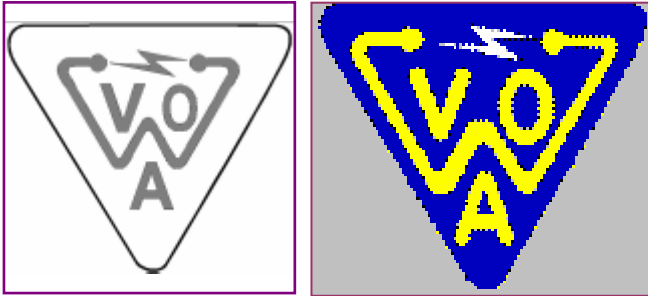


# VWOA NEWSLETTER

Email Issue #30

2007



## Apology to the Membership !

Sorry it took so long to come out with Email Newsletter #30. Former VWOA Vice President Miles MacMahon and your Newsletter Editor have been devoting most of our waking hours during the last four months to the effort of building a Registry of Radio Officers lost during World War II. Little else was accomplished during this extended period. We have recently turned over the Prototype Presentation to our VWOA 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Douglas Stivison. The Database contains 226 documented lost Radio Officers with details of their ships and circumstances of loss of life.

We hope that Web Master Douglas Stivison will be able to find time to publish this Registry on the VWOA Web Site in the coming months.

I reported these efforts in the Chairman Report of the 2007 VWOA Year Book previously distributed to the VWOA Membership.

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual Awards Luncheon took place at the Seamen's Church Institute Top Deck on June 16, 2007. Our Year Book presented the backgrounds of the two recipients of the **VWOA Historic Preservation Award Plaque.**

Presentations by William H. Terbo of the Tesla Memorial Society, Inc. and Joseph R. Kinney of the New Yorker Hotel were well received.

Photographs provided by VWOA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Richard Kenney are as follows:



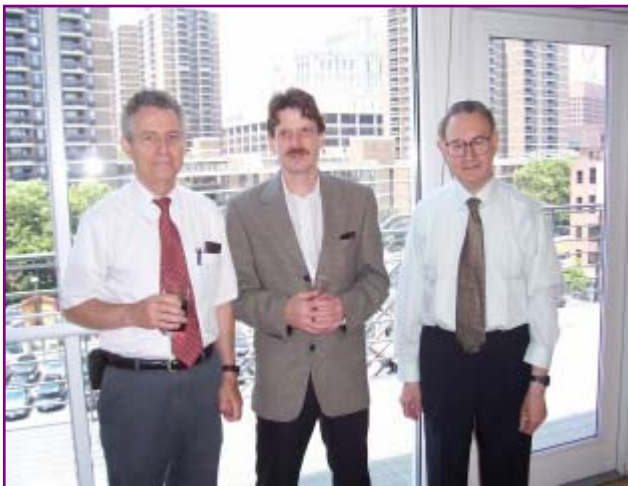
Left to Right: VWOA 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Douglas Stivison; William Terbo, Tesla Memorial Society; VWOA President Alan Ehrlich; Herman Arond, Snug Harbor Resident and former VWOA Treasurer; and VWOA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Richard Kenney.



*Mary Ann Marzen and VWOA Director Herbert Holzberg*



*VWOA Veteran Member Diana Mackay Eigen & Liv R. Aune*



*VWOA Director John Mc Gonigle; Member Eli Morawiec and VWOA President Alan Ehrlich*



*Rick Kenney; Capt Olav Aune & Liv R. Aune*



*Valentina Siderenko & Director John Chooljian*



*2007 Award recipient Joseph R. Kinney displays Memorabilia from the Hotel*



*Wendell R. Benson, Membership Secretary receives the David Kintzer Memorial Plaque from VWOA President Alan Ehrlich.*

Incidentally many years ago I submitted an article which was published in the Hoffman Island newsletter.

