



# THE GALILEO OBSERVER

A Monthly Newsletter of the  
Galileo Alumni Association

VOL. II, No. 4

April, 2004

## SPORTS HALL OF FAME DINNER ONLY DAYS AWAY – TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE!

It's not too late to buy your tickets to the Galileo Sports Hall of Fame Dinner on May 8<sup>th</sup> at the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club. Tickets are \$45 apiece and will NOT be sold at the door. Make checks out to Galileo Alumni Association and mail to Galileo Academy of Science and Technology, Sports Hall of Fame, 1150 Francisco Street, San Francisco, CA 94109, and indicate whether you prefer roasted chicken or New York steak.

The Italian Athletic Club is located at 1630 Stockton Street in North Beach. Limited free parking is available for early arrivals at the St. Peter and Paul's Church parking lot. There will be no host cocktails starting at 6:00 pm and dinner at 7:30 pm. Ten former athletes from 1949 through 1991 will be honored.

The committee, headed by Ron Ertola (Class of 1949) has worked hard to make this an exciting and fun event that carries forward the sports excellence tradition of Galileo. Don't miss it!

A ticket form can be found at the end of this newsletter and also on the Galileo Alumni website, [www.galileoalumni.org](http://www.galileoalumni.org).

## GAA TO HAVE PAGE IN THE PENDULUM

At a recent meeting of your Editor and Jim Dresser, President of GAA, with Mark Huynh, faculty advisor to The Pendulum, it was agreed that GAA would have a page devoted to alumni news and events published in The Pendulum on a quarterly basis, starting with the September issue. This is welcome news for all alumni and for the students as well, resulting in a closer bond between the two and providing for increased attendance at events of both the school and the alumni. The issue of The Pendulum will be mailed to all alumni currently in our databases. This will broaden the scope of circulation of the newspaper and The Galileo Observer, which will continue to publish its monthly email newsletter.

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## THE PENDULUM SWINGS STRONGER

The future looks bright for The Pendulum, assured Mark Huynh, faculty advisor to the newspaper, in a recent meeting with your Editor and Jim Dresser, President of GAA. Several seniors will be graduating this semester, including Jean Lee, Editor, but Mark is very positive about the new Editor

and staff. The paper will make stronger efforts to sell advertising, and GAA will try to help as much as it can. This is certainly good news for the paper that is the vital voice of the students. Good luck, Mark!

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## THE SECOND PRINCIPAL OF GALILEO

FRED W. KOCH, 1936 - 1940

On June 9, 1936, the San Francisco Board of Education appointed Fred W. Koch as Galileo's second principal. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Koch was an Assistant Principal at Galileo. He also served as Science Department Chair prior to being appointed Assistant Principal. Before he came to Galileo High School he was a teacher at Lowell High School. Mr. Koch came to Galileo when the school was being organized and classes were first held in the Red Cross Buildings by the Civic Center. He had the advantage of knowing the school and the school's problems.

In those days, everyone connected with Galileo was determined to make it the "baby high school," one to be reckoned with in scholastic and academic achievement. As a former Science teacher, he saw the need for a club that was not highly specialized and would have a universal attraction. He was instrumental in forming such a club, the famous (at the time) Natural History Club.

One of the Natural History Club's most noteworthy deeds was establishing a scholarship to the University of California. This scholarship was financed jointly by the Natural History Club and the Footlights Club, which was also under the supervision of Mr. Koch. The Natural History Club sold book covers to raise money and the Footlights Club produced semi-annual shows.

One of the most important actions early in Mr. Koch's administration was that of initiating a fund of \$2,000, contributed to by friends and students of the school to purchase a telescope for the observatory, which bears his name.

Mr. Koch shared a necessary personal characteristic with his predecessor, Major Nourse, and that was a sly but keen sense of humor.

