stories demonstrate the importance of the issue for service members like the death of former Marine Clay Hunt, who became a veterans advocate after leaving military service in 2009 but died shortly after moving to Houston in 2011. According to his mother, Susan Selke, Hunt suffered from depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, but when he went to the VA medical center in his new location, he had trouble getting an appointment and could not get his brand-name prescription filled at the facility's pharmacy. He was told he would have to wait for it to be mailed to him, since the pharmacy stocked only generics. Hunt shot himself March 31, 2011. "If you know about antidepressant, anti-anxiety medications, you can't ... stop them cold. You can't wait for it to come in the mail and then expect that it's going to work quickly," Selke told House lawmakers last year.

The House proposal follows a recommendation from the Military Modernization and Retirement Compensation Commission that DoD and VA align their formularies. According to the Government Accountability Office, just 43 percent of the medications in DoD's formulary also are in VA's system, excluding many pain medications, antidepressants and antipsychotics taken by injured service members for physical pain and mental health conditions. Commis-

## **Gone Fishing**

Pete Burelle, President 274-3787

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sion member retired Army Gen. Peter Chiarelli said the gap leaves troops vulnerable. "If we have found a medication that works, it should be available wherever (the veteran) goes," Chiarelli said. "We should not put our service men and women in this situation." The House Armed Services Committee will review its full version of the fiscal 2016 defense authorization bill on Thursday. The Senate will work on its own version of the legislation over the next few weeks. [Source: MilitaryTimes]

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## **VA Vet Choice Program Update**

### **40 Mile Eligibility Rule**

In order to expand eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it will determine eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program based on the distance between a Veteran's place of residence and the nearest VA medical facility using driving distance rather than straight-line distance. This change has been published in the Federal Register and is effective immediately. "VA is pleased to announce the distance calculation change from straight-line to driving distance for the Veterans Choice Program," said Secretary Robert McDonald. "This update to the program will allow more Veterans to access care when and where they want it. We look forward to continued dialogue with Veterans and our partners to help us ensure continued improvements for Veterans' to access care."

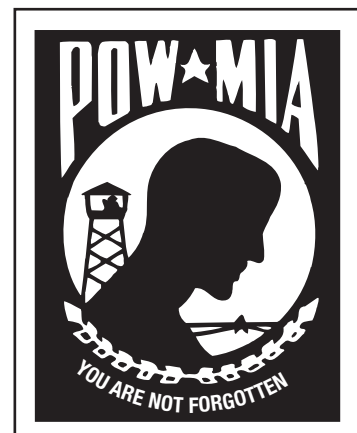
The change from straight-line to driving distance roughly doubles the number of eligible Veterans. Letters are being sent to the newly eligible Veterans to let them know they are now eligible for the Veterans Choice Program under this expansion. If a Veteran does not remember receiving a Veterans Choice Card or has other questions about the Choice Program, they can call (866) 606-8198. Effective immediately, VA is also changing the mileage calculation for beneficiary travel. The change will ensure consistency in VA's mileage calculations across the two programs. The beneficiary travel calculation will now be made using the fastest route instead of the shortest route. For more details about the department's progress and related information, see [http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/factsheets\\_and\\_details.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/factsheets_and_details.asp). [Source: VA News Release]

## **VA ID Card Update**

### **H.R.91 Gathering Steam**

A Florida congressman is claiming momentum for his bill H.R.91 ensuring every honorably discharged veteran receives an ID card from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs which, he insists, can be done without burdening taxpayers. U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL) introduced the "Veterans ID Card Act" earlier this year and claimed it was gathering steam on Tuesday. The bill has picked up more than 30 cosponsors. On 21 APR, the Vietnam Veterans of America and the Association of the U.S. Navy (AUSN) endorsed Buchanan's bill. The bill has also won the backing of veterans groups including AMVETS and Veterans for Common Sense (VCS) in the past few weeks. "I am very excited that momentum is building for this important legislation to help our nation's veterans ... The VSOs and members of Congress from both sides of the aisle recognize that this is a straightforward, cost-neutral bill that will make it easier for veterans to provide proof of their service." Buchanan said.