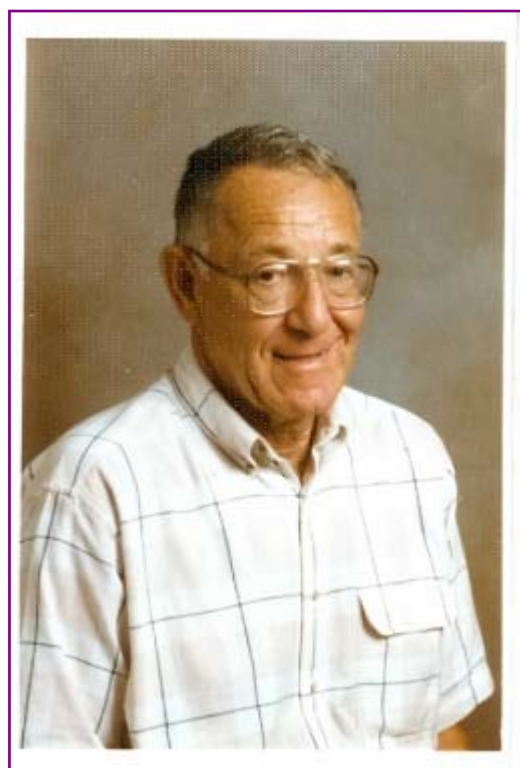
It was an interesting story of my last voyage where Murphy's Law prevailed throughout a 78 day voyage to West Africa. If you think it is worth repeating for the VWOA newsletter, I can forward a copy to you. It is four pages long, titled "The Jinx".

> 73s--Cy

Our featured story for this Newsletter comes from a VWOA Member who has successfully recovered from a stay in the hospital where he had a Heart operation this past January and February.

We last heard from Cy S. Brill in March of 2007. He had just finished reading a copy of latest VWOA Email issue of the Newsletter. I always enjoy exchanging sea stories especially with the "new group" of youngsters with 6 month endorsements that came after WW2. I managed to meet up with some of them at WSL especially Jim Friel, a damn good operator. If the new crop of operators were like him then they got my respect and admiration for taking us out of the vacuum tube era into digital and earning some respect aboard their ships thereby enhancing further respect for our profession.

## The Jinx by Cy S. Brill



*Author Cy S. Brill 2007*

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For generations, we who go down to the sea in ships, have been accused of being a very superstitious lot. Even the weekend warriors who pilot their own sailboats or fishing boats will agree. After all, when it boils down to you, your ship and Mother Nature, and you are a thousand miles from nowhere, you just have to expect Murphy's Law to prevail. That is, if something is going to go wrong, it will for it is so ordained. So why tempt fate?

Now in my book, there are three rules to be followed with no expectations. To ignore them is to invite almost certain disaster. First, never take a North Atlantic voyage in the winter. To do so subjects you to the worst elements that Mother Nature could provide. That is constant 30 foot waves and swells, sleet, snow, strong freezing winds and continuous radar observance of floating icebergs. Oh yes, half the crew, including the untouchable officers are seasick regardless of how much sea legs they have acquired over the years. Second, never take a ship just out of lay-up. Everything is either missing or in disrepair. And third, never take a pier-head jump. That is, don't have them pull up the gangway soon after you have just come aboard. If so, you will find, only too late, that you are at sea and half your gear is inoperative with no spare parts or publications on board.

Well, I was starting to enjoy a happy life of semi retirement after 31 years at ITT World Communications and a return to sea duty when

this new ship assignment came up that seemed too good to pass up. The good ship SS Del Monte, due to set sail out of New Orleans bound for West Africa and in need of a Chief Radio Officer sounded ideal. I was assured that the radio shack was equipped with all the latest electronic equipment. This would include Single Side-Band phone, Fax, Teleprinter, VHF, Satcom, Sitor (Satellite teletype over radio), along with the normal high and low frequency transmitters, receivers and auto alarm. The weather, aside from the constant hurricane formations should be ideal. Also the ports along the West African coast should be so exotic and unexplored. All my doubts were now forgotten. I was hooked.

Well, you guessed it. I should have followed my instincts. Actually the ship had just come out of a six month lay-up. The boilers had not yet been fired up. Half my gear was either missing or inoperative. Spare parts were scattered all over and the necessary publications and schedules were all missing. And, of course, sailing time was posted for Six AM the following day. So go ahead, call me superstitious but all signs pointed to it. This trip was going to be a bummer.

The ship's complement was 34 officers and crew. All, with the exception of yours truly were loyal sons of the deep south. With their heavy bayous accents, they had no trouble understanding each other, but they could not understand me at all. Despite my clearly

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legible New York accent, they said, “Sparks, you talk funny”.

We also carried four passengers and two Cadets from the Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point. These Cadets, being a minority from the north and sadly lacking in “southern style” humility, suddenly found themselves sailing under the “Confederate Flag”.

Depending on their study course, these cadets were required to serve actual sea time aboard either Deck or Engine on a merchant ship under the guidance of the officer on duty. These cadets are usually very bright and are highly recommended before even being admitted to the academy, but hey, didn't I predict a bummer of a voyage? The engine cadet's greatest contribution to knowledge was “huh” and the Chief Engineer was moved to remark, “Now I'm not prejudiced, mind you, but that cadet is the stupidest minority I've ever seen. On the other hand, the deck cadet was just too smart. He knew everything, couldn't be taught anything and had an answer for everything. The Captain gave orders to keep that boy out of his sight.

Our ports of call were Monrovia (Liberia), Abidjan (Ivory Coast), Lagos (Nigeria), Lome (Togo), and Takoradi (Ghana). Sounds exotic, doesn't it? Well, each port was worse than the previous one. Everywhere you saw nothing but abject poverty, corruption and complete lack of law and order. Many of the 100 pound

bags of rice unloaded at Monrovia were pierced by the loaders and the spillage scooped up by the natives. Due to a lack of fuel ashore, power was shut off at dusk which caused work stoppage due to a blackout. Crime was rampant. The military and other officials were always demanding cigarettes and dinner invitations to the Officers Mess. And Monrovia is one of the more advanced cities on the West African coast, having benefited from the Firestone rubber plantation holdings for many years.

At sea, our work problems mushroomed. Both my radars were continually breaking down. My new satellite unit lost its phone output and no spare circuits on board. Message traffic (via Morse telegraphy) was unusually heavy from many shore stations including Europe and the States. All the local shore stations along the African Coast were either unmanned or just shut down. Fortunately, I was able to work Miami and New Orleans via radiophone in spite of intermittent breakdowns and lack of spare parts.

The engineers had their hands full with breakdowns of ice machine, washer, dryer, air conditioner and boilers. The Chief Cook came down with a badly gashed finger. The lady passenger fell and twisted her ankle. The 3rd Mate came down with Malaria.

Murphy's Law still working, right? Well that was just for starters.....

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The day before our arrival at Lagos, Nigeria, I intercepted a report from a Norwegian ship which had just left Lagos. "When we anchored at Lagos Roads during the night, we were robbed by ten black men with guns and knives. We lost everything of value and all money, but nobody was hurt so we are happy that is over. They did the same thing to another ship where the Captain fired his 38 and they returned fire with automatic weapons, shot the Captain in the eye and raped his wife".

I immediately passed this report to my Captain who filed notice via radiophone with the American Embassy and our home office of Delta in New Orleans for protection. When we arrived at the pilot station in Lagos at 2 AM we had firearms and hoses ready along with lights over the side. In addition the Captain would not drop anchor, but instead proceeded in circles until 6 AM when the Pilot came aboard to guide us to the dock.

While docked at Lagos, we were all advised not to go ashore as no one could guarantee our safety. This did not bother our knowledgeable Deck Cadet who returned to the ship one morning after a night with some "Lady of the Evening". He was escorted by two armed police who explained to the Captain that not only did he inflict some personal bodily injury by "beating on her bones" but, mother of all sins, he had attempted to leave without any financial compensation for services rendered. They were demanding \$100 plus two cartons

for each of them and an invitation to dinner in the Officer's Mess. The Captain was so furious that I thought he would toss the cadet over the side or at least confine him to quarters for the balance of the trip.

From then on things went from bad to worse. Two of our seamen were mugged and beaten right outside the gates. The unloading of cargo was delayed due to a lack of shore side power. More pilferage and more walk-outs by the longshoremen. We finally managed to completely unload one hatch and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate prepared to climb down for inspection. He got no further than the top rung of the ladder which came off in his hand down he plunged four stories to the bottom. We hauled him up with compound fracture of the ankles, wrist, hip, spine and skull; more dead than alive. It was impossible to get an ambulance or any medical assistance no matter how much dollars the Captain offered. Finally, with the help of the U.S. Consul we got him to a dispensary where one of our crewmen volunteered to stay with him overnight and tend to his needs.

He was then flown to an Orthopedic Hospital in New York where, somehow after many operations, he managed to survive. Meantime a relief 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate who had been flown from New Orleans to Ghana was robbed there at the airport and finally made it with a broken down cab to the ship after ten hours, missing most of his luggage and almost completely

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dehydrated. He gasped for water after which we assisted him up the gangway.

Well, Takoradi, Ghana was our last port and surely things were going to improve. They certainly couldn't get worse, could they? Little did I know that the JINX was still riding with us and MURPHY'S LAW was still in effect.

Because our cargo for this port was soya wheat in 100 pound burlap bags we were besieged by hundreds of starving natives each day. They would arrive about 7 AM and just sit there on the dock awaiting spillage from the punctured bags. This would be scooped up along with whatever dirt and grease from the dock and his would mix with water to make a paste. This would be their meal for the day. This is if they could get fresh water. Pilferage along with ambushed truck loads of additional bags came to about a thousand bags. When the Captain objected and hired local armed guards with rifles at the gangway, all the workers just quit and walked off the ship. Their pay incidentally averaged about 50 cents and hour. Later, along with the starving natives on the dock, they all rioted and stormed all over the ship robbing and looting. The even dug into the garbage cans which had been festering under the hot sun all day. The Captain and armed guards were firing at will along with hoses to wash them overboard.

The final indignity came when home bound, two days out of Ghana, our crew came upon a

stowaway in one of the containers. He had been hiding there for about three days without any toilet facilities, food or water. He was now the ship's responsibility to house and feed until we arrived stateside at which time we would be facing a heavy fine for harboring a stowaway. I would venture to guess this was the best food and lodging this stowaway had ever had in his lifetime and a free ride to boot.



*Radio Officer Cy S. Brill 1945*

The voyage lasted 78 days. Each passenger had paid about 1500 dollars for the voyage regardless of how many days were involved and they disembarked with fond memories of an exciting voyage. When signing off in New Orleans, the Captain asked me to stay on for another voyage. An offer of this kind is always interpreted as an acknowledgement of a job

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well done. This bothered me. “Captain, I’ve enjoyed sailing with you but I should never have made this trip in the first place. The ship was just out of a long lay-up and worse still, a pier head jump. I’ve been a JINX”.

I must have touched a nerve with that magic word. Suddenly he was no longer that affable, congenial southern gentleman. His face turned livid. His eyes bulged. He banged his fist on the desk. And now he was shouting.....

“JINX, JINX, JINX, that’s it... That damned Deck Cadet...HE NEVER PAID THE WHORE”

## THE END

### VWOA MEMBER NEWS

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We at VWOA want to thank you for your favorable responses to your VWOA Email Newsletter.

We can only continue this form of Celebrating the Past if all of our VWOA Members make known some of their personal special events that contributed to their career in Wireless.

We want to hear from YOU. Dig into your memories and share them with the rest of your VWOA Members.

Dixon Greenwood KA8RAM reports:

Just wanted you to know that Maritime Day was a disaster for me. I only worked WW5SUB. Never had such a fast fade - like riding a roller coaster. A beam would be better than a gnd mtd vert and running 100 w. I have wkd abt 268 countries much of it with an attic dipole at 15' - can't complain. Keep warm and dry, It is COLD and damp here, No rain or snow. Keep up the good work. 73 Dick

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VWOA published the following story in Email Newsletter #14 in March of 2006:

VWOA Life Member William H. (Bill) Millard learned the Wireless Art while enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and would like to hear from others who started their career in Radio while working on the CCC Projects.

He stated that he felt gifted to learn CW and after 47 years gave up his license last month.

### MY1997 BIOGRAPHY

As written for Edwin F. Pleuler Jr., former Secretary of the VWOA  
By William H. Millard W4PBN

Here is one of the responses received recently by our Membership Secretary, Wendell R. Benson.

The URL referenced by Jim Farris is his Web Site. It’s very informative and in his

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generosity, [Jim Farris W4FOK](#) allows you to download a number of Books that he has Authored, over the years.

sent: Saturday, April 21, 2007 12:15 PM  
subject: Response to request by William H. Millard

Wendell, Thanks for your e-mails. I will send in my application for membership in VWOA. 73, Jim

This message is also  
Sent by U.S. Mail to:

[William \(Bill\) H. Millard W4PBN](#)

Apr. 21 2007

Dear Bill,

I hope that this letter reaches you and finds you doing well.

In a recent issue of the VWOA bulletin, I read with interest your account of your experiences as a radio telegrapher. It was especially interesting to me to read about your having had your original experience as a CCC radio operator. I am responding to your request that anyone having CCC radio experience contact you.

I attended the code school at Ft. Barrancas, Florida, in mid 1937, and after serving as a CCC radio operator at Morton, Mississippi, and

Greenville, Ala., I was selected in Feb. 1938 to be the Chief NCS Operator at WUGA, the CCC District "H" CCC Headquarters, Ft. Benning, Ga.

In order to gain additional high school credits, I left the CCC in late 1938, but returned and served 1939/40 as Chief Net Control Operator at WUMA/WUNA, the CCC District "D" CCC Headquarters, Ft. McClellan, Ala. I had to leave the CCC because I had served for 24 months, the maximum allowable time. I returned to high school and obtained my diploma.

During 1940/41, I served as a civil service radio telegraph operator at WVR, the 4th Corps area NCS at Ft. McPherson, Ga.

In Mid 1941, before the U.S. entered the war, I joined the British Civilian Technical Corps, which permitted Americans to remain civilians but to wear the RAF uniform and work in the early warning Radar System (Chain Home) that surrounded the British Isles. While there, I was primarily a technician, but I also had radio telegraphy experience in the radio net that transmitted aircraft plots to the central plotting station.

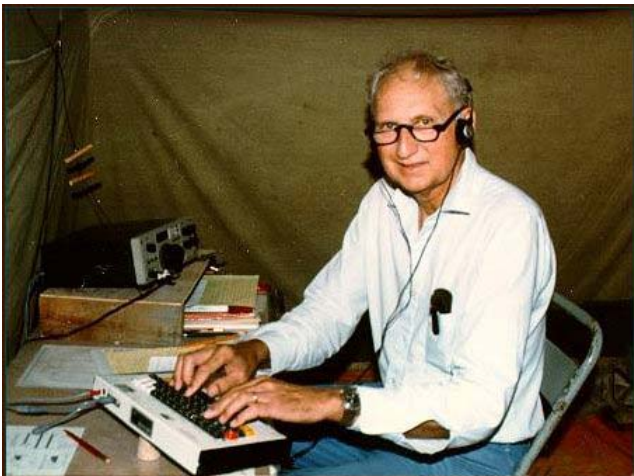
I left the CTC in mid 1943, and in London joined the U.S. Maritime Service, and sailed as Chief Radio Officer aboard Liberty Ships. During the time I was at sea, I served in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean, and the North and South Pacific War Theaters. I left the Maritime service in December, 1945.

Upon returning home, I entered Auburn U., and afterward had an Aerospace career that ended with my retirement in 1980. I have had the same call, W4FOK, since 1938 and have operated only CW. I am also an American Morse operator and have written a computer program that teaches both American and International Morse. It is named "The Mill", and has been popular around the world for more that 20 years.

I have written a well illustrated book about my CCC experiences, and another one about my WW-II experiences, and they are available as a free download from my Web Site. If you have a computer, and an internet connection, you can download them at:

<http://home.comcast.net/~w4fok/>

73,



Jim Farrior W4FOK

## WENDELL'S NEWS CORNER

Visit: <http://www.qsl.net/n1ea>

This web site had been in trouble for quite awhile but it is again active.

He is well known for his activities in the MV Prinsendam SOS

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Wendell brings to our attention the following poem:

### The Merchant Marine Monument in Battery Park by Gloria Flora Nicolich VWOA Member

LOOK!

There's an interesting monument.  
What's that all about?

Well!

A man fell into the water,  
Some men are pulling him out.

OH!

Go on to another tourist sight.  
Lots to see before tonight.

STOP!

Not just a monument, much more.  
A tribute to unknown heroes  
Whose lifeboat never reached the shore.

WAIT!

Look once more and you may see  
Valiant heroes of the sea

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Who, when their long ordeal was done  
Remained unheard of and unsung.

SALUTE the men of the Merchant Marine  
Seamen strong and true.  
In War and Peace for 300 years  
They brought the cargo through.

HONOR the men of the Merchant Marine  
Too long discounted and demeaned  
The time has come to pay our debt.

RECOGNITION, REMEMBRANCE AND RESPECT!  
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From one of our Coast Guard readers  
of our VWOA Email Issues:

Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2007 8:41 AM  
Subject: Coast Guard Vietnam Veteran-The Wall

November 11, 2007 will mark the 25th  
Anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam  
Veteran's Memorial.

In 1982 some dozen Coast Guard veterans  
attended. Twenty years later only two  
recognizable veterans attended for that  
milestone.

The purpose of this notification is two fold.  
The first is to ask as many people as possible  
make the trip to Washington this year to  
highlight the Coast Guard's participation in that  
conflict. This may be the last grand occasion  
for some. We have already lost many of those  
small numbers who served in that conflict.

The following is from the parade's organizers:  
[http://www.vva.org/25thEvent/event\\_info.htm](http://www.vva.org/25thEvent/event_info.htm)

THE SCHEDULE:

NOVEMBER 10, 2007

The Opening Ceremony on the Mall  
10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m

The opening ceremony will start at 10:00 a.m.  
and will take place on the Mall at 3rd Street,  
between Jefferson and Madison Drives.

The Parade

11:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Immediately following the opening ceremony,  
the parade with thousands of participants,  
military vehicles, floats, veteran motorcyclists,  
and marching bands steps off. Along side the  
reviewing stand will be limited bleacher seating  
for those veterans and members of the  
general public who wish to view the parade.

Washington Monument Grounds

12 noon until 6:00 p.m.

Parade participants and the general public can  
enjoy a variety of activities and street vendors.

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A notice from VWOA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Richard  
Kenney:

GENTLEMEN OF THE VETERANS WIRELESS  
OPERATORS ASSOCIATION:

For your information, opening on Thursday,  
November 15th 2007, the New York Council of  
the Navy League will co-sponsor an exhibition  
of photos and artifacts (hopefully to include at  
least one scale model of a participating

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battleship) of the voyage of the Great White Fleet, to commemorate the Centennial Anniversary of the historic journey. The exhibition take place at the Ukrainian Institute of America, 2 East 79th Street, just a short distance down Fifth Avenue from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A symposium on the significance of the sailing is tentatively scheduled for Friday, November 16th, with participation from the Naval Historical Center and Naval War College, among others. The exhibition will run through November 24th. The public is invited.

RICK KENNEY, Executive Director  
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Or

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