The tradition of special birthday parties for Galileo principals continued with Principal Koch. On October 1, 1936, Mr. Koch, who was taken completely by surprise, was whisked with the greatest secrecy into the midst of a "surprise birthday tea," complete with cake and all the trimmings. The cake was very large and quite grand and was made especially for the occasion by Chef Stromberg of the St. Francis Hotel. The cake was a bit hit and disappeared very quickly!

The annual birthday party in 1939 for Principal Koch was held on October 2nd. As always, it was a surprise and Mr. Koch was lured away from his desk with a report of some unmanageable boys in the hallway, but instead he found a room full of well wishers.

Principal Koch presided at his first graduation on January 17, 1937. Principal Koch presented two hundred thirty seven graduates with their diplomas on the stage at the War Memorial Opera House.

Mr. Koch took a six-month leave of absence at the end of the Fall 1937 semester due to ill health. During his leave he took a sea voyage to Borneo to visit his son, a geologist for Standard Oil Company. Mr. Carl Arthur Anderson, principal of Presidio Middle School, filled in for Mr. Koch while he was on leave. The purpose of Mr. Koch's trip was to regain his good health. The Galileo faculty sent a bon voyage basket to him and several students sent him farewell cards.

Mr. Koch was amazed to meet Galileo alumni on his trip. He traveled by steamer and on that ship he found six Galileans. Two were ship's officers, three were members of the crew working their way around the Pacific during their summer vacation and one was a young engineer returning to China. He was proud of the fact that Galileo graduates became teachers (one at West Point), orchestra leaders, actors and athletes. He said that his greatest pleasure was to work among the boys and girls of Galileo and to know that, wherever he went in this or other countries, there are men and women from whom I can expect a friendly greeting.

While traveling he would send messages back to Galileo. One such message said, "I wish you could be here to see these strange people and listen to the various tongues. I must try to understand. If you tell a taxi driver he is going too fast, unless you make every word plain, all he hears is the last word, and he speeds up until you are in terror lest he kills some little native kiddie along the road." Mr. Koch returned to Galileo as principal in the Fall 1938.

Besides the acquisition of a telescope for Galileo's Observatory, Fred W. Koch is remembered as the founder of Galileo's Museum of Natural History. The museum was in the planning stages from Galileo's beginnings, and masked in appearance and cloaked with mysterious identity, opened in late 1939. The museum was housed in Room 359. Students, teachers and friends of the school contributed different specimens. The museum contents included rock formations, stuffed birds, leaves, impressions of leaves, bones, animal materials, fossils, snake skins, mineral corals, shells, shell formations and many other interesting objects.

In January 1940, Principal Koch addressed the issue of textbooks and their care. He felt a textbook should be expected to last a minimum of 3 years. He required that all textbooks be covered, either by book covers the students made or those purchased at school for 5 cents.

Mr. Koch retired in June 1940, after serving for eighteen years at Galileo. An editorial upon his retirement stated that he has been more than a teacher and principal to the students; he has been a true friend, a true leader and a true promoter of high ideals.

*Editor's Note: Bettie Grinnell researched and wrote this article.*

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## HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS AVAILABLE FROM SFUSD

Need your high school transcript? Does your employer want it? Just curious? It makes no difference, now you can have a copy of your high school transcript from the San Francisco Unified District located at the former Eugene McAteer High School. Or you can go directly to the [www.sfusd.edu](http://www.sfusd.edu) website and request same. Just click on forms on the left hand side of the website, then type the word transcript in the search window, then click on transcript request. (Note: You must have Acrobat Reader to do this.) The fee is \$3.00 and is for transcripts only, not diplomas. This service is available for high schools and some middle schools (Marina Middle School included), but no elementary schools. For further information contact Marcella at SFUSD.

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## GALILEANS ATTEND GIANTS TRAINING CAMP

A group of 42 alumni and friends flew to Scottsdale in March to visit the San Francisco Giants training camp and to otherwise have fun. The trip, an annual event, was arranged by Mel Chiarenza with the help of Rich Baptista. They were joined by 11 others. The group stayed at Chaparral Suites, a very

well located hotel with a great cocktail hour and sports bar. I was there last December, and it is THE place to stay in Scottsdale.

