

THE OPAL EXPRESS

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Merry Christmas

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President's Message

Merry Christmas Opalholics!

Can you believe Christmas is just around the corner? Have you done all your shopping yet? If not, opal jewelry is always a great gift for that special someone!

As one year ends and another is ready to start, I hope that we can work on new projects and get together to share them. We are working hard to make the opal show a reality this year! We will let you know all the details as they come to light.

I want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a very happy and prosperous New Year!

Stan McCall
AOS President
Custom Creative Gem Cutting



When Did Christmas Trees Originate?

The true Christmas tree tradition can be traced to 16th-century Germany, where Christians began to decorate trees—or, if times were tough, simple pyramid-shaped stacks of wood—inside their homes. The tradition of adding candles to the tree branches is most commonly attributed to Martin Luther, leader of the Protestant Reformation movement in the 1500s. (Legend suggests he was inspired by the stars in the night sky and wished to re-create the scene in his own home using candlelight.)

Source:

<https://www.countryliving.com/life/a45590/christmas-tree-origin>



Personalities Behind the Gem World

Kokichi Mikimoto

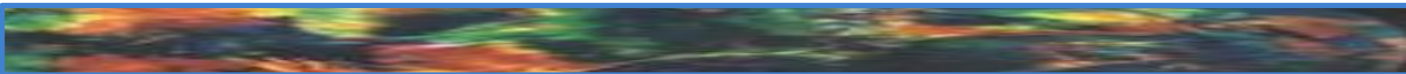
1858-1954

by Roy Beatty, F.G.A.A.

Metal Stone & Glass Magazine – Spring 2000

as told to AOS editor, Kathleen James

by Mary Aracic



Pearls, a favoured gem amongst the rich, have a long history of exclusive use by the ruling classes. At various times throughout history those with vision tried with varying degrees of success to assist nature in providing a predictable supply of pearls.

Then came Mikimoto and history received one of its small, subtle but important changes with the successful production of cultured pearls. Japan was ruled by an Emperor and ruling class since 660 B.C. However, by the mid 1800s, the Emperor was held in grandiose captivity and the country was ruled by the Shoguns. By 1850, the emerging commercial power of the United States was looking towards the Orient to further trade opportunities and this led in 1853 to Commodore Perry landing on Japan, seeking port facilities and trade opportunities. The treaties were formalized and they were signed in 1854 and Japan's isolation as a feudal power came to an end, and emerged a country seeking a more obvious role in world affairs.

Into this rapidly changing society was born Mikimoto, son of a noodle maker, who was in his own way causing changes in the pearl world that would rival those changes happening in his native Japan.

Forced into becoming the family bread winner due to this father's ill health, Mikimoto, while little more than a child, developed sales and marketing skills by selling noodles by night and vegetables by day.

On his first journey from his home in Toba, to the capitol of the Shoguns, Tokyo, he visited the port city of Yokohama. Here he was exposed to the fascination of pearls and pearl shell for the first time. Their beauty captivated him and held him spellbound for the rest of his life.

His salesmanship continued as he expanded family noodle business and commenced trading in marine products. His sincere desires to improve the lot of his fellow townspeople came when he was elected to municipal office. His desires to improve his town of Toba are well-illustrated by his example of opening up a channel so that Toba may become a useful port instead of a quiet backwater in danger of being passed over by the rapid trade expansion along Japan's coast. Japanese, like most people who appreciate beauty, had a fascination with pearls although it was not until the 1870s that any semblance of an organized pearling industry commenced with major producing areas in Omura Bay, Nano Bay and close to Mikimoto's home, Ago Bay. By the mid 1880s, concern was being felt at the depletion of natural oyster stocks. Mikimoto and some close friends commenced a far reaching venture when they started raising oysters and abalone under controlled conditions in Ago Bay. Pearls were an accidental bonus from the oyster production with the best coloured and most perfectly

Continued on Page 3

shaped being produced by the Akoya oyster. This fact and the comparison of Akoya pearls with those produced by other oysters and abalone planted an idea in Mikimoto's mind – he must find a way of raising Akoya oysters and find some way to produce pearls. By consulting the marine biologists of the day, Mikimoto soon hoped to learn the reason (or the secret) why some oysters produced pearls. Once this was known, then the way might be found to encourage more oysters to produce pearls.

