



# The Old Hemlock Letter

*An Exclusive Publication Dedicated to the Continued Development of the  
Old Hemlock English Setter*

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

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Greetings all;

*I hope you have had a good season. The weather here is cold and snowy and we have another deer season next weekend and part of the following week and then a couple weeks of grouse season, which ends in January this year. Our limit has been reduced to two birds a day, a little too late to help much. Michigan was good again this year and we had a good time up there, then returned to Ohio and off to South Dakota. The crops were all in the fields with no harvesting started until two days into our trip. That made the hunting difficult and the birds were in standing corn and they were picking beans. The first day was our best hunting there due to the snow. Diva, Charm and I had a very good day that first morning. While hooking up the trailer with our gear in it, I received a call about my father's heart attack. He had surgery for bladder cancer in August and surgery to remove 80% of his prostate in October and both of those operations were successful and the results were promising. I returned home and helped, alternating weeks with my sister, with his care after his triple by-pass surgery. He got along great! At 87 he is now driving and taking part in cardio rehab for 12 weeks... he did 25 minutes at 3 mph on his second session. He gets scoped on January 26<sup>th</sup> to check if his bladder cancer has recurred... so the saga continues. This cut into our hunting time, but family is important and Anna's mother sat for the dogs. The wedding plans continue with me attempting to stay out of the way, the best I can.*

*I hope you can all make the reunion in March. Please get your registration information in as soon as you can so we can make sure that you all have a great time. Hopefully, some of the new owners will be able to attend so we can all get a look at those lovely puppies from this year's (True/Becasse and Boswell/Whisper), as well as last year's, litters.*

*The staff at Hunting Hills does a great job and is very helpful to all of the owners. Also, they give great advice on how to help you train your puppies and dogs. I learn something new every year. It is always fun to see old friends and their dogs and is a really good time. I hope to see you there.*

*Best,*

*Roger*

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## **OH Setters – Team Recktenwald**

July 10, 2009 eight Old Hemlock puppies were whelped at the home of Jim and Barbara Recktenwald. There were 4 males and 4 females, sired by OH True, owned by Roger Brown, out of Timber's Ryman Becasse, owned by the Recktenwalds. The puppies were placed as follows:

- Jim and Barbara Recktenwald of Shorewood, MN – blue female, OH Patches McNab
- Gary and Nancy Johnson of Aspenglow in Willmar, MN – an orange female, Aspenglow Saffron
- Jeff Campbell of Hillsboro, OH – an orange/Tri-color female, OH Lady Beretta
- Michael and Brook Schneider of Richmond, KY – a blue female, OH Kodiak.
- Robert Tovarnak of Coraopolis, PA – an orange male, OH Time Enough
- Richard Baylor of Columbus, OH – an orange male, OH Buckeye Casey

- Kevin Ferguson of Bluffton, IN – a Tri-color male, OH McKay
- John and Toni McGranaghan of Amherst, NH – an orange male, OH True's Bromley

Any who visit the websites; Upland Journal, Bird Dogs and Doubles or Grouse Camp, know well the wonderful progress of OH Bromley. We understand the remainder of the litter is doing just as well in their first "puppy season." Jim and Barbara did a superb job with this litter despite some problems for Becasse, who recovered very quickly. Congratulations to all, and we look forward to seeing you at the 2010 OH Reunion.

### Late Breaking Litter News from Maine!

On Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>, 3 male and 2 female, Old Hemlock puppies were born to the Catlett's OH Whisper, sired by OH Boswell (Bowman)! Larry says, "The more dogs the merrier. The 'pack' softens the blow of losing one of your 'kids'. When you are as old as I am and have to cover as much ground to find birds as we do in Maine, a fresh dog every few hours is great – and no 2-4 season stretches waiting for the puppy to mature. We just get good dog work continuously!"

As of publication, the puppies do not have names but are being placed as follows:

- Larry & Vicky Catlett, Leeds ME, female
- Scott and Sharon Hanshue, Dowling, MI, male
- Tom & Cindy Fabich, New Castle, PA, male
- Luther Otto, Fitzwilliam, NH, male
- Mark Hitsman, Tioga, PA, female

Congratulations and thank you to the Catlett's for hosting another wonderful litter.



