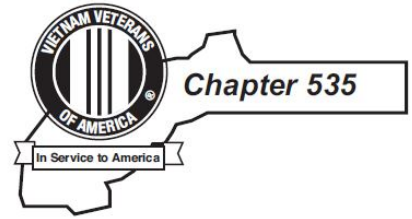




# INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA  
**CHAPTER 535**

Website: [www.vva535.org](http://www.vva535.org)



Volume 27 Issue 3

March 2017

## President's Message

Good day everyone,

Our third meeting of 2017 occurs on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. We have a very important election coming up in April and there is urgent need to have members step up and speak up about their willingness to serve as a Board Member or Officer. A new President is necessary and everyone knows why. In my experience the job is not as hard to do as you may assume. All it takes is the support of a few other members and it's just not that hard. I will be one of those members to support our new President as long as I can. Think about it and contact Dick Corn or me if you have any questions or have a suggestion on who you might recommend. I look forward to seeing you on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Harold K. Graves  
President

## Matters of interest as outlined at Board Meeting of February 16, 2017:

Five booth Captains are needed for organizing our VVA-535 display at the Nevada County Fair. Application to the fair district must be submitted by March 15, 2017. The fair is scheduled for August 9-13, 2017.

Discussion revolved around a possible slate of officers who might serve VVA-535 during the upcoming 2017-2018 term of office. Several

members will be contacted and encouraged to step up to the cause.

## Upcoming Events

Unveiling of VVA-535's bronze plaque, and others, is scheduled at the Auburn Veterans Pavilion on **Saturday, March 4, 2017 at 11:00 a.m.** All veterans and families invited. A potluck luncheon will follow the unveiling. For information, contact The Forgotten Soldier Program at 530-889-2300. The Veterans Pavilion is located adjacent to 991 Lincoln Way, Auburn, CA – just west of the State Theater.

Nevada County Fair – August 9 – 13, 2017.

## Chapter 535 Officers

President  
Harold Graves ..... 470-8507

Vice-President  
Al Hernandez ..... 864-2480

Treasurer  
Ralph Remick .....559-7716

Secretary  
Dave Johnson .....887-8297

Past President  
Pete Burrelle ..... (deceased)

## Directors

Al Hernandez ..... 864-2480  
 Dave Johnson ..... 887-8297  
 Ralph Remick ..... 559-7716  
 Ric Sheridan ..... 274-1413  
 Dave Chaix ..... 269-1431  
 Bill Holman ..... 265-8387  
 Kent Hawley ..... 432-3551  
 Bart Ruud ..... 823-1368  
 Dale Epps ..... 368-6156  
 Harold Graves ..... 470-8507  
 Dick Corn ..... 277-8856

**Committee Chairs**

Finance .....Ralph Remick & Dave Johnson  
 Parade and Honor Guard ..... (vacant)  
 Membership Affairs .....Ric Sheridan  
 Newsletter ..... Interim editor Bart Ruud  
 Nominations ..... Dick Corn  
 Christmas Year Round ..... Harold Graves  
 NCCVC ..... Ken Farmer  
 Web Master ..... Ralph Remick

Quartermaster ..... Kent Hawley

**Nevada County Veterans Affairs Rep.**

Kevin Edwards ..... (530) 273-3396

[ncvso@co.nevada,ca.us](mailto:ncvso@co.nevada,ca.us)

**VVA 535 Jacket Embroidery**

Should anyone acquire a VVA 535 jacket and find the need for the sewing of patches, the following business could be considered:

**Alterations by Melody**  
**609 High Street**  
**Auburn, CA 95603**  
**Phone: 530-888-8935**

**ELECTIONS – APRIL 2017**

President Harold Graves announced he would not be available for a second term as an officer or as President of VVA-535. Elections will be held in April, 2017 and Dick Corn will again serve as the Nominations Chair. Contact Dick with your commitment to serve and to submit your name to the Nominations Committee.

