

## Vicki B. Stocking

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**From:** Cowan Community Center <mail@networkforgood.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 13, 2025 7:00 AM  
**To:** Vicki B. Stocking  
**Subject:** Cowan Creek Post: March 2025



**Cowan Community Action Group**  
Growing Community Since 1964

*A monthly letter from Cowan*



## March 2025



### Spring Pulling Forward

"In March, winter is holding back and spring is pulling forward"

Greetings from Cowan as the daffodils, one of the first flowers of spring, push forward. Their familiarity are comforting. I hope you have those sweet flowers in sight that give you a sense of breathing and make you smile. We all need those moments of peace.

We are holding a place for you at Cowan. Join with us for events that interest and appeal to you. We are in the power of community and that the center has room for everyone. Whether you come for your mind and muscles with yoga on Mindful Monday, music and a meal on Thursday, or spend time with us, you are welcome and wanted.

We are pulling all the events of Spring and Summer together and look forward to being with you and your families. We are excited to be offering....

Pine Mountain Warblers, Woodland and Wildlife Weekend: April 24-28

Levitt AMP Whitesburg Music Series: May 29- August 1

Kids on the Creek Camp: June 2 - August 1

Cowan Creek Interns: June 2 - August 2

Cowan Creek Mountain Music School: June 22-28

Growing Home: July 30 - August 2  
Grow Appalachia Gardens: Ongoing

We are looking for ways to connect. We are looking for you!

Spring forward,  
*Valerie*

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## News from the Creek

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### Stories in a Quilt

By Valerie Ison Horn

Thank you Abby for cherishing and sharing your Grandma Lela Halcomb's Bluebird quilt.

It's hard to describe how special it is to hold the scraps of fabric our 'Granny' and ancestors have held and poured their labor and love into to create a beautiful quilt. Abby did not get to meet her Granny as she died early at the age of 51. Abby's mother was just expecting her, the quilt has been a lifelong connection that even her sons honor and help them feel that love. We are inviting our community members to share quilts that reflect their love for nature and family. There are many ways to connect with and appreciate nature.

Life also gives us moments to connect. As we were thinking of a Bluebird Quilt show and how we connect that to Cowan, I remembered being in daycare at Cowan in 1970. The times were a bit more casual fifty plus years ago. Somehow, my memory lets me believe when daycare was too much I had the option to wander out to the Senior Citizen Center and hang out with my Granny Jane and her friends while they quilted. The space in the trailer was crowded and my comfort zone was under the quilt frame.

As I was thinking of this, we were doing a deep dive in old materials and records. A picture of the old trailer where Seniors met and I got to hang out was on the top of the list. Seniors have been on my mind and it was nice to see the old home for the Cowan Senior Citizen program.

If you have a senior in your life, give them a call, visit, and check in. If you have a special quilt in your life, get it out and touch it. If you have a special one to share, bring it to the Bluebird Quilt Show.

Be on the lookout for an opportunity for seniors to gather at the center and share their stories. Patchwork Stories coming soon!

\* As part of our Pine Mountain Warblers, Woodlands and Wildlife Weekend we will be having a nature-themed quilt show at the Letcher County Extension Office. If you would like to show your quilt or quilts at this event, please register [here](#).



COWAN COMMUNITY CENTER  
PINE MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE WEEKEND  
**BLUEBIRD QUILT SHOW**  
WE INVITE YOU TO SHARE YOUR COMMUNITY AT THE LETCHER COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE. THE EXHIBITION IS FROM 12:00 NOON WITH A CLOSING RECEPTION. QUILT MAKERS ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 2ND. THANKS TO LELA HALCOMB FOR HER TALENTS IN CREATING THIS BEAUTIFUL QUILT.



## Pick and Bow Program for ALL Ages, not just kids

Did you know that you don't have to be a kid to take part in the Pick and Bow Program? Every Thursday night, you can just show up and pick an instrument (banjo or guitar) and make your way to becoming an old time musician! The sessions are led by the best local old time musicians, along with snacks and good company for friends.

Guitar is taught by Levi Caudill, banjo by Logan Dollarhide and fiddle by Logan Dollarhide.