### First Season by Karen Killay

Brierpatch and Gunsmoke, littermates, now a little over 18 months old, enjoyed their first season here in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, on grouse (very sparse), woodcock (decent flights), and stocked pheasants (not as good as it used to be!).

A lack of wild birds has always been an issue for training for us, and as well the prohibitive expense of consistent preserve hunting. However, hunting two states has helped Jim in extending the season, therefore exposing the boys, although not always in idyllic circumstances. And, my hat goes off to Jim for not taking shortcuts. He trains each dog separately and hunts each dog alone as well.

An historic ice storm hit us very hard this past winter (Bob Rose can attest to this – as he was our houseguest in the midst of it all) and created an unbelievable spring and summer clean up. The worst destruction was the loss of our 800-foot enclosure, which was the setters' play yard. Not alone in our plight of storm damage, it was mid July before the fence people could get to us. Walking the dogs on leashes was a nightmare as downed trees in the woods made for impassable paths. Believe me when I say walking the side of a main road became old very quickly, especially with two one-year-old setters suffering from cabin fever.

Jim started training Brier and Gunsmoke in late summer using proven conventional methods, bird wings to start then evolving to planted quail, which we maintained for training, until the boys became bored. Then a much anticipated trip to a local club where all the setters had a go on Hungarian Partridge. Bramble and Cider, the boys' uncles, eight years young and also litter mates, were predictable and excellent (thank goodness as these birds are expensive). Brier was right where he should be for his age and exposure, excited and joyful, and learning through trial and error the art of hunting, and keeping at a comfortable range. He bumped a few birds until it finally registered that he had to maintain a decent distance from these critters. His points, while in need of styling, were solid and productive. Jim was very pleased.

And then there was Gunsmoke. It could be said that Gunsmoke was joyful about the ride and seemed "interested" in the reason for this outing. When released to hunt however, he totally lacked drive and was clearly not interested in "looking" for birds. He was not hunting and stayed ridiculously close, almost underfoot. When almost by accident he came upon a bird, he circled it and then downright avoided it. I was baffled as this dog was great in yard training. Then I heard Jim say softly, "I wonder if we have a blinker." "What's a blinker?" I asked. (I confess that in all my years around bird dogs I had never heard that term before, probably because we never had a blinker.) After Jim's explanation I was sick. An Old Hemlock who was a blinker? Was this a rush to judgment? After about a half an hour of Gunsmoke

wanting to play only, (no amount of shaking birds or feathers in the snout interested him), and with a bothered mindset, we crated him for the eventual trip home. As the outing was 75% successful, the remaining dismal 25% had Jim quite concerned. While not yet convinced that we might have a serious problem, he was none the less very quiet on the way home. In my case, ignorance is bliss, but Jim's reaction troubled me.

Timing can be everything. Hunting season in New Hampshire started two weeks later, and after several hunts with uncles. Jim loaded up "the kids" to start their first season. Brier continues where he had left off at the preserve, excitedly hunting and learning as he went along. He wasn't retrieving yet but would find the bird after the shot and stay with it. Retrieving would come later. He was a happy bird dog.

Hopefully but tentatively Jim hunted Gunsmoke. Fortunately, Gunsmoke acted somewhat differently than he had at the preserve. He showed some interest although he was not at all fiery, and he did work in front of Jim. The hunt was not productive but Jim was cautiously optimistic. Several days later Jim hunted Gunsmoke again and the routine was the same except Gunsmoke on his own stumbled onto a bird. He pointed, held and Jim flushed the bird making the kill. Gunsmoke marked the bird, ran like the wind, and retrieved it, parading around for some time before bringing it to Jim. Now he was one excited bird dog!

From that day on Gunsmoke had been a hunting machine. He is obsessed, fiery, and tireless. When the brain clicked on the transformation was unbelievable. We are thrilled. Along with all this wonderful stuff there are some issues that need to be addressed. He now ranged too far and buries the birds instead of retrieving them to Jim. With only two more weeks left in the season there is a lot of work to do, but with what could have been Jim is happy to work on these kinds of problems.

Brier and Gunsmoke are decidedly different both in looks, personality, and hunting style. But, what they now share is desire, fire, and intensity. First season? It's been wonderful!