After a first night welcome buffet dinner which was on St. Patrick's Day, Baptista was decorated with a green hat and green hair and John Zuffo led the group in Irish and Italian songs. They partied until 1:30 am in the sports bar.

The following day Vicky Hernando Spadaro (Class of 1954) and her husband Jim, who live in Surprise, AZ, invited the group to their home for a BBQ. Attending were Rose (Class of 1955) and Ted Melcher, Maria (Class of 1954) and Armond Ancona, and her brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Rich (Sacred Heart Class of 1945) and Mary McDougall, Tom (Class of 1952) and Kate Bracken, Mel and Karen Chiarenza. Kay Michelis (Class of 1954) and others went to the Phoenix Bocce Ball area.

Friday was the first game for the Giants vs. Seattle and most of the group attended. After the second cocktail hour, some went to dinner at local restaurants, while others went to an Indian casino. These included Don DiBasilio, Frank and Nina Clima, Beverly Delossa (Class of 1952) and Michael Thomey, Kay and Lisa Michelis, and the Joe Scafidi's, among others already mentioned.

On Saturday, the Giants won against Anaheim, and attending the game were Ron Ricossa (Class of 1946) and Anstell Daini (Class of 1948), Sam (Class of 1945) and Marilyn Carini, Bernie Valdez (Class of 1949), Ron Ertola (Class of 1949), former San Francisco Police Chief Tony Ribera, Frank Brady, Mary and Tom Chelini, and others.

Sunday's game was against the Oakland A's, but most did not attend as the temperature reached 97 degrees.

The group left on Monday after a most enjoyable five days in the desert.

(Thanks to Mel Chiarenza for providing the above information. See the [Giants Trip report](#) on the [Galileo Alumni website](#) for photos of the trip.)

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## Through The Telescope. . .



It's good to see that Michaelis Liquors at Union and Fillmore has kept the name of the original owner, Henry Michaelis (Class of 1951) who passed away several years ago. Prior to the liquor store, Hank used to run the Michaelis Food Store at Northpoint and Larkin, and it also has kept the original name to this day. Originally started by his father, Hank worked there while attending Galileo and later owned it outright. Gal students would go there for lunchtime sandwiches and drinks.

Whenever I'm in the neighborhood, I drop in to the original Swensen's ice cream store at Union and Hyde to have an ice cream cone. Shortly after it opened in 1948, Earle Swensen offered me a part-time job after school. I had to refuse because I was playing basketball for Galileo and we had practice and games after school. Many years later, in the 70s, I ran into him on the beach at Zihuatanejo, Mexico, and he offered me the Swensen's franchise for the coastal towns of Mexico. Mexicans were not used to the high butter content of Swensen's ice cream, and they preferred what we would call ice milk or sorbet. Nevertheless, Swensen's was for a time sold in Mexico City, but disappeared probably because of the Latin American preference for a lighter ice cream.

In the 40s and 50s, some of Swensen's neighboring businesses were Searchlight Market, Savelli's Grocery, Home Drug Company (the sign is still there), and Marcel et Henri pate (now Zarzuela Spanish restaurant). Hyde Street for about five blocks south of Union now sports some small restaurants and boutiques and three laundromats within a block of each other, serving the residents of the many flats and apartments in this area of Russian Hill.

Among the Galileo students who lived close to Swensen's were Ben Dito, Bill Dito, Gilbert Dito, Jim Dresser, Ray Foppiano, Bob Gilardi, Pete and Marie Moresi, Naitius and Emil "Boofer" Marinello, Frank Pavich, Jim Harper and me. Others who lived a little farther away (up to 7 blocks) were Dino Natali, Mario Lechuga, Brent Jones, George Bertucelli, Tom King, Frances Mazzaferri, Ed Belasco, Janet Neilsen Sullivan, Barbara Stallings, Linda Matteucci, Shirley Larson, Frank Lofrano, and the Bragg brothers (Don, Arlyn, and Allyn).