**Wayward Pilot Takes Flight**

Feb. 17, 1974 – Private First Class Robert K. Preston, US Army, a helicopter pilot who had washed out of training, crept across the tarmac at Fort Meade, Maryland, and boarded a UH-1 Iroquois helicopter. The aircraft was unarmed and, as was usual, was kept fueled on the flight line. With the practiced hand of his training, he quickly went through the start up sequence. Without clearance, he pushed in the power, pulled up on the controls and took off into the night. For a time, he orbited the base at night, enjoying the view and hovering over base housing. Finally, bored with this, he set out for a new destination – the White House. When PFC Preston arrived in Washington, he took a flight down the Anacostia River, turned north at the Capitol Street Bridge and then flew directly to the White House. It was about 1:00 am. At first the Secret Service was somewhat miffed. He buzzed the White House itself and then hovered overhead for six long minutes. At the time, policy was that they would not fire on a helicopter or other aerial intruder if it might endanger innocent bystanders, and so they waited. Finally, he flew down the South Lawn and landed about 100 yards toward the south fence. The Washington Monument towered in the background and he remained there on the ground for a minute. Two Maryland Police helicopters that had flown down from around Baltimore hovered nearby. Suddenly, PFC

Preston took back off into the night skies and the police gave close pursuit. An extended tail chase ensued at low level. In fact, it turned out that PFC Preston was indeed quite an expert pilot after all, as he managed to not only outmaneuver the two helicopters at every turn but even managed to drive one down in the process. The second helicopter broke off but stayed nearby after what officials called, “a modern day dogfight”. PFC Preston returned to the White House once more. It was nearly 2:00 am and he had led the officials on a prolonged chase — certainly, his fuel was running low. This time he flew up to the Washington Monument, hovering at seven feet of altitude along the base for a bit before flying back straight north onto the White House’s South Lawn. There too he hovered just a few feet over the grass and it seemed to officials that this time he might be preparing to make a dash to crash into the building. The second Maryland Police helicopter set down quickly between him and the White House as Secret Service agents moved toward the helicopter. Then, without warning, they opened fire with handguns and shotguns hoping to cripple the helicopter. They also fired and hit PFC Preston with a shotgun blast, injuring slightly. He landed the damaged helicopter at once — though it seemed also that the damage from the gunfire had knocked the aircraft out of the sky, leaving the Secret

Service to conclude that it had downed the helicopter. Once on the ground, the Secret Service and Maryland Police rushed in. PFC Preston jumped clear and fought them hand to hand, though he was badly outnumbered. It wasn’t long before he was subdued, however. Handcuffed, he was taken into the White House for questioning before being transferred to Walter Reed hospital for treatment for his light injuries — mainly shotgun pellets. The following day, when being escorted into a police car, he was smiling. When asked why he had flown back to the White House a second time, he said that he knew it was wrong to fly over the White House so he had flown back “to turn himself in”. The Secret Service ordered psychological testing. Ultimately, all civil charges were dropped and he was left to the military court system. In the end, PFC Preston had proven two things — first, he was a pretty darn good helicopter pilot after all; and second, that he was certainly not up to the moral and ethical standards of the US Army. He was sentenced to a year in prison.

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/61725/day-history-man-lands-stolen-helicopter-white-house-lawn>

## **Trump’s immigration ban puts deployed troops at risk** By: Military Times editors, February 5, 2017

A relatively small group of people was directly impacted by President Trump’s Jan. 27 decision to ban border entry to the United States for people from seven predominantly Muslim nations.

No, we’re not talking about the foreign nationals who showed up at U.S. airports, stunned to find out the entry visa they

expected had been summarily revoked.

Instead, we’re talking about the thousands of U.S. troops who are currently, right this moment, deployed to those countries that President Trump singled out as threats to the United States.

