

Moments in Time

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SPRING 2011

PINE POINT—SAUSALITO'S LOST COMMUNITY



PHOTO: SHS COLLECTION

This is how Pine Point appeared pre-1942 looking from north to south. The railroad trestle is on the left and at center right is the tidal marsh before it was filled with dirt from Pine Point. The area became Sausalito's World War II ship building yard, Marinship.

If you were a rail passenger entering Sausalito from the north in the years just before World War II, you would have stopped first at Waldo Point Station, then crossed a trestle over a tidal marsh fronting the American Distilling Company (formerly Mason's Distillery; today, Whiskey Springs). At the south end of the trestle, you would have come to your second Sausalito stop, and the last before arriving downtown—Pine Point Station. Tracing that route today, you may well wonder: Why would there have been a train stop there on what appears in the above pre-war photograph to be a wooded knoll overlooking a salt marsh?

The answer lies in Sausalito's pre-war history—the fact that there was once a thriving community on Pine Point. But Americans are known for their can-do spirit, and they are famously open to drastic change when that seems practical, and, in war time, patriotic. The sense of urgency and crisis prevailing in this country in the months immediately after Pearl Harbor left no doubt as to the necessary course of action. Sausalito's shoreline had to be radically altered in order to build the Marinship yard on the northern waterfront. And in the process, between 80–100

Sausalito residents would have to find homes elsewhere.

Today, if you walk the sidewalk on the east side of Bridge-way between Olive and Nevada streets and carefully study the topography along that stretch—noting the descent from the highway to the road that wends through the Marinship below (past the Marina Office Plaza, the tennis courts, the art festival site, the Susaki-Walker (SWA) offices)—you'll be struck by how precipitously the land drops from the highway to the flat land below. It's as if someone had come along with a giant knife and sliced through the land, leaving a sheer cliff. And you have to ask yourself: What could have caused this shear drop-off? Why is the road out of town aligned so close to the cliff? And was there once land beyond this point, perhaps level with the highway to the immediate east, then gradually sloping to the bay?

In fact, there was—Sausalito's lost community of Pine Point. Sacrificed in this country's great wartime mobilization following December 7, 1941, this small peninsula jutting out from the shoreline, once a snug residential enclave, provided the vital landfill required to create Marinship. And a small community of largely working class families had to be moved from the point before it was destroyed.

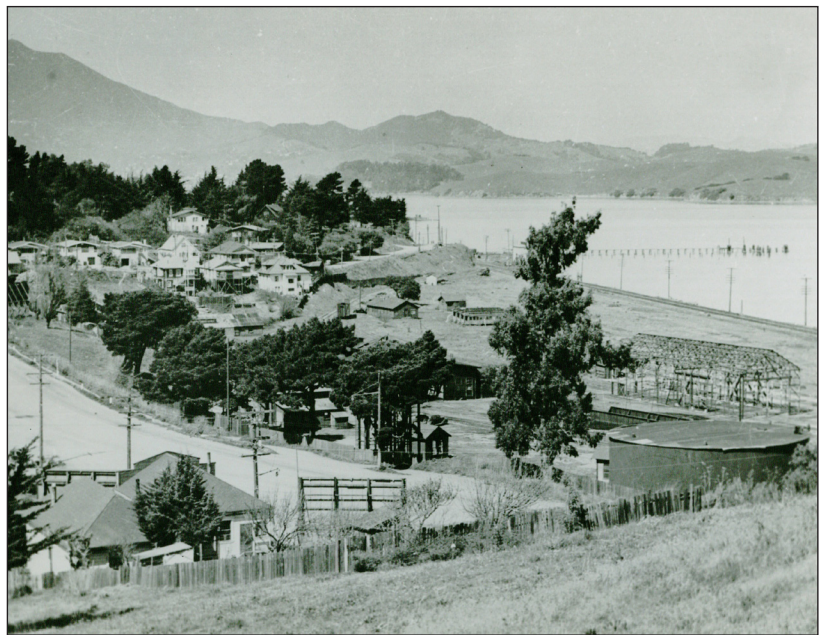


PHOTO: SHS COLLECTION

This 1930s photograph shows the Pine Point residential community as it appeared looking from south to north. The county road in the left foreground leads out of town. On the right is a fuel tank for ferryboats and locomotives and beyond are other railroad buildings.

