

# Watershed Events

## The Mantoan Family's Sauve Terre Farm

### CLCF's Mission in Action

CLCF's mission is to conserve the natural environment of the Cedar Lakes region, and CLCF's vision is to sustain the abundant natural beauty, clean water, and biodiversity of the Cedar Lakes region for generations to come.

At the heart of CLCF's vision is a vital land trust—one that is an important resource and works hand-in-hand with the community as well as with local, regional, and national conservation partners to protect and care for the natural aspects of CLCF's mission area. As part of this effort, CLCF envisions diverse natural ecosystems, sustainable working farms, healthy watersheds, habitat for recreational and educational opportunities, and scenic vistas.

CLCF's long-term collaboration with Joe and Laura Mantoan is a wonderful example of CLCF's mission in action.

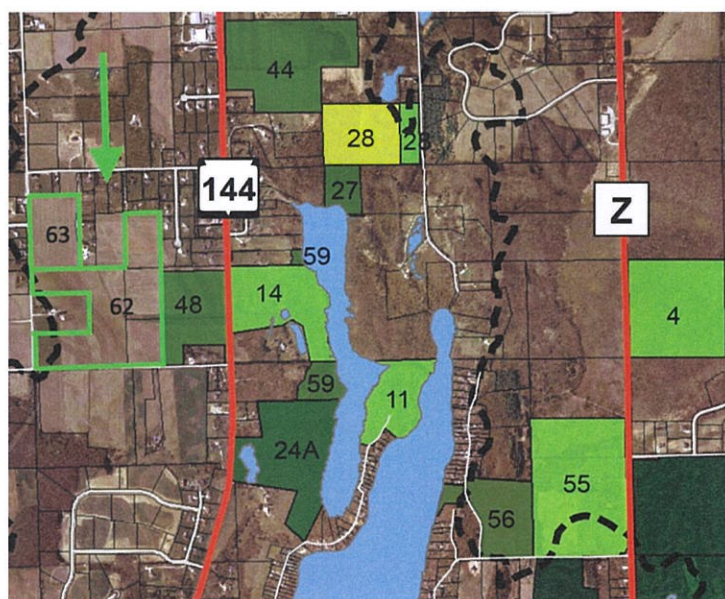
CLCF's relationship with the Mantoan family dates back to 1991, when Joe and Laura Mantoan first met CLCF's founder, Geoff Maclay.

Since that time, CLCF and the Mantoan family have protected 96 acres of land to the west of Gilbert Lake. CLCF and the Mantoans have achieved this land protection through five conservation easements. A summary of these transactions is included in Table 1. Map 1 shows the location of the protected parcels, including the 2019 and 2020 conservation easements, which are numbered 62 and 63 and are outlined in green.

**Table 1: CLCF / Mantoan Conservation Easements**

Parcel #	Date	Acres	Method
48	2004	23.8	Donation
59	2016	5.9	Donation
59	2016	2.2	Donation
62	2020	49.2	Partial Sale / Donation
63	2019	14.9	Partial Sale / Donation
		96.0	

**Map 1: CLCF Protected Properties Near Gilbert Lake**



*Joe Mantoan and his granddaughter Laura*



The Mantoan family generously donated the first three conservation easements, totaling 31.9 acres, in 2004 and 2016.

In 2019 and 2020, CLCF and the Mantoans closed on two additional conservation easements, totaling 64.1 acres. The structure of these transactions was as a partial sale / partial donation based on independent appraisals. The Mantoans' willingness to donate a significant portion of the value of these transactions in combination with a government funding opportunity allowed CLCF to protect these acres at a very reasonable net out-of-pocket cost to CLCF.



*The Mantoan Family's Sauve Terre Farm*

#### **A History of CLCF and Mantoan Conservation Efforts**

In September 1991, CLCF purchased 40 acres from Frank and Natalia Lichon on the western shore of Gilbert Lake and was looking for a suitable buyer for a portion of the property containing the Lichon home.

The conservation values of the property were equally important to CLCF and to the Mantoans, including protection of the wetlands along the shoreline of Gilbert Lake.



