

# Even more new teammates join our SFO station

Six more teammates are joining the SFO station this week, including Haneen Alhabeeb, who spent time as a lobby host before heading off to training.

Haneen, a San Francisco native, worked at Wells Fargo before joining Virgin, which she did "because for a while now I have been interested in the airline industry. Virgin was my first choice because it's Virgin America, the Vogue of airlines right now. Who doesn't want to be a part of it?"

Like other new hires who worked in the lobby before starting training, Haneen found working in the lobby to be helpful. "I became familiar with many of the airport codes and Airline policies, so I went into training with a little more confidence than I had before lobbying."

As the only person in her class headed to SFO, "it was bittersweet," she said. "to have to say goodbye to everyone at the end. We all formed a very close bond and I will definitely be visiting them in the east coast soon."

Haneen's hobbies are binge-watching TV shows and road trips, and her favorite travel destinations are Las Vegas and San Diego. She'd like to add that "I'm excited to be a part of team SFO and everyone I have met so far has been beyond amazing. Can't wait to meet the rest of the team."

*(continued on page 2)*



LADIES IN RED – As Project Runway's Tim Gunn might say of SFO GSTs Virginia Harte and Erika Straub, "It's a bit matchy matchy."

## VX airlifts strandeers after hurricane devastates Cabo San Lucas

BY STEVE FREITAG

Hurricane Odile, one of the strongest tropical cyclones to ever hit the Mexican peninsula of Baja California, devastated the resort city of Cabo San Lucas in mid-September with 125 mph winds, hours of rain, and widespread destruction, leaving outages, shortages and looting in its aftermath.

Four days after the storm struck Cabo, the damaged airport opened for humanitarian flights to evacuate some of the thousands of stranded American and Canadian tourists. Supervisor Aracely Sandoval and other Virgin personnel traveled down to Cabo, where they saw the damage to the town from flooding and high winds, and the damage to the airport, which is Mexico's seventh-busiest.

"It was a very emotional situation for me," said Aracely. "The most difficult part about was that we did not know what we would find, or who was going to help, or where to place the aid."

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A BBC photo shows damage in Cabo San Lucas after the recent hurricane.

## Six more new GST teammates join SFO station

(Cont. from page 1)



**Reggie Saliba**, from San Diego, said “I was picking up my niece and nephew from a Virgin America flight in SFO and went up to the ticketing counter to get a gate pass. All the employees looked super happy and the culture seemed very 'alive' compared to other airlines. I've always believed that if you treat your employees the right way it'll show in their performance at work.”

Before coming to Virgin America, Reggie was a co-owner of a small car dealership in San Diego. With the rest of his class, he trained in Dallas, which had tons of great food locations, and “Everyone was so friendly. I will be heading back soon.”

Reggie loves basketball and plans to travel to every NBA arena, following the Lakers. His favorite travel destinations are New Orleans, (“awesome food and even better service”) and Hawaii.

“To all my future teammates, I can't wait to meet all of you and be ready to have a great time and laugh. If you don't know how to laugh, please switch shifts now.”



**Haneen Alhabeeb**, center, with her trainers Sean Jaochico and Daniel Sheppard in Dallas.



New SFO teammates, and some destined for other stations, participate in the Dallas Heart Walk last month.



**David Zubiria** of the Bay Area began flying Virgin in 2007 “and immediately fell in love with the airline.”

“It wasn't until my friend Jose Alarcon Herrera got hired as a GST that I actually pondered working for the company myself. He said I would love the job and that it would work perfectly with my schedule since I recently decided to go back to grad school.”

“Prior to making this decision, I worked at Kaiser Permanente for seven years as a Performer/Educator in their Educational Theatre Program. Acting has always been a passion of mine and I will continue to perform as a hobby for the rest of my life.”

One of the most fun and memorable experiences he had during training in Texas was participating in the HeartWalk as a VX representative with the rest of the Dallas teammates. “They were all very welcoming and so much fun!” he said.

David loves traveling, especially Rio De Janeiro, and says “Something you will probably notice right away is that I'm about as goofy as they come. Love making people laugh and smile and hope to accomplish that with each and every one of you in the near future.”