### **GBE Legacy Lives**

**by LeJay Graffious**

OHF Administrator and Director

As I begin to write this, two Old Hemlock Setters romp through the room. At 10:00 a.m., the temperature outside reached 2° F. Black Willow and Carmel play like sisters. We are reciprocating dog sitting while the Marshalls ski. Steve and I have shared our young setters first season with many mutual hunts. Their indoor puppy play disappears in the field. They have hunted grouse in Michigan and West Virginia, and wild quail in Virginia. The blue and orange brace work well together. Each has her own productive style that complements each other.

As I finish my first season hunting birds over an OH Setter, I have a new respect for George and Kay's writings. I have always appreciated my peripheral relationship with their setters and his articulate words

about his relationship with his own designed dual setters. Now, "Living with Gun dogs" has a deeper meaning in my psychic, from the warmth of her body on my lap as I try to type in the studio with the generations of her ancestors surrounding us, to the thrill of seeing her lock on a grouse in covert where her genes had tread.

In the spirit of OH Traditions, we enjoyed the setter photos included with holiday cards this season. All of these were placed in the wooden bowl at Old Hemlock to be enjoyed by all visitors and keeping spirit of the Evanses' legacy alive. Helen Ann and I enjoy your notes and your setter's memory photos. They are so enjoyed by our visitors. Also, I will be glad to include your OH Setters photos of hunts or daily living on the oldhemlock.org.

One of the goals of the OH Foundation is to promote the philosophy of GBE, set forth in his writings. I have always thought a good way to do this would be to post favorite or poignant quotes from OH Family members and friends on our web page. This would provide snippets for those who Google dog quotes. I would like this idea to over-come inertia but it would need kinetic energy from you to gain momentum. Jeff Kauffman brought to my attention a GBE quote, which was in a British Shooting Magazine, Shooting Gazette. In the October 2009 issue on Page 111, there is a full-page photo of a Black Cocker Spaniel running in a field with this quote printed as an overlay;

*"I think we are drawn to dogs because they are the uninhibited creatures we might be if we weren't certain we knew better. They fight for honor at the first challenge, make love with no moral restraint, and they do not for all their marvelous instincts appear to know about death. Being such wonderfully uncomplicated beings, they need us to do their worrying."*

- George Bird Evans

This Troubles With Bird Dogs quote is the most frequent response when using an internet search engine. I think we should put more of these excerpts in cyber space for the next generation of GBE readers.

Steve Marshall has supplied the first. He wrote, "I'm well into October Fever and enjoying it immensely. In a recent conversation, you spoke of wanting to assemble favorite quotes from George and Kay. Page 62 holds a favorite for me; 'There is time, and you must take it, to lay your hand on your dog's head as you walk past him lying on the floor or on his settle, time to talk with him, to remember with him, time to please him, time you can't buy back once he's gone.'"

I encourage you to reach back into your memories and pull out a memorable quote with its citation. Convert your potential energy into kinetic energy and send in your snippet.

Old Hemlock Foundation continues to find its legs. We had about 150 visitors to the house and another 3400 to the website in 2009. Many who came to Old Hemlock found us from the website and had taken the

virtual tour or admired the setters on-line. Some were past readers who took the pleasure in their first visit to GBE's home. We had twenty-five high school students with WVU Upward Bound program visit Old Hemlock to learn about George and Kay, and do community service. About fifty members of the Preston County Historical Society visited in October. Old Hemlock Family members are always welcome and are encouraged to provide input for ways to promote GBE's body of work and his legacy.



### A Miracle Puppy by John McGranaghan

I was ten seasons into hunting grouse and woodcock in my New Hampshire woods, reclaimed orchards and farm lots. Perhaps it is just as appropriate to say that I have been pursued these ten years by a sense of tradition; traditions not my own, but that I was attracted to.

My first year's adventures did not include a four-legged friend. That first season yielded no birds to my crisp new vest but my imagination put many there. I spent my time learning how to recognize proper grouse and woodcock cover and scouring the southern half of my state looking for those places that might hold birds.