The bill would ensure all veterans receive ID cards from the VA instead of just those who served 20 years in the armed forces or are seeking medical treatment for service-related wounds. Buchanan said veterans are forced to carry DD-214 paperwork, which contains sensitive information including Social Security numbers, and an ID card would be more convenient and would do a better job of keeping their personal information secure. "In an age of increased scrutiny in regard to the military service of individuals, every veteran who has served our nation honorably should be able to obtain a VA card if they wish to have one," said Edgar Rodriguez, the director of government relations for the AUSN, on Tuesday. "These cards empower veterans by allowing them to conveniently carry evidence of their military service, making their lives easier in a variety of ways. We at AUSN support this common-sense measure and hope that it is swiftly passed into law in the 114th Congress." Buchanan says his bill is budget neutral since veterans who opt for the ID card would have a "small fee" which the VA secretary would examine every five years.



# Chapter 535 Information Center

## Chapter 535 Officers & Board of Directors

### Officers-Phone

<b>President</b>	
Pete Burelle .....	274-3787
<b>Vice-President</b>	
Al Hernandez .....	265-6765
<b>Secretary</b>	
Dave Johnson .....	885-1230
<b>Treasurer</b>	
Ralph Remick .....	887-8297
<b>Past President</b>	
Dick Corn	

### Directors

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Kent Haley .....	432-3551
Bart Ruud .....	823-1368
Dale Epps .....	368-6156
Harold Graves .....	470-8507
Dick Corn .....	272-5922

## Chapter 535 Committees Chairs

Finance .....	Ralph Remick & Dave Johnson
Parade and Honor Guard .....	Pete Burelle
Membership Affairs .....	Ric Sheridan
Newsletter ...	bholman@succeed.net, 265-8387 Bill Holman
Nominations .....	Harold Graves
Christmas Year Round .....	Harold Graves
NCCVC .....	Ken Farmer
Web Master .....	Ralph Remick

### Nevada County Veterans Affairs Rep.

Victor Ferrera .....	(530) 273-3396
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### Membership Facts Chapter 535

<b>VVA</b>	
Individual members	31
Life members	39
<b>AVVA</b>	
Individual members	1
Life member	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>



The Vinh Son Orphanage, has a new web site

[www.friendsofvso.org](http://www.friendsofvso.org)

## Master Chief Charlie

USS Lake Erie (CG-70) Pygmy Goat

A bad command climate survey may have sunk the career of a San Diego cruiser skipper, but then there was that deal with the goat. When investigators began peeling back the onion on cruiser Lake Erie earlier this year, they started hearing stories about Master Chief Charlie, a four-legged visitor who occasionally appeared on the ship and even made at least one Pacific voyage. Master Chief Charlie, an adopted pygmy goat that enjoys granola bars, served as a mascot for the Lake Erie. He bleated at command picnics and family events, according to a source with direct knowledge of Charlie's handling. The source requested anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly about the handling of a naval animal. "Charlie was the unofficial face of Lake Erie," the source said. "He's always a big hit with the kids."



Sailors at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam stand in formation alongside Charlie the goat in 2013

When Capt. John Banigan, the cruiser's commanding officer, agreed to take Master Chief Charlie along for the ship's homeport shift from Hawaii to San Diego, he unwittingly ran afoul of California's regulations on transporting domesticated goats into the state. Banigan was removed 27 APR from his post as the cruiser's CO; an investigation into the command's climate remains ongoing. Violating "California's domestic pet entry laws" is one of the points of the investigation that led to Banigan's relief, two official sources confirmed. Banigan, 49, declined a request for comment through a spokesman.

### Upcoming Dates and Events

June	4	General Chapter Meeting 6 pm
July	2	General Chapter Meeting 6 pm
July	4	Parade in Grass Valley

## Veterans Directory

### Congress

Senate - Veterans Affairs Committee .....202-224-9126  
House - Veterans Affairs Committee.....202-225-3527

### Department of Veterans Affairs

Board of Veterans Appeals .....202-233-3001  
Central Office .....202-565-8124  
Freedom of Information/Privacy Act .....202-233-3616  
Public Information .....202-233-3056  
Veterans Health Administration .....202-535-7010  
VA Telephone Care Program .....800-733-0502  
Cemetery, Burial, & Headstone Info.....800-697-6947

### Agencies

Department of Defense .....703-545-6700  
DEERS Information (California).....800-334-4162  
CHAMPUS (California).....800-741-5048  
Office of Management and Budget Veterans Affairs.202-395-4500  
Small Business Administration Office of Veterans Affairs .....202-205-6773

### Locator & Reunion Services

Army Worldwide Locator.....317-542-4211  
Navy Times Locator Services .....703-750-8636  
Service Reunions .....703-998-7035  
Vietnam Veterans Locator .....319-388-9023  
Veteran's Locator Service ..... 800-449-VETS

