

those decisions. They knew that I was interested in the business but never had the money to buy into it. So they made the business available to me at a very reasonable price, far below what the market value was. I gained ownership in 1981 and became president of the business.

"Peter Loft and his brother were very kind to me — I guess because I had worked hard and been honest and done a good job of running the business for them for 10 years," Don adds.

With two sons currently in college, Don will continue to work at Kellogg. He is, however, looking toward the future. "Right now there's no indication that either of the boys has an interest in coming into the business," he says. "I certainly would like to find a younger person to take under my wing and maybe give them the opportunity that I was given as a young man."

Readers of THE GRASS ROOTS are most familiar with the turfgrass seed and lawn and garden division at Kellogg Seeds & Supplies. But they do an equal amount of business with their wild bird seed and cage bird seed. "The pet division has always been a very steady part of the business while the other is very seasonal," Don points out.

At Kellogg they don't produce turfgrass seed — they formulate and mix it. Some is put in bags with the Kellogg label, and some is custom mixed and packaged. "When a golf course superintendent calls up and says he needs a certain mix for fairways or tees, we can put it together for him," Don explains.

"When we were owned by Lofts, we sold their varieties and their seed," he continues. "Once that relationship ended, we became an independent seed company. We still represent Lofts, but we also represent approximately six other major seed companies, so we can give customers a nice mixture of various proprietary seeds. No one else in the state is really in the position to do that."

In turfgrass, the company deals mainly with sod growers, golf courses, landscapers, lawn maintenance people, municipalities and cemeteries. "We had one professional salesman in this area, Egon Herrmann, for 25 years," Don points out. "He retired at the end of December. We will

miss him. He certainly had contact with the golf course people." Egon was nearly 70 years old when he retired.

Jay Hager, who has been with the company for 28 years, replaced Egon in turfgrass seed sales. He previously worked in the retail lawn and garden end of the business.

With their lawn and garden line, Kellogg sells regionally, mainly to retail lawn and garden centers, some nurseries and some chain stores. The wild bird seed is also sold regionally to specialty wild bird stores and to the nursery and garden centers that purchase their lawn and garden products.

The cage bird seed is sold nationally through 70 distributors around the U.S. "We also do a little exporting," Don adds. The seed is sold to independent pet stores and to pet store chains.

The company is still located in the same building in which the Kellogg family started the business back in 1918. "The building was initially built in the 1890's, and it really meets our needs quite satisfactorily because we can flow everything gravity wise, which allows us to be quite efficient," Don explains.

The downtown Milwaukee location was once home to four seed companies — Tewles, Cortein, North Coast and Kellogg. "We were all within a four-block area. However, we are the only surviving company today," Don points out.

Don believes that his greatest career challenge came early in the game, when he first started at Kellogg Seeds & Supplies. "The two older gentlemen who were running the business didn't have financial backgrounds, so the company was in somewhat of a disarray," he recalls. "I was fortunate that the board brought in a consultant who I learned a great deal from. We changed the way the company did all of its business internally. That was a tremendous challenge at that time."


"I remember the consultant always saying, 'How can you beat this? You're getting a masters degree in business and getting paid for it, besides.' And he was right," Don adds.

The climate for small businesses has changed greatly. "It's certainly much more difficult than it was when I began 32 years ago — or even 20

or 10 years ago," Don relates. "We've seen a tremendous change in government regulations, registrations, and increased competition. But you just have to keep going forward and plugging away and doing your thing as best as you can."

Another challenge for Don came when he joined the board of directors of the O.J. Noer Research Foundation in 1988. "I could see that nobody on the board had a financial background," he remembers. "Research grants were getting higher and their corpus was actually getting smaller. The end result was that some changes had to be made, and I got directly involved with that."