**Cristin Cornewell**, originally from Indiana, came to Virgin America because she saw it as “a company that cared more about the guests than the bottom dollar, and I feel that Virgin America is that company that goes above and beyond for its people.”

Before joining Virgin, Cristin worked in an outpatient clinic as a registration specialist. She trained in Dallas with Heather Murphey and Shelly Adams, like the rest of her class, and whom she called “Amazing!” While in Dallas she was able to join the Dallas team for the Heart Walk, and also learned Texas-style line dancing.

Cristin’s hobbies are reading, music and dancing, and her favorite travel destinations are Chicago and Charleston, S.C.

To her future teammates, Cristin would like to say, “Always make it fun!”

**Marla Nelson** of Oakland

(and now Piedmont) came to Virgin America because of her love of travel. “The airport is one of the most exciting places in the world because it’s packed with people traveling to all destinations, either preparing to make new memories, or returning home already having made those memories. Virgin America allows me to be a part of their story.”

Before she came to Virgin, Marla was a stay-at-home mom, and before that she studied Chemistry at Cal, worked at UC San Francisco, sold Real Estate, did pharmaceutical sales, and also worked at Restoration Hardware.

Of her Dallas experience (which included “a lot of studying”), Marla says Dallas was a beautiful city to explore and learn.” She loves to walk – “As crazy and strange as that might sound, I walk 10+ miles every day. It gives me a great excuse to get outside, explore my city, and clear my mind.” She also loves to cook for her family, and one of her great joys is when her kids return home.

Her favorite travel destinations include most anywhere, but she especially loves cruises. “I can totally kick back and relax knowing that everything is totally taken care of. The food, entertainment, and new destinations you visit almost daily makes for a great way to travel and explore.”

To her future teammates, Marla would like to note that she has observed that “Virgin America is a first class organization. The level of professionalism and care that I have experienced this far is second to none.”



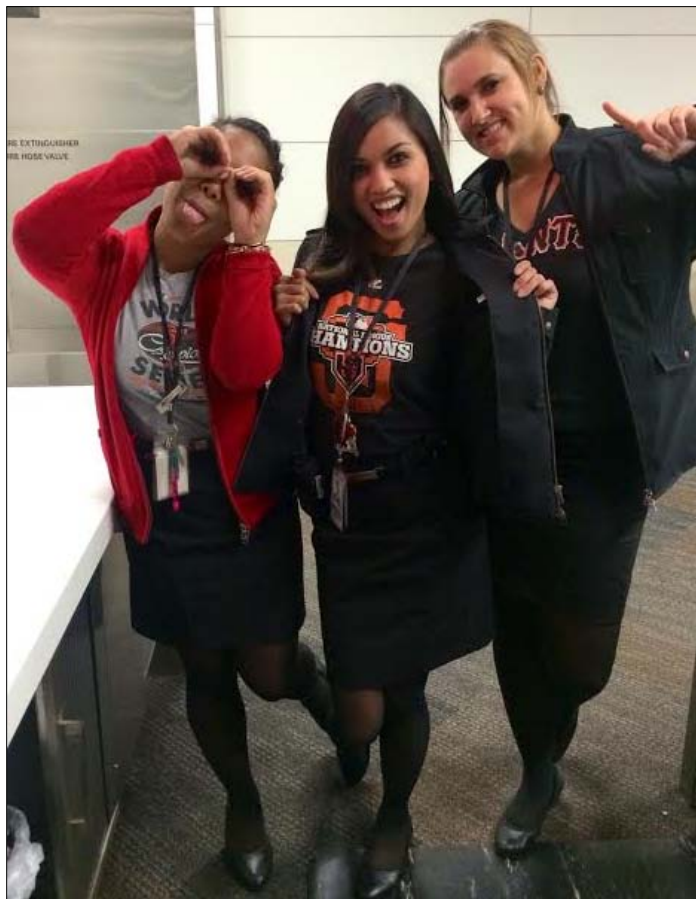
**Kristen Rigney** from Hercules said “I’ve wanted to work for Virgin America since the first time I flew with them. With the vibrant atmosphere and smiling employees, you could say it was love at first flight.”

Before starting at Virgin, Kristen worked at Trader Joe’s, where she continues to work as well, and like the rest of her class, trained in Dallas with Heather Murphey and Shelly Adams. “Training was more fun than I could have imagined, with one of the classroom highlights being a non-verbal communication activity best described as a dance version of the game “Telephone” that I remember playing back in school. The end result is never the same as the initial communication by the time it’s been passed through the entire group!”