### Miscellaneous

Vietnam Women's Memorial Project .....202-328-7253  
Sons & Daughters In Touch CA .....805-872-4035  
Retired Pay - Cleveland DFAS.....800-321-1080  
Navy Lodging..... 800-NAVY INN  
Army Lodging..... 800-GO ARMY

## Conceal Carry Weapons Class

Dennis Fruzza, American Legion

If anyone is interested in attending the CCW course that we hold monthly in the Remembrance Room at the Grass Valley Veterans building, please contact Gary Weber at 274-7664 or <<http://weberfirearms@gmail.com/>>weberfirearms@gmail.com. Gary will then send notification emails for the next course and all of the material to the interested parties. We are charging 1/2 price for Veterans and their spouses, which at this time is \$50.00 all others \$90.00. Everyone pays the \$10.00 range fees.

Recommendation is to download the CCW Application from the mynevadacounty web site, print it out, or obtain one from the NCSO, follow their instructions. Then take the application to the NCSO on the second floor of the Rood Bldg. Once the course is taken and the qualifying is completed, then add the certificate to the application and wait for them to call.

Three firearms can be put onto the CCW permit, qualifying with all of them, shooting 50 total rounds between the firearms.

## Newsletter Submissions

Please ensure that submissions for the newsletter reach us no-later-than the 15th of the month before the meeting. They may be mailed to:

### VVA Chapter 535

Attn: Newsletter Editor

18455 Augustine Rd, Nevada City, CA 95959

e-mail to [bholman@succeed.net](mailto:bholman@succeed.net) or

call Bill Holman at (530) 265-8387

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of Vietnam Veterans of America National, State Council, or Chapter 535 or the newsletter editor, but those of the author of the comments.

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### Has Your Address Changed?

Please let us know before the Post office quits forwarding your newsletters. If you find your not receiving your newsletter's or hearing from us, please contact Bill Holman at

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## America's Most Beloved Vets

### Operation Iraqi Freedom



Bill Krissoff

Chris Kyle

David Bellavia

Jessica Lynch

- In the wake of his son's death in Iraq, Doctor Bill Krissoff joined the Navy to honor his memory, deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Called the most lethal sniper in U.S. military history, the Navy SEAL Chris Kyle served four tours in Iraq and was awarded two Silver Stars and five Bronze Stars for valor.
- While clearing a house during the Second Battle of Fallujah, the soldier David Bellavia killed five jihadists, including one in hand-to-hand combat.
- The first American POW rescued since the Vietnam War and the first-ever woman, Jessica Lynch received unprecedented media coverage.

## **"Vietnam at 50 Crazy Joe"**

Joe Scholle flew hundreds of sorties in Vietnam as a UH-34D helicopter pilot ferrying troops, logistics and medevac patients from base to base and in and out of "hot LZs" - landing zones under fire. While there for a year starting October 1967, the Marine acquired the nickname "Crazy Joe" for the actions he took at his base at the start of the Tet Offensive. The nickname has stuck all these years, and so have the memories of many close encounters. Scholle, 71, shared a few recently at his home.



Joe Scholle

### **A chopper through the trees.**

What was supposed to be a "milk run" ended up becoming Capt. Joe Scholle's first medical evacuation in Vietnam. As the new guy with roughly a week under his belt, Scholle was flying co-pilot. The lead pilot, Jerry Norton, was to log in his very last flight before leaving Vietnam. They were to transport a passenger to another base and return to Marble Mountain Air Facility, where they were attached to Helicopter Marine Medium Squadron 363. "It was a nothing kind of thing to do... a milk run," Scholle said. "You know, you don't want to get the guy killed on his last day." While heading back, they received a distress call from infantry troops who spotted their chopper overhead. They had a very badly wounded man on the ground. The last medevac helicopter just left, and another wouldn't arrive for at least 30 minutes. "This guy really needs to get out of here," they pleaded.

