

July / August / September 2007

Volume 16, Number 3

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-



The magnificent *Te Poe O Te Kuki Airani*
(The Pearls of the Cook Islands)
natural pearl necklace
contains 1,700 *Pinctada maculata* pearls
ranging in size from 3 to 3.5mm
interspersed with amethyst, peridot, amber and garnet.

See the story of these unusual pearls on pages 3-8.

EDITORIAL

Another issue, another struggle. News of pearling, cultured and natural pearl oddities and one-of-a kinds came pouring in the past months, and we had a devil of a time putting this jigsaw puzzle together. It's rather like owning a dairy herd: one must service your critters faithfully, day and night.

One of the most interesting bits of pearling news came totally by accident: a new subscriber who learned of *Pearl World* through *Pearl-Guide.com* told us of his fascination with fine Spanish and German wines, and a new love of *P. maculata* pearls... which were old friends of this Editor, from his travel to the Cook Islands over ten years ago.

This, in turn, rekindled our thoughts and dormant friendships with the Cooks, and led to the lead story herein: pipi pearls.

If you don't know much about this tiny and often completely overlooked natural pearl from the northern region of the Cook Islands, then you're in for a surprise. The story of the intersection of the collection of pipis and the ancient and revered culture of the Cook Islands makes interesting reading, and has produced a virtually priceless new artifact in the pearl world.

On another note, an old friend returned from round one of his trek around the world in search of the back story of pearls with which he intends to have his book, entitled *Tears of Mermaids: The Secret History of Pearls*, to be published next year, or the following.

We wrote about Stephen Bloom in the October/November/December 2006 issue, and have been following his travels with great interest.

He kindly wrote a summary for us of his journeys for us which appears—quite abbreviated—on page 15.

We could not reproduce all of his reminiscences as he recounted each and every person he encountered in his search: this took up several pages of small type, and we just could not fit it into this issue. We shall, however, try to include it in the next issue of *Pearl World*, as it is a snapshot of Who's Who in the business... as well as a testament to his dogged determination to author a treatise on pearls that is not your usual promotional pap put out by paid industry scribes.

The JCK Show in Las Vegas is proceeding on schedule as usual, and this year we are bypassing it for a variety of reasons... one of which is medical.

In 2003 I was unceremoniously slapped into a hospital when my cardiovascular medicos determined that my heart's aortic valve needed refurbishing. This was

quite an undertaking... and with quite a few unforeseen results. One of which is that my Jewish and Muslim friends no longer invite me into their homes, as I now have a pig's heart valve helping circulate blood in my body.

The other result is that I have to report in for occasional check-ups, and one was scheduled with my cardiologist which prevented me from traveling to Seattle to meet Ben Bergman, Steve Metzler and the *Te Poe O Te Kuki Airani*... and also to waddle up to Las Vegas for the annual extravaganza to see old friends, the green baize card tables, and pearls galore.

No biggie on the latter, as I have come to abhor traveling by airplane here in the States, even though it is a mere 50-minute flight from Phoenix to Las Vegas. Queuing up like animals to a slaughterhouse and having to take off your shoes—thank you, Richard Reid—while being pawed by TSA minions is not my idea of a fun time among the *hoi polloi*. Then you are greeted by native Vegans as though you are a walking tree festooned with twenty dollar bills from whom they wish to enrich their livelihoods.

No thank you. At least Tucson is more genteel about separating you from your gelt.

Anyhow, rescheduling an incredibly busy cardiologist (whom I call "Doctor Kervorkian" with quite some affection) was not in the cards, nor even vaguely possible, so I shall be sitting here, pouting in the 100°F heat while pearl-ers assemble here and there, out of my direct gaze.

We shall nonetheless try to cover the goings on in Seattle and Las Vegas to the best we can in the next issue.



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IT ALL STARTED WITH A BOTTLE OF WINE

This is not your ordinary pearl story. It is, instead, a tale of great, colliding passions.

One: about Spanish wines. The other: natural pearls.

It started with a recent new subscriber from Seattle, Washington, who learned of us through *Pearl-Guide.com*, Jeremy Shepherd's quite excellent web site which bills itself (and correctly, we may add) as "The World's Largest Pearl Information Source" (if you don't believe us, look it up yourself).

