

Teen charged in theft spree

By **JULYE WEMPLE**
Press Enterprise Writer

BLOOMSBURG — An 18-year-old has been charged for a string of thefts in two counties, including over \$1,000 in stolen credit card charges and more than \$600 in goods and cash swiped from cars, police say.

Jared Allen Lewis of Sunbury

Police: Suspect's haul over two counties topped \$1,600

was caught when his friend discovered many of the stolen items in the car she let Lewis borrow, police say. Here is what police say happened:

Bloomsburg Officer Kenneth Auchter was called to East Third and Fourth streets on Nov. 3 for a

series of overnight vehicle break-ins. Eric and Denise Hess, 720 E. Third St., told Auchter someone had taken Vera Bradley and Nikon prescription glasses, each valued at \$200, a car stereo faceplate and about \$50 in loose change.

At 529 E. Fourth St., Penny Evans reported her notary public stamps, seals and log book were stolen, along with \$150 to \$180 in

loose change. Martin Simons, 531 E. Fourth St., told police the thief took \$3 in change and a prescription ointment from his vehicle.

Tim Lefevre, 554 E. Third St., reported his car stereo was taken, and Stephen Engelhardt of 720 E. Fourth St. discovered his wallet, containing \$100 in cash and three bank cards, had been stolen from

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Police: Cancer recovery reaches peak

Food fight turned violent

Man allegedly choked woman over cooking

By the Press Enterprise staff

SCOTT TWP. — A man went “berserk” and choked a woman because he was unhappy with the way she cooked his breakfast, police said.

Jay Ryan Neal, 32, of 78 W. Cedar St. in Stoney Brook Circle, was outside his residence when police received a complaint of domestic violence shortly before noon Dec. 18.

Krista Jessmon told police that Neal had been drinking all morning when the argument over food escalated into Neal dumping the food she was cooking into the kitchen sink, telling her that she didn’t know how to cook.

Neal then came around the kitchen counter and grabbed her by the throat with both hands. He then started “banging” her head off a window, she told police.

Her brother, Brendan Lane, said he was present during the argument and that Neal “snapped” and grabbed his sister by the throat.

Lane said he fled out the door and called 9-1-1 for help.

Neal was taken into custody and arraigned on charges of strangulation, simple assault and harassment.

He is awaiting a hearing scheduled for Wednesday.



Press Enterprise/Keith Haupt

SHOWN, from left, are **Don Hunter Sr., Margaret Hunter, Mike Smathers, Robert Hunter, Becky Hunter, Jim Hawkins, Cathy Esworthy, Kristi Nevel, Linda Hoover, Karisa Auten, Mike Flickner** and **Jessie Flickner**. They all made the trek to Carbon County near Jim Thorpe on Friday afternoon to climb a mountain to celebrate the one-year anniversary of Becky Hunter’s battle with cancer. She is now cancer free.



Press Enterprise/Chris Krepich

BECKY AND ROB HUNTER of Millville stand together on a mountaintop to celebrate a year since her cancer diagnosis.

Mountaintop trek on diagnosis date keeps Millville man’s promise to wife

By **CHRIS KREPICH**
Press Enterprise Writer

JIM THORPE — A year ago, when Becky Hunter developed an aggressive form of breast cancer, her husband Robert taped the date to the wall of their home in Millville and promised her they would be on a mountaintop a year later, in this life or the next.

Friday, they were standing together atop Bake Oven Knob surrounded by family and friends toasting to Becky’s clean bill of health.

Robert wanted the two mountain climbers to scale to a more majestic summit, but Becky recently had her last surgery. He said the relatively short

hike also allowed about 15 family members and friends who supported them along the way to join them on the rocky, snowy, frigid peak.

The top of Bake Oven Knob, along the Appalachian Trail south of Jim Thorpe, is also the place Robert proposed to Becky five years ago.

But Becky said it wasn’t the mountain that mattered. It was being with the friends and family who supported them over the years.

Never a doubt

At age 29, Becky was diagnosed with cancer on Dec. 29, 2016, and the prognosis was bleak.