You will be joining the monthly jam in Whitesburg in no time!

Healthful benefits? Yes! "Studies have shown that listening to music can lower blood pressure and pain as well as improve sleep quality, mood, mental clarity and memory. Music can raise your mood and fend off depression." ([link](#)) While you have a good time playing or listening to music, all of these healthful benefits will be yours!

- **Stress Reduction:** Playing an instrument can help express feelings and emotions. Listening to music can trigger brain activity that reduces anxiety and helps to lower the stress hormone cortisol.
- **Improved Mood:** Music can elevate mood by increasing dopamine, a "feel good" hormone". Listening to music can instantly improve your mood.
- **Improved Memory:** Music can enhance cognitive functions like memory and attention.
- **Creativity:** Studying music can help nurture creativity and build self-esteem.
- **Confidence:** Playing in public can help build confidence.
- **Depression Relief:** Learning an instrument can help combat depression in the same ways that it reduces anxiety and stress.
- **Pain Management:** Music can help manage pain.
- **Immunity:** Exposure to music might improve innate immunity.

Not to mention, the wonderful community you get to hang out every week!

So, what are you doing Thursday nights? See you at the Cowan Community Center!

## What's in Our Archive?

Mandy Fleming has been the brave staff member to go through hundreds of stored music lessons on our Zoom archive and transfer them to YouTube. If anyone has done this process, we know that it is grueling and time-consuming. We are so lucky that Mandy actually enjoys this process, mostly because of her interest in the history of local music and the legends of eastern Kentucky.

She notes:

"Working with all those music school videos, I got to catch bits and pieces of the lessons, especially the earlier parts of the videos. I love how many of the instructors were taught by people I grew up hearing about as local legends that have now left us, and the way current instructors pass on interesting stories about those musicians, and their works.... Building off that, I can really see how the music school (Cowan Creek Mountain Music School) carries on not only



the music but the spirit of those 'local legends' as well, and their stories continue to be shared out into the world and passed on to the next generation of musicians. Even as a VERY beginner level person (I hesitant to even use the term "musician"), it's hard to not feel pulled in by that notion of shared culture."

The very essence of what Cowan Community Center provides for the region and beyond, through the various programming stemming from music lessons, square dances, agriculture, environmental works, community building and education for all ages, is remembered and appreciated through these video footages. As we all experienced the loss of significant "archives", our family heirlooms, and family photos, we are fortunate to be the safe keepers of this footage.

Some of the archives will be shared through the Cowan Creek Mountain Music School archives, which can be accessed and subscribed (at no cost). Please [click here](#) to access and go down the memory lane of good times we shared.



## SOURCE Newsletter March Edition is Coming

Don't miss any edition of the monthly SOURCE Newsletter!

Sign up [here](#) to have it delivered right to your email!

With Pine Mountain Warblers, Woodlands, Wildflowers and Wildlife We next month, this newsletter will give you all the information you need to be fun filled weekend.

Sign up for the event by clicking this [LINK](#).

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## Farms & Friends

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Eric King's high tunnel

## Snow as Natural Fertilizer

by Abigail Maggard

They say snow is a natural fertilizer, if this is true, the gardens should be good this year. It's getting to be the time for our farmers to plant spring gardens.

Our Grow Appalachia participants received seed starter kits to help them get the season started. Others, like Eric King, who have high tunnels, have planted their crops since snow is on the ground.

We will be host our annual Plant and Seed Market on Sunday, April 6th at the Cowan Community Center. This will be a great opportunity for all growers and landowners. We will have a variety of seed and garden plants and this year we will also have a selection of new plants.

We would love to connect with more Grow Appalachia and Woodland Growers. If you are interested in learning more, please contact [abby@cowancommunitycenter.org](mailto:abby@cowancommunitycenter.org)

## Virtual Cowan Book Club is Coming Soon...

Join us from near and far!

*April Book: "Redbuds are Not Red"*

What a great way to stay connected with your community through this book club! Cowan Community Center is starting a virtual book club for all living near and far. We will be starting the first session in April with the classic Cowan must-read by Carol Ison. The session will be led by Valerie Ison Horn.