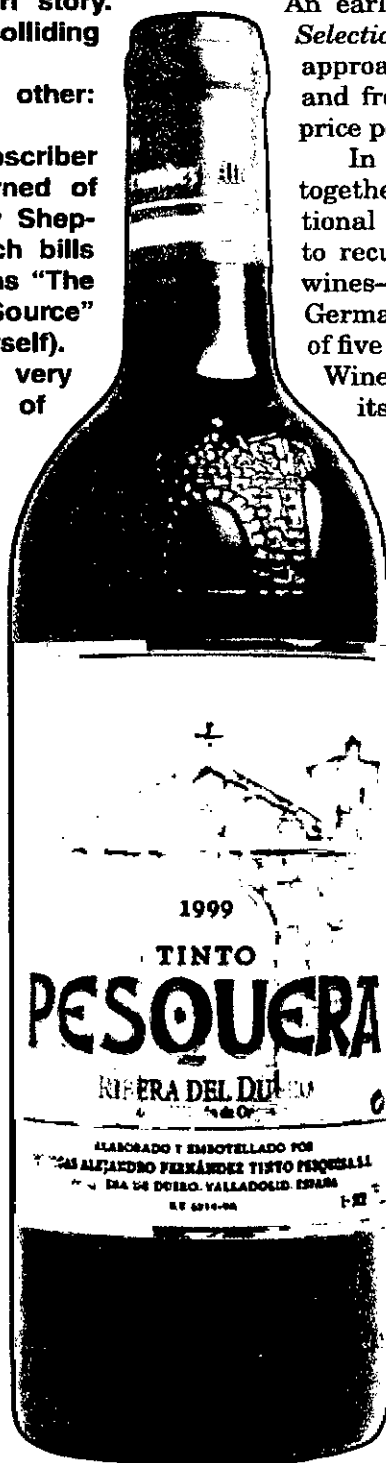
Herewith begins our yarn of a very unusual (and romantic) pairing of interests.

THE ENOLOGIST

As a young retailer in the 1970s specializing in European estates, Stephen Metzler began seriously studying the possibilities in Spain, attracted by its high elevations, mountains, and remote river valleys. Spain held the very same attraction for the Romans and the medieval winemaking monasteries, who recognized the great viticultural gift inherent to the cooler and higher inland regions. Metzler's study coincided with the end of four decades of dictatorship and a renaissance of Spanish arts, in particular fine wine.

In 1985, Metzler met and married Almudena de Llaguno, who had returned to Madrid following seven years with Spain's diplomatic corps in San Francisco. Together, Metzler and de Llaguno rapidly built their fledgling company, Classical Wines, to a position of international recognition.

They founded their company upon the principal that elegance and balance—naturally occurring in Spain's cooler regions—are the primary considerations for quality.



An early by-line, *A Singular Concept in the Selection of Spanish Wines*, differentiated the approach from New World fashion tendencies, and from the stubborn pattern of selling by price points.

In 1996, a love for German Riesling—together with the movement towards traditional authenticity led by Bernhard Breuer to recuperate terroir-driven, naturally drier wines—resulted in portfolio expansion to the German arena. With focused representation of five of Germany's leading estates, Classical Wines offers the best of Europe from both its northern and southern extremes.

Along with stylistic consistency, Classical Wines has established an exemplary trajectory with its suppliers. Matching philosophies from the start, unique and long-lasting relationships—in many cases familial in nature—have resulted. It is not uncommon, for the company to speak of suppliers from whom twenty or more vintages have been shipped, many from their very first vintage.

Classical Wines stands for a philosophy, as well as consistent quality, value and service.

THE PEARL CONNECTION

The pearl portion of this saga began, like that of many other initial encounters with these gems of the sea for many other pearl aficionados, purely by an unusual combination of blind luck, happenstance, and serendipity. In Steve's own words:

'Classical Pearls' would be an appropriate corporate title for such philosophical enterprise in this arena—perhaps a claim to such trademark could be made within the scope of this article!

My wife Almudena and I have

"Passion" to page 4

"Passion" from page 3



Stephen Metzler began his career in wine in 1976 as a specialty retailer while finishing an undergraduate degree in Piano Performance at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Spain soon became a special area of study, resulting in a first trip to that country in 1982, and repeat visits to Europe two or three times yearly ever since.

Almudena de Llaguno is a native of Madrid, and held key positions in the Tourist Office, Commercial Office and Consulate of Spain in San Francisco.

Upon returning to Spain she entered the wine trade, where she met Stephen Metzler. Stephen and Almudena were married in Madrid and have together built Classical Wines to its position of national prominence in the field of Spanish wines.

travelled the world consistently since the mid-1980s, as we were on the cutting edge of a renaissance in Spanish wines, becoming international agents for a highly-rated estate, Alejandro Fernández of Tinto Pesquera (one of the world's greatest red wines!).