More than 5,000 troops wake up every morning with commanders’ orders to work shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of Iraq, Syria and Somalia. And troops occasionally conduct missions with allies in Libya and Yemen. All of those nations were impacted by the immigration ban.

Those American troops believe in their mission because commanders for years have said those people are allies in America's fight against Islamic extremism.

We have to wonder, how were those missions — and those individuals — affected by Trump's immigration ban?

How did their "allies" react to the news that the Americans' commander in chief abruptly declared all people from those counties to be potential threats to the U.S. homeland?

How much time and energy is the top American commander in Iraq, Army Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, spending trying to diffuse the political tension? Probably a lot, since the Iraqi parliament has voted to retaliate with rules barring Americans from Iraq. It's not clear, legally speaking, how that will impact the U.S. mission there. But it will certainly be a headache for Townsend.

The uproar is a reminder of a gaping hole that former President Obama left in U.S. policy toward Iraq. There remains no Status of Forces Agreement between Washington and Baghdad to clarify the legal issues underpinning the presence of U.S. troops operating there. That leaves U.S. troops there open to legal prosecution, incarceration or deportation.

The lack of a SOFA agreement was a key reason U.S. troops withdrew completely in 2011. Yet Obama sent American troops back in 2014 without a SOFA, and, this time, top U.S. officials downplayed its importance. A SOFA would be helpful in resolving the tension right now.

Trump's immigration ban will also be felt

down among the lower ranks, as it's bound to have some chilling effect on the sincere friendships between American troops and their allies in Iraq and Syria.

Those American service members depend not just on local military professionals but also translators, local contractors who provide logistical support, and, maybe most of all, the everyday Muslims — shop keepers, tribal leaders, clerics — who have the actionable intelligence to help defeat the Islamic State group.

Make no mistake — for many of the Muslim allies working with U.S. troops, Trump's sweeping and indiscriminate immigration ban was simply humiliating.

Yet for the Islamic State and its allies, Trump's executive order was hailed as a gift from Allah, a global public relations victory that money can't buy. It will make it far easier for ISIS propagandists to exhort those lone, unhinged jihadists out there to commit acts of violence against Americans.

Trump's immigration ban is a counterintuitive policy that warrants a little explanation from top leaders. Is the threat of terrorism at home so great — and this immigration ban so urgent — that it requires actions that jeopardize momentum in the counter-terrorism mission overseas? Is this a new ground-level risk that troops must accept?

Most Americans have never, and will never, drive around in Iraq and Syria in Humvees, with all the risks that entails. But for that small group of Americans who do, the dusty roads and barren landscape there probably look a little bit lonelier and more ominous than they did just a few

weeks ago.

In a bit of good news, the White House seemed to acknowledge some of these concerns a week after the ban was announced by amending its executive order regarding Iraq to allow entry into the U.S. for families of Iraqi interpreters who served the U.S. military forces.

## **Writing Your Story for INCOMING**

### **Ongoing repeat solicitation**

Ideas for your story:

- Think about what you appreciated about the Vietnam experience. There is surely a means to segue into that with very little reflection on the negative aspects of war.
- What did you appreciate about the Vietnamese people during your deployment?
- Can you steer away from the bad stuff and reflect on the best experience you had in the Nam?
- Surely you had a close buddy and you supported each other. Maybe there is a story in that.
- What really got you through the day-to-day anxieties and fears? There might be a positive recollection in that regard.

All politics aside, this is about protecting the lives of U.S. service members.

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- How did your experience instill in you a sense of patriotism that you possibly express every day of your life.

So far we have heard from Ruud, Epps, Chaix, Hamer & current Marine LCpl. Jesse Hernandez. (Thank you!)

No writer needs to dwell on the negatives of war. Each of us who was there lived the negatives, and all of us are better people for having served, especially when we look at how we matured as a result of our experiences. Each of us has derived a sense of being and an energy that is different from what it might have been had we not gone across the pond.