So far as hobbies go, Kristen loves snorkeling, hiking, walking her Great Dane (named Moose), and dancing (even though she says it’s painful to watch). Italy, Thailand, and Mexico top the list of her favorite travel destinations “though I have a feeling that list will be expanding soon.”

To her future teammates, Kristen says, “I’m excited to work with and learn from you all!”

**SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS ARE IN THE PLAYOFFS!**



At upperleft, George Maseda, Cynthia Portillo and Tony Koo work at the gates. Wearing their Giants colors, center left, are Miguel Diaz, Cynthia Portillo, Kat McIntyre and Andrea Gomez. Lower left, Geraldine Posadas and Lora Reichhold also wear Giants T-shirts. Upper right, Miguel Diaz, Peishou Liu, Fran Torres, Robert Corcuchia, Geraldine Posadas, Lora Reichhold, Suzette Rabano and Virginia Harte show their hometown pride at the ticket counter, as do Geraldine Posadas, Bernadine Lopez and Lora Reichhold.



photos contributed by Lora Reichhold, Miguel Diaz and Cynthia Portillo

# Flight from Cabo

(continued from page 1)

SJD supervisors Oscar and Cristina met the flight, and Aracely said she was glad to see familiar faces.

“Cristina told us that they already arranged had 135 guests waiting to go, and we told her that we had two extra seats,” Aracely said. Guests were brought out on a bus and lined up for processing their passports and bags. Due to the lack of electricity, satellite cell phones were used to communicate passport info to OCC for clearing the guests. As sunset approached, it became even more urgent to get out on time, during daylight, since there was no working airport tower.

“While we were tagging the bags, we heard stories” of the storm’s severity, Aracely said. Among the phrases: “I have never experienced anything so ugly in my life,” “I thought it was the end of the world” and “Seemed that the entire city would be destroyed by the winds.”

Aracely said it was incredible to see a city devoted to tourism without water, electricity, cell phones, Internet and food, but she was impressed by how Mexican government was handling the situation.

As sponsors of a humanitarian flight (and far from the only one – other airlines also contributed), Virgin America was willing to take any stranded Americans or Canadians, not just guests who had originally booked on Virgin.

Supervisor Miguel Diaz sent out a warning to swing shift workers that with the humanitarian flight coming in, an extra large crew of GSTs would be sent to meet it, and the ticket counter would remain open until every guest had been helped. Guest services manager Tim Horn noted in an e-mail to airport staff that “They have been through a very traumatic event and will require that anybody that comes in contact with them be over-the-top compassionate and patient. Regardless of whether they are VX guests let’s be sure to send them home raving about the great people at VX.”

When the plane finally landed at SFO, Aracely said you could hear the guests clapping and excited to be back in the U.S. “During deplaning every single one of them said ‘Thank you,’” she said, adding that she even saw a few guests crying.

Along with Miguel and Tim, a team of four GSTs – Grenna Tupas, Usman Khan, Carolyn Giusti and Lana Jefferson – met the flight, and gave a welcome to everyone as they exited the plane.

“The guests were extremely tired, as you can imagine, and a lot of them were also sunburned,” Miguel said. The guests also expressed their gratitude to Virgin for the humanitarian flight, and some who said it was their first time flying with VX mentioned how much they loved the aircraft, especially the comfortable seats and mood lighting.

Lana and Usman directed guests to immigration, while Carolyn and Grenna handed out immigration forms to the guests. The experience was very emotional – “We saw tears in their eyes,” Grenna said. “And we could not help but have tears in our eyes, handing the forms and pens to the guests.”

Once the guests picked up their checked bags, they proceeded to their original airline, Miguel said – most of them to American or Alaska airlines. The guests were re-booked to travel the following day and went to local hotels for the night.

“I must say that the crew on that flight did an outstanding job,” Aracely said. “This is an experience that I am never going to forget.”



Rampers load fresh water onto the humanitarian flight from Cabo San Lucas.