I had some early success, not so much the result of a learned eye or experience, but rather to the many hours that I spent afield. Every once in a while we'd stumble upon a decent covert that held birds. The excitement at my first grouse flush and the fact that he fell to my shot was just what I needed to keep my interest each time I grabbed my department store vest, gun and put my Lab on the ground. I've missed many more than I've hit since that first lucky day, I'll tell ya'. Yet, every time out was filled with the hope and expectation of a bird flushed and Connor bringing the prize to hand with all the joy of a child finding his first two wheeled bicycle under the Christmas tree on a snowy morning.

All the elements were present in our NH coverts and needed only the blessing from above to put the pieces together, rewarding Connor's work and my determination

to follow his nose. Once in a while it came together for us. Most of the time, due to my bad shooting and birds avoiding my 8's, we came home with an empty vest and poor Connor without the taste of feathers in his mouth. Yet, I've loved spending time in my New Hampshire woods since a child, so the days were not lost and I generally learned something each day spent in those covers.

Just as many aspiring upland hunters had before me, I read stories. Stories of how 'gentleman gun dogs' would work thick cover to find and set a bird so that fella on the wood-end of the shotgun could better anticipate the bird's flight. Of all of these stories and accompanying photos and sketches, those that froze in my mind involved English Setters. And of those it was the regal looking canines with flowing form and feathers that most caught my fancy. Those images and stories led me to learn of Dual Type dogs and how and why the came about.

Of those there were two. The George Ryman dogs, arising from a man's vision and determination to bring about a line, had never been and so was new to this earth. And the other beginning with those dual dogs and always dipping back to that gene pool; the results of the efforts by George and Kay Evans, who likely spent more time afield with their setters than any others. Folks with a dedication and an eye toward setters that have instinct to find and work upland game, be one half of a partnership, look beautiful at hearth and home and provide loving companionship in and out of the field.

These things appealed to me on many levels and I wished to have one of these gentleman dogs with which to pursue my new found past time. About four years ago I read about a fellow in my own New Hampshire, who bred Llewellyn Setters and referred to them as a "classic New England gun dog." His dogs had the look and reputation describing what I yearned for, so after several conversations and visits, I acquired a tri-colored male. I named him Tucker.

He is developing into a fine woodcock dog, has promise to be a decent grouse dog and is most definitely my good friend and companion. It wasn't until sometime after that I learned of the differences between my Tucker and the Dual Type Dogs, so I decided that when the time was right, that it would be a good thing to have such a dog added to our family.

It was nearly two years ago that I contacted Roger Brown in order to inform him of my interest. Somewhere along the line at least two individuals, and I suspect another, spoke kindly of me to Roger in reference to owning an Old Hemlock Setter. For that I am gratified beyond words and forever thankful. It is no small thing to have men and fellow upland hunters who value these dogs, to have thought me a candidate to be included in the Old Hemlock family -- no small thing to me.

During the summer of '09, Roger and I spoke a couple times of failed parings and possible litters. Roger informed me of how an available puppy is greatly dependent upon the male to female ratio in a given litter. There seemed to be a possibility of a pup sometime in

2010 but, with no assurances possible, I braced for a wait. And so now I am finally getting around to how this story begins and ends with happiness at the McGranaghan household.

It began on the occasion of receiving a note from Roger telling me of a puppy that had unexpectedly become available. How that came about is a story for someone else to tell, but those circumstances made it possible for us to have this wonderful male, orange belton, who we subsequently and with great joy named OH True's Bromley. Roger told me that he was ours – that he would like for this pup to make a home with us and that we need only make arrangements to fetch him from away off in Minnesota.

As with many these days, money is tight and I have been working part-time. I didn't know how we could pull this off at short notice. My wife Toni and I had been speaking on the phone back and forth over the next hour or so about these things and lo-and-behold Toni calls me back one time, all excited. She was *very* excited and could hardly get the words out. It seems that her boss had just walked up to her desk and handed her an extra week's check -- something about straightening out the books. Totally unexpected, timely and just what we needed to drive to Minnesota and back. Needless to say, the two of us were a bit pleased and agreed that this was providence at work. The details with our jobs worked out like the sweet action of my well-oiled old Fox and we were set to leave that coming Friday afternoon with plans to arrive at Jim and Barbara Recktenwald's place on Saturday evening. They very graciously invited us to spend the night and repeatedly called us both before and during our journey, encouraging us to not hurry on their account, but rather take time and be safe.