Do share with us, in your own words, something of that chapter of your life. And, thank you for your service.

Forward your story to Bart Ruud at [bruud45@gmail.com](mailto:bruud45@gmail.com) or hand deliver to Bart.

## **Củ Chi Tunnels (Vietnam)**

The tunnels of Cu Chi are an immense network of connecting underground tunnels located in the Cu Chi district of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. The Cu Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War, and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tet Offensive in 1968. The tunnels were used by Viet Cong guerrillas as hiding spots during combat, as well as serving as communication and supply routes, hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters for numerous guerrilla fighters. The tunnel systems were of great importance to the Viet Cong in their resistance to American forces, through which they secured American withdrawal from Vietnam and ultimate military success.

American soldiers used the term "Black echo" to describe the conditions within the tunnels. For the Viet Cong, life in the tunnels was difficult. Air, food and water were scarce and the tunnels were infested with ants, poisonous centipedes, scorpions, spiders and vermin. Most of the time, guerrillas would spend the day in the tunnels working or resting and come out only at night to scavenge for supplies, tend their crops or engage the enemy in battle. Sometimes, during periods of heavy bombing or American troop movement, they would be forced to remain underground for many days at a time. Sickness was rampant among the people living in the tunnels, especially malaria, which was the second largest cause of death next to battle wounds. A captured Viet Cong report suggests that at any given time half of a People's Liberation Army Force (PLAF) unit had malaria and that "one-hundred percent had intestinal parasites of significance".

### **U.S. campaigns against the tunnels**

Communist forces began digging a network of tunnels under the jungle terrain of South Vietnam in the late 1940s, during their war of independence from French colonial authority. Tunnels were often dug by hand, only a short distance at a time. As the United States increasingly escalated its military presence in Vietnam in support of a non-Communist regime in South Vietnam beginning in the early 1960s, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops (as Communist supporters in South Vietnam were known) gradually expanded the tunnels. At its peak during the Vietnam War, the network of tunnels in the Cu Chi district linked VC support bases over a distance of some 250 kilometers, from the outskirts of Saigon all the way to the Cambodian border.

The tunnels of CU Chi did not go completely unnoticed by U.S. officials. They recognized the advantages that the Viet Cong held with the tunnels, and accordingly launched several major campaigns to search out and destroy the tunnel system. Among the most important of these were Operation Crimp and Operation Cedar Falls. Operation Crimp began on January 7, 1966, with B-52 bombers dropping 30-ton loads of high explosive onto the

region of Cu Chi, effectively turning the once lush jungle into a pockmarked moonscape. Eight thousand troops from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division, 173rd Airborne Brigade, and the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment combed the region looking for any clues of PLAF activity.



**A trap door on the jungle floor leads down into the Cù Chi tunnels. Closed and camouflaged, it is almost undetectable.**

The operation was, for the most part, unsuccessful. On the occasion when troops found a tunnel, they would often underestimate its size. Rarely would anyone be sent in to search the tunnels, as it was so hazardous. The tunnels were often rigged with explosive booby traps or punji stake pits.



**A booby trap with bamboo spikes.**

The two main responses in dealing with a tunnel opening were to flush the entrance with gas or water to force the guerrillas into the open, or to toss a few grenades down the hole and "crimp" off the opening. The clever design of the tunnels along with the strategic use of trap doors and air filtration systems rendered American technology ineffective.

However, an Australian specialist engineering troop, 3 Field Troop, under the command of Captain Sandy MacGregor did venture into the tunnels which they searched exhaustively for four days, finding ammunition, radio equipment, medical supplies and food as well as signs of considerable Viet Cong presence. One of their number, Corporal Bob Bowtell died when he became trapped in a tunnel that turned out to be a dead end. However the Australians pressed on and revealed, for the first time, the immense military significance of



the tunnels. At an International Press Conference in Saigon shortly after Operation Crimp, MacGregor referred to his men as Tunnel Ferrets. An American journalist, having never heard of ferrets, used the term Tunnel Rats and it stuck. Following his troop's discoveries in Cu Chi, Sandy MacGregor was awarded a Military Cross.