(Continued on page 13)



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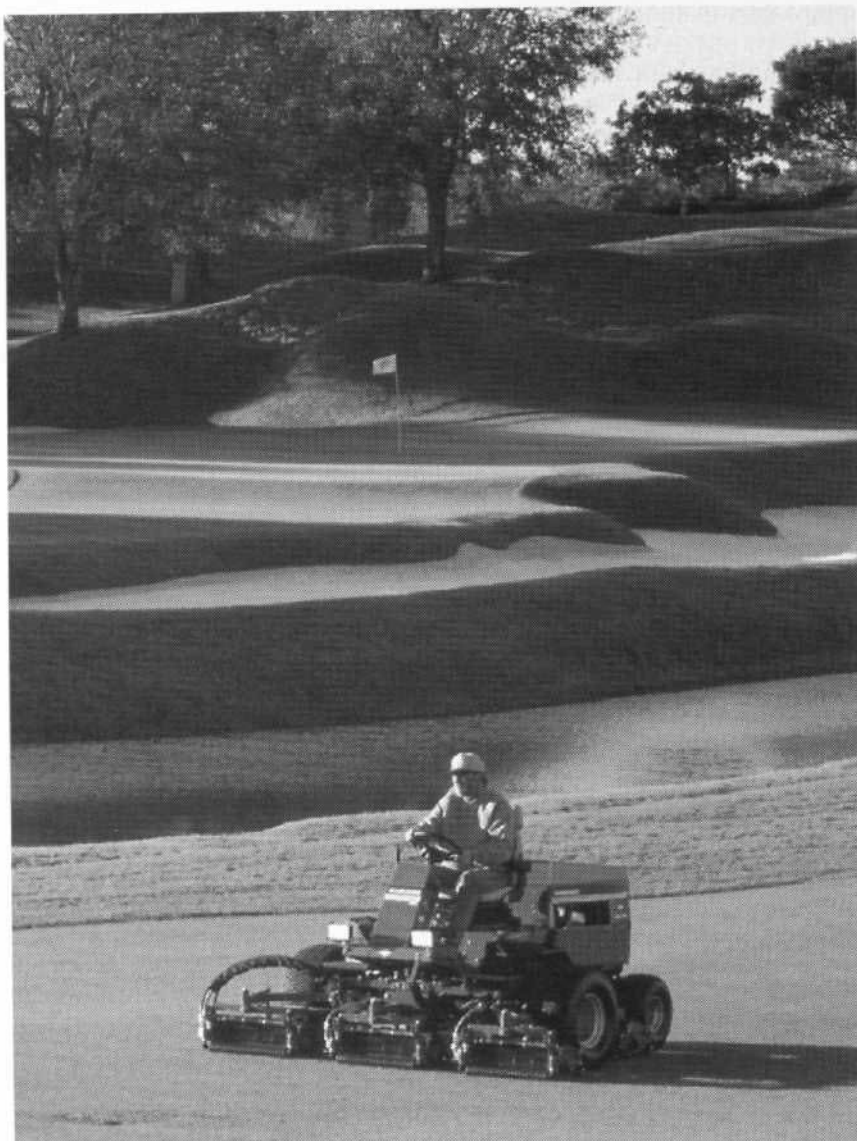
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(Continued from page 11)

"At the time, they had their corpus invested with a bank which had many different officers and had changed management people many times. It was floundering. No one was looking after it," he continues. "So I got some new investment managers involved. They have really taken the corpus and grown it."

At the same time, other board members concentrated on raising more money through different means. "We've grown the corpus now to well past \$400,000, and we're paying out much more for research than we ever had. I'm very proud of that," Don says. Today he serves as treasurer of the O. J. Noer Research Foundation.

Don also has been involved with bird organizations. "I was on the board and served for two years as president of the Wild Bird Feeding Institute," he points out. "I also was on the board of the National Cage Bird Show for many years, and I felt good about changing some things

and watching the national show grow."

He explains that the National Cage Bird Show is kind of like the Oscars for birds. "It draws the best breeders from all over the U.S., Canada, and other countries," he says. "The birds are judged and can win a Kellogg trophy which was started way back at the initiation of this organization. We give out 13 specific trophies. To win one is the ultimate honor that a breeder can achieve."

In the Milwaukee area, Don has served on the Kiwanis board and he was the recipient of their public service award. Currently he's on the Kiwanis Priority One committee, which is youth oriented. He's also worked as a Boy Scout leader at the Gaenslen School for the handicapped, an inner-city school supported by the Kiwanis.