Early on, we dreamed of travel for pure pleasure instead of business, and an airline magazine article on the Cooks in approximately 1991 had us dreaming for more than 15 years before finally managing a visit. 'Rarotonga' and 'Aitutaki' became code words between us when we felt the need for relief from daily pressures. Their simple verbalization seemed to have a noticeably calming effect.

We finally managed a two-week visit in late August and early September of 2006.

The visual beauty of the islands and the genuineness of the Cook Islanders charmed us beyond our expectations. But while Almudena (and her mother) had always appreciated and purchased pearls, I had been chronically gem-blind my entire life.

Unable to avoid pearls in the local stores, I began taking note

and learning from the local experts, beginning with a few purchases as souvenirs.

But I was 'blindsided' by the somewhat hidden displays of small, brilliant creamy/golden pearls called *poe pipi*. They knocked me out, and after due consideration we purchased a single small 18k ring with one round 5mm pipi and two perfectly round black keshis.

Then we looked further with newly opened eyes and found a spectacular 7.5mm pipi drop pendant, which I am viewing at this moment with pleasure on my wife's neckline (Ed.: photo below).



"Passion" to page 6

Notes on pipi pearl oyster fishing in Tongareva (1995)

Source: Pearl Oyster Information Bulletin, August 1997

Tongareva Atoll, also known as Penrhyn, is situated in the northern Cook Islands, 9°S and 158°W. Two species of pearl oyster are common in the lagoon, the 'parau' or black-lip pearl oyster, *Pinctada margaritifera*, and the much smaller 'pipi', *Pinctada maculata*.

Pipi is gathered by both sexes, and is one of the few fisheries in Tongareva which involves women. The pipi are collected from the tops of the patch reef within the lagoon. Mask, snorkel and gloves are the necessary items, and the shells are simply plucked from the reef, to which they are attached by the oyster's byssus.

Pipi are collected primarily for the natural pearls which are sometimes found inside. Some of the meat is also

eaten, though a considerable amount is wasted.

Fishing activity was closely observed. Two women collecting for 50 minutes collected 21kg of pipi. This equates to what is commonly referred to as a 'bag', i.e. approximately one full 25kg rice sack. This is the common unit of measurement used by pipi collectors. 7kg of pipi were counted out, for a total of 355 pipi. Therefore approximately 1000 pipi would constitute a bag.

It took three ladies approximately 2 hours to open the 7kg of pipi. 50 pipi were weighed (852g), and the shucked meat was also weighed (121g), giving a recovery weight of around 14%.

The meat can be eaten raw or cooked, and is very tasty, though a little gritty.

On this occasion, in the 7kg sample, only one salable pearl was found, as well as three others of no commercial value. The number of pearls found in a full bag of pipi varies greatly, with sometimes no valuable ones found at all, and sometimes as many as 20 of various qualities.

Pipi pearls are a significant source of income for Tongarevans. As they are found, they are stored in small jars. They are then often used as a cash reserve. When a major purchase is required, for example a TV or video, new freezer, etc., the jar can be sold to buyers in Rarotonga. Although exact figures are difficult to obtain, jars containing an unknown number of pearls are sold for several thousands of dollars.

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We fell in love with natural pipi pearls, perhaps due to their contrast with the plethora of black pearl offerings in the local boutiques. But mainly, this follows a lifelong appreciation for natural authenticity in all things.

We applaud what appears to be an increasing appreciation for natural pearls, although there seems to be precious little information on pipis. Certainly in the cultured world of size-is-everything, I can understand that these rare, albeit smallish pearls may suffer a certain sort of underappreciation.

But what really caught our eye was a carefully displayed collar of 1,700 poe pipi named Te Poe O Te Kuki Airani which was not offered for sale. Upon our return home, we began our inquiries regarding its possible acquisition.

The creator of Te Poe raided his family's remaining pipi inventory to promote their 30th anniversary in the Cook Islands pearl industry. The timing of our arrival and discovery of pipis was pure serendipity. The necklace is priceless, for sure. But he wasn't expecting to sell it so soon, and it was a month of communications following our return until the sale took place.

Key considerations: Our heart was in the right place, we were clearly not speculators, and we

agreed to allow his continuing use of Te Poe (including physical return for special display and promotion—hand delivered, of course!). In short, a warm and meaningful relationship engendered by 1700 little pearls. What greater argument in favor of the gem of the sea can there be?

PIPI ORIGINS

Penrhyn, the Cook Islands' most isolated and equatorial atoll, has been important as a source of pearls and shells for centuries, and is given a position of prominence by Kunz in his South Seas Islands section (at that time, it was Penrhyn/Tongareva for golden South Seas pearls, Tuamotu for the natural blacks).