What's happening to the price of gasoline in San Francisco? I remember in 1952, regular gas was 19 cents a gallon. Ah, those were the days. . .

Sign in St. Francis Hospital: Bad News: Time Flies; Good News: You're The Pilot.

Remember reading *Conchita Arguello* in Mrs. Anderson's Spanish class? Conchita was a 15 year old California girl who fell in love with a 40 year old Russian. In those days, we didn't hear too much of child kidnappings.

If any of you drove down the San Joaquin Valley on Highway 99 a few decades ago, you would have noticed the Giant Orange stands. Now, reports VIA magazine, there is only one left and it's located in Fairmead just off the highway south of Chowchilla.

Have you heard Dolly Parton's version of *The Star Spangled Banner*? It's almost as good as Sandy Patti's, considered the best performance of our national anthem.

Do you remember when the only "credit card" you had was the dog tag with a notch issued by The Emporium? Now the former Emporium site on Market Street is going to be the flagship store of Bloomingdale's.

A Blockbuster employee told me that nowadays many new films are released on DVD only 4 months after they appear in the theaters.

What melody, if any, do you have on your cell phone? Mine is Tchaikovsky's *1<sup>st</sup> Piano Concerto*, a favorite of mine. I can never mistake it when my phone rings. I have temporarily replaced it with the *William Tell Overture* (the Lone Ranger theme).

At Albertson's, the butcher told me that a young girl was standing at the live fish tank and tapping on the glass as many of us, including myself, do. Well, a sturgeon in the tank apparently didn't take to this, and suddenly jumped out of the tank and startled the little girl. Some fish story, no? It's true.

Giovanna Gaskell, my favorite soprano, also known as Jowanna or Joanna Woeber (Class of 1951), writes that the play *All My Sons*, starring Will Marchetti (Class of 1951) was a winner. It was "absolutely marvelous, a very strong emotional story. Will was wonderful. We saw him backstage. He has no future plans to do anything right now and is going to take the summer off." Thanks, Giovanna, for that "high note" on Will.

**How I Learned to Love Opera:** During my sophomore year at Galileo, my father suddenly passed away at age 57. In order to help the family and make a few extra dollars I approached the student



counselor, Mr. Harry Krytzer, who happened to have a personal friend who needed a helper for his garden on weekends. So I started working 3 or 4 hours each Saturday at the home of Mr. G. O. Wilson, a Standard Oil executive, in Pacific Heights. Mr. Wilson's wife was Carol Green Wilson, author of *Gump's Treasure Trade* and other books. I would go around watering all the plants and flowers, and I remember pouring an eggshell solution on certain plants, which Mr. Wilson said was good for them. All the while, he had loudspeakers outside so that we could hear the Saturday afternoon Metropolitan Opera broadcasts. I grew to love the singing and the intermission features, Opera Quiz and Opera News. Just before I left for home, Mr. Wilson would treat me to a large dish of ice cream.

I bought Milton Cross' *Stories of the Operas* and followed the plots. Later, at Cal Berkeley, I listened to 78 rpm recordings of operas and took a course in music appreciation. Listening to Mario Lanza sing *Be My Love* and *Che Gelida Manina* was another great influence. I wore out my 45 rpm discs of his songs and arias. After I turned 21, I went to The Bocce Ball on Broadway where the waiters would sing operatic arias. Incidentally, Jowanna Woeber used to sing there. Those Saturday mornings tending to Mr. Wilson's garden were the beginning of my lifelong love of opera.