*Gilbert Lake Shoreline*

In the spring of 1992, CLCF sold the Lichon home and just over 10 acres to the Mantoans, beginning a decades-long relationship between CLCF and the Mantoan family.

At the time of the Lichon home purchase, Joe and Laura Mantoan met Tod Maclay, who was planting several hundred trees on CLCF's remaining 29-acre portion of the Lichon property, as part of a broader restoration effort of the land adjacent to Gilbert Lake's northwestern wetlands. The trees that Tod planted are now over 40 feet tall and are part of CLCF's Lichon parcel (labeled #14 in Map 1).

Note that the Lichon family has a fascinating history. If you would like more information about that history, please refer to Lee and Mary Krueger's history book, entitled *The Town of West Bend*, published in 2008.

#### **The Mantoan Family Sauve Terre Farm**

In 2000, the 82-acre farm across State Highway 144, directly to the west of CLCF's Lichon property, was under significant development pressure. Geoff Maclay introduced the Mantoans to the farmers who owned the property, and in 2001, the Mantoans purchased the 82-acre farm.



*The Mantoan Family's Sauve Terre Farm*

The farm is located in a sensitive ecological zone. To the west, the farm is bordered by Nabob Road, which lies along the subcontinental divide. Water on the eastern side of this divide flows into Gilbert Lake and ultimately the Milwaukee River Watershed and Lake Michigan, while water on the western side of the divide ultimately flows to the Mississippi River Watershed.

The Mantoans' farmland slopes significantly toward Gilbert Lake. The eastern boundary of the farm is within 1,000 feet of Gilbert Lake's wetlands. Any runoff from the land in that location directly impacts not only spring-fed Gilbert Lake, but everything downstream, including Big Cedar Lake and



onward. Imagine if the farm had been subdivided and developed. Then imagine the impact of rain and the resulting runoff from that development, including runoff from chemically treated lawns, roofs, and asphalt roads (which would be salted in winter) versus the impact of rain falling over a thick carpet of permanent grass cover that now exists on the farm.

That is one of the many differences that the purchase of this 82-acre farm has made to the watershed. Others include the maintenance of a working farm in the area when so many have been lost to development, as well as the protection of significant open space and scenic views.

“Each day, an estimated 6,000 acres of open space are converted to other uses. Expanding urban and suburban areas often results in a loss of forests, grasslands, and other natural areas. This loss is significant, as open spaces provide many benefits and ecosystem services.”

- U.S. Forest Service

#### **The First Conservation Easement with CLCF**

In 2004, the Mantoans donated a working lands conservation easement to CLCF on 22 acres of the farm’s eastern portion along State Highway 144. This conservation easement (labeled #48 in Map 1) allows the land to be either a working farm or open land--but protects it forever from development.



*A Young Calf at Sauve Terre Farm*

#### **The Second and Third Conservation Easements with CLCF**

In 2016, the Mantoans donated an additional two conservation easements to CLCF, both of which are numbered #59 on Map 1. These two conservation easements comprise 8.1 acres of wetlands on the shoreline of Gilbert Lake.

CLCF is very proud of its efforts to protect the ecologically sensitive Gilbert Lake. To date, CLCF and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) through its ownership of #24A on Map 1 have protected approximately 6,000 feet, or 55%, of Gilbert Lake’s shoreline.

#### **The Fourth and Fifth Conservation Easements with CLCF**

To the north of the Mantoan family’s Sauve Terre Farm, Roman Lichon and his wife, Leigh Anne, retained ownership of a 17-acre parcel of farmland from Roman’s parents’ original estate. This parcel is bordered by Nabob Road and Church Drive and is contiguous to the Mantoans’ 82-acre home farm.

The Lichons knew of the Mantoans’ commitment to ecological farming and land conservation and wanted this last portion of their parents’ estate to be protected from future development. After a few years of discussion between the families, the Lichons agreed to sell their land.



*The Mantoan and Lichon Families - June 7, 2019*

On June 7, 2019, the Mantoans completed the purchase of the Lichons’ 17 acres of farmland and simultaneously placed 14.9 of the 17 acres into a working lands conservation easement with CLCF. In this case, CLCF paid for 55% of the value, and the Mantoans donated the remaining 45%.

At the same time, CLCF and the Mantoans were also working to conserve a significant portion of the remaining acres of Sauve Terre farm. During 2018 and 2019, CLCF and the Mantoans met with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) to discuss land protection opportunities in the Milwaukee River Watershed.

Out of this relationship came the opportunity for CLCF to partner with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a division of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), on a working lands conservation easement as part of



the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Through this program, CLCF was able to protect an additional 49.2 acres of the Mantoan family's Sauve Terre Farm.

CLCF closed on this conservation easement on March 18, 2020. Similar to the easement on the Lichon property, this transaction was a partial sale / partial donation of the appraised value of the conservation easement. However, in this instance, NRCS provided 33% of the funds, CLCF provided 33%, and the Mantoan family donated 33%.

### **CLCF's Mission in Action**

The protection of these 96 acres through the five conservation easements is important on many levels, including:

- Conserving the scenic beauty of the area,
- Protecting the water quality of Gilbert and Big Cedar Lakes,
- Preserving ecologically sensitive wetlands, and
- Helping to support sustainable working farms.

### **Meet Sauve Terre's Farmer**

Joseph P. Mantoan, the son of Joe and Laura, returned from college in 2008 to help out with the operation of the farm and with the transition to a certified organic operation.

The Mantoans decided to name the farm Sauve Terre, which translates to Safe Land or Saved Earth.

The name Sauve Terre is particularly important to Laura Mantoan, as it is the name of the village in southern France where she spent a year abroad during the 1970s.



*Farm Operator Joseph P. Mantoan*

### **A Few Words from Farm Operator Joseph P. Mantoan**

"First, I want to say how important the work CLCF is doing is for young farmers like myself. Because the land at Sauve Terre is protected from development pressure, it means that it is now economically accessible not just to me, but also to future generations of farmers.

While growing up in Whitefish Bay, we spent a lot of time at our home on Gilbert Lake. I became a 'child in the woods' and became very connected to the natural world around me. After studying Sustainable Agriculture in college as part of my Environmental Studies degree, it was great to be able to return to our own land to farm.

We have three major approaches to our ecological farming practices. The first is establishing permanent pasture and managed livestock grazing. We try to mimic nature's system of diverse permanent cover of soil and to move large herbivores across the landscape in order to increase topsoil and biodiversity. In our biosphere, this was done for thousands of years by the large herds of buffalo that built our amazing pre-settlement soils. At Sauve Terre, we plant and maintain permanent pastures with over a dozen varieties of grasses, legumes and forbs. Our beef cattle move each day to a different section of pasture and there leave behind nutrients to feed and stimulate the life of the soil.

An acre of well-managed grassland sequesters more carbon than an acre of forest. Scientists from the Savory Institute have demonstrated this successfully for over 50 years. They believe that if 50% of the world's farmland could be managed this way, in a short five years, we would have pre-industrial levels of carbon in our atmosphere. For example, once we had established perennial pasture on our new 25-acre parcel just south of Sauve Terre, Kevin Krause, who still has his home there, reported an amazing increase in the number and variety of birds following the conversion of the fields from corn and soybeans to pasture.



### A Few Words from Farm Operator Joseph P. Mantoan (continued)

The second approach is using a permaculture key line water management system to capture and disperse rainfall throughout the farm. In a 2010 workshop conducted by Riveredge Nature Center and Wellspring Inc., we met Mark Shepard. Mark is an international permaculture consultant who has published several books. He helped us to design and install a series of eight contour lines of small ditches and berms to capture and disperse water on the slope of the farm. On three of these lines, we have planted hundreds of perennial fruit and nut trees and bushes, such as hazelnut, chestnut, and elderberry as well as a variety of fruit trees. These provide nutrition for us and also food sources for a wide number of native pollinators and local wildlife.

The third approach is the use of certified organic standards in our farming. We use no herbicides or pesticides on the farm. Science tells us that we retain about 20,000 additional gallons of water, or about 1-inch of rain per acre, for every 1% growth in organic matter. We have increased the farm's organic matter from about 2.5% to 3.5% since 2008. This increase in soil life means the soil is acting like an expanding sponge to hold and convert water into additional life forces. With about a dozen or more rainfall events each year, producing an annual average of 24 inches of rain, we are holding approximately 250,000 gallons of additional water per acre per year. In all but extreme events, we are keeping all the rainfall on the farm.

By using these three main approaches to farming, science and observation tells us that we are significantly improving soil life and biodiversity and, as a result, helping to improve water quality in the watershed. One of the most dramatic indications of this is a story about our former neighbor to the east of State Highway 144 on Gilbert Lake.

A few years after transitioning to these three approaches, he asked 'What are you doing over there?'

We explained our approaches and asked why he wanted to know. He said that each year a small, brown river would run like a torrent under the large culvert on Highway 144 and through his woods into the wetlands of Gilbert Lake. He went on to say that he no longer saw that water moving through his property. For us, that is just the sort of outcome we are looking for."



*Contour Lines and Ditches for Water Sequestration*



*Educational Workshop at Sauve Terre Farm*

### The Mantoans' Efforts Extend Beyond Sauve Terre

Over the years, the Mantoans have conducted many workshops and tours for farmers, schools, and conservation groups in order to share and collaborate on their approach to ecological farming.

After one of these workshops, the Big Cedar Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District (BCLPRD) asked the Mantoans to take over the lease and operation of 25 acres of farmland near the corner of Washington Street (Hwy 33) and State Hwy 144 and to farm it organically.



The BCLPRD purchased this property from the Fritsche family in May of 2002, and in July 2002, CLCF purchased a conservation easement from the BCLPRD in order to permanently protect its conservation values.

The Fritsche property (#44 in Map 1) is near the headwaters of Gilbert Lake, and prior to the end of 2002, CLCF constructed a large stormwater retention pond on the eastern side of the property.

In 2012, the Mantoans started to transition the agricultural land on the western side of the property to certified organic and established a perennial hay field. In 2013, the Mantoans planted fruit trees and native elderberry and hazelnuts as a complement to the Adopt-A-Tree planting that CLCF did around the retention pond. In addition, Meg Jansky, the daughter of Jim Fritsche, allows the Mantoans to farm the two acres the Fritsche family still owns, contiguous to BCLPRD's parcel.

Over the years, several neighboring families have asked the Mantoans if their children could spend some time working at Sauve Terre. The Mantoans are always delighted to give anyone interested experience with their ecological farming methods.



#### A Few Words from Farm Owner Joe Mantoan:

"My family is very grateful to CLCF and its members for the wonderful work it continues to do in protecting the natural world around us.

We are especially grateful that CLCF sees the value of protecting working farmland as a part of the CLCF mission. This began with founder Geoff Maclay and continued with the self-professed 'farm girl' Mary Franz as Board President for many years. This commitment lives on with the dedication CLCF's current Board and for that, the Mantoan family is very grateful.

We all do this conservation work to help protect the natural world and to enrich our lives.

We also do this work so that our grandchildren and their grandchildren can enjoy the scenic beauty and natural world around them.

My sincere thanks to CLCF and its members for making this possible, and a very special thanks to Geoff and to the memory of his son, Tod Maclay, for starting our family on this wondrous journey."



*Braden and Clarissa Krause*

One of these connections resulted in the purchase, in 2017, of an additional 25 acres directly to the south of Sauve Terre Farm from Kevin and Debra Krause. Their children, Clarissa and Braden, have worked several summers at Sauve Terre.

The Krauses had originally planned to develop their 25 acres into several housing lots. However, after becoming more familiar with the Mantoans' approach to stewardship of the land, they decided to sell to the Mantoans instead.

#### Future Working Lands Opportunities

On April 16, 2020, NRCS announced that it is investing more than \$7.5 million in the Milwaukee River Watershed Conservation Partnership Program led by MMSD. CLCF – along with other land trusts and municipal organizations – is a partner in this project. CLCF is looking forward to working with interested farmers in the CLCF mission area to protect their lands with agricultural land easements similar to the 49.2-acre project recently completed with the Mantoans.

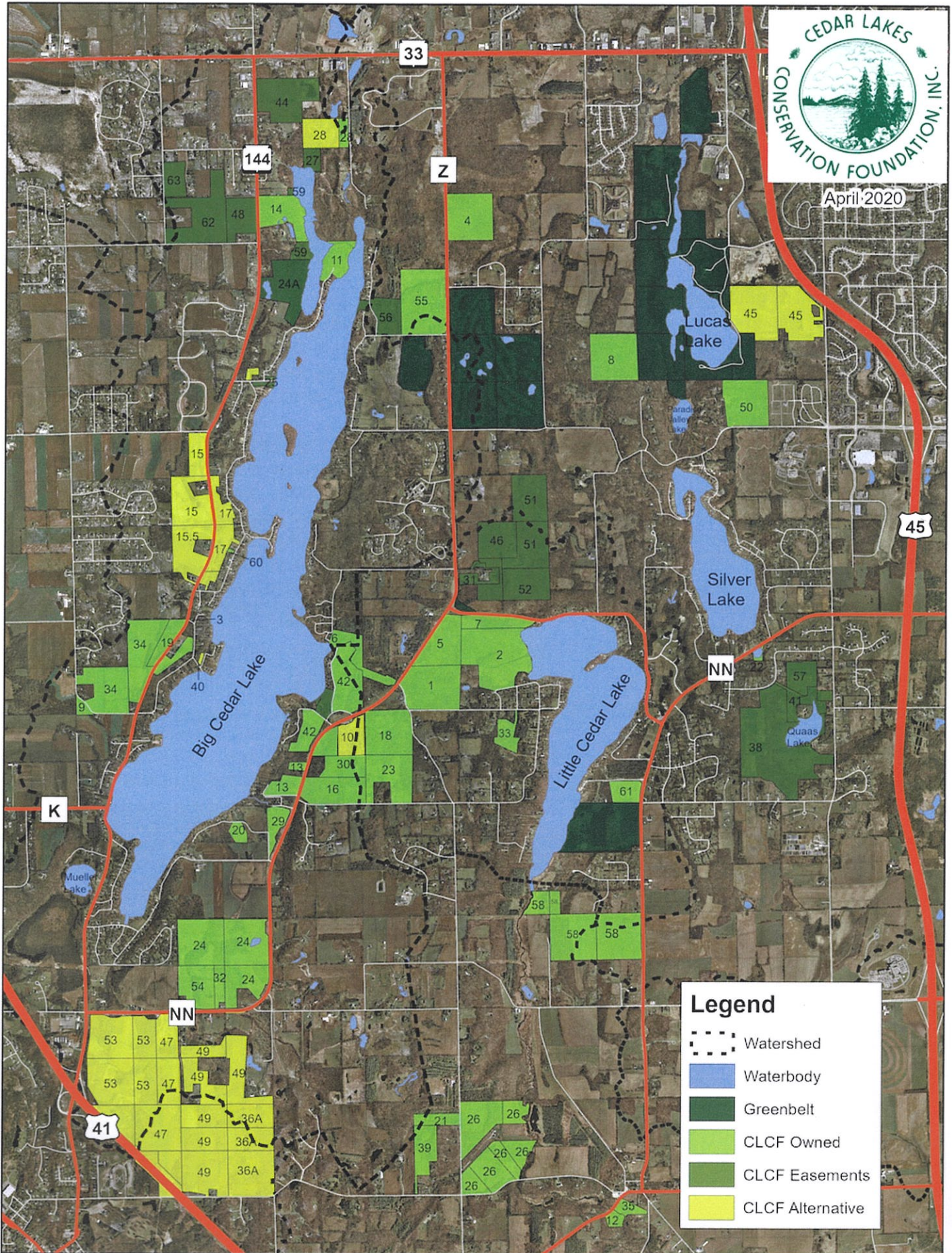
As farm operator Joseph P. Mantoan so eloquently stated, agricultural land easements can help keep farming economically accessible not only to today's generation of farmers but also to future generations as well. If you'd like to learn more about the program, please contact CLCF at (262) 353-4866.



CLCF's Mission Area



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Tod Maclay  
Helen Reilly  
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Your generosity is very much appreciated.

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