From its mistakes, and the Australians' discoveries, U.S. command realized that they needed a new way to approach the dilemma of the tunnels. A general order was issued by General Williamson, the Allied Forces Commander in South Vietnam, to all Allied forces that tunnels had to be properly searched whenever they were discovered. They began training an elite group of volunteers in the art of tunnel warfare, armed only with a gun, a knife, a flashlight and a piece of string. These specialists, commonly known as "tunnel rats", would enter a tunnel by themselves and travel inch-by-inch cautiously looking ahead for booby traps or cornered PLAF. There was no real doctrine for this approach and despite some very hard work in some sectors of the Army and MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) to provide some sort of training and resources, this was primarily a new approach that the units trained, equipped and planned for themselves.

Despite this revamped effort at fighting the enemy on its own terms, U.S. operations remained largely unsuccessful at eliminating the tunnels. In 1967, General William Westmoreland tried launching a larger assault on Cu Chi and the Iron Triangle. Called Operation Cedar Falls, it was, in principle, exactly the same as Operation Crimp, but with 30,000 troops instead of the 8,000.

On January 18, tunnel rats from the 1st and 5th Infantry uncovered the Viet Cong district headquarters of Cu Chi containing half a million documents concerning all types of military strategy. Among the documents were maps of U.S. bases, detailed accounts of PLAF movement from Cambodia into Vietnam, lists of political sympathizers, and even plans for a failed assassination attempt on Robert McNamara. With this one exception, Operation Cedar Falls failed to achieve its objective of destroying the communist stronghold in the region.

By 1969, B-52s were freed from bombing North Vietnam and started "carpet bombing" Cu Chi and the rest of the Iron Triangle. Ultimately it proved successful but futile. Towards the end of the war, the tunnels were so heavily bombed that some portions actually caved in and other sections were exposed. But by that time, they had succeeded in protecting the local guerrilla units in "surviving to fight another day".

Throughout the course of the war, the tunnels in and around Cu Chi proved to be a source of frustration for the U.S. military in Saigon. The Viet Cong had been so well entrenched in the area by 1965 that they were in the unique position of locally being able to control where and when battles would take place. By helping to covertly move supplies and house troops, the tunnels of Cu Chi allowed guerrilla fighters in their area of South Vietnam to survive, help prolong the war and increase American costs and casualties until their eventual withdrawal in 1972, and the final defeat of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975.



The 75-mile (121 km)-long complex of tunnels at Cu Chi has been preserved by the government of Vietnam, and turned into a war memorial park. The tunnels are a popular tourist attraction, and visitors are invited to crawl around in the safer parts of the tunnel system. Some tunnels have been made larger to accommodate the larger size of Western tourists, while low-power lights have been installed in several of them to make traveling through them easier and booby traps have been clearly marked. Underground conference rooms where campaigns such as the Tet Offensive were planned in 1968 have been restored, and visitors may enjoy a simple meal of food that Viet Cong fighters would have eaten.

Above-ground attractions include caged monkeys, vendors selling souvenirs, and a shooting range where visitors can fire a number of assault rifles, such as the M16 rifle or AK-47, as well as a light machine gun like the M60.

### Củ Chi tunnels



A command center in the tunnels. Visitors to the complex can eat meals underground, sampling foods that the underground Viet Cong fighters had eaten, such as rice



Tour guide showing how the tunnel works.



Tourists can fire a variety of Vietnam War era weapons at the shooting range.