We arrived late in the evening, and our hosts, undaunted by the late hour, spent much time visiting with us and allowing that first opportunity to spend time with our new baby, his litter mates and Becasse, their mother.

For Toni and I, it was love at first puppy breath! We were greeted with an energetic pup in fine fettle and just as anxious as we for hugs and kisses.

After a spell we all surrendered to our weariness and the dogs settled in to their accommodations. We retired with thanks in our hearts and no little excitement, for the days to come. The ride home began that next morning as we parted with new found friends and much well wishing.

Nearly two weeks has passed until the time of this writing and OH Bromley has settled into his new home well. He and our Llewelin Setter, Tucker, are already fast friends as our 'pack' has adjusted. Bromley, in keeping with what I have heard and read, is one smart Dual Type Old Hemlock Setter. Toni and I could not be more pleased at what the future holds as we look to hunting our New Hampshire and Maine coverts with an Old Hemlock Setter. What a privilege it is. And to the McGranaghan household – 'A Miracle Pup.'



## The Singing Bower by Chad Slagle

*Chad Slagle is a local man whose livelihood involves writing and singing music about his love of the mountains and his Appalachian roots. Read what Chad says about George's influence on his life: - LeJay Graffious*

There were many legendary figures that frequented the sporting goods store that I grew up in – from famed archery expert, Dr. Reverend Stacy Groscup, to trapping and outdoor writer Warren "Jack" Ryan. But, without a doubt, one of the most influential figures for me as a child was artist and author George Bird Evans.

I was doodling in a sketchbook one day when George first walked into my father's store. As he talked in length with my father about hunting dogs, I noticed him watching me out of the corner of his eye. Finally, he asked, "What are you drawing, son?" I slowly slid the sketchbook in his direction. He seemed excited about what I had done, and even commented about my use of shading and composition. My father interjected and said, "George is an artist, too. He writes books and illustrates them." The conversation continued and I soon learned that George made a living telling stories and drawing pictures. I was stunned. Up to that point, most of the adult men I came into contact with were coal miners, carpenters, and the like. The idea that someone could live in my small town and make a living doing such things was almost unfathomable to me.

As the years passed, George continued to encourage and inspire me. He gave me a copy of his book, *The Upland Shooting Life*, and for the first time I felt as though someone was able to put in to words what I felt when I took to the field. His philosophy on the outdoors was different than the hook-and-bullet magazines that I was reading at the time. There was a respect, a wonder, and a humor in his words unlike anything that I had ever read before. A seed was planted, and there was no turning back.

George once told my father that the only difference between raising a good dog and a good kid is where they sleep at night. Those words were the basis of a song I wrote called, *Bloodlines*. And, I guess if I really think about it, his words and philosophy have been a basis for much of my work, and ultimately, my life.

– Chad K. Slagle

*Editors Note: For more about Chad Slagle, check out his website at [www.thesingingbower.com](http://www.thesingingbower.com)*

**Ears For A Hat**  
by John McGranaghan

Why on this puppy  
This setter of mine,  
With the Ryman Old Hemlock  
Genes in the line.

Do the ears set down low  
Compared to my Llew,  
Making room for a pate  
For a hat to sit too.

For room to rise  
When a questioning look,  
Or hanging down low  
When just reading a book.

Is it something for birds?  
Is it something for woods?  
Or maybe an accident  
I think it looks good

There's a point a ways back  
On top of the crown,  
That leaves ample space  
Big eyes that are round

Whether for this  
Or rather for that,  
Those ears set down low  
Make room for a hat.



**Spc. Krol, Grayson M. U. S. Army Reserv**  
By Mike Krol

As most of you know, my son is in the Army and is currently stationed in Iraq. He is doing well, but the experience has been a real eye-opener for him. He is seeing first hand the ravages of Saddam's brutality to the Kurds, and the incredible poverty existent throughout much of the country. Grayson seldom asks for anything, but we recently received the following note from him:

*I pray this email finds you and mom well, and also just a continued reassurance that the Lord has continued to protect myself and buddies down here. Thanks for praying. I was also wondering if it would be possible (since the army is slow in these sort of things) for you to get a bunch of bulk tooth paste and toothbrushes from Sam's (some where in the area of 80) so we can hand them out and hopefully I would be able to teach a class in Kurdish. I figure we are handing out all this candy to these kids who already have rotten teeth why not try to give them something helpful rather than harmful? If you want, maybe get a few people in on it too so you don't blow a big wad of cash. You don't have to do this by any means, I will try to get some other people to hook us up too so please don't feel obligated.*

Over the past few months several of you had asked for Gray's address, and what he might be needing. I didn't want to trouble you with any of this, but I thought that perhaps a few might like to help out with the toothbrush/toothpaste request, and of course any little note of encouragement and support would go a long ways in keeping his spirits up. Here is his address:

Spc. Krol, Grayson M.  
B Co. 414 CA BN  
COZ Irbil  
APO AE 09338

Mike

## In the Hearts of their Masters

**Old Hemlock High Timber**, masters Bill and Robin James, Pownal, VT. (*s. OH Sirius – Rose and d. OH Bittasweet – Catlett January 1998*) Died September 12, 2009. Timber was a puppy from the Ice Storm litter – a troubled beginning with wonderful results.

**Old Hemlock Stonehouse**, masters Jeff and Gabriella Leach, Davenport, NY. (*s. OH Sirius – Rose and d. OH Bittasweet – Catlett January 1998*) Another Ice Storm puppy, Jeff and Gabriella comforted Stonehouse painlessly for a month after learning he had inoperable hemangiosarcoma in his abdomen. “He was a great hunting buddy and friend who now lies across a pond, under a white pine where we can see them from the house and raise a glass to them always.

**Old Hemlock Brooke**, master Dennis Bogan, Red Wing, MN. (*s. OH Sirius – Rose and d. OH Bittasweet – Catlett January 1998*) Yet another Ice Storm puppy gone. “In our hearts there will never be another dog with such a sweet disposition like Brooke. Not only was she a remarkable dog and an important part of our family, but a true representative of the Old Hemlock strain.” – Dennis Bogan.

**Aspenglow Chevre**, masters Gary and Nancy Johnson, Willmar, MN. In June, 2000, Chevre whelped a litter of Old Hemlock/Aspenglow puppies sired by OH Manton (Evans). From that litter, lines extend to the recent Recktenwald litter. Chevre was 14 ½ years old and had a nearly perfect health record her entire life, which we hope is passed on to her puppies as well as Becasse’s. Gary and Nancy feel blessed to have had their “big brown eyed girl” for so many years and we feel privileged to have Chevre in the Old Hemlock pedigree.

“...the one best place to bury a dog is in the heart of his master(s).”  
- Ben Hur Lapman



**Editors Note:****Greetings:**

Another bird season has likely come to a close for most of you. We here in the northern reaches of NY still have nearly two full months of open grouse season, but Mother Nature sees fit to close us out of the woods by this time each year with several feet of snow. Grouse hunting in the snow can be a delight but we have a phenomenon called "Lake Effect" that brings all our snow at once. So, despite the DEC's efforts to provide sporting opportunities to hunters at the expense of the birds, the birds never had it so good! Another Reunion is also approaching, at which we have the opportunity to see puppies from two new litters. Hopefully we will have a good turn out and good weather. Bob Rose has worked hard to set the dates and arrange for lodging at the "dog friendly" Morgantown Super 8 and at the same rates as last year. The management of Super 8 assures us there has been no repeat of the parking lot vandalism experienced last year. However, those staying at the Super 8 will have the opportunity to support a parking lot security detail – a minimal added expense for peace of mind – the more who participate the cheaper it will be for all. Please complete the attached Reunion Registration form and return it to Bob Rose as instructed but before Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>. This will allow us to provide an accurate number of attendees to Hunting Hills for meals and birds. You will need to make your own motel reservations by calling Super 8 at the number provided.

Lastly, I hope you will take the time to respond to Grayson Krol's request for assistance with his Army Reserve mission in Iraq. This young man and his fellow soldiers are making tremendous sacrifices in the name of freedom, and in particular, helping an oppressed people over-come the ravages of war and the cruel poverty in which they live. Whether you agree with the current political solutions or not, the young men and women sent there face uncertain and often impossible tasks. A care package and encouraging word is the least we can do in return for the freedoms they secure.

Best to all,

Mike, Link and Flint

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