GSTs Carolyn Giusti, Lana Jefferson, Usman Khan and Grenna Tupas gather before the flight from Cabo arrives, lower right. At center, the guests on the flight relax after their ordeal. At right, Tim Horn and Usman prepare for the flight to arrive.  
photos by Aracely Sandoval and Grenna Tupas



# HEART WALK HEROES



SFO teammates participated in mid-September in the Bay Area Heart Walk, sponsored by the American heart Association. Dozens of teammates (including many from HQ) walked around the Oracle campus in Redwood City to raise awareness.

Aracely Sandoval meets a giant heart, at left, and Maritza Parra is excited to be there. Below, Tim Horn and Daryl Elsberg arrive at the walk, and Maggie Curry and Anne Edwards flank former GST (now at Central Baggage) Kayla Smith, as Brad Fowler photobombs from the back.





Walkers proceed, at left, and most of the SFO participants gather for a group shot, below. At bottom, the bake sale in the Virgin Village before the walk raised \$292.32 for the American Heart Association. Altogether, SFO raised \$1119.32.



Photos by Molly Lynn and Steve Freitag



## COASTAL CLEANUP CHAMPIONS



Virgin America again participated in the 2014 Coastal Cleanup, in conjunction with NatureBridge. Teammates restored habitats in the Marin Headlands Watershed of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in late September and earned VFit miles and a Virgin T-shirt for their time and labor.

*At left, supervisor Tim Valdivia works at habitat restoration, as do other VX participants, above.*

## BOWL US OVER



On a recent slow Saturday night, supervisor Miguel Diaz brought out the bowling equipment and gave guests a try at making a strike or a spare, which would win them a free pair of headphones. The evening was so slow, however, that most of the attempts were made by GSTs stationed at the ticket counter.

*Henry Wong and Sarik Ouch try their hands at bowling, above. At right, some of that evening's check-in crew: Henry Wong, Debbie Cuadra, baggage handler Myer Munoz, Miguel Diaz, Brooke Ziel and Andrea Gomez.*

*photos by Steve Freitag*







*Erika Straub lives long and prospers during her tandem jump, at left, Below, Erika prepares to jump out of a fully functioning airplane.*

## ***Erika takes a leap of faith ... to find out why the birds sing***

“It wasn't something that was on my bucket list or anything,” said GST Erika Straub of her decision to skydive in early September. “In fact, it was more something I never thought I'd do.”

But when a Groupon for a skydive jump near Sacramento fell onto her out of the clear blue sky, “It didn't seem so scary anymore.”

Erika said she was also inspired to take the plunge by Nikki and Gabby skydiving, as seen in the last *Virgin Villager*, and a quote on that page by Albert Camus: *“In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there's something stronger – something better, pushing right back.”* She also found a quote by a skydiving instructor that she thought was poetic: “Now you know why the birds sing.”



Erika added that “When I bought the Groupon, I thought I could just book a jump the following day. My decisions have to be impulse-based or else they won't happen – however, the next available jump wasn't until the following week. Having to wait a whole week, I was sure my nerves would start to kick in.”

“I was surprised to find that even as my toes were over the edge of the plane it still hadn't quite hit me. I was filled with excitement and just kept thinking how much scarier making speeches in school was.”

“The initial jump off the aircraft and free falling was the most amazing, visceral thing I have ever felt in my life. It took a moment to realize what was happening, and then everything was just beautiful.”

“When I landed, I immediately wanted to go back up and much higher. Later when I got back into the car I couldn't figure out how people can just go back to regular life after doing something like that.”

“All I know is, my next adventure is going to be diving with sharks.”

**49ERS START SEASON IN A NEW STADIUM**



photos by  
Maritza Parra  
and  
Steve Freitag



Wearing their 49ers gear at the start of the season are, from top left, Enrique Calvo, Luchelli Adorable, Fozia Haroon and Gabby Aramburo, Jackie White-Leung and Cristina Ramos, Ryan Barrick, Courtney Whitfield, Carolyn Giusti and Rochelle Stagí, and in center, Brooke Ziel.

The 49ers moved down to Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara for the 2014 season, after being in Candlestick Park since 1971 (and before that, they were in Kezar Stadium in Golden Gate Park). What this means to us ... far less game day highway traffic near SFO!

# TAKE-UPS OUT TO THE BALL GAME



Operations and leadership took in a Giants game in early September – and this was Ewa’s first baseball game ever!

Above, operations and leadership are excited to be at the Giants game. Below left, operations and leadership take their seats to watch the Giants game. Below right, Ewa Chris watches his first baseball game. Any questions? It’s all pretty self-explanatory.

photos contributed by Maritza Perra



# HONOR FLIGHT OF AMERICAN VETERANS



**“We can’t all be heroes. Some of us have to stand on the curb and clap as they go by.” – Will Rogers**

It’s a yearly tradition at SFO, when American veterans fly to Washington, D.C., to reflect at their memorials. Both the departure and the arrival this past month were marked by ceremony, flags, music and balloons – and the respect and thanks of grateful citizens who show up to cheer and applaud the brave men and women who served their country.

The Honor Flight Network is a non-profit that honors America’s veterans with these flights, focusing on veterans of World War II and especially those who are terminally ill. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, an estimated 640 veterans of WWII die every day.





**Ouch**



**Diaz**



**Fitzpatrick**



**Adorable**

More changes afoot, as **Nikki Fitzpatrick** and **Virginia Balan** are transferring to the new Dallas Love Field station (joining **Joyce Manalo**, as mentioned in the last issue), and **Joanna Diaz** transfers to the LAX station. **Magda Yanez** is also transferring to the San Diego station, and **Navindra “Kenny” Persaud** is taking a position as supervisor at the new LaGuardia Airport station in New York. While we’re sorry to see all of these teammates go, we can all be glad that there will be familiar, friendly faces when we non-rev through those cities.



**Luchelli Adorable**, now working in the admin office, has been elected as our station’s representative to the GST Work Rules Advisory Team. If you’ve paid any attention at all, you’ll know that the WRAT works tirelessly on behalf of our GSTs to make Virgin’s work rules flexible, fair and consistent. (And speaking of the admin office, looks like **Casandra Lopez Raygoza** is also helping out there.)



Longtimer **Sarik Ouch** has also departed Virgin, in search of new adventures. I’ll especially miss Sarik for our shared love of corny puns. Here are some recent ones we told one another:

- *Did you know I was addicted ... to soap? But I’m clean now!*
- *I got re-addicted to hayrides, but they’re so dangerous! I really fell off the wagon!*
- *My mom went to a psychic and broke the psychic’s crystal ball! Cost her a fortune!*
- *Did you hear about the boy trapped in the giant origami statue? They’re waiting for details as it unfolds.*
- *I never wanted to believe that my dad was stealing from his job as a road worker. But when I got home, all of the signs were there.*



More great information in Elmer’s recent **VXellence** briefs ... including some changes to existing policy, which I always find the hardest to remember. Here’s some of the highlights from the most recent issues:

- At a recent event at SFO the VX marketing team gave out free baggage vouchers that guests can use on future flights. These vouchers, which give guests up to 2 free bags, expire November 30. Only 15 were given out, but if you receive one, waive the bag fees and use the Waiver Type “OTHER” and in the Remarks box enter “CC Promo Voucher.”
- If working an oversold flight, go to VXConnect and search “Denied Boarding Tool Kit.” This step-by-step guide will help you minimize involuntarily denied boarding guests, which are reportable to the DOT. When in doubt, reach out to a lead, supervisor, or your learning coordinator.
- Do you know who is our station’s safety coordinator? It’s **Celina Gutierrez-Tufono**, one of our OPS supervisors. Report any safety concerns to her at [sfo.safety@virginamerica.com](mailto:sfo.safety@virginamerica.com)
- .— Guests with allergies (such as tree nuts or peanuts) need to be aware that Virgin America cannot guarantee an environment free of any allergens, and a guest with severe allergies should advise Virgin America prior to travel.
- If someone has a single letter as a last name (like “Malcolm X” or “Kenny G”), Sabre is fine with it EXCEPT when the last name letter is a C, B, I or Z. For those last names, double them, so that the name appears like “Grandmaster ZZ.”



**BABY APELLANES** – Megan Apellanes had her baby boy Mason Jacob on Sept. 23 at 4:31 a.m. (“The time I would have been on my way to work!” she says). Big brother Aaden Ray, at right, holds the newest addition to the family.

- See the recent news involving travelers getting into fights over the use of the “knee defenders,” which prevent the seat in front of you from reclining? Virgin’s rule is that anything that precludes a guest from utilizing cabin amenities (i.e. the seat reclining feature) shouldn’t be allowed. ITMs can ask (and eventually order) a guest to remove these types of devices, and the guest must comply.
- No more transfer and interline tags! If this is going to work (and some may still have their doubts), we’re going to have to focus on one thing: on gate-checked bags, *use extremely neat and legible handwriting*. Also, make sure that printed bag tags are legible and visible, and that old bag tags (or anything with bar codes, for that matter) are removed.
- Here’s a question: can an unaccompanied minor travel on a buddy pass? No, they can’t. Too many variables that could impact the safety of the minor and the integrity of the process.
- Remember, only GSTs should be putting bag tags on our guests’ luggage. No baggage handlers should be putting tags on our guests’ luggage, ever. Also, pink tags should be placed on baggage by GSTs, not by the guests.
- When downgrading two First Class guests due to last-minute FAM bookings, send the First Class guests (gently!) to Main Cabin, if Main Cabin Select is not available. Leave the MCS guests alone, and only two people are affected rather than four. Still, this takes a lot of finesse ...
- No animal – pet, service animal, or emotional support animal, is allowed to sit on the cabin seat. If they are under the size of a two-year-old child, they can sit on the lap.
- Remember that if TSA inspectors audit you on your knowledge of policies and procedures ... go look it up! Never say you don’t know. They want to know that you know how to find the information.



I welcomed the new sunshade for curbside a few issues back ... so where is it? I was a bit premature! I saw a pic of it and thought it looked great!



This newsletter is by and for SFO guest services, but we’d love to have more GST participation, especially with articles. Go somewhere? Write an article about it. Or just share your photos and write captions. Have a passion or do something interesting? Write about it. At the very least, you’ll have something to be proud of (or something for your resume) ... and you might get a lunch voucher out of it. And everyone who contributes to this newsletter is entered in a raffle for a prize at the end of the year.



Personals column, below, is from *Virgin Villager* #3, back in 2012. See you next time.

– Steve Freitag

This 18th edition of **THE VIRGIN VILLAGER** was edited by Steve Freitag, with assistance from Elmer Tosta, and Supervisor Maritza Parra as our head honcho. This is YOUR newsletter, so why not contribute to our next issue, out in just a few weeks? Send your contributions (photos, stories) to [stephen.freitag@virginamerica.com](mailto:stephen.freitag@virginamerica.com) and you too can get your name in print! And maybe even win a lunch voucher, like Lynne Enderson, Edna McInernery and Peishou Liu did for our last issue!

And if you contribute to the *Virgin Villager*, you get entered into our big year-end raffle drawing!  
*(If you ever buy state lottery tickets, remember . . . your odds of winning are much better here!)*

*plus, we don’t cost a dollar*

## PERSONALS

**YOU ARE SO HOT.** I can’t believe how hot you are. You are the hottest Virgin here ... ever! And I’m not surprised, the way you always wear both your sweater and your jacket together. Me, I’d be broiling! Do yourself a favor and leave the jacket in your locker.

**HOW ABOUT WE GO CLUBBING?** My grandfather wants me to check out the Kiwanis, Rotary and Elks clubs. Frankly, I don’t see myself joining any of them, but I could use some company. We’ll grab Taco Bell after.

**YOU’VE GOT JUNK IN THE TRUNK!** And frankly, it’s probably affecting your gas mileage. Stop off at the SFO transfer station and get rid of it! They’ll only charge you a small fee, and you won’t have to fill up your gas tank as often. Plus, you’ll be able to put your groceries in the trunk and not have them sliding around on your back seat.

**I WANT YOU** hours. You don’t want to work both Friday and Saturday nights, right? Give me those hours!

**LET’S GET IT ON!** That’s the name of a classic soul song by Al Green. If you haven’t heard it, you should -- he’s an excellent singer, and it’ll be a nice change of pace from all that Katy Perry you listen to.

**YOU GOT ME GOING, GIRL.** Yes, I’m heading to Dallas, so here’s my standby boarding pass. Please give me a good seat, preferably a window. I’ll be returning on Friday, so if you’re working gates that day, maybe you’ll get me coming back, too!