THE LITTLE NEIGHBORHOOD THAT WAS

The biggest, fastest and most far-reaching change the city of Sausalito ever experienced was not planned by the City Council nor voted on by citizens. It happened as part of this country's emergency response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, the catastrophic event that launched the United States entry into World War II. During the two-and-a-half months that followed, a dramatic sequence of decisions changed Sausalito's waterfront and economy forever. Local residents witnessed record-breaking maritime mobilization taking place right before their eyes.

It began on March 2, 1942, when the Bechtel Company of San Francisco received the following telegram from the U.S. Maritime Commission (USMC):

It is necessary in the interests of the national emergency that the maximum number of emergency cargo vessels be completed prior to December 31, 1942 . . . Submit a proposal for a shipyard site to be located in one of the west coast ports in which your organization could operate to the best advantage. The emergency demands all within your power to give your country ships.

In twenty-four hours, Bechtel replied to USMC that it had chosen Sausalito's northern waterfront to locate the shipyard. The proposal included demolition of the little residential community of Pine Point, but its obliteration seemed of small importance compared to the need for ships. The breakneck project went ahead and the first keel was laid in the yard on June 27, just three months after the decision to locate in Sausalito. That first liberty ship, the *William A. Richardson*, was followed by 92 other vessels between June, 1942, and September 25, 1945.

While the story of building and operating the Marinship has received considerable attention, the tale of the disappeared neighborhood of Pine Point, a 202-acre wooded knoll within the intended boundaries of the future shipyard, is less well known. Built around the turn of the century most probably for Northwestern Pacific Railroad (NWPR) workers and their families, the 32 modest Pine Point houses were the only residences in town located east of Bridgeway. The community

enjoyed pleasant bay views, its own circular road, and easy access by boat and train, including its own stop at Pine Point Station. Most of the homes were modest, two-bedroom, one-bath structures built in a plain craftsman style characterized by porches, tapered columns and a slightly curved flare at the bottom of the siding. Left undisturbed, the bay side neighborhood might have had a distinctive identity today.

But a very different fate awaited the homes and out buildings on Pine Point. In a "Judgment on the Declaration of Taking," dated March 23, 1942 (just three weeks after the site was selected), the U.S. government asserted its unquestionable right to "acquire property by eminent domain . . . under authority of the Attorney General of the United States . . . for national defense purposes." The parcels of land were held in the names of some 80-property owners, the largest being NWPR. The total compensation limit set by the U.S. Congress was \$221,234.75.

Within a month, the government became the sole owner of all physical property on Pine Point, including the homes and the NWPR buildings. With the clear objective to build the shipyard at maximum speed, the government allowed approximately 30 days for people to leave before their homes were either moved or leveled.

For the movers the process was straightforward: jack the house up and insert stout, four wheeled dollies under each corner; bring in a tow truck and haul it off to a dirt lot elsewhere in town; reset new jacks and leave it until a new foundation could be built. In the graphic on page three, artist Giacomo Patri beautifully illustrates the houses on dollies waiting to be towed.

The Bechtel Company's contract with the US Maritime Commission left no room for sentimentality. By the end of April, the houses remaining on Pine Point were bulldozed in preparation for the massive shipyard re-landscaping project: the leveling of Pine Point hill and the filling in of the tidal marsh to the north of it with salvaged dirt. The large surface area created became a level work yard next to the six shipways. Today that area is approximately where the Post Office, Mollie Stone's and Gate Three are located. The former NWPR tracks that had run along the water's edge were relocated further to the west in order to move building materials efficiently into Marinship.

Thus a quiet salt marsh became historic Sausalito acreage. The area filled with dirt from the Pine Point hill is marked today on the north by the 3030 Bridgeway Building (formerly the Marinship Administration building) and on the south by the Gate Three (Arques) area. Glancing back at its history, we are reminded of the dramatic demolition of Pine Point, of the spent energy of thousands of wartime workers, and the sacrifices made by the residents of Sausalito's lost community, Pine Point. —Margaret Badger