Please register at this [LINK](#) to get notifications for the future book club book list and meeting dates. We hope to offer virtual and in-person sessions for the club. Let's make a meaningful virtual community through sharing books and making connections near and far.

Stay tuned for further reading list.



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## Music from the Mountains

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Derek playing with Jackie Helton and Bruce Greene from one of the VHS tapes Bruce made in 1995. From the Berea Archive and Special Collections

## Summer Cowan Advanced Banjo Instructor Derek Wall's Origin Story with Bruce Greene and Jackie Helton

by Grace Ann Rogers

A Magoffin County banjo player, Derek Wall, is joining us at CCMMS this fall to take a moment to tell you why it is particularly special that we are able to share this music with you. I first heard Derek's playing in the fall of 2023 when I was at Berea College collecting recordings of old time and fiddle music from Magoffin County musicians, where my mom's family has been primarily exploring recordings of the Patrick and Helton Families who were recorded by Bruce Greene in the late 1970s-early 2000s. If you have been around the Kentucky Old Time Fiddlers Convention for a while, you will probably remember Derek's Uncle, Jackie Helton, from the 1970s Old Time Fiddlers Convention and CCMMS.

As it turns out, Bruce Greene recorded not just Jackie, but Jackie's father Jackie Howard, and Uncle Casey Helton. It quickly became clear that Jackie's playing had grasped me so acutely as a kid, extended beyond him, and was a constant presence down through his family. The heavy drop thumbing, tendency to grab the fiddle whenever possible, wide collection of tunings ranging from the "Low John Henry" to the "High John Henry" and a consistent repertoire of songs and tunes were present through the generations of the Helton Family tracing back to Hassell's father Claude Helton.

If you make your way through the materials Bruce recorded, you'll start to notice recordings of Hassell in the 70s at the height of his playing ability. In the mid-80s, you notice Hassell's stamina begins to decline, but Jackie is right there beside him, taking the mantle. By the early 90s, Derek shows up. At first, he is an unidentified voice chiming in when his grandpa Hassell forgets the name of a tune or what tune to play. A few years later, you can hear Hassell and Jackie encouraging him to play with them. In the 90s, he is right there in the mix with his Uncle Jackie, and Hassell's influence is still present in their playing. There is a beautiful [video](#) of Jackie Helton, Penny Helton, Bruce Greene, Patrick, and Derek Wall playing together in 1997.

With one quick Google search, I found Derek's YouTube channel. Well, many more searches. I was locked in a library all day for two weeks, so I had plenty of time to search. He was still playing this music and playing it in the style of his family. His playing is distinct, but it also felt like hearing his grandfather Hassell transported through time. I reached out to him on Facebook and my dad and I had the chance to chat with him about growing up with this music. It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to invite Derek to share his music with family and connect through this tradition.

In his own words, Derek describes his musical history :

Hello, my name is Derek Wall. I currently live in Morgan County, Kentucky, but I was raised in Magoffin County, Kentucky. I grew up in a household where everyone played an instrument or sang, so I have been exposed to music ever since I was born. My grandfather Hassell Helton initially sparked my interest in music. He played old time fiddle and learned to play a banjo at a young age by his father Claude Helton, but so did I. I loved the sound of the fiddle. So, he picked up the fiddle and began to teach him. At the age of 9, I picked up the fiddle and learned to play by listening to, and playing with, my grandfather. Me and my uncle Jackie Helton, who was also taught to play the fiddle by Claude Helton, his grandfather, played together nearly every Sunday. I loved the sound of the drop thumb banjo better than the fiddle. So, I laid down the fiddle and began to teach myself clawhammer banjo in the same style as my uncle and grandfather played and have been playing that style ever since. Through the years, I taught

3-finger Scruggs style banjo as well, but my love has always been the drop music that my family played.

## Itching for that Summer Weather? Levitt AMP Whitesburg Series... Big Announcement on April 3rd!

by Steve Ruth

2025 is sizing up to be the most varied series yet for Levitt AMP Whitesburg. From a cappella to zydeco, it'll be a different sound every week featuring Grammy and other award winners, master musicians of their genre and rising young trailblazers, both international and local. Always free and always family friendly.