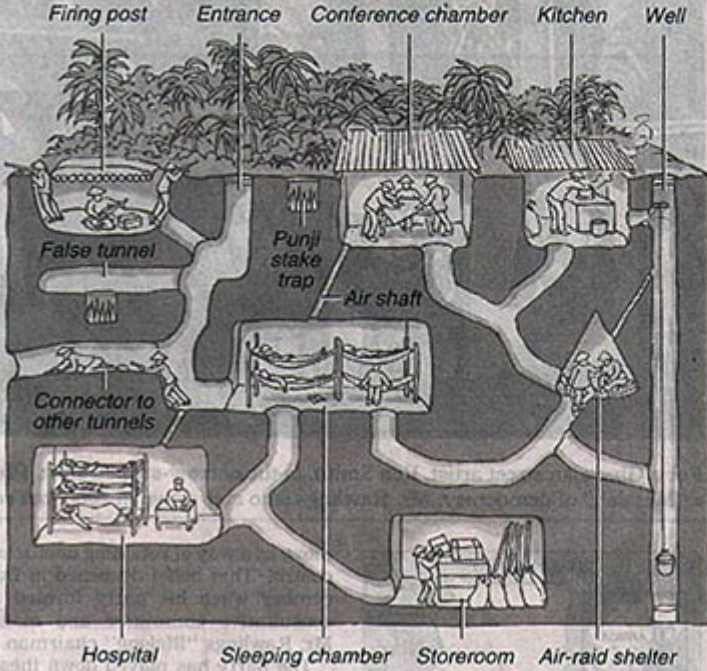
Visitors entering tunnel system.

**GUIDEBOOK**

**A Day Trip to Wartime**

The 75-mile-long Cu Chi tunnels, once a haven for Vietcong fighters and villagers, are now one of many battlegrounds in Vietnam that have been converted to tourist attractions.

**A Typical Vietcong Tunnel Complex**



Sources: "The Tunnels of Cu Chi," Tom Mangold and John Periyate, Cornell University



Associated Press



[Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cu\\_Chi\\_Tunnels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cu_Chi_Tunnels)]

The following narrative is a repeat appeal for talent within VVA-535 to step up.

**VVA-535 Elections – April 2017**

The success of any organization, and VVA-535 is no exception, can be directly attributed to the strength and dedication of its leaders. Good leadership attracts, inspires and helps an organization retain membership and retain a cadre of Officers and Board Members.

VVA-535 is some 70 members strong. Among the membership are many known for their leadership skills and equally important, there are many with latent and strong leadership skills that just don't recognize it in themselves. Each member knows leadership skills because he served in one or another branch of our military. In that tenure, he witnessed leadership, and the chances are great that he served in a leadership capacity. Beyond the military experience, many have observed or have actively been involved with supervision and leadership in their post-military lives. That prior training and experience is something we of VVA-535 can capitalize upon to our great benefit.

VVA-535 is at a juncture where it needs to cultivate and grow its leadership. It's easily seen that leadership of VVA-535 is a team effort with the Officers and Board members working together to coordinate meetings and activities such as participation in local parades, Victorian Christmas, fundraisers, and organizing and staffing the VVA-535 booth at our local fair.

Past leaders are in the wings to nurture new leadership. Many know our organization's traditions and possess real time experience in creating success of projects undertaken over the years. Networking and involvement simplifies many undertakings, and it is mentorship that simplifies tasks undertaken by those who step up and have fun with the challenges of maintaining an inspired and viable organization.

A slate of Officers for 2017-18 is a part of succession. Take a chance; this is your opportunity to volunteer and lead VVA-535 into the future. Your contribution will reap rewards impossible to perceive without involvement!

Thank you for your consideration.

## March 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Ash Wednesday	2  VVA 535 General Meeting 6:00 p.m.  Operation Rolling Thunder began (1965)	3  “Star Spangled Banner” made U.S. National anthem (1931)	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 Daylight Savings Time begins	13	14	15	16  VVA 535 Board Meeting 6:00 p.m.	17  St. Patrick’s Day	18
19 Start of Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003)	20 First Day of Spring	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

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 \_\_\_\_\_