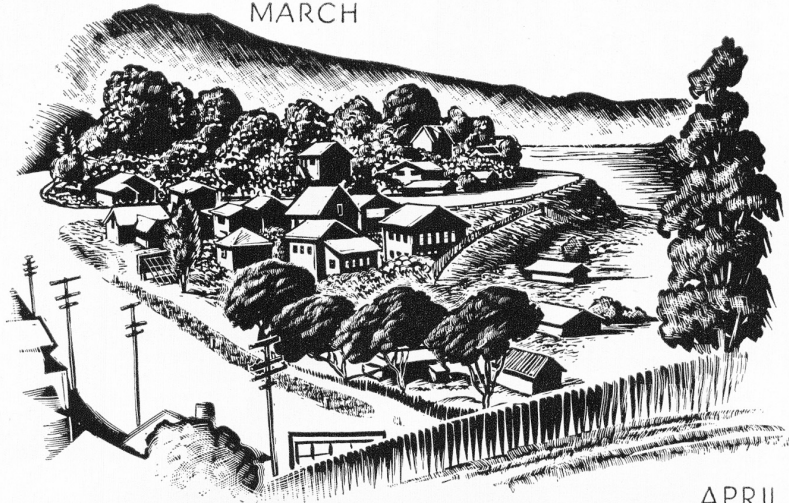


PHOTO: MARGARET BADGER

The simple, craftsman style architecture of this former Pine Hill residence, now located on Spring Street, was typical of the homes moved in March, 1942. The tapered columns, sloped roof and slight flare at the corner of the second story siding are characteristic features.

An Artist's Story of the Building of Marinship

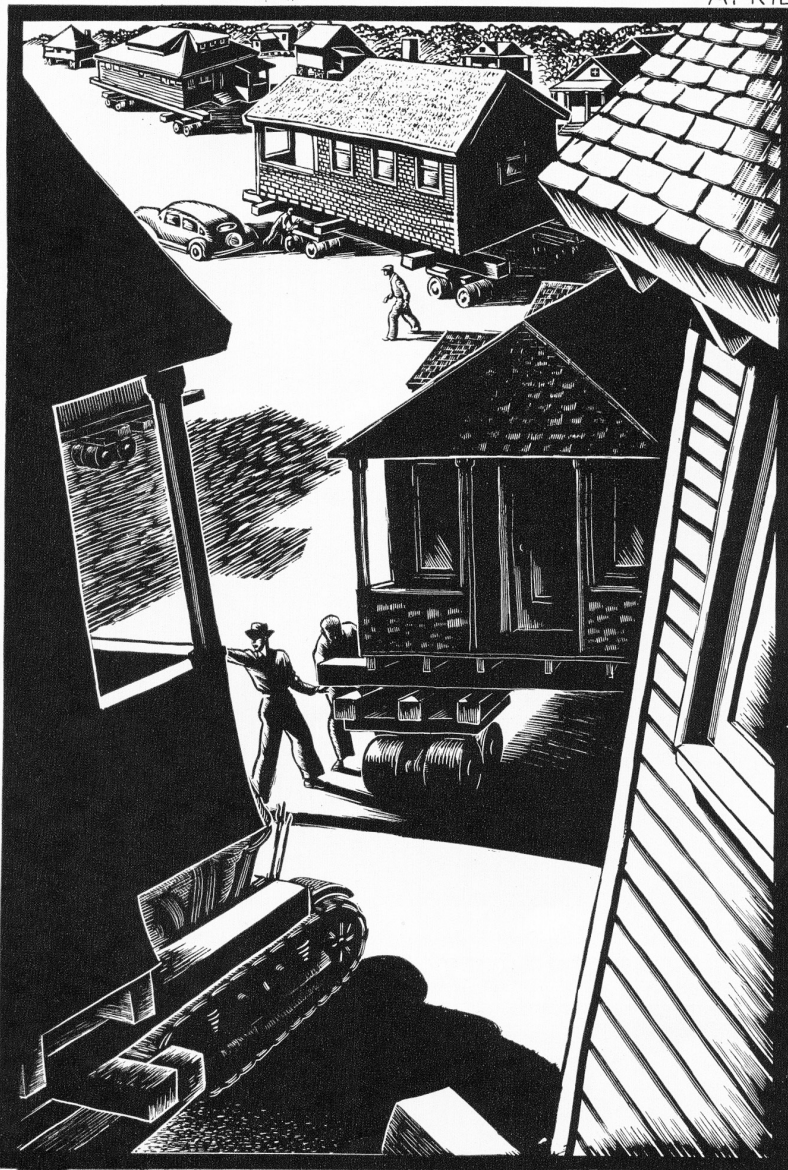
MARCH



MAY



APRIL



JUNE



JULY



PATRI

GRAPHIC: SHS COLLECTION

These five illustrations by Giacomo Patri appeared in the SF Chronicle, Sunday, November 1, 1942, entitled "Marinship—A Bay Area Miracle." Beginning with an illustration of the Pine Point residential community, the artist tells the story of moving the houses, leveling the hill, building the ways and constructing the ships.

JUST ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO PAID THEIR BILLS

People who lived on Pine Point, the neighborhood Sausalito lost in America's rapid war mobilization in the early 1940s, are hard to find today. They scattered when their east-of-Bridgeway community was bulldozed in the spring of 1942 to provide landfill for the Marinship, the shipyard that dominated the northern waterfront during World War II. But following a variety of old-timer tips, we found one of them—93-year-old Carrol Madsen, who lived at Pine Point as a young man in the period just before the war.

Carrol was truly a child of Sausalito. Of Irish-English descent, as so many locals were in those days, he came here when he was six, one of four children whose father had a job as a policeman with the Golden Gate Ferry Company. Ultimately raised by a single mother, he remembers the family moving from place to place—from 4th to 3rd streets, from Johnson to Bonita to Turney to Cazneau to Caledonia—"always looking for cheaper rent."

He attended Central School and Tam High in the '30s. When the war broke out, he went to work at the Marinship

about their pre-war homes and where those homes are today. By 1942, he was married with a small son. He remembers the community vividly. "We were pretty much a cross-section of Sausalito then—our neighbors were just ordinary people who paid their bills. They were a mixture of everything. A lot of them worked on the railroad and the ferries, and a few for the government. There were some who, I guess you'd say, had 'made it' a bit more than the rest. Charley Lariano was the Sausalito Fire Chief. Mr. Bradley was a mailman. Frank Baptiste was a building contractor, and Carlo Heymen was a plumber. There was a Sausalito constable, I think his name was O'Connell, and Grinsel, he was an automobile salesman. Then, of course, there was Ernest Jackson, who had the Sausalito Lumber Company. At one time he owned the Alta Mira Hotel."

Asked how integrated Pine Point was with the rest of Sausalito, he said, "We were sort of a family—kind of set apart from Sausalito proper. My two sisters were there. We felt we were a little off to ourselves."

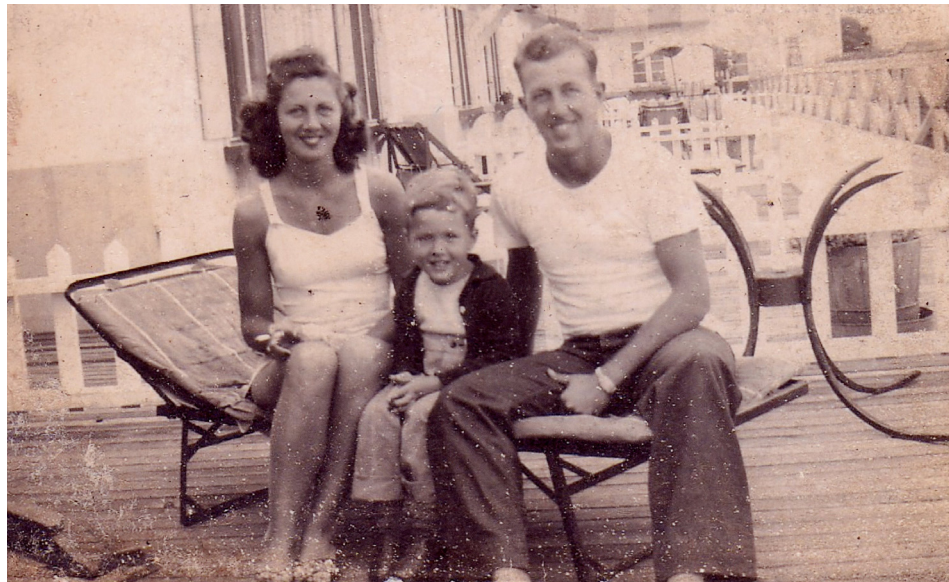


PHOTO: COURTESY OF CARROL MADSEN

Charlotte, Ralphie and C.D Madsen while Madsen was in boot camp for the navy in Mission Beach, San Diego in 1944. Two years earlier he and his family had been evicted from Pine Point along with all the other residents.

yard for a couple of years, then joined the Navy. In 1949, he bought a truck and went into business for himself. His business became Shaffer & Madsen Company, excavators, involved in major development projects around Marin, including the filling of the big canyon on upper Spring Street west of Woodward.

Carrol Madsen recently toured with us the former Pine Point area and talked about the people who once lived there,

There's no local record of how much the government gave individual homeowners for their Pine Point homes. Carrol Madsen says he was paid \$3,000 for his, which gave him a profit of about \$700 over what it cost him. "I felt I'd gotten a good deal—that was a lot of money in those days—and I think most of my neighbors felt the same way." There was a lot of patriotic sentiment following Pearl Harbor, he recalls, and people felt they were helping the war effort.

By March of 1942, many of the Pine Point houses had been demolished. "They had to get them out of there fast," Madsen recalls. "The excavation was about to begin." For the houses considered worth saving, the government got around \$100. "It wasn't interested in making money on them, it just wanted them out of the way."

Following our waterfront tour, Madsen led us down lower Spring Street, where, following their condemnation, about 12 to 15 Pine Point houses ended up. Although others were distributed elsewhere around town—Locust, Cazneau, Johnson—this was the largest concentration in Sausalito. The land that received them, essentially a barren stretch of dirt in 1942

with “no sewers, no sidewalks, nothing,” had been purchased by the Vincent Maggiora & Son Company from the original owner, the Sausalito Land & Ferry Company. For contractors Vince and Louis Maggiora, who already owned a number of lots along Sausalito streets, the appearance of scrap houses on the market presented something of an opportunity. Partnering with Hanson Brothers Moving Company, they were able to move some of the unwanted houses off Pine Hill and relocate them at very little cost to themselves. “Vince took the south side of the street,” Madsen says, “and Louie took the north side.”

Once the homes were in place the Maggioras built the foundations and put in utilities and other street improvements.

The Pine Point houses are still on Spring Street, still largely owned by the Maggiora family, serving as sturdy Sausalito affordable rentals to the present day. Many have been remodeled and their wooden exteriors altered with plaster and other materials. But the community that existed out on the point in mid-century no longer exists. To Madsen’s knowledge, not one original Pine Pointer—or Pine Point descendant—lives in a Pine Point house today.

—Doris Berdahl



LEFT: This dramatic photograph shows Pine Point—now stripped of its buildings and trees—being blown up. The tons of dirt loosened by the explosions were quickly bulldozed to fill in the salt water marsh to the north that would soon become the hard, flat surface of the 202-acre Marinship boatyard.

BELOW: The W.A. Bechtel Co. documented its work on Marinship as it progressed. This photo from “camera angle ‘A’ —Hill, North Side” shows the exact location of the excavated Pine Point hill and the marsh which the dirt will fill. April 15, 1942.



PHOTOS: SHS COLLECTION

KEEPING HISTORY ALIVE

Last fall, the Historical Society officially launched, with the support of the Sausalito Public School District, a 3rd grade program for Bayside School and Willow Creek Academy involving about fifty students. In 2010, the focus was on the Downtown Historic District. In the Spring of 2011, students will do guided research in the Phil Frank History and Research Room and in the fall will turn their study to Marinship. The program includes classroom visits and field trips led by over a dozen SHS docents.

During the classroom phase in 2010, docents introduced students to the history of Sausalito using books, artifacts and “Then and Now” student workbooks filled with photos, maps, historical facts, and space for the students to add their own research notes. The teachers followed up with each student to research a particular building or site and to write a paragraph about it and how it relates to the town’s history.

On the field trips, docents guided students, teachers and parents through the streets where the researched buildings still stand. The students compared their pictures of historic structures with the present day buildings and each posed for a photograph in front of their chosen building or site. Finally, the students opened up their lunches at Gabrielson Park and enjoyed an ice cream treat donated by Lapperts on Bridgeway.

Historic sites visited by the third-graders studying the Downtown Historic District included the Ice House, Viña del Mar Park, and the present-day Sausalito Hotel, Winship’s Restaurant, Don Olsen Associates, Jewelry By the Bay, Scoma’s, Horizons, Galerie Engelstad, Georgiou Boutique, Marin Fruit Company, Crazy Shirts, Gene Hiller Menswear and Poggio Trattoria.

In a final awards ceremony, students received framed photographs of themselves with highlights from their research, courtesy of SHS and Sausalito Picture Framing. The occasion



PHOTO: COURTESY OF LARRY CLINTON

Third grade students from Willow Creek Academy entered the Ice House with their clipboards ready to learn from the pictorial display within. SHS docents were on hand to interpret.

was attended by teachers, school administrators, parents and docents.

Assessment of last year’s program has been positive. Teacher Paula Hammons of Bayside School wrote: “Thank you ever so much for the wonderful field trip experience: exploring Sausalito’s downtown historic district. The children (and adults) were engaged and stimulated by the wealth of information you shared. We all learned a great deal. Your impeccable preparation helped to make this a memorable day for all of us.”

Willow Creek teacher Ann Siskin exclaimed: “My third grade social studies curriculum and instruction would not be the same without this exceptional educational partnership! The program has provided students with hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that help bring our community’s history alive. The program has encouraged memorable learning for every student.”

And, finally, Superintendent Debra Bradley summed up the impact of the program: “I cannot say enough about the Sausalito Historical Society and how their efforts have brought richness to our students in both historical exposure and personalized recognition to each of our students. Needless to say, the parents are thrilled as well and attended the recognition assembly with cameras in hand.”

The costs of last year’s program were offset by generous donations of over \$3,400 from SHS members in response to a year-end fundraising letter. We wish to thank all our cash donors once again and our in-kind donors—Waterstreet Hardware, Lappert’s Ice Cream and Sausalito Picture Framing—for making this program possible.

It is our plan to continue this program on a bi-annual basis, under the leadership of SHS Board members Susan Frank and Bob Woodrum.

—Larry Clinton



Third grade students from Bayside Elementary School display their framed images from the downtown historic buildings project with participating SHS docents standing by.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

NEIL DAVIS ENTERTAINS A FULL HOUSE

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JANE CLINTON



Robin Sweeny and Neil Davis remembering old times.

On January 31, 2011, SHS members and guests enjoyed an informal talk by Neil Davis, proprietor of the No Name bar during its heyday from 1959-1973. Neil recalled many of the colorful characters who frequented the bar in those days, including Sterling Hayden, Spike Africa, and the infamous Margo St. James, who flew down from Washington State for the event. A capacity crowd clung to every word and lingered afterward for further socializing.

During his talk, Neil presented SHS Board member Robin Sweeny with a bouquet of flowers, in memory of some of their pleasant exchanges when he was running the bar and she was Mayor.

IN MEMORIAM EVERT HEYNNEMAN

The Sausalito Historical Society was grieved to learn of the death of one of its founders and former presidents, Evert Heynneman, on February 27, 2011. The newsletter will remember Evert's contributions to the Historical Society in the next edition.

NEWS from the SHS BOARD

New Membership Rates and Benefits

In November, 2010, the board approved a dues increase for the membership, the first increase in ten years. We took this step in order to cover the increasing costs of our many programs and events. We also agreed on new membership benefits.

NEW RATES:

Senior	\$15/year
Individual	\$25/year
Family	\$40/year
Sponsor/Business	\$100/year
Patron	\$250/year
Benefactor	\$500+/year

Your renewal date is one year from when you last renewed. The month and year of your renewal will appear next to your name on the address label in all communications from SHS. If you have any questions about your membership, please contact Sharon Seymour, SHS Membership Chair, at 289-4117.

BENEFITS of MEMBERSHIP:

All: Newsletter, advance notice of events, membership rates for events and research services.

Sponsor/Business: All of the above plus membership rates for your guests for events and acknowledgement in the Newsletter.

Patron: All of the above, plus two free tickets to an event of your choice.

Benefactor: All of the above plus two free tickets to all events for the year.



Thank you to new members at the Sponsor/Business level and above:

Herbert and Sisi Damner
Poggio Tratoria
Martin and Elizabeth Terplan