Mikimoto commenced following his dream to produce pearls. He experimented with many different irritants to the oyster shell – sand, glass, metal, fish scales, bone and any other foreign object that may be of possible use. He experimented with various ages of oyster – 2 years old, 3 years old and 4 years old. The results were always negative. After much unsuccessful work, Mikimoto had one of the inspired ideas which can alter the world. He realized that he had tried to grow pearls on everything but pearls itself. With that realization, Mikimoto decided to grind up pieces of Mother of Pearl and use small pieces to insert in his oyster stocks. This work had just commenced when his oyster stocks were destroyed by the Red Tide, a virulent marine organism that kills shell fish. This devastating loss almost brought financial ruin. However, Mikimoto continued his experiments in a much reduced way. This was the low point of his life, facing financial ruin and ridiculed by friends. Supported by earnings of the noodle business run by his wife, Mikimoto checked on some oysters planted some five years previously. His wife opened some of the oysters and found to her amazement a semi-circular pearl. Quickly opening several others, they found more pearls, all semi-circular. Mikimoto's elation at producing pearls was tinged with a disappointment that the pearls were not perfectly round.

The decision was made not to continue finding ways to grow perfect pearls, but to produce the semi-circular pearls and develop a business based on them.

Mikimoto was granted a ten-year patent rights on his semi-circular, cultured pearls in January 1896 and commenced operations in that year. His forward planning included having a million oysters in the water by 1902. His first commercial crop of semi-circular pearls was harvested in 1898 with practically every oyster yielding a fine white, semi-circular pearl.



Mikimoto
Old Man Pearl of the World

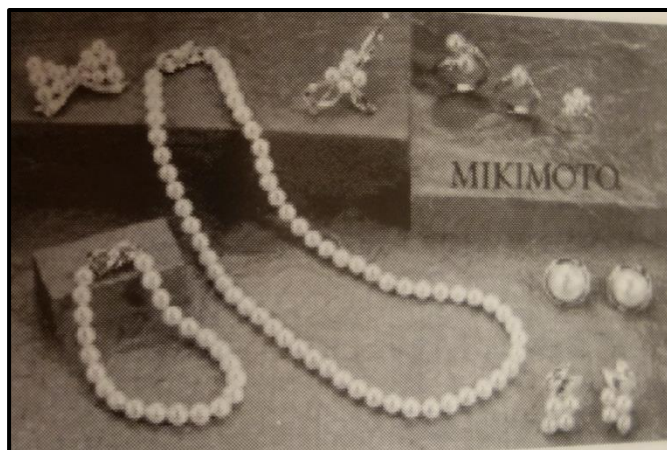
Continued on Page 4

This crop met little response from the usual pearl buyers and this situation led Mikimoto into opening a shop in Tokyo. Clerks were taught how to explain the difference between natural and cultured pearls and so doubts about the new product were dispelled. This presentation of cultured pearls with its honest open marketing led rapidly to orders being received from Italy, France, Great Britain and the United States. As his business expanded, Mikimoto was still facing the dilemma of only being able to produce semi-circular pearls as produced by inserting the Mother of Pearl seed between the mantle and the shell.

All experiments in placing the Mother of Pearl seed in the body to produce round pearls led to the death of the host oyster. By 1905, Mikimoto had his million oysters in the water, with thousands of them seeded in various ways in hopes of producing round pearls. Just as commercial rewards and acknowledgements of his achievements were reached, disaster in the shape of Red Tide struck the oyster beds. By encouragement and enhanced wages, Mikimoto was able to move one hundred and fifty thousand oysters into new waters. This operation took all his money and with 850,000 oysters dead before producing a pearl. Mikimoto spent time opening and examining the dead oysters, particularly those from his experimental cages. Upon opening an oyster from one batch, he found no pearl between the mantle and the shell.