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Doctor facing endangerment trial

Bloom physician accused of being drunk during emergency surgery

By **JULYE WEMPLE**
Press Enterprise Writer

BLOOMSBURG — A doctor accused of being drunk while giving anesthesia to a patient during an emergency surgery has agreed to face trial in county court.

Dr. Ananda K. Panikkar, 67, waived his right to a preliminary hearing in District Judge Russell Lawton’s office recently on charges he endangered his patient in the operating room, then attempted to drive home drunk, records show.

Agreeing to forgo the hearing “shouldn’t suggest Dr. Panikkar did anything wrong,” pointed out Greg Moro, Panikkar’s attorney. “This is

in no way an indication of guilt.”

Panikkar, who worked as an independent member of Geisinger’s staff, appeared to show no signs of impairment while at the hospital on July 13, according to his co-workers. The surgery went smoothly and Panikkar left the hospital around 12:30 a.m.

Shortly after the procedure, police spotted his vehicle swerving along Route 42. When they pulled him over, he admitted having a single glass of wine earlier in the night, and taking Oxycodone that had been prescribed to him. But his blood-alcohol was tested at .28 percent, more than three times the legal limit of .08 percent.

Moro says he waiting on ‘discovery,’ or the evidence the attorney gen-

eral’s office has collected, but notes the blood-alcohol is inconsistent with the reports from the medical professionals that night.

“He’s a good man,” Moro said. “A good physician.”

His client has since resigned and closed his practice and is now facing a disciplinary hearing from his medical board, Moro said.

Panikkar, of 321 Reading St., Bloomsburg, is facing charges of DUI, reckless endangerment, and several traffic violations including careless driving, failing to stay in a single travel lane and continuing to use a turn signal for a distance of about a quarter-mile without making any turns.

Cops: Man made threats in restaurant

Berwick defendant admits to harassment, sees more serious charge dropped

By the Press Enterprise staff

HEMLOCK TWP. — A Berwick man allegedly entered the Kentucky Fried Chicken along Columbia Mall Drive and told employ-

ees he would “put a bullet” through the head of another man the next time he saw him, according to police.

Andrew Tate, 20, of 42 Water Dam Road, Berwick, made the threat against Ty-

ler Rupert to restaurant employees, according to Hemlock Township Police. Tate also asked both employees and the restaurant manager where Rupert lived.

At a hearing before Dis-

trict Judge Doug Brewer in December, Tate pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of harassment, in return for a charge of making terroristic threats being withdrawn.



Press Enterprise/M.J. Mahon

LOCAL BABY NEW YEAR

Tyler Reese holds newborn son **Jackson Tyler Reese** on Monday at Geisinger Medical Center, Danville. Jackson, born to Reese’s wife, **Deneen Reese**, was the first baby of the new year at area hospitals. Jackson was born at 1:58 a.m., weighing 10 pounds, 1 ounce, and measuring 22½ inches long. The baby joins sister **Charlotte**, 3. The family lives in Ringtown.

WEATHER

TODAY: Mostly sunny
HIGH TEMP: 22°
PRECIPITATION: 0%
TONIGHT: Clear, cold
LOW TEMP: 4°
PRECIPITATION: 0%

