

# SPORTS



Mitchell Brown

Been There, Done That

## Paintball will colour you happy

Like most adventures, Larry Licastro's began with a six-pack of beer.

The year was 1984 and he had just finished playing hockey with his buddies when someone came into the dressing room and offered the players a six-pack for five minutes of their time.

Turns out The Man-With-The-Beer was looking for recruits for a game of paintball, a form of capture-the-flag for grown-ups, only with paintball guns (called markers in the trade) to tag the other team.

"It was great," the Kleinburg resident said. "I went home and I lay around the house thinking of all the stupid things I did and how I would have done things differently. I thought, 'I have to get out there and do it again so I can do it right'."

Fast forward a few years and Mr. Licastro is the proud owner and operator of both Ultimate Paintball, an outdoor range just outside Milton, and Area 51, an indoor range just off Keele Street and Sheppard Avenue in Downsview.

As the name suggests, Area 51 looks like the set of a sci-fi TV show, which isn't surprising when you realize most of the fixtures, from fake boulders to flying-saucer things, were salvaged from the Total Recall TV show, which was once filmed on a soundstage just down the street.

A couple of little green men and a thorough coat of yellow paint on every conceivable vertical surface complete the otherworldly ambiance of...

What's that?

Yes, yes, I was just getting to the actu-

See PAINTBALL, page 26.

## Keglers come in all shapes, sizes

BY ADAM MALIK  
Special

In the time John White has operated the Stouffville Bowling Centre, he has witnessed a lot of keggers.

The same can be said about Gord MacLean at his Stellar Lanes facility in Newmarket and Gerry James at Markham Bowl.

All three agree bowling remains a sport for everyone. It harbours no prejudices toward those who take to the lanes with the hope of throwing strikes and, more importantly, having fun.

"Here, I've got kids as young as three years old who use two hands to throw the ball down the lane to one lady who's 93 and she's here every week in a senior league," said Mr. White. He describes his downtown Stouffville facility as being "born out of the 1960s" with six lanes and no automatic scoring.

"It's a sport for all ages," added Mr. MacLean.

While it requires some technical skills, bowling, whether it be five or 10-pin, is a relatively easy game to learn. It's far easier than a game such as golf, insisted Markham bowling enthusiast Brian Crozier.

"It's a game of luck," Mr. Crozier said. "But you can pick the game up pretty quick, I'd say in a couple of weeks."

"And the proprietors at the centres can give you tips, as well."

For youngsters, Mr. White favours the five-pin game because the ball is lighter and smaller than its 10-pin cousin.

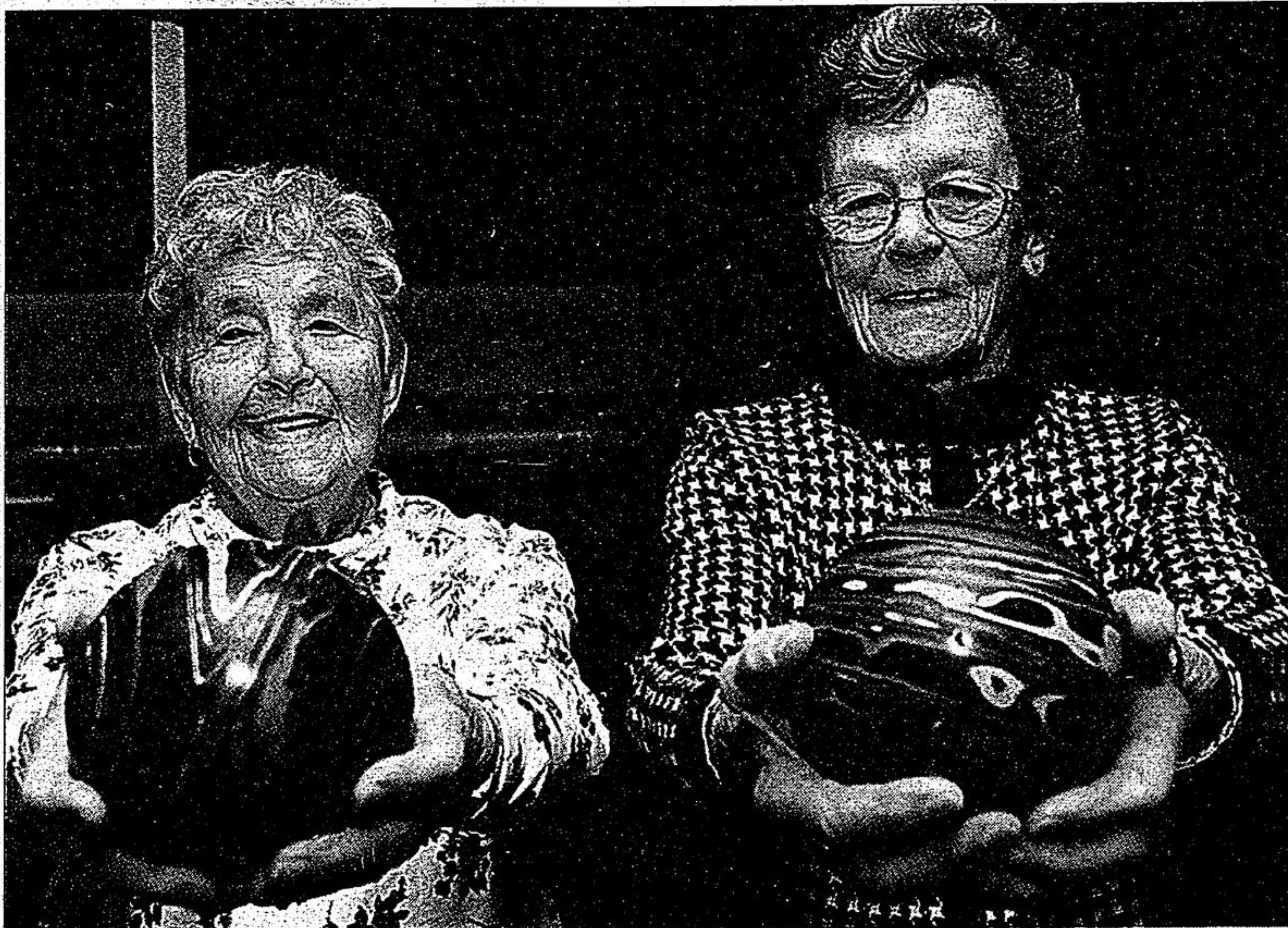
But he also cautioned the five-pin game can present more of a challenge because of the smaller ball and pins being more spread out.

"In five-pin, if you throw the ball down the middle, you might only take down the head pin," said Mr. White.

"In 10-pin, though, if you throw the ball down the middle of the lane, you're likely to get a few pins down."

Playing a sport with a wholesome image where no physical contact is involved can entice an entire family.

"It has a family and social atmosphere," said Mr. James,



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Adele Willis, 93 (left), and Cecilia Sirbovan, 81, have a lot of fun bowling at Stouffville Bowl. Ms Willis remembers when the place had three lanes and pin boys. "I don't bowl any better, I just get older," she says.

who runs 20 lanes at Markham Bowl.

Bowling is a social activity. Bowling centres run organized leagues for bowlers, regardless of gender and skill level.

### *'It's a sport for all ages.'*

Stouffville Bowling Centre hosts one men's league, two ladies leagues, three mixed leagues and one for the mentally challenged.

"I've got a league of ladies who bowl and they socialize," Mr. White said. "People bowl to get out and meet new people."

Participating in a weekly mixed league spawned a relationship between Mr. Crozier and his wife, Wendy, some 27 years ago.

"For me, bowling was a night out and a way of meeting new people and that's how I met Wendy," he recalled.

In some instances, business

meetings have been held on the lanes, just as they are on the golf course.

To promote bowling to the younger generation, facilities open their doors to youngsters through programs run by the Youth Bowling Council.

In the council's mandate, everyone plays. Unlike some sports, where the more talented individuals are offered an opportunity to shine, everyone plays regardless of ability. Nobody sits on the bench.

Throughout the bowling season, the council stages several in-house tournaments, which help acquaint members with the excitement and experience of tournament competition.

At the five-pin level, age groups are broken into bantams (10 years of age and under), juniors (11 to 13) and seniors (14 to 18).

At the 10-pin level, the age groups include bantams (11 and under), juniors (12 to 14) and sen-

iors (15 to 18).

Play (league and tournament) is conducted on a handicap basis and a novice can win an event just as easily as a more experienced player.

For those who possess more skill, the council offers the Four Steps To Stardom program, a championship that begins at the house level, proceeds to a zone championship, a provincial championship and culminates at the national championships.

Currently involved with a youth bowling program in Stouffville, Mr. Crozier has seen an increase in the number of youngsters.

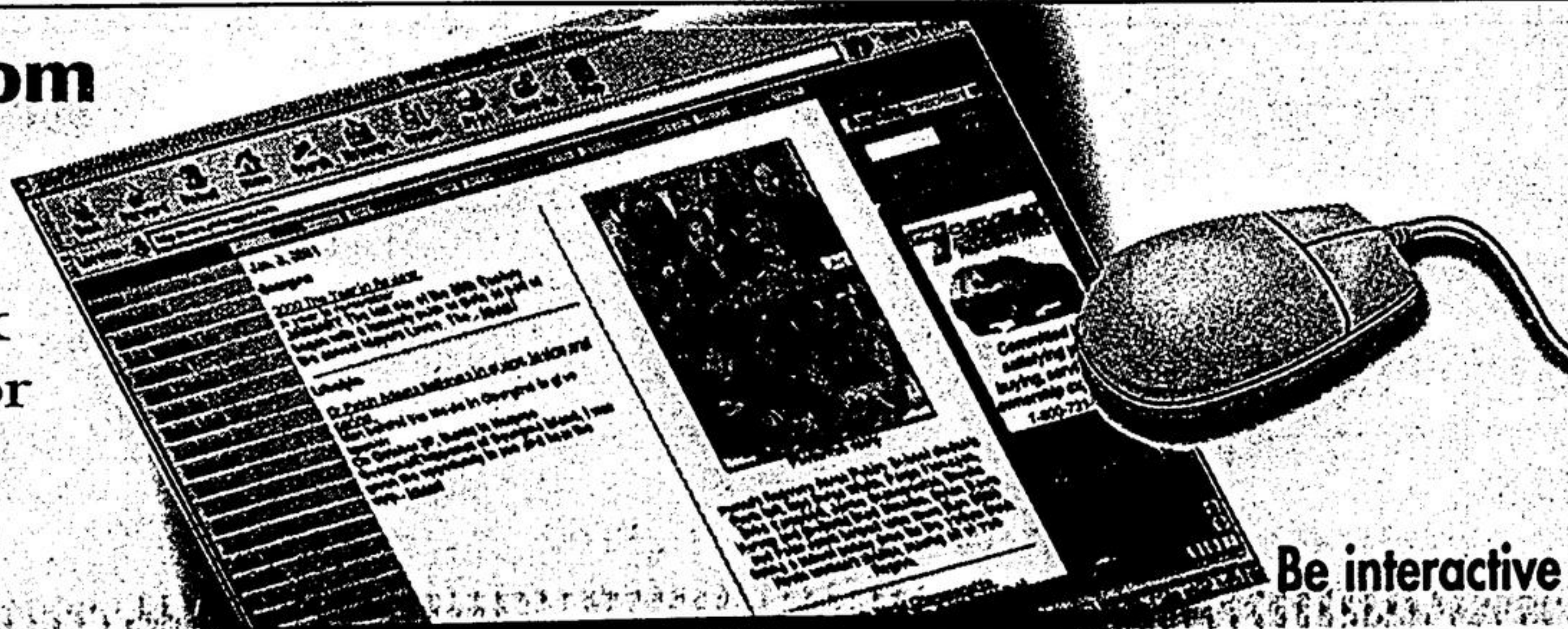
"This year I see a lot of younger people, four and five-year-olds," he said.

For parents, bowling is a viable option for entertaining youngsters during the holidays or a

See DONT, page 26.

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