Stay tuned!



## Monthly Connections



### Kelli's Mindful Moments

For March's Mindful Moment, I am sharing with you some of my favorite few gentle shoulder release movements. All you need is a comfortable seat, lift your arms at your sides. You can do these at any time throughout your day to release tension built up around any stress or hard work you have been doing. It's a relief for many of us to hold tension in the neck, shoulders, and jaw. I hope this helps!

<https://youtu.be/3O2J4PndOws>

**Mindful Monday Yoga with Kelli**  
**Mondays, 10:30 AM \*FREE\***  
**Cowan Community Center**

No experience/registration necessary! Just show up!



Need other recipes? Click [here!](#)

## Cowan Community Center "Our Favorite Recipes" ~ From Friends & Family Potato Pancakes the Mountain Way!

by Valerie Ison Horn

When others appreciate and enjoy your food, it sure feels good. I am proud at Cowan for family gatherings which always includes meals. It is a little rushed, but one of the things I do that brings me joy and I am most proud of when the food is just right. That is not always the case, but this weekend, I did with potato cakes. Do you make potato cakes? We rarely have them, but this weekend we had over 10 lbs of mashed potatoes and we had plenty left. They became S

I don't measure and I don't usually follow a recipe. I use what I have and probably will not be able to recreate these potatoes, but if you enjoy them, please let you to give them a try. Plan and make those extra mashed potatoes, I can't not being left over, seems they need to sit 24 hours at least. The potatoes are dry.

My recipe for Saturday included.

- 8 cups mashed potatoes
- diced onions
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1/2 cup flour
- salt/pepper
- red pepper -(be careful, I almost did too much)
- 1 cup cheddar cheese
- 1 cup buttermilk (or as needed to make a thick batter)

Batter should be close to hushpuppy batter, not like pancake batter.

You could add bacon pieces, celery, green/red pepper shavings (didn't have)

I spooned out a large tablespoon about 3/4 inch thick without patting down with oil, just a little oil on the griddle. About five minutes on each side until golden, flip until the first side is well done, so it does not break apart.

Note...I did not measure anything, these are just my best guesses. Use your own needs more or less.

If you have a different version or better recipe, please be sure to share or send

Enjoy!

Val

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## March Events Calendar

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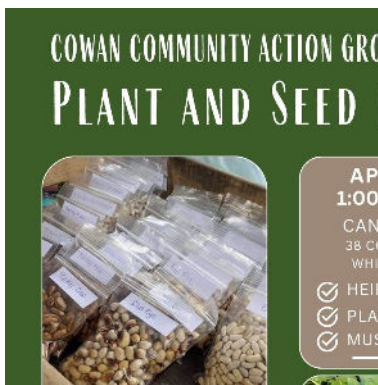




**Writing Session For Mountain Women Farmers & Gardeners with Amy Le Ann Richardson**  
**Tuesday, March 25th at Cowan Community Center**  
**5:30 PM Registration & Food**  
**6:00 PM- 8:00 PM, FREE**

Come write with us! Share your voice and be part of this enriching experience. We can't wait to hear your story!

Brought to you by a grant from Kentucky Foundation for Women



**Plant and Seed Market at CANE Kitchen**  
**Sunday, April 6th**  
**1:00 ~ 4:00 PM, FREE**

Gather together to celebrate SPRING by thinking GARDEN!

- **Heirloom Seeds!**
- Get your **plant starts** to accelerate your garden growing!
- Enjoy a **musical performance!**
- Let's **share a meal** and be a community!

Want to register? Be a Vendor?