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INSIDE

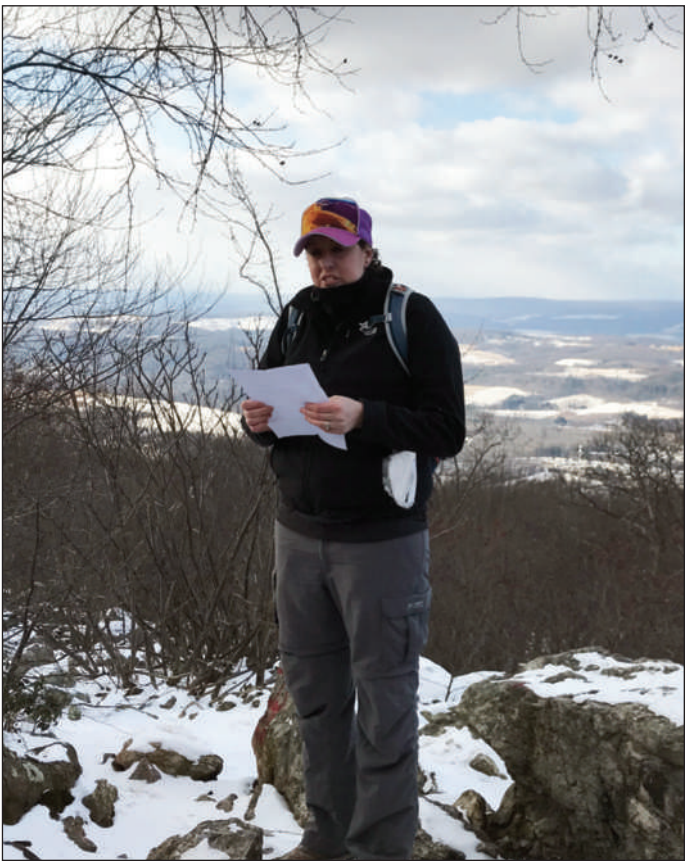
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BECKY HUNTER speaks to a gathering of friends on a mountaintop near Jim Thorpe while celebrating a year since her diagnosis with an aggressive form of cancer.



A VISTA can be seen behind Hunter as she speaks on the mountain.

PHOTOS BY CHRIS KREPICH

Peak ‘Believe that God has a plan for everything’

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“That night I said to her, “One year from now somehow, someday, we will be standing on the top of some mountain, either in this life or the next,” Robert said. “It was the darkest day of my life. I prayed that God would help me keep that promise, and he did because here we are.”

That promise was fulfilled on Friday after Becky fought through surgeries and chemotherapy to become cancer free.

Robert says his wife is the strongest, sweetest, kindest, most inspiring person he has ever met.

But when she was diagnosed, he said, he saw something fearful in her eyes for the first time.

That was the only time, he said, because ever since she has been courageous, strong and tenacious in her battle.

“She’s a mountain climber; she believes in God,” he said. “She’s fearless. She never looked back. Not one minute.”

When doctors offered statistics on survival rates and chances of recovery, Becky said they didn’t want to hear it. They were going to get through it.

She said she had aggressive triple negative cancer, which doesn’t often respond well to treatment.

“It’s one-in-a-million,” he said of her recovery, tenacity and positive outlook. “It’s just not something I’ve seen before. She’s fearless in the face of it. It’s so rare. She was absolutely resolute in her outlook of what it’s all leading toward. It’s incredible.”

‘In awe’

On top of that frozen mountain, Becky thanked everyone for making the cold, rocky climb.

“We are standing here now, on top of a mountain, because of a promise kept,” she said. “Rob told me that night, when the doctors called to give the news, that if I stayed strong this day would come. I wasn’t sure in this life or the next.”

“I kept the faith, went to

treatment and leaned heavily on my family and friends to help see me through. Many of you are here today. I am blessed and so grateful and in awe of your sacrifice and support.”

Becky said she has strong support from Trinity Child-care where she works as a preschool teacher. The cards, letters, gifts and drawings from coworkers and the kids helped her during her recovery, she said. The people at Hawkins Chevrolet where Robert works as sales manager were also very supportive, the couple said.

‘Life is fleeting’

Becky said the last year was the worst of her life, but also the best.

“No matter what the future brings, we stood strong, on top of a mountain together, in the middle of winter, on this day, in spite of the odds. We endured, and dared our hearts to keep pace. It’s a spectacular feeling. So take it in. Because life is fleeting.”

Becky took a moment to

remember her mother and others who have died from cancer and could not join her to celebrate.

“Follow your dreams. Take chances. Be courageous and bold as you have inspired me to be,” she said. “Believe that God has a plan for everything.”

“Remember those who have gone before us. My mother and others who never got this chance to celebrate with us. But they’re here. I just know it.”

‘Hallowed ground’

The group shared a toast before heading back down the mountain.

“So as we make our way back through the pines, descending, be aware of every step. Enjoy them. Laugh along with the madman, my husband, at the front, whose heart is much bigger than his sense of direction. Drink up. We may never be here again.

“This is hallowed ground. This is where we proved some things wrong, and others right. Please focus on the

right. Life is too short to ever look down.”