Thought for the Month: *Life is a matter of priorities, especially when you get older.*

## **GALILEO GRAPPLES WITH SUCCESS**

**Chima Nwankwo**

**Pendulum Staff**

**The Galileo wrestling tradition is still alive and well after the team's stellar performance during the 2003/2004 season. Although the team had a large number of inexperienced wrestlers, stellar coaching by coaches, Larry Kane and John Orille, led the team to a second place finish behind Washington in the AAA. The team also placed second in the AAA all-city tournament, with four Galileo wrestlers winning the San Francisco Section title for their weight class. Galileo finished with an overall 12-4 record (4-1 in AAA).**

**With Sr. Otis White (25-5) leading the way, Galileo undeniably improved upon last year's third placed finish. However, as this is White's last year as a Galileo Lion, the team will be hard pressed to find someone to fill his shoes. Otis White won four-straight San Francisco Section wrestling championships, which is both a Galileo and AAA record. He is also second on Galileo's career win list and has an 80-percent winning percentage over the last two seasons. Whew!!**

**Galileo senior, Danter Levexier, was awarded with the AAA's Most Outstanding Wrestler for the mid-weight category. Throughout the**

season, Dante showed heart and determination as he grinded his way to a 5-0 AAA record and the San Francisco 135 pound title. Galileo wrestlers, Otis White, Selby Tran, and Clinton Wan, also received gold medals in their respective weight classes securing them a trip to the state championships held in Sacramento. However, all four Galileo representatives lost their first round matches against very stiff oppositions from teams from all over the state.

**In all, this was a tremendous season for the Galileo wrestling team as they keep the winning tradition alive. Go Lions!!**

<u><b>Final All-City Standings</b></u> 1. Washington 206 2. Galileo 150 3. Lowell 101 4. O'Connell 99 5. Balboa 95 6. Lincoln 4	<u><b>Gold Medal Winners</b></u> 130 pounds - Selby Tran 135 pounds - Donte Levexier 152 pounds - Clinton Wan GAL 215 pounds - Otis White
<u><b>Silver Medal Winners</b></u> 103 pounds - Kenny Griffin 145 pounds - Leon Lin	<u><b>Bronze Medal Winners</b></u> 112 pounds - Patrick Louie 119 pounds - Tony Wu 125 pounds - Erwin Tan 140 pounds - Allen Wang 189 pounds - Royce Bonilla

## **AUTOGRAPHS**

Send in your favorite autographs from your Senior Class yearbook, and we'll print them in The Observer.

Example: *"To a fellow scientist all the luck in the world. I enjoyed copping from you in our test. Your lab pal, Frank Pavich (1951).*

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## **CORRECTION**

The story by Carl Nolte in last month's issue titled, "How To Be a San Francisco Native" should have been "Talking like a San Franciscan". Anybody can learn how to talk like a native, but only those born in The City can be called natives. The error was due to a problem in formatting.

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## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

## RETRACTION/CORRECTION:

**Editor's Apology:** In the March issue, we inadvertently and incorrectly stated that Barbara Dito was the cousin of Bill Dito and his classmate at Galileo. This is incorrect. Bill and Barbara Dito were not related prior to their marriage to each other. Barbara graduated from Washington High School, Bill from Galileo. We hope this did not cause any harm to Bill, and we are sincerely sorry for the mistake.

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*Such a great Observer. Is this Sisvan? If not, who? . . . Doris Repetto DeRoss*

Ed. Yes, Doris, it's me.

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*Thanks, Sisvan, yes they [Sam Butera and The Witnesses] were really hot, and I remember driving up Saturday nites just to see them. I always thought Keely was really HOTTTTTTTTT. . .ha ha. My wife and I went to see Sam and The Wildest last nite, but as luck would have it, Butera cancelled his engagement at The Avi. Boy, were we disappointed; he had cancelled in February also because of illness, and I hope that this isn't a sign of Sam quitting the business. The last time we saw him he was really good. After the last show of that nite, he sat with us, and we talked about the good times in Reno and Tahoe and the different performers that played there.....ahhhhhhhh memories. Take care, Sisvan, and if I hear anything more I'll E-mail you. Ken Lang (Class of Fall, 1946)*

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*You're looking for Galileans to report in for periods before and after the 50s. I'm from the class of '46, probably one of the most exciting eras in Galileo's history.*