Contact Abby at [abby@cowancommunitycenter.org](mailto:abby@cowancommunitycenter.org)

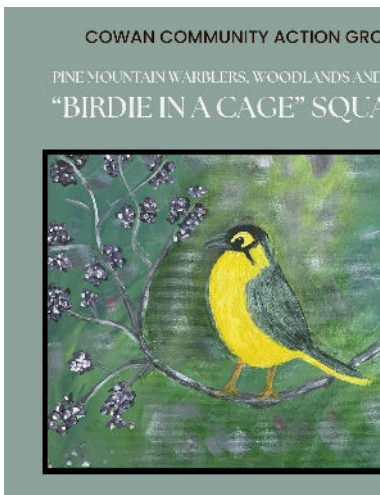


**TreeCATs 2025**  
**Fridays, March 28th ~ April 25th**  
**2:00 ~ 5:00 PM, FREE**

Attention Woodland Growers!  
 Gain knowledge of the trees and greenspaces around us from urban and community forest experts through a 15-hour course on Zoom and hands-on assignments outdoors.


Join with others over a series of Friday afternoon sessions to learn more about your forest. The session will be led by Curtis Cox and support for your forest is offered.

Please reach out to [abby@cowancommunitycenter.org](mailto:abby@cowancommunitycenter.org) for more information.




## ***Pine Mountain Warblers, Woodlands and Wildlife Weekend at Cowan Community Center Saturday, April 26th***

Join us for a nature-filled weekend at the **Pine Mountain Warblers, Woodlands and Wildlife Weekend!** This special event is perfect for birdwatchers, nature lovers, and anyone eager to explore the beauty of Pine Mountain's forests and wildlife.

 **Date:** April 24th-27th 2025

 **Location:** Cowan Community Center, 81 Sturgill Branch, Whitesburg, KY

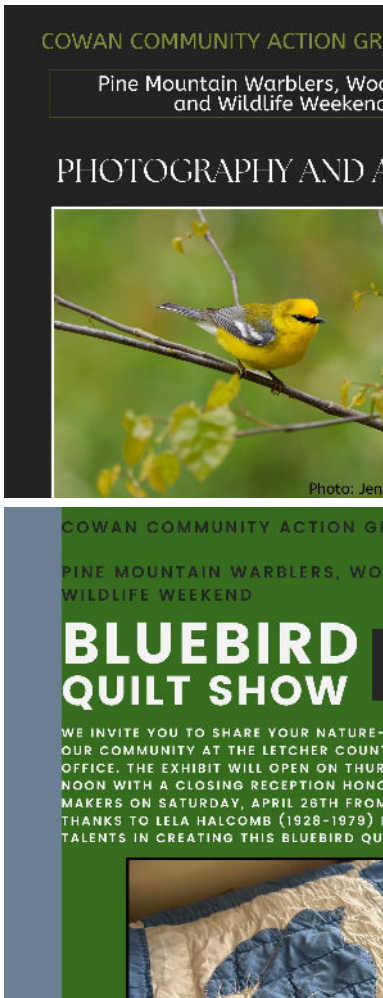
### **What to Expect:**

-  Guided birding excursions to view a variety of migratory songbirds including vireos, tanagers, and many others.
-  Guided trips with expert naturalists partnered with local guides to explore the woodlands of Pine Mountain.
-  Raptor show featuring hawks and owls, and conservation discussion.
-  Family-friendly activities, including easy walks, nature crafts, and quilts featuring the work of local and regional artists and photographers.
-  Agroforestry and Regenerative Agriculture workshops and field trips.
-  Local foods and entertainment.
-  Evening campfire storytelling and stargazing.

Whether you're an avid birder, a hiking enthusiast, or looking for a fun and relaxing getaway in nature, this weekend is designed for all ages and abilities to enjoy the outdoors.

 **Come experience the wonder of Pine Mountain's scenic beauty and wildlife!**

Follow this link to learn more! [CLICK HERE!](#)



***Be a Part of the Pine Mountain Warblers, Woodlands and Wildlife Weekend and Exhibit Your Work!***

Calling for quilters and artists!