‘Fearless’

As for Becky and Robert, they plan to spend the next year on the road.

Robert said he was never one to take chances. But his wife also inspired him to finish dreams — like his third music album in Nashville and his novel.

Robert was ready to give it all up when Becky became ill, but she pushed him to finish both of his creative works even as her own health was in question.

“It was only ever about 12/29/17 and her faith,” Robert said. “It was only ever about the future. It was never about doubt, or hesitation or fear. I never saw it in her after that night.”

Becky said when Robert asked her what she wanted to do if doctors told her she had a year to live, she said she wanted to live life together to the fullest while following their dreams. And that meant touring the country in support of the new CD and book.

Becky also wrote a children’s book during her illness, which is being published this year.

The music on Robert’s new CD, “Revival,” and his book, “Relapse: A Love Story,” are for Becky and about her, Robert says.

“No matter what the doctors said, or how many surgeries she had, she believed in us, in God, in this,” Robert said. “She was so courageous it was unbelievable. It was so inspiring.”

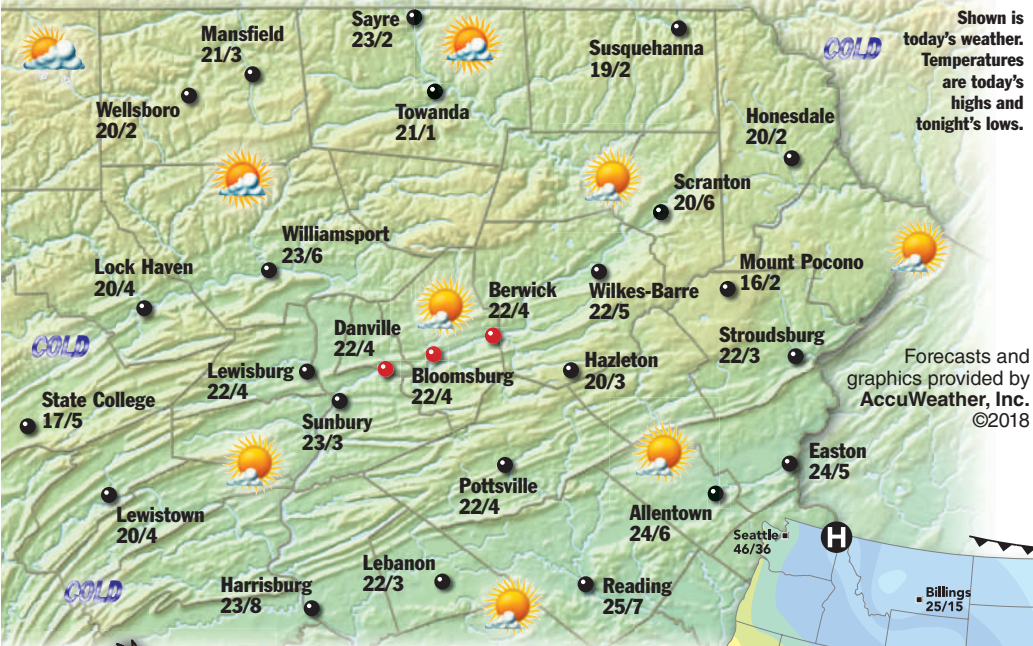
He says it has changed the way they view and live life, and appreciate every moment and relationship with the realization that each one is a gift to be cherished.

In her speech Friday, Becky told her friends they should “be grateful for every adventure. Never, ever yawn or forget that we were made to climb mountains. We are the chosen few who know exactly what it feels like, to push onward and upward in any condition. They’re hard miles. But what an amazing view we are blessed to have.”

Reporter Chris Krepich may be reached at 570-275-2104 or chris.krepich@pressenterprise.net.

Regional Four-day forecast

Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Mostly sunny and cold	Clear and cold	Clouds and sun	Periods of sun	Colder with sunshine
High 22°	Low 4°	26°/12°	23°/5°	11°/-2°
Wind: WSW at 10-20 mph 0% chance of precip	Wind: SW at 4-8 mph 0% chance of precip	Wind: SSW at 3-6 mph 10% chance of precip	Wind: NW at 12-25 mph 25% chance of precip	Wind: WNW at 10-20 mph 10% chance of precip



“The bitterly cold conditions we’ve been enduring gives you some idea what winter is like in Central and Northern Canada, in such communities as Big Trout Lake and Churchill.