Spotting a scar in the mantel, he opened it with his knife and found in the body of the oyster his dream answered – a perfectly round pearl. On checking the batch of shells, he found that they had been seeded with Mother of Pearl seed wrapped on mantle tissue from another oyster. With some trepidation, he opened four more oysters from the same batch and found four more perfectly round pearls. Once again in the depths of despair, a way to victory was revealed.

Work continued; his experience in raising oysters led to higher yields. His experimental work into production of round pearls gathered pace. Mikimoto expanded his outlets for pearls and pearl jewellery. Natural disasters continued to haunt his efforts. In 1908 a cold current nearly wiped out his oyster crop and in 1911 his oyster beds were attacked by an octopus plague. By offering a bounty on each one caught (considered a delicacy) there was no shortage of bounty hunters. The net result was a victory again, but a costly one.



Mikimoto Pearl Jewellery

However in 1908, Mikimoto was granted a patent on the round pearls he had produced two years before.

Mikimoto once gave an accurate description of his activities in those early days. “He was like a juggler tossing six balls in the air at one time and trying to keep an eye on all of them.” He had to be constantly at research, organise production and develop a factory for the export trade. There was no procedure to follow – he could not profit by others, failure or success. But with success on the horizon, Mikimoto selected a second site for a pearl farm at Gokasho some 829 acres of land and 1,540 acres of sea leased from a local fishing cooperative. At the same time he established a factory in Tokyo to produce mounts for his pearls.

To ensure good productivity from his employees, he established a consultation group to discuss working conditions, such as including an eight-hour day, bonus schemes and retirement plans. He was a revolutionary in his merchandising. His shop had a price on each item with no haggling, rather than the traditional contest over price between buyer and seller.

This control over all areas of production and marketing coupled with harmonious relations with his employees, ensured the success for which he had strived for so long. His efforts may be regarded as providing a working example for Japan's rapid rise from a feudal power to a major power in a relatively short time.

An indication of his success can be gauged from the prizes won at international expositions and world trade fairs. In the period between 1904 and 1939, he won grand prizes at 11 expositions and three world fairs. The model of the famed Liberty Bell on exhibition at the World Trade fair in New York in 1939 can gauge an indication of the showmanship that helped Mikimoto promote his products. Costing \$1,000,000 to produce, the bell had a core of Mother of Pearl, covered with 12,230 pearls and 366 diamonds. The bell's famous crack was reproduced in black pearl. The finished size of the bell was 14" high and 45" in diameter. The base was decorated with 37 pounds (about 16kg) of sterling silver.

He produced many similar grand creations to attract attention to this products and to the quality of goods that Japan could produce.

In 1921, he faced many legal battles over the authenticity of his pearls in his promotions, they were always stated as being cultured, some contested this description and called them counterfeit. He won many court battles and in France he was given the right to call his

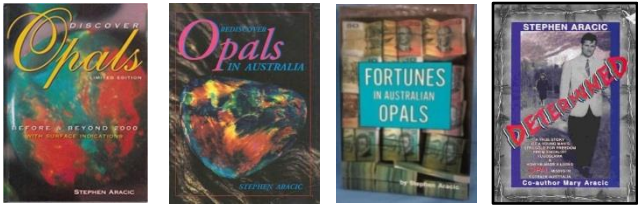
product simply "pearls". But he continued to market them as cultured pearls. As evidence of his determination and promoting a quality product, he once burned 75,000 inferior quality pearls worth \$25,000 in 1933.

This determination established a rightful place for cultured pearls that has existed to this day. The dark war years saw the curtailment of virtually all his activities, save some small scale experimental work on Tatoka Island.

After the second world war, Japan faced enormous upheavals in all aspects of life. One of the few Japanese institutions to remain unaltered was Mikimoto's pearl farm. Post war production was well underway in 1951 with some 65 million oysters in the water, most had been seeded with 3 Mother of Pearl beads, giving a potential yield of some 20 million pearls. Quality control was strict ensuring that only 6% of production reached the customer, the rest being used as a source of calcium phosphate for medicinal use.