Local divers were known for their expertise, and a NZ government ethnic study even mentions that Penrhyn Islanders/Tongarevans have a particularly dark complexion associated with their incessant diving.

P. maculata is one of (if not the) smallest pearl-producing oysters, and—as such—pearls of any size and frequency have always been rare, relegating them primarily to collection for their brilliant shells (Maori traditional costumes feature pipis prominently).

Penrhyn lagoon seems to have offered exceptionally ideal

temperature and alimentionation, together with the appropriate parasitic population, to have delicately tipped the scales towards pearls.

Brief attempts at culturing (via parasitic induction) were made in the 1970s as the cultured industry was gaining a foothold.

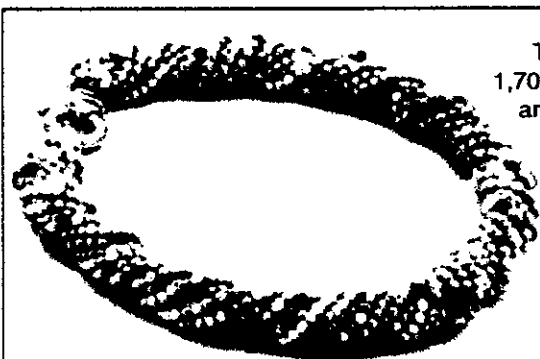
To dive for *P. Maculata*, a license must be obtained and only Cook Islanders (Tongarevans, one would assume) are allowed to apply.

A note about the 'Cook Island Pearl Fisheries' in the Fall of 1998, by Terry Coldham, an Australian gemologist, on *Ruby&Sapphire.com*, citing:

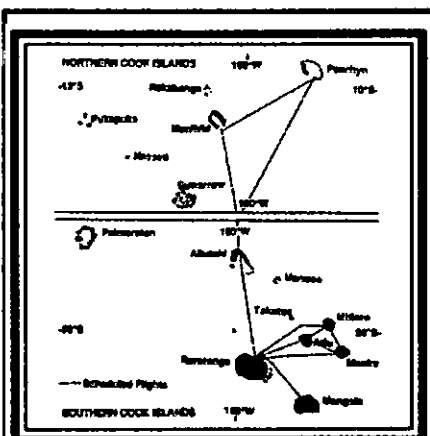
"... we spent a day collecting these small [pipi] oysters off a few coral heads in the lagoon. They are in about two to four feet of water and occur in large numbers.

"We then proceeded to open them, looking for natural pearls. We did very well, found about twelve in some 600 oysters. They ranged from white to golden and have a beautiful luster. Most were well shaped and ranged in size from 2mm to 5mm. One large one of about 8mm was attached to the shell, the amazing thing being that the shell is only about 20mm across and it's hard to believe the oyster could live with such a relatively large object inside it."

[Editor: I well remember sitting at a welcoming feast on Tekake William's kaoa over a decade ago, opening mounds of *P. maculata*, nibbling out the meat and spitting the tiny, offending seeds at each other, amid raucous gales of laughter and unbelievable camaraderie. There must have been thousands and thousands of pipis left imbedded in the sands of the compound. Alas, no more. These buried treasures were all washed away—along with most kaoas—by Cyclone Martin in late October, 1997.]



The Te Poe O Te Kuki Airani has 1,700 pipis, 3-3.5mm, on 12 strands and an 18k handmade clasp, with interspersed peridot, garnet, amethyst and amber. It took one full month to drill, and is one of a kind, produced for the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Cook Islands cultured pearl trade by a prominent local pearling family.



Rarotonga is the seat of Cook Islands' government which is situated 1630 nautical miles northeast of Auckland, New Zealand. Fifteen islands comprise this nation which covers a total land area of about 240 square kilometers, but which is spread out over more than two million square kilometers of the southwest Pacific Ocean. The islands, named after explorer Captain James Cook who first sighted Manuae (Hervey Island) in 1773, were first settled about 800AD as part of the great Polynesian migration... were declared a British protectorate in 1888... came under control of New Zealand in 1891.... and were granted independence in 1965. Cook Islanders retain citizenship rights to New Zealand. There are two main groups of islands in the Cooks. In the south are Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Mangaia, Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, Manuae, Takutea and Palmerston. The northern islands are more remote and widely dispersed: Penrhyn, Manihiki, Pukapuka, Rakahanga, Suvarrow and Nassau. Five of the southern islands and two of the northern group are serviced by a local air carrier, Air Rarotonga. Both English and Maori are commonly spoken.