**Bird Photography and Art Show**

As part of our Pine Mountain Warblers, Woodlands and Wildlife Weekend nature-themed photography and art show at the Community Agriculture Enterprises, Inc.- CANE. If you would like to show your photography or art please register [HERE!](#)

**Blue Bird Quilt Show**

As part of our Pine Mountain Warblers, Woodlands and Wildlife Weekend nature-themed quilt show at the Letcher County Extension Office. If you would like to show your quilt or quilts at this event, please register [HERE!](#)

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## Cowan Monthly Calendar

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Photo by Deladis Haywood

**Mindful Monday Yoga with Kelli**  
**Mondays, 10:30 AM \*FREE\***  
**Cowan Community Center**

No experience/registration necessary! Just show up!

## Letcher County Pick



Cowan Community Action Group  
Growing Community Since 1964



FREE after school traditional music classes  
Instruments and snacks provided  
Learn to play fiddle, banjo, guitar, or dulcimer



Mon 3:00-4:30 | Martha Jane Potter  
Tues 3:00-4:30 | Burdine Elen  
Wed 3:00-4:30 | Cowan Elem

## Letcher County Pick & Bow FREE After School Traditional Music Classes for KID

Appalachia Proud! Have youth engage in traditional music from the mountains of West Virginia at school! Snacks are provided for after school, community meal provided for school! classes!

Grades 4+ welcome!

### FIRST CLASS:

Martha Jane Potter: Monday January 27  
Burdine: Tuesday January 28  
Cowan Elementary: Wednesday January 29  
Carcassonne Community Center: Wednesday January 29  
Cowan Community Center: Thursday January 30  
Hemphill Community Center: Friday January 31

### LAST CLASS:

Martha Jane Potter: Monday May 12  
Burdine: Tuesday May 13  
Cowan Elementary: Wednesday May 14  
Carcassonne Community Center: Wednesday May 14  
Cowan Community Center: Thursday May 15  
Hemphill Community Center: Friday May 9

**STUDENT CONCERT @ Cowan Community Center: In the evening on May 15**

Register [here!](#)

Cowan Creek  
Pick & Bow

FREE  
Traditional  
Music Classes  
for all ages  
at the  
Cowan  
Community  
Center

## Cowan Creek Pick and Bow for Kids AND Adults! Weekly FREE music lessons at Cowan Community Center Thursdays, 5:30 PM

Have you always wanted to learn how to play an instrument? Guitar, fiddle, banjo, dulcimer, or mandolin?

Free traditional music classes for all ages at the Cowan Community Center. Every Thursday from 5:30pm for all ages. No experience necessary!

We invite you to join us for learning new skills and making new friends!

Register [here!](#)





## Cowan Creek Pick and Bow Beginner PIANO! Weekly FREE Piano lessons at Cowan Community Center Wednesdays, After School

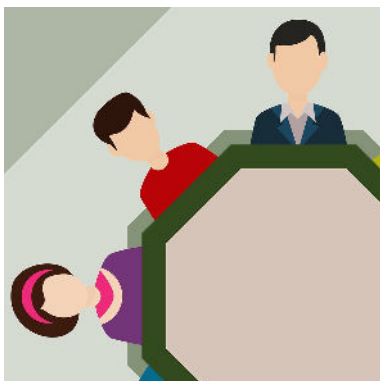
Cowan Creek Pick & Bow is now offering beginner piano lessons with Beverly Mann beginning February 5th for youth grades 3rd through 12th. Classes will be held at the Cowan Community Center on Wednesdays after school. If you would like to sign up for a class, please register at the link below. Space is limited! Sign up today!

Register [here!](#)



## Whitesburg Old Time Jam Old Post Office, Whitesburg Every First Saturday, 1PM-4PM FREE

Play your favorites or learn some *new* old time tunes! Rekindle with your old friends, make new ones and have a great time! All levels from beginners to advanced are welcome to attend! Bring a chair for yourself and snacks to share if you wish. Free event.



## Cowan Board Meeting at the Community Center March 18th @ 6 PM Hybrid, Zoom & In-Person

Open to all! Come and share your vision with us!

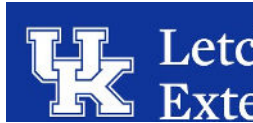


## Homemakers Every Second Tuesday, at 11AM

Free to all. Variety of lessons come from the Letcher County Extension Office. Don't miss this dish to pass! See you there!



Donate



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606-633-3187

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