Mikimoto died on 21 September 1954 at the age of 96 after a life filled with many experiences and disappointments, but finally with much success. He is truly known as the "Pearl King" or the "Old Man Pearl of the World".

As AOS Editor, I would like to thank Mary and Stephen Aracic once again for allowing us to share their wonderful stories from Lightning Ridge. I look forward to sharing more opal stories from Stephen and Mary in future newsletters!



You'll find more opal stories from Stephen and Mary in these books.

Interesting Facts About Pearls

1. Pearls are the Only Gemstone to Come from a Living Creature

Despite being classified as a gemstone, pearls differ significantly from all others (including sapphires, rubies, emeralds, etc.) due to the fact that they are the only gems to come from a living creature. All other gemstones form in the Earth's crust as magma cools under high pressure.

2. Natural Pearls are One of the World's Rarest Jewels

Here is a statistic worth considering: less than 1 in every 10,000 wild oysters contain pearls. As the popularity of these gems continued to grow in the early part of the 20th century, the population of occurring oyster beds in the ocean's waters became severely depleted from overfishing. Despite the rise of cultured pearls, the population of wild oysters still hasn't completely recovered. Given that, it's understandable why people consider natural pearls one of the rarest jewels on the planet.

3. An Estimated 99% of Pearls on the Market Today are Cultured

When Kokichi Mikimoto created the first cultured pearl, it marked the beginning of a trend that would change the pearl industry forever. Today, nearly all of these jewels on the market are cultured, largely because almost all natural pearls have already been harvested. Even at a farm where they are cared for and protected, not all of the mollusks produce a pearl. Even then, not all of the pearls are of high enough quality to make it to the market.

4. The Land for Cartier's Flagship Store in New York was Bought with a Pearl

On the subject of Cartier, the French design powerhouse is also connected to pearls in another interesting way. When the wife of a railroad magnate fell in love with one of Cartier's pearl necklaces, Pierre Cartier made her an extraordinary offer. He would give her the natural pearl necklace (valued at \$1 million) plus \$100 in exchange for her Italian-Renaissance inspired home on New York City's Fifth Avenue. She agreed, and the rest is history. Cartier transformed the mansion into one of the world's most luxurious retail experiences. Today, Cartier's Fifth Avenue Mansion is the company's largest store in the world.

Source: <https://www.thepearlsource.com>

~ Bench Tips ~

This page will be dedicated to bench tips and techniques from our readers. If you have bench tips you'd like to share, let us know! Bench tips can be anything - metal work, lapidary, wirework - anything creative that you would like to share. Send your tips to: aos.editor.02@gmail.com

FANCY RIVET HEADS

by Brad Smith

Brass escutcheon pins are an easy way to add a nice look to your next riveting project. The pins have perfectly rounded heads so all will be the same size and shape. They can be used for fastening several pieces together or just used to provide accents and added detail on a piece.



The pins can be a little hard to find, so try the best hardware stores first. Be sure to get solid brass pins, not brass plated steel. If unsure, test them with a magnet. They are easy to find online. Just do a Google search on "brass escutcheon pin".

For best results, select a drill that gives you a hole with a close fit to the rivet. Trim the rivet to a leave a little less than one diameter sticking out the back side. Place the head on a scrap of hard plastic on the anvil so as to not flatten the head. I prefer a ball peen hammer (with a small 3/8 inch ball) for setting the rivet.



Smart Solutions for Your Jewelry Making Problems
[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Reader: If your organization has an opal or rockhound-related event, please email particulars to info@opalsociety.org. Upcoming Event listings will be included at the discretion of The Opal Express editor as space and scheduling permit.

January 21-22, 2023 – Exeter, CA

Tule Gem and Mineral Society
Exeter Memorial Building, 324 North Kaweah Ave., Exeter, CA 93221
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Tule Gem and Mineral Society Gemshow
Contact: (559) 799-6034, margaretbu03@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.tulegem.com>

February 18-19, 2023 – Antioch, CA 94509

Antioch Lapidary Club
Contra Costa County Fairgrounds, 1201 West 10th St. Antioch, CA 94509
Hours: 10 AM to 5 PM Saturday and Sunday
Jewelry, Gems, Findings, Supplies, Auction, Grab Bags, Exhibits and hands on projects for kids
Contact: (925) 301-6957, edysnyder@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.antiochlapidaryclub.com>

February 25-26, 2023 – Vallejo, CA

Vallejo Gem and Mineral Society
Solano County Fairgrounds, McCormack Hall, 900 Fairgrounds Drive, Vallejo, CA 94589
Hours: 10 AM-5 PM
Gems, geodes, fossils, beads and minerals from around the globe. Discover lapidary and stone crafts from vendors and live demonstrations. Something for everyone! Silent auction, geode cuttings, and games of chance and discovery for kids!
Contact: (415) 254-1506, ddahonvgms@gmail.com
Website: <http://vjgems.co/>

March 4-5, 2023 – Ventura, CA

Ventura Gem & Mineral Society
Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd., Ventura, CA 93001
Hours: Saturday 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
50 exhibits of gems, minerals, fossils and lapidary arts; ongoing demos of lapidary and jewelry making; raffle prizes & silent auctions; a Second-Hand Treasures Store & plant sale; 15 dealers; children's activities and free resources for teachers. A SoCal tradition for 6 decades and counting!
Contact: (805) 312-8467, info@vgms.org
Website: <http://www.vgms.org>

March 3, 4 & 5, 2023, Newark, CA

Mineral and Gem Society of Castro Valley
Newark Pavilion, 6430 Thornton Ave., Newark, CA
Times: Friday and Saturday, 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
MGSCV Annual Show. 40+ dealers, display cases, demonstrations, door prizes. Sunday auction of donated items from society members. Fluorescent displays and dealers. Free parking.
Contact: Showchair@mgscv.org
Website: <http://MGSCV.org>

March 10-12, 2023 – Stoddard Wells

Victor Valley Gem and Mineral Club
47th Annual Stoddard Wells Rockhound Tailgate
Time: Friday, Saturday & Sunday – 9 AM – 5 PM
Come visit us and our vendors for Handcrafted and Faceted Jewelry, Slabs and Cabs, Findings, and Equipment, Minerals and Fossils. TONS of Rough Material and More
Contact: (909) 657-7200, markklantz53@gmail.com
Club Address: 15056B Seventh St., Victorville, CA 92395
Phone: (760) 243-2330 and leave a message. Email: president@vvgmc.org
Website: <http://vvgmc.org>
[Tailgate-2023-Info.jpg](#)

March 11-12, 2023 -Turlock, CA

Mother Lode Mineral Society
Stanislaus County Fairgrounds, 900 N. Broadway, Turlock, CA
Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
Admission: Adults \$8, 12 & under free w/paid adult
Parking: Free
Activities: Jewelry, Beads, Tools, Educational Exhibits, Demonstrations, Fossil Exhibit, Sharks, Fluorescent room, Speakers, Geode Cutting, Dinosaur Walk-about, Gold Panning, Gem & Mineral Identification. Chat with Paleontologist Neal Larson, Large Fluorescent Room, Kids Activities, Rock Sale – old collections, Earth Science Tables, Food Court, Gemstone & Fossil Dig bags, Raffle, 45 Dealers
Website: <http://www.turlockgemshow.com> or <http://www.motherlodemineralsociety.com>

March 18-19, 2023 – Lemoore, CA

Lemoore Gem & Mineral Club
Trinity Hall, 470 Champion St., Lemoore, CA
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Featuring gems and minerals from around the world! Fossils, Jewelry, Beads, Stone Carvings, Lapidary Rough, Geode Cutting, and Artesian Jewelry.
Website: <https://facebook.com/AndLemoore>

March 18-19, 2023 – San Jose, CA

Santa Clara Valley Gem & Mineral Society
Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, 344 Tully Rd, San Jose, CA 95111
Hours: Saturday & Sunday 10 AM-5 PM
Fun for children of all ages. Free Parking.
Active Duty, Retired Military, Their Dependents & First Responders
Free with Valid Military ID or First Responder ID

March 24-26, 2023 – Clovis, CA

Fresno Gem and Mineral Society
The Clovis Rodeo Grounds, 748 Rodeo Dr., Clovis, CA 93612
Hours: Friday & Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Central Valley Gem and Mineral Show: Showing Crystals, Gems, Jewelry, Minerals and Fossils. There will be Silent Auctions and Door Prizes. Free Parking and Free Admission
Website: <https://www.fgms.online>

March 25-26, 2023 – Angeles Camp, CA

Calaveras Gem and Mineral Show
Calaveras County Fairgrounds, 2465 Gun Club Road, Angeles Camp, CA 95222
Contact: clairemathison1@gmail.com
Website: <https://calaverasgemandmineral.net/>



Be sure to visit your local gem and mineral shows. It's a great way to learn about these natural wonders and meet other people who have a passion for this fascinating hobby.

American Opal Society Membership Application

FILL IN APPLICABLE INFORMATION		DUES / FEES	AMOUNT PAID
DUES:	RENEWING MEMBERS	\$35.00	
SELECT ONE	NEW MEMBERS	\$45.00	
INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP FEE (All addresses <u>outside</u> of USA)		\$15.00	
PRINTED NEWSLETTER FEE (Paper copy postal mailed instead of PDF file by e-mail)		\$10.00	
ADDITIONAL BADGES (Your first badge is <u>free</u> when joining)		\$15.00	
TOTAL PAID DUES plus International, Print or Badge Fees if Applicable:			

Please make check or money order payable to "American Opal Society". Mail payment and application to:

American Opal Society: PO Box 4875, Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875

An optional quicker method of payment is via the internet. To pay via PayPal, please visit the membership page on our website at http://opalsociety.org/aos_application_by_web.htm to complete the form and make your PayPal payment. You may pay with a credit card or via PayPal account. The transaction is completely secure and the AOS never sees your credit card number. The AOS PayPal account is membership@opalsociety.org.

NAME	
BUSINESS NAME	
ADDRESS	APT # or PO BOX
CITY	STATE
ZIP OR POSTAL CODE	COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE USA)
PHONE - Home ()	PHONE - Business ()
E-MAIL	
WEBSITE	
OCCUPATION	HOBBIES and INTERESTS

NAME BADGE ORDER FORM:

PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WISH IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE using up to two (2) lines of text for your name, nickname, or name of your opal related business.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER: The AOS publishes a membership roster once per year in its newsletter, The Opal Express. Your name will be included. Please check what additional personal information you listed for other members. If it is different from the information above, please note that on the application.

☐ Address ☐ Phone-landline ☐ Phone-cell ☐ E-mail ☐ Website

Please sign here: _____

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Are Your Dues Due Now?

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL OR NEWSLETTER E-MAIL.

There will be a date that shows the current month/year of your membership. If the date is older than the current date, your dues are overdue.

A Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. Please note, that as the system is set up, if your renewal is not received you will be AUTOMATICALLY dropped from membership thereafter. It is your responsibility to assure your dues are current.

Thank you.

The Editor

(revised 11/27/19)

The Opal Express

American Opal Society
P.O. Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875

Volume 55, Issue 12

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

3rd Thursday of the Month
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Anaheim Community Center
250 E. Center Street
Anaheim, CA 92805



TO:

Meeting
December 15th at 7 p.m.
Anaheim Community Center



General Meeting Location at:

[Anaheim Downtown Community Center](#)

250 E. Center Street
Anaheim, CA 92805

**Next meeting will be Thursday, December 15th, at
7:00 p.m. at the Anaheim Downtown Community Center**

American Opal Society

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Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/opalsociety>
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqVRfyUA?view_as=subscriber

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