Steve continues: *My conjecture is that this effort to cultivate the *P. maculata* was a noble attempt to retain Penryhn's unique personality (in the wine business we use the French term "terroir").*

Tragically, warmer temperatures and lowering tides in addition to overcollection have exposed and drastically reduced pipi populations, making ongoing pipi pearl collection a sporadic and unpredictable business, and culturing being totally out of the question.

*At our request, the creator of *Te Poe* scoured his 1970s inventories for the 10 large poe pipi in the image attached [see upper left, page 8], ranging from 6.5mm to 8mm in a full range of shades. A necklace to complement *Te Poe Pipi O Te Kuki Airani* in a more formal, elegant style is the objective.*

As an edible pearl oyster, often the insignificantly small pearls were more a nuisance than value (like (like the seeds in an orange) in comparison with the shells themselves. We can only hope that

awareness of poe pipi as an endangered species might be of some assistance in guaranteeing their preservation.

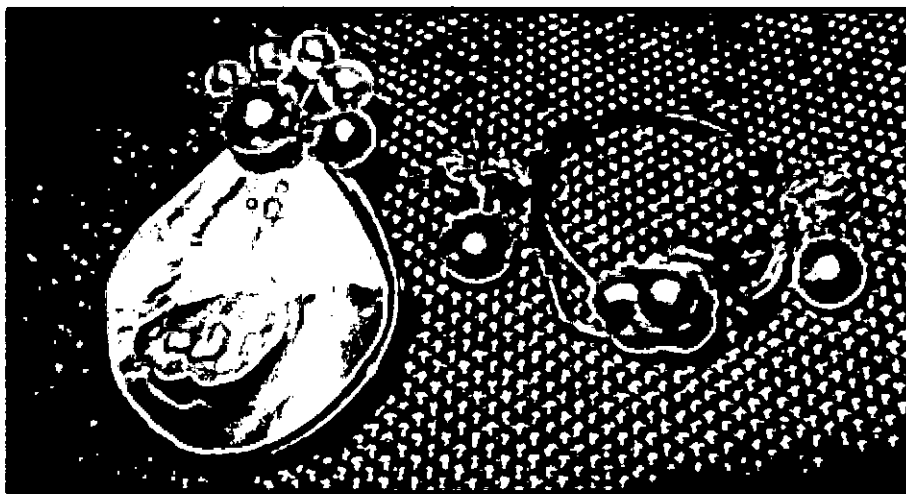
"PIPI PEARLS"

Pipis don't grow pearls
I know that
Ocean wading
My feet feel for them instead
Digging this way and that
Evicting seaward indigenous
inhabitants
Colonising my flax pipi basket
Soon to be
Fritters to fatten my urban prince

Poem by Simon Inez Harriman of New Zealand. Published October 2005 on *PoemHunter.com*.

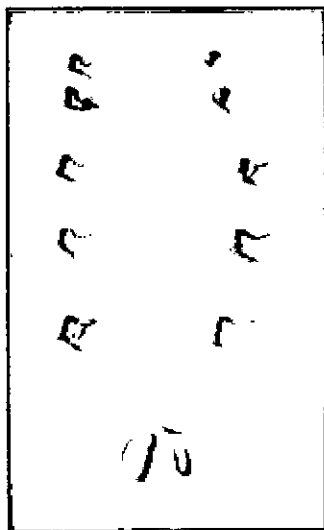
Steve ends: *Our primary desire is to acquire pearls in as direct and uncompromised manner possible. I have come to love pearls in and of themselves via poe pipi and have heretofore been immune to the jewelry bug altogether. A steep curve lies ahead!*

"Passion" to page 8



The rather paltry pipi collection of The Editor... small but tendering very bright and lasting memories. The "tongue" sticking out of the *P. maculata* shell (left), graced by a regal pipi crown, is both slightly erotic and tremendously amusing.

"Passion" from page 7



These ten larger pipis (6.5 to 8mm) and an absolutely gorgeous 14mm Australian drop (left) were made into a classical platinum and diamond necklace (right) whose Cook Island name is *Poe lo Mata Nui*.

The diamonds in this piece pay tribute to the traditional celestial navigational skills of the Polynesian race, says its creator.

Notes on the *Poe lo Mata Nui* by Ben Bergman of Rarotonga

"Koau Teia Ko Tangaroa, Ko Rongo, Ko Io."

"I am Tangaroa, I am Rongo, I am Io."

In ancient Cook Islands culture there are the physical and ethereal worlds. Mangaian legend states that the twin Gods Tangaroa and Rongo were thus defined, Rongo was an inhabitant of the spiritual world while Tangaroa resided in the material realm.