*Several teachers/instructors were standouts, but this initial story concerns a classmate, James (Jay) Sanders. Jay was an Army brat, living with his parents, younger brother and sister in Fort Mason. His Dad was a sergeant. We had been pals since our days at Marina Junior High. He was adventurous with an itchy foot, always on the move, perhaps because of his father being a career soldier. At the time he had little interest in school, taking a home economics course, for example, because he could socialize with the coeds. We would sit on a promontory at the fort and watch troops embarking for overseas, later going to the PX or the fort's movie house. Sometimes we would go on to the Presidio, going to the military hospital where I would sometimes play the piano for the young men who were now old beyond their years.*

*At the start of his senior year he dropped out and took a menial job as a civilian "engine wiper" aboard an Army military transport vessel that plied San Francisco Bay, stopping at Angel Island, where they would pick up such items as dirty laundry from the military stationed there and take it to the prison at San Quentin. The prisoners would launder the uniforms and the ship would bring them back to the military. On one such trip, after picking up the clean uniforms, a young man in Army clothes hopped aboard as they were heading back to home port. Jay spotted him and asked what he was doing aboard. The man gave him some story and Jay said "OK, but you'll have to wait in a passenger room." He then led the man to a door, ushered him in and locked the door. It was a closet. Of course, it was an escaped prisoner; Jay was the hero of the hour, gaining headlines in the local press.*

*Jay later went into the Army, completed high school and some college through courses it provided. When he took his discharge, he applied to a prominent chemical company in the East Bay. He gave my name as reference and, naturally, I praised him to the skies. They liked him so much he was offered the opportunity of an all-paid education to become a chemical engineer. But civilian life again palled, and he*



*went back into the service.*

*For a time, he was a supply sergeant at the Oakland Army Depot. Later he transferred overseas. He called on me one day, looking thin, somewhat at odds with himself. Then he just went away.*

*Several years later, at my office at a Sacramento TV station, a young FBI agent called on me. It seems Jay had gone AWOL and they wanted to locate him before he could be declared a deserter. I wish I knew what happened to him, but nothing more was heard. He would have been my age by now, 75, but I don't think he was worried about staying around that long, the guy with itchy feet. Harvey Tepfer (Class of 1946).*

Ed. Note: Great story, Harvey. Too bad, we can't have "the rest of the story".

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## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

May 8 - Sports Hall of Fame Dinner

Summer and Fall, 2004 – Belasco Theater Company productions

October 22 – Galileo Alumni Golf & Dinner Raffle

(Note: More events will be added as they become known)

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The Galileo Observer invites your letters, memories, inquiries and suggestions. All submissions are subject to editing. Send them by email to: [editorgalileoobserver@yahoo.com](mailto:editorgalileoobserver@yahoo.com), or by postal mail to: Galileo Observer, care of Galileo Alumni Association, 1150 Francisco Street, San Francisco, CA 94109.

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## GAA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Jim Dresser (1951)

Vice President: Joe Scafidi (1950)

Secretary: Monica Parenti Kirkland (1953)

Treasurer: Augie Venezia (1953)

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Mel Chiarenza (1953)

Frank Clima (1951)

Nina Pattini Clima (1950)

Diane Wall Cowart (1965)

Kay Lazzari Michelis (1953)

Fred Setting (1950)

Cordy Porter Surdyka (1953)

Janet Sullivan Neilsen (1953)

Ben Vanni (1948)

### Committee Chairpersons

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**Membership: Diane Wall Cowart (1965)**  
**Database: Mel Chiarenza (1953)**  
**By-laws: Monica Parenti Kirkland (1953)**  
**Communications (Newsletter): Sisvan Der Harootunian (1951)**  
**Webmaster: Vaughn Spurlin (1960)**

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**FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION, VISIT THE GALILEO ALUMNI ASSOCIATION WEBSITE,  
[WWW.GALILEOALUMNI.ORG](http://WWW.GALILEOALUMNI.ORG).**

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*Comments? Contact the [Galileo Alumni webmaster](#)*

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