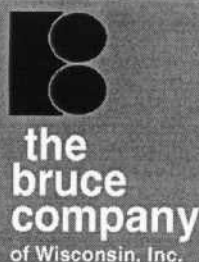
Don and his wife, Carol, live in Brookfield. Carol is a graduate of the UW-Milwaukee and a part-time medical technologist. They have two sons

— Eric, 20, a student at UW-Stout; and Andrew, 18, a student at the University of Minnesota.

"I've always been a sports fan," he relates, "and I've always had an interest in golf. Although, with our business, we're busiest when the golf season is going strong. So it's hard to be able to play as much golf as I would like to."

"I try to get to the superintendent golf outings," Don continues. "That's always been real enjoyable for me because I get to play some of the different courses around the state. I don't do very well anymore, but I have fun."

"I think we're very fortunate in Wisconsin to have beautiful courses, both old and new," Don says. "The new golf courses being built today are so picturesque, incorporating nature and water and tress. To me it's absolutely exciting. I enjoy just walking around a golf course. I enjoy walking even more than the way I play golf!" 🌿



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Fresh Season, Realistic Attitude

By Pat Norton

So you say that another great golf season is almost upon us, eh??? So you say, at least publicly, that you're all fired up for another great golf season to begin???

So, you say that you're kind of tired of being cooped up on your cozy little golf course shop... working those normal 7-8 hour days that others in the modern workplace take for granted... with each and every weekend 'OFF'... as opposed to being locked into the 'ON' position for the other three seasons of the year???

Feeling a little guilty, I suppose, that you're still getting that bi-weekly paycheck while expending only a normal amount of daily effort... as opposed to a few short weeks from now when you'll be expected to pitch a tent in your shopyard, then steal a few hours of sleep between irrigation line breaks, projects from last fall... and other items that are filling up your yellow legal pads so quickly that the paper supply is getting critically short!!!

That is what you're all so anxious to get started with, eh sporty boys??? Let's not get too eager, beaver!!!

About the only tough times that we all experience during the restful, normal winters are those occasions when

we happen to encounter a well-meaning member or patron at church, at the grocery store, or at the post office... almost immediately they launch into a series of inane questions about the health of the golf course... as if... the golf course... might not make it through the winter intact!! Give me a dollar for every time a superintendent is asked one of the following three inane questions during the offseason... I'll then pool all of the \$\$\$... and we'll all head down to Mexico for a month and drink Margaritas with Jimmy Buffet... and try to return in time for the start of the season!

Inane Question #1; "Hey, (your name here), How is the golf course surviving the winter and do ya' think we'll have much 'winterkill'???"

Don't you wish that just one time you could say... "The course will be just fine come springtime, please define for me just what 'winterkill' means to you, and next time ask me a different, more intelligent question... and by the way, **GET A LIFE, SPORT...** I'm a lot more wrapped up in that course out there than anybody else around here, and do you see me obsessing about it all of the time???"

Inane Question #2; "Hey, (your name here), What exactly do you do all winter???" And, "Gee whiz, it must be nice to be off all winter"...

So I usually reply with just a hint of sarcasm... "Yea, it's really great getting such a hefty annual salary, and such great benefits, for only 6-7 months of work... heck yea, man, I'm way overpaid... and by the way, fella,... it's none of your damn business as to how I spend my winter work days... let's just say that I like my time off, and my privacy during the winter... so do not ever visit me at the shop... I can just imagine all of the interesting questions that you might have if you ever saw all of that cool golf course equipment... and confidentially, putz, we never have to do anything to this equipment at all... ever, ever... it always works perfectly... park it all in November, dig it out in March, start it all up, and away we go to now your greens and fairways!!!"

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Inane Question #3; "Hey, (your name here), "How much is the senior membership/regular membership/greens fee gonna be for 1997?? Is John gonna have those 'Big Helga' drivers on sale right away in the spring??? How much are the prices of hot dogs, potato chips, and beer gonna be increasing? It is getting a little bit expensive out there, don't you think?"

These questions really make me chuckle... and they're asked of superintendents all too frequently... don't these people realize that we don't know and don't really care about such things... a good reply might be... "We've decided to withhold your member ship for this season, Mr. Dusty Wallet, because you play the hell out of this course, never patronize the golf shop/clubhouse, smuggle your soda pop/bologna sandwich combo into your golf bag every time, and let's face it you have absolutely no intention of buying your 'Big Helga' metal woods, your 'XXX used Club Specials, or anything else here, unless it's an absolute emergency!!!"

As an aside, gentlemen, how many of you distinctly remember growing up golfing with those famous 'Club Specials', made by Acushnet? After a number of years I graduated to using the 'Finalist', then 'Titlist'... nothing but the best for this 'Watson wannabe' golfer... nowadays, I'm back to using 'Whatever's In the Bag XYZ' as my preferred brand... in my case, it definitely makes no difference since I only hit the ball about 150 yards maximum...

The redundant problem, guys, is not really one of... "Hmmm, I wonder which of these wondrous fertilizer of biostimulant products will really transform this place into the course that I'd really drool over."

That stuff is generally the easy part... the tough part of this business is making the a golf course look great with limited labor resources/funds/budget/'dinero'.

It's much more a question of "Hmmm, I really wonder how I'm going to replace all of these key staff members that have A) found themselves a real job with great wages and benefits, or B) decided that upon graduation form college they'd like to pursue a career in their field, or C) simply decided that the total commitment to turfgrass management should end at 3:30 each summer day... "And why didn't they tell us about all those long hours... and weekends... and maybe I'll change my major... and I guess that I'm not really interested in coming back to work here next season... . so don't count on me... for sure, man... OK"??

So, what's left to mull over, debate, and decide on are those late winter/early spring decisions that are part of any golf course superintendents 'rites of spring', namely...

1) How to assemble a great, or at least a somewhat competent, golf course staff... that will hopefully approach the skill level of last year's bunch... before the end of the new season... or before the superintendent has to be committed for psychiatric evaluation!!

2) How to fend off the questionable suppliers that pop up each spring, touting this new 'wonder lube', or that new 'biostimulant'... that's got great testimonials attached from faithful user in Woodchuck, USA... but no research or proof that it'll cure what ails those native soil greens... my personal favorite is the 'humic acid' product that's most certainly going to improve soil tilth... "just try a few cases, and then we'll convince you that you're seeing improved water infiltration and percolation on your greens!!"

3) The next big trick, which is intimately tied to the level of your trained staff people, is... "How to attain the quality

that a guy envisions, while working within the labor budget that the corporation expects will be closely followed." The key here, as we've all probably learned, is to keep a super sharp eye on the budget, limit the OT, and **resist the force, Luke, of your ingrained training from years ago**, and realize that most of the golfers think that this place is really... a pretty darn sweet golf course.

4) A most important factor for golf course types is how to gear up mentally for the long, intense upcoming season... as you may have guessed, I'm having a little trouble as I'm writing this... I foresee a really, really long season with a really, really green golf course crew. Does the training of personnel ever really end?? I don't think so... it's all part of the job, big boy!!

So, what's the magic cure for the mental toughness part of the golf course management game? First of all, drink more beer on the course during the working day.

Then, go up to that really offensive foursome that is slower than molasses, pull their cart keys, and kick them off of 'your course'.

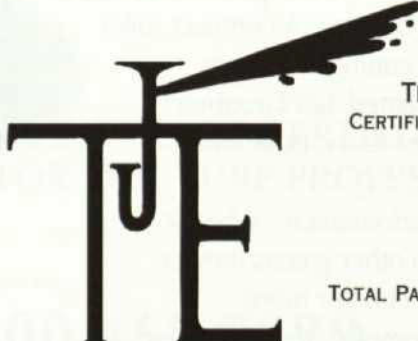
Next, get on the telephone and order, without any approval whatsoever, those 150 trees from McKay Nursery that the place really needs, or that luscious piece of equipment that you've been absolutely lusting over!! Live for the here and now, man!!! Just do it!! Be more assertive!!!

Finally, sit down at your rest and prepare your letter of resignation... you'll soon need it.

And lastly, begin checking out the classified ads in your local newspaper. Pay particular attention to the 'Low Stress Jobs Listings'... they typically pay the best...

Ultimately, as you're all reading this and I'm banging it out on the keyboard there'll be a mental catharsis within each one of us as we realize that our profession may not be as recognized as the medical or law professions, but that it's usually quite enjoyable, satisfying, visual and creative, and almost always demanding.

And given that there are some negatives attached to our line of work, I'll still take it over pretty much anything else in the golf world, and certainly anything else in the green industry. ♣



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MILLETT WINS WATSON FELLOWSHIP; ACCEPTS AWARD AT GCSAA CONFERENCE



Steven M. Millett, a PhD candidate in Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a feature columnist for THE GRASS ROOTS, received a prestigious Watson Fellowship from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. The award was presented to Steve on February 12 at the Friends of The Foundation Reception at the 1997 GCSAA

Conference in Las Vegas.

The fellowship is funded by The Toro Company in honor of its longtime employee, Dr. James Watson. Each award—there were four this year—is for \$5,000.

Applicants for the Watson Fellowship are judged on academic excellence, peer recommendations, communication skills, commitment to a career in turfgrass research and service, accomplishments in education and research, and future potential. Steve is clearly a leader on all counts.

Participating in the award presentation were Dr. Watson, Robert Trent Jones Sr., and Ben Crenshaw. The Watson Fellowship speaks highly of Steve Millett and his bright future in turfgrass management. He is an exceptional young scientist and the WGCSA members have been fortunate to have him in our state. 🌱



Steve Millett accepts congratulations as a Watson recipient from Robert Trent Jones, Sr.

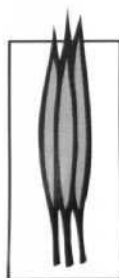
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EXPO is PACKED!

By Tom Schwab, Superintendent
O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility

The Green Bay Packers (America's Team) are back. Everything is Packer this and Packer that, as it should be. Playing with words and keeping in the spirit, I'd also like to say that the 1997 EXPO was PACKED. It has become a huge educational gathering that is one of the biggest and best in the Midwest for turfgrass and landscaping information.

The 14th annual Wisconsin Turfgrass and Greenscape EXPO was held on January 10, 11, and 12 at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Middleton. From the comments I heard it was a resounding success. The ingredients for a favorable conference were all in place. The educational sessions were informative, the trade show was huge, and the camaraderie among friends was particularly pleasant. Even the weather was acceptable, for one day of the show anyway.

The past history of always having bad weather for EXPO didn't slow attendance. There were 382 registered attendees eager to learn more about management of their turf and landscapes. That may have been a record number of registrants. What is certainly a record was the number of exhibit booths in the trade show. Seventy booths were occupied by the vendors which beat the old record, set last year, by nine. Working the booths were 148 knowledgeable sales personnel eager to educate you on all their latest innovations and wares. If the trade show keeps growing like it has been, we may have to move it into the parking lot. These exhibitors give very much support to the turf industry in Wisconsin, so I encourage us to pay them back by purchasing their products throughout the year. They have everything you could ever need for your landscapes and I hope you got to visit with most of them during the show.

The conference started out with an opening session that included a synopsis from the University Turf Research Group. They described the work being done at the Noer Facility and at other sites located throughout the state. After that, many scholarships from the Wisconsin turfgrass industry were presented. These scholarship donors, turf student recipients, and amounts are summarized here:

<u>Donor</u>	<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Amount</u>
AgrEvo	Brad Smith	\$500
AgrEvo	Tara Zabkowitz	\$500
Spring Valley	Sheri Barlow	\$500
Wisconsin Turfgrass Association	Jamie Johnson	\$600
Wisconsin Turfgrass Association	Joel Peterson	\$600
Wisconsin Turfgrass Association	Bill Hart	\$600
Wisconsin Turfgrass Association	Nathan Rohde	\$600

Significant research donations were also presented to the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association at this time. These included:

<u>Donor</u>	<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Reinders/ Bayer Program	WTA	\$500
Reinders/ Daconil Program	WTA	\$6,875
		in 1996
		(Over \$52,000
		in past nine years!)
Spring Valley/Milorganite Program	WTA	\$640
WI Turf Equip./Milorganite Program	WTA	\$780
Horst Distr./Milorganite Program	WTA	\$1,570
Cannon Turf Supply Program	WTA	\$322
WI Sod Producers	WTA	\$875
WI Golf Course Supt. Assoc.	WTA	\$10,000
Northern Great Lakes GCSA	WTA	\$400
Bull's Eye Country Club	WTA	\$1,255
Riverview Country Club	WTA	\$1,000
Steven's Point Country Club	WTA	\$1,245
Westmoor Country Club	WTA	\$2,770
		in 1996
		(\$23,120 in past
		eight years!)



Convention Center

The educational sessions were outstanding this year. The ones I attended were even better than expected, and I expected a great deal. The comments from other attendees were very complimentary of the presentations also. There was a wide range of topics to satisfy all managers of sport-turf, lawn and landscape, and golf environments.

Dr. Wayne Kussow, in a couple of outstanding presentations, provided his findings on managing the nutrition within the turf plant. He also had precise research information on root zones, isolated dry spots, nutrition/disease relationships, putting green management decisions, and environmental concerns like runoff and leaching.

A reputable force of expertise came from the UW-Madison including wildlife ecologist Scott Craven, entomologist Phil Pellitteri, plant pathologist Jennifer Parke, horticulturists Amy Sausen and Jerry Doll, and computer wizard plant pathologist Doug Maxwell. Plant pathologists Steve Millett, Gary Gaard, and Jeff Gregos were there also.

There is one thing unfortunate about the format of EXPO. That is having concurrent sessions where two or three great presentations can be going on in the same time slot. I missed Scott Craven's talk because I was at a different one, then all day I listened to people say what an entertaining and informative talk he gave. Phil Pellitteri is always good and I missed his. Another great talk I missed was from Jennifer Parke, a newcomer to the turf business. Her presentation was cutting edge, talking about biological controls of turf diseases. Next year I hope they go to only two concurrent sessions at a time, rather than three. I'll still miss good talks but not as many.

The presentations from non-UW-Madison folks were also memorable. Hank Wilkinson from the University of Illinois gave two very informative turf disease presentations. He has a great demeanor that is fun to listen to and we seem to never tire of hearing good turf disease information. Skip Lynch from Seed Research of Oregon gave a talk about native grasses; where, how, and why to use them. His slide presentation did not arrive in the mail on time so a few people were disappointed because they didn't have a picture to visualize what he was saying. He



Alums from the UW-Madison turfgrass management program had their annual breakfast with Professor Kussow at EXPO.



The donation from Reinders' Ed Devinger carried their cumulative total to over \$50,000! WTA president Wayne Horman accepted.



Chris Wendorf, LL Olds Seed Company, talking shop with EXPO speaker Skip Lynch, Seed Research of Oregon.

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overcame the mishap quite effectively by painting the picture with his words.

Grounds and sportsturf managers were fed a full plate with talks by Dave Mellor, grounds manager of County Stadium, Mike Kelly from Glenn Rehbein Company, and Dr. Don Taylor, plant pathology and earth services professor from UW-River Falls. They talked about special challenges of managing sportsturf, the proper way to construct and build a sportsfield, and the importance of soil physical properties in sportsturf settings.

Professor Ed McCoy from Ohio State gave a very detailed workshop on putting green construction. Tom Delaney, from the Professional Lawn Care Association of America, updated lawn care professionals on current regulations and laws which effect that industry and gave tips on practical ways to communicate lawn care issues with the public. Joe Bilskemper, a lawn care specialist from La Crosse, presented a great slide show on developing a professional image.

Additional memorable lectures were presented by Craig Reinders and Adam Mock from Reinders Irrigation, Paul Huggett and George Brandt (two Wisconsin sod producers), Tom Jacobs from QTI-Human Resources, and Virgil Meier from the Scotts Company. They filled out the educational sessions with talks about latest irrigation technologies, using big-roll turfgrass sod, employee leasing, and turfgrass breeding and development. I wish I could have heard them all because they were all reported to be "top-notch."

(Continued on page 21)

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