When considering the creation of this new jewelry piece, this cultural duality came into play, hence why I have used the twin chain construction.

But duality is a wonderful thing and can exist on many levels—as such it is a constant theme of this necklace.

Given that I was not born on Rarotonga but came to live there as a young child, I have up until quite recently questioned my cultural origins and loyalties. I found that there was no easy answer.

To declare for one meant denying the other so I decided to have the best of both worlds and acknowledged myself a 'hybrid'.

As a long time dancer/performer of Cook Islands culture, I had participated in the prestigious Cook Islands 'Dancer of the Year' contests of 1996, 2000, 2002.

During these performances I took on the persona

of Tangaroa, God of the Ocean and part of my chant written above (a judged criteria for the contest) I have found to be an inspiration for this new jewelry piece.

The persona of the God, I felt was relevant as he is the guardian of the Ocean and as such all that comes from it—including pearls.

Bringing this all together was quite a challenge!!

The natural pearls not only reflect the interests of Steve & Almudena but (like *Tē Poe*) also acknowledge both my family's presence in the Cook Islands and an historic pearling area. The Australian white SSP drop at the center of this piece reflects Bergman family origins.

The number of pearls in this piece totals 11. In numerology the combination of these numbers equals 2, the central theme of this necklace.

The diamonds in this piece beautifully enhance the pearls and pay tribute to the traditional celestial navigational skills of the Polynesian race.

As we navigate our daily existence within an increasingly integrated global culture, we encounter many anomalies. Perhaps it is judicious to view these differences from the perspective of 'Io Mata Nui', an enlightened approach of multiple perspectives. ♦



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SCANNING THE PEARL WORLD

HAWAII

Scientists in Hawaii have made a breakthrough in developing a stronger disease-resistant pearl oyster. This process developed by Dale Sarver Ph.D. and John Patterson Ph.D. may well help to revive the Japanese pearl industry that has been so devastated by pollution and disease.

Working with Australian akoya and Hawaiian Black Lip varieties, they used modern genetic engineering techniques to produce strains of oysters that have the potential to fight off infection from bacteria and other pathogens.

Virulent bacteria can be a major problem in pearl culture. Biological pathogens are implicated in crippling mortality in Japan, China, Cook Islands, and Marshall Islands. Even if bacteria are not the primary problem, they can ultimately compromise the oyster through secondary infections.

Bacterial blooms can kill vast numbers of oysters at any life stage, but especially after the seeding operation when they are more vulnerable to infection. In addition, even small pinpoint infections in the pearl sac can result in imperfections in the nacre greatly reducing their value.

Any improvement resulting in increase disease resistance would greatly assist in the recovery of this great industry.

While no animal can exist without some sort of system to fight off infections, pearl oysters are known to possess only primitive immune systems.

These improved strains of oysters have the added ability to produce immune factors that are known to be lethal to bacteria and other infective agents.

The process has been successfully repeated several times and produced thousands of oysters proven to possess this factor, and a significant reference and seed population has been retained.

In addition, this process can be used to introduce other factors involved in nacre formation, amplification, growth, and possibly color.

Sarver and Patterson are seeking partners to commercialize this technology and incorporate it into the production process of the most innovative farming operations.

Inquiries can be directed to Dr. Sarver at 808-322-7108 or dalesarver@hawaii.rr.com, or Dr. Patterson at 808-634-0388, or tween20@hotmail.com.

NEW YORK

Christie's auction house has received a record price for the Baroda Pearls, a two-strand natural-pearl necklace with matching earrings, brooch and ring which sold on April 25th for \$7.096 million to a private Asian buyer.

The necklace featured 68 of the finest and largest pearls from the seven-strand natural-pearl necklace that once formed the cornerstone of the Royal Treasury of the Maharaja of Baroda.

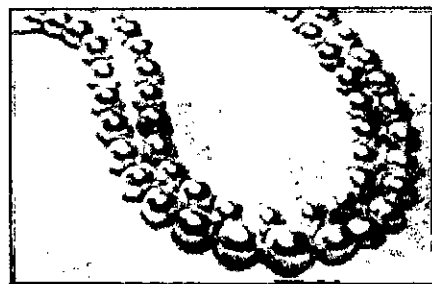
The pearls sold during the "Magnificent Jewels" auction

held on April 25, which netted more than \$39 million with 90 percent of the lots selling.

The sale also set a record for the highest per-carat price ever paid for a sapphire, when a cushion-cut, 22.66-carat Kashmir sapphire sold to an anonymous buyer for \$3.064 million.