*"Poor Jerry... talk about agony... on his face... It's his last day," Scholle recalled. "There's active shooting going on down there, and you could see that he wanted to say, 'Well, wait for the medevac, we don't have a corpsman,' or something. But he couldn't."*

So down they went. They flew low and fast keeping the trees between them and enemy forces. At the designated spot, they popped over the trees and, because the wind was at their back, did a quick "buttonhook" maneuver thrusting the nose up and kicking the rudder hard left to turn the Seahorse copter 180 degrees around, essentially heading backward as they landed in a paddy field. The "bad guys" were over the next row of trees in an adjacent field. That made getting out much more risky. Their helicopters didn't accelerate very well at takeoff, Scholle said. Wanting to reduce the chance of having their aircraft raked with enemy gunfire, Norton headed straight for the trees away from the enemy. He got about three-quarters of the way up and "no kidding, he chopped

the tops off with his rotor blades and went right through the trees," Scholle laughed as he recalled the episode. They made it out safely, although the damaged rotor blades "talked" to the pilots about their mistreatment, making a loud "whishing" sound all the way back to the base. Mechanics had to reshape and rebalance the blades before the chopper could be used again.

### **Good friends killed.**

Attending college in the early 1960s, Scholle, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., was well aware that he would likely be drafted. At some point in his youth, he fancied himself becoming a Marine pilot after watching "Flying Leathernecks" starring John Wayne. The question Scholle asked himself: "How do you get out of the draft, and do what you want to do?" The answer: He entered the Marine Corps' Platoon Leader Class program that placed him as a lance corporal and automatically took him out of the draft. During each of his last two years in college, he spent six summer weeks at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., attending Officer Candidate School. After graduating in 1965, Scholle, then 22, received his commission as a second lieutenant.

By the time he made it to Vietnam two years later, Scholle had developed a strong sense of camaraderie with his fellow pilots. Some had gone through flight school together. Those serving with him in Vietnam faced the same hardships and uncertainties of war, forging close bonds cemented with their shared experiences. The pilots in Scholle's squadron typically flew six days a week at all hours of the day and night. Crews on medevac duty never knew when a call to pick up casualties might come in. Aside from that stress, there was always the very real possibility of being shot down. There were other dangers, too. Scholle said he lost as many friends from accidents as he did from enemy fire. One friend, Robert "Ike" Isaac Terry III, was copilot on a helicopter out in bad weather. They were flying very low to keep under the clouds when their Huey slammed into the side of Charlie Ridge, a hill just outside the main base at Da Nang. "That was the end of a good friend of mine," Scholle said. "I wasn't very happy about it. ... But that's the kind of thing that happened."

"Stupidity" was another factor that got pilots killed, Scholle said. He recounted how a close buddy, Joe Cestare, was flying copilot on a gunship that was part of a formation escorting H-46 troop carriers. When an enemy anti-aircraft gun fired at the formation, most of the aircraft scattered to avoid getting hit. However, a major who was the lead pilot in charge of Cestare's aircraft decided to engage. "God only knows what was running through his mind," Scholle said of the major. "Everybody's screaming, 'Don't do it, don't do it, don't do it.' And he rolled in. He's coming down for a strafing run ... Then the 50-caliber opened up." Scholle

*Continued on Page 6*

wasn't flying on that mission, but said other pilots who witnessed it told him how pieces of the Huey just flew off, and after the rotor blades stopped spinning, the aircraft plunged several hundred feet to the ground, killing all four aboard. "So, Joe Cestare ... St. John's University... a New York City kid, like myself..." The thoughts came out in fragments as Scholle just shook his head at the senseless loss of another close friend. "Nobody takes on a 50-caliber with a Huey gunship. Not that. No, no, no."

### **The making of 'Crazy Joe'**

Everybody knew the North Vietnamese were about to launch a major offensive, Scholle said. "We just didn't know the full extent of it." Scholle planned to capture the battle sounds on a reel-to-reel tape recorder. Ahead of the big event, he hooked up two microphones and hung them outside the windows of his hut. When the attack finally came, he and his roommates jumped out of their hooches and ran to the relative safety of sandbag bunkers. Once there, Scholle realized he forgot to turn on his recording device. So as rockets and mortars rained down on the base, he ran back to his hut to hit the play/record button. "Then I ran back to the bunkers," Scholle recounted. "One of the senior captains, Joe Clark, says, 'That's one crazy Joe.' And it stuck." On several occasions after leaving Vietnam, Scholle said he'd make a new acquaintance who, after hearing Scholle's name, would ask in an awestruck voice, "Are you the Crazy Joe?" "God only knows what stories people are telling about me. ... I hope some of them are true."

### **Distinguished Flying Cross**

On May 22, 1968, Scholle directed the Seahorse he was piloting to a field near the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam to resupply troops engaged in heavy combat. Tall grass hid the troops so well that, not seeing anybody, he began to add power to his aircraft to abort the landing. As he did, voices shouted, "No, no, we're here." Scholle hovered in the area and decided to do a "quick hard left rudder and come around again." That's when "all hell broke loose," he said. With bullet holes peppering the windshield and shrapnel spraying the side of his face and neck, Scholle was eager to leave. "I'm looking out the window. The crew chief is shoveling out ammunition. I'm like, 'Hurry up, hurry up.'" A slap on the leg from the crew chief below the pilot's seat was the signal that the cargo had been offloaded, and Scholle got away as quickly as possible. Knowing his aircraft had taken many rounds, he looked at his instrument gauges to make sure the hydraulic systems were working. The gauges indicated everything was fine. What he didn't realize was that an important electrical component had been damaged leaving the gauges frozen in place.

Once airborne, Scholle learned that his copilot was seri-













ously wounded. One bullet came up through the floorboard and lodged in his big toe. Another came through the side of the aircraft, hitting his thigh and giving him a "big flesh wound." A bullet or piece of shrapnel had also severed a cord to Scholle's helmet that provided communications in the aircraft. While the aircraft was heading to a medical facility at Dong Ha, the crew chief - unable to tell Scholle that at least one hydraulic system was shot out and that the second one was also likely damaged - tried to inform Scholle of the situation. "We're flying back... and all of a sudden, up from between my legs comes this big red hand... First thing you're going to think is 'blood...' I'm thinking, 'Casualties down in the belly.'" Scholle learned afterward that the hand was covered in red hydraulic fluid leaking from damaged lines as the chopper was flying. "It was a good thing we landed when we did. Otherwise, it would have been totally out of control." Scholle said flying a helicopter leaking hydraulic fluid is like driving a car without power steering. And once the hydraulic fluid is gone, it's like driving a car with the steering wheel completely detached.

He figured the strength he needed to fly the aircraft came from all the adrenaline pumping through his system. For the courage he showed staying in the landing zone until all their cargo was off-loaded and for the skill he showed maneuvering the heavily damaged aircraft to safety, Scholle received a Distinguished Flying Cross. But the experience unnerved him. Scholle said he shook the next three days every time he entered an aircraft. One way to overcome the fear of getting into the pilot's seat again was to let the copilot fly, he said. He also smoked many cigars to calm his nerves.

On July 4, 1968, Scholle landed at a base that was supposed to be secure. "Everybody was standing up, waving, 'Hi, how are you,'" recalled Scholle. They were carrying to the aircraft a patient who had stepped in a gopher hole and broken his leg. Suddenly, Scholle could hear the rat-atat-tat of an AK-47. One bullet struck the corpsman in the leg. Another round tore through the back of the copilot's flight suit before it burned across the back of Scholle's neck. "It felt like someone took a hot poker out of the fireplace and slapped you across the back of the neck." When he felt that, a frantic Scholle told himself, "Time to leave." Again he flew a damaged helicopter with two wounded crewmembers to the same medical facility he had gone to six weeks earlier. After that second close encounter, Scholle said he had a very difficult time flying again. On the first mission he was assigned after recuperating from his wound, Scholle said he started hyperventilating and nearly passed out. Passing the controls to a bewildered copilot who had just recently reported for duty in Vietnam, Scholle said he tucked his head between his legs and just rocked back and forth until he regained the courage to take the controls again. [Source: Star and Stripes

# June - 2015



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				General Membership Meeting 6 pm		
		1	2	3	4	5
  Marty Martinez Kurt Chismark	 Dale Epps		  Roy Stangeby Leroy Hubbard	  Michael Gregerson Joseph Sanders		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
 Flag Day			 Dick Corn	 Gene Downing		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
 Father's Day			 Charles Shea			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

**Application For Membership**  
**VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC., CHAPTER 535**

P.O. Box 37, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Individual membership is open to all Vietnam-era veterans who served on active duty for other than training purposes between August 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975 and In-Country Veterans: February 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone (     ) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone (     ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Chapter No. **535**                      Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_ ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

◆ **Membership Type:**     Individual – 1 year @ \$20 annual     Individual – 3 years @ \$50  
(select one)                 Life Member    **Payment Plan**     \$50 down, \$25/mo Until paid in full  
**Select Age Group**  Ages 56-60 \$200     Ages 61-65 \$175  
    Ages 66 and over \$150     Ages 72+ \$100

◆ **Payment Method:**     Check             Money Order             Visa             MasterCard  
(select one)

◆ **Card Number** \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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