“In these vast areas of Canada, temperatures often remain below zero both night and day, and can, on occasion, plummet to minus-40 degrees. Wind-chill temperatures as low as minus-60 are not unusual. This is the kind of extreme cold that requires you to spend a lot of time indoors.

“It likely will be the middle of next week before we can expect some moderation in temperature.

“Today and tomorrow will be variably cloudy, with high temperatures reaching only the low to mid-20s.

“Some of yesterday’s early morning lows were Elysburg, 2 degrees; Danville, minus-2; Bloomsburg, minus-4, and Catawissa, 0.”

Thaddeus Quackus, PE weatherbird



By Sara Prough, 8½, Barton, N.Y.

Sun and Moon

Today	Tomorrow
Sunrise 7:31 a.m.	7:31 a.m.
Sunset 4:49 p.m.	4:50 p.m.
Last	New
Jan 8	Jan 16
First	Jan 24
Full	Jan 31

River Stages

As of 7 a.m. yesterday	Current Stage	Flood Stage
Susquehanna	2.00	19
Bloomsburg	4.22	20
Danville	7.02	24
Sunbury	4.09	22
Wilkes-Barre	2.52	—

AccuWeather

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Almanac

Selinsgrove through 5 p.m. yest.

Temperatures

High/low	19°/-10°
Normal high/low	36°/20°
Record high	61° in 2005
Record low	-10° in 2018

U.S. Extremes
(For the 48 contiguous states)

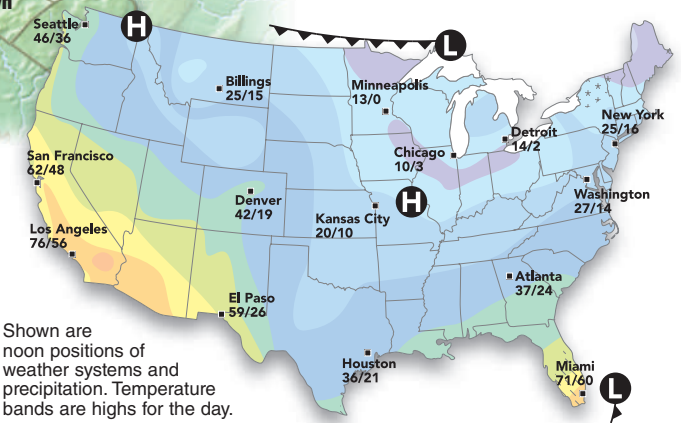
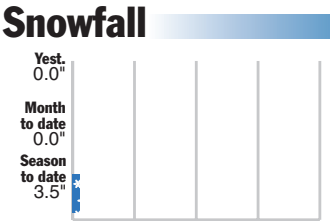
High	81° in Hollywood, Fla.
Low	-45° in Hettinger, N.D.

Precipitation
24 hours through 5 p.m. yest. 0.00"

Month to date	0.00"
Normal month to date	0.09"
Year to date	0.00"
Normal year to date	0.09"

Heating Degree Days
An index of energy consumption indicating how many degrees the average temperature fell below 65 for the day.

Yesterday	60
Month to date (normal)	60 (37)
Season to date (normal)	2251 (2284)



Fronts	Precipitation
Cold Warm Stationary Showers T-storms	Rain Flurries Snow Ice
-10s -0s 0s 10s 20s 30s 40s 50s 60s 70s 80s 90s 100s 110s	

National Cities

	Today	Wed.		Today	Wed.
	Hi/Low/W	Hi/Low/W		Hi/Low/W	Hi/Low/W
Anchorage	42/30/c	33/21/sn	Los Angeles	76/56/c	73/57/c
Atlanta	37/24/s	41/22/pc	Miami	71/60/r	70/44/pc
Atlantic City	27/14/s	34/26/pc	Milwaukee	14/6/s	17/1/pc
Baltimore	25/9/s	32/21/pc	Minneapolis	13/0/pc	6/-7/pc
Boston	19/13/s	29/20/s	Nashville	26/13/s	34/12/pc
Charleston, SC	40/24/s	35/25/sn	New Orleans	41/29/pc	43/29/s
Charlotte	36/17/s	40/21/c	New York City	25/16/s	29/23/pc
Chicago	10/3/s	17/1/pc	Oklahoma City	26/15/s	37/17/s
Cincinnati	17/4/s	25/7/pc	Orlando	58/49/c	54/31/r
Cleveland	13/3/pc	20/8/s	Philadelphia	25/13/s	31/22/pc
Dallas	30/20/pc	46/25/s	Phoenix	73/51/pc	74/52/pc
Denver	42/19/s	49/21/s	Pittsburgh	16/4/s	25/11/pc
Detroit	14/2/pc	15/3/sn	St. Louis	19/11/s	22/2/s
Honolulu	81/70/s	82/69/s	Salt Lake City	39/19/s	39/24/pc
Houston	36/21/c	48/27/s	San Francisco	62/48/c	60/51/r
Indianapolis	11/-1/s	19/0/pc	Seattle	46/36/pc	49/37/c
Kansas City	20/10/s	22/0/pc	Tampa	57/45/c	56/38/r
Las Vegas	67/45/pc	62/44/c	Wash., DC	27/14/s	34/25/pc

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice

Theft spree

Continued from front page

his vehicle.

Tracheotomy tube

Two days later, Constance Warren called police, saying she loaned her car to Lewis on Nov. 3 so he could go to Walmart, but he failed to return it. She got the car back later, only to find Englehardt’s cards inside the vehicle.

A check of Englehardt’s accounts showed purchases made to the Mystery Box and Food Express in Berwick, Sneiderman’s Jewelers for \$368, Weis Markets for \$9, Walmart for \$134, the Unity Food Mart for \$29 and the Shoe Dept. for \$165.

Video surveillance showed Lewis, who was easily identified by the tracheotomy tube around his neck, was with Warren at Sneiderman’s, where he purchased a set of rings for her.

When questioned, Warren turned the rings over to police. She also said she was with Lewis on Nov. 3 when he brought a large bag of loose change to the Giant Food Store in Scott Township to redeem it for cash.

Other thefts

Lewis was also charged with being in possession of a stolen Volkswagen Jetta on Nov. 7 when Scott Township residents complained he was knocking on doors, asking for gas for the stalled vehicle.

Officer Vincent Taggart found Lewis and three other males walking in the 3700 block of Old Berwick Road around 9:30 p.m. They told police the car Lewis had picked them up in ran out of gas on the way to Berwick. A check of the registration showed the vehicle belonged to Travis Shaffer of Danville and was previously reported stolen.

Lottery ticket heist

That’s the same day Lewis is accused of stealing thousands of dollars worth of items from Harry Nagle, 1210 Holly Drive, Berwick, in Salem Township, Luzerne County. Nagle reported three zoom lenses for his camera, worth \$2,439, were missing, along with 17 PlayStation and Xbox games, a phone, credit cards and jewelry belonging to his wife.

Surveillance video from Game Stop in Buckhorn showed Lewis pawning the games, police say.

A few days later, Lewis swiped winning scratch-off lottery tickets from the counter of a gas station when the winner walked away to get a drink, charges say.

Ricky Gauthreaux told police he walked into the Unity Mart at 301 E. Seventh St., Bloomsburg, on Nov. 11 at 8 p.m. with two winning lottery tickets — a \$50 winner and a \$20 winner.

He put the tickets on the counter and walked to the rear of the store to grab a soda from the cooler.

Meanwhile, Lewis had walked into the store and noticed the tickets on the counter. He picked them up and handed them to clerk Jival Vyas, as if he were the rightful owner, charges say.

Vyas cashed in the tickets and Lewis fled the store before Gauthreaux returned to the front counter, officers say.

Lewis is charged with felony counts of access device fraud and receiving stolen property. He’s also charged with seven counts of theft and receiving stolen property, burglary, and criminal trespass. The charges he’s facing in Columbia County have all been sent on to county court. In Luzerne County, online court records say he has not yet had a preliminary hearing in district court.

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