"This auction marks a turning point in the jewelry world where original designs, rarity and provenance prove to be just as important as the quality of the gem," Christie's Head of Jewelry Rahul Kadaki said.

This extraordinary two-strand natural pearl necklace is strung with sixty-eight of the largest pearls from the famed seven-strand natural pearl necklace that formed the cornerstone of the Royal Treasury of the Maharaja of Baroda.



This exceedingly rare and historically important necklace presents an unrivaled opportunity for collectors through its combination of royal provenance, unrivaled quality, and exceptional rarity.

"Having amassed huge quantities of pearls from all over the Gulf region, the Indian Royal families were famed for the superlative natural pearls in their treasuries.

"The seven-strand Baroda "SCANNING" to page 11

pearl necklace was the masterpiece of all these collections. The two-row necklace now comprising sixty-eight of the finest and largest pearls of this superb necklace encapsulates everything the modern collector could expect from the most important pearl necklace in the world," said Rahul Kadakia, Head of Jewelry for Christie's Americas.



In India, the pearl was treasured most among all other gems and was used prolifically, adorning the magnificent royal dress of the Maharajas of India and woven into ornate decorative objects.

Over the centuries, the Maharajas came known for their lavish taste, and their eagerness for vast quantities of pearls to adorn their crown jewels, symbolizing their wealth and power, often reached mythical proportions.

Notable examples that illustrate the boundless riches of a Maharaja include an ornamental belt of one hundred rows of pearls; a majestic seed pearl and bejeweled canopy; and the magnificent seven-strand Baroda pearl necklace.

Considered to be one of the

most notable jewelry collectors of the nineteenth century, the Maharaja of Baroda, Khande Rao Gawkwar (r. 1856-1870), possessed an unparalleled collection of state jewels. Most remarkable in his collection was the famous "Star of the South" diamond, a Brazilian diamond of 129 carats, and the "English Dresden," a drop-shaped diamond of 78.53 carats, both of which were set together in a triple-tiered diamond necklace worn by the Maharaja.

In addition to diamonds, Khande Rao came to possess an extraordinary necklace composed of seven strands of perfectly matched and graduated natural pearls. This necklace was among the most expensive items in the Baroda treasury and it remained among its most prized jewels.

In 1943, Maharaja Pratapsingh Gaekwar (r. 1939-1947) made headlines by marrying Sita Devi, his second wife. Referred to as "The Indian Wallace Simpson" by the Western media, she went on to become one of the most flamboyant Maharanis of all time, known for her passion for jewels and strong personality.

Upon marrying the Maharaja, Sita Devi received the jewels from the Baroda treasury that dated back to Mughal times, as well as the renowned seven-strand pearl necklace and the three-row diamond necklace suspending the "Star of the South" and the "English Dresden."

While many of Sita Devi's jewels were sold in Monaco in later years, the seven-strand pearl necklace remained a part of the Baroda Royal Treasury.

The current lot featured the largest and most perfect pearls from the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh strands of the historic,

rare, and world-renowned seven-strand necklace.

Its two large strands, joined by a cushion-cut diamond Cartier clasp, consist of sixty-eight graduated pearls, measuring approximately 9.47 to 16.04mm, all impeccably matched in color, luster and shape.

Never before has such a supreme example with exceptional provenance appeared at auction.

The necklace is complemented by a pair of natural pearl and diamond ear pendants, a brooch, and a ring en suite.

ABU DHABI

It has been passed down for 800 years, from Chinese emperors to Marco Polo. The name of its current owner is a secret. But hundreds of people were scheduled to get the chance to buy the world's largest natural pearl on the market.



The 575-carat Arco Valley Pearl

The "Arco Valley Pearl" - eight centimeters in length - was supposed to be up for bidding at Abu Dhabi's Emirates Palace and on the Internet, where it was estimated to fetch up to \$8 million.

The 575-carat pearl from 12th century Mongolia once belonged to Chinese emperors, Persian kings, the grandson of Genghis Khan and Marco Polo.

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"SCANNING" from page 11

The value of the saltwater pearl was based on its size, color, weight, exclusivity, history and records of what people have been prepared to pay for similar precious items.

"It's 800 years old and it still takes your breath away," said Khaled al-Sayegh, 35, a jeweler from Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the auction organizing committee.

Despite its extraordinary provenance, the Arco is nowhere near the largest pearl ever discovered.

The 240-millimeter Pearl of Allah is the world's largest. It was found by a diver off the Philippine island of Palawan in 1934 and is stored in a museum in that country.

The Arco Valley pearl, named after a previous owner from Austria's Arco Valley family dynasty, is white with a touch of blue, mixed with cream colors on its sides.

It has been drilled three times: to fit among the jewels of an unknown woman's tiara, to go with a ceremonial mandarin suit and to fit a crown or turban decorated with precious stones belonging to a Persian king. And it has since been restored to its original shape.

Court documents prove the pearl was owned by Kublai Khan, the 13th Century emperor of China and grandson of Genghis Khan. Experts believe Kublai Khan gave the pearl to Marco Polo as a gift.

Al-Sayegh said he and his partner brought the Arco Valley pearl to Abu Dhabi earlier this year. He said the pearl was privately owned but did not disclose the owner's name.

At least 400 people from the Emirates, Gulf countries, China,

India, Britain, the United States and Tahiti were expected to attend the auction.

But a death in the Emirates royal family postponed the auction of the largest pearl on the world market, just hours before the bidding was to start.

According to the organizers of the auction, the news that Sheik Saeed Bin Nahyan Bin Mubarak al Nahyan— son of the Emirates' education and science minister Sheik Nahyan bin Mubarak al Nahyan— had died in a car crash led to the postponement.

No new date was set, said Paul Fletcher, manager of the Dubai-based Lifestyle Auctions.

Auction proceeds were supposed to help rehabilitate the pearl trade in Abu Dhabi and the Gulf region, where a century ago people harvested treasures hidden in the oyster beds of the sea.

"The organizers felt it was not appropriate to celebrate a revival of the pearl trade at the time of mourning in the royal family and in the Emirates," Fletcher said.

DUBAI

The Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC) announced it will establish the Dubai Pearl Exchange (DPE) in an effort to further expand the precious-commodities sector and revive the UAE's historical status as a destination for pearl diving and trading.

The pearl exchange will be set up under the auspices of the Diamonds and Coloured Stones Division of the DMCC. It is designed as a platform for pearl trading from around the world and will have auction facilities for traders.

Ahmed bin Sulayem, chief operating officer of the DMCC, noted in a statement how the pearl industry, valued at \$1 billion in

rough form, has recovered significantly since 2005. He said prices have shown a continuous upward trend, despite a 23.6% rise in world pearl production, reaching 1,552 tons in 2005. He also noted that pearls are popular in jewelry and sell for a wide range of price points, from \$50 to \$50,000 per pearl grain.

"The establishment of the Dubai Pearl Exchange enables DMCC to provide complete infrastructure for members to trade in all precious commodities," he added.

Tawfic Farah, executive director of the DMCC's Diamonds and Coloured Stones division, said: "While pearl-producing farms span Japan, China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Tahiti, Australia and French Polynesia, the trade and auction of pearls is conducted primarily through Hong Kong. As one of the oldest professions, pearl diving has traditional importance in the UAE and the region, and DMCC is keen on rebuilding the pearl trade to attain its historical significance."

He added that Dubai is already a global center for the gold and diamond trade, and that the city's strategic location, industry-specific infrastructure, international standards and best practices, and upcoming projects in the pearl trade will provide traders with distinct advantages.

"It is our mission to make the Dubai Pearl Exchange a world-class trading facility that supports the pearl industry," he said.

The DPE will develop a "one-stop shop" for the pearl trade and foster professional business relationships with major players in the pearl, colored stone and diamond industries. Pearl-grading services will also be provided, through a partnership with the Pearl Laboratory in Bahrain.

Membership in the pearl ex-

change is limited and will be given to DMCC-licensed companies.

"PEARLS OF DUBAI"

A new plan to brand cultured pearls from Dubai and re-establish the region's significance as a pearl producer through the Dubai Pearl Exchange was announced during the opening day of the 12th Biennial International Colored Gemstone Association (ICA) Congress.

Ahmed bin Sulayem, chief operating officer of the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC), laid out plans for the new project, which will bring Dubai-brand pearls from production to retail.

"The aim of this ambitious project is to revive the U.A.E.'s historical significance as a leading destination for pearl diving and trading," Sulayem said. "The project will comprise a pearl farm, waterfront museum and retail destination."

Once it is up and running, Pearls of Dubai will produce Dubai-brand pearls at offshore farms. Visitors to the center will be transported to select pearl production sites on traditional sailing vessels called "dhows" and may even have a chance to try pearl diving firsthand, Sulayem added.

"Pearls of Dubai will develop the entire value chain of the industry from production to retail. The newly created Dubai Pearl Exchange will form an integral part of this chain by providing an exclusive trading platform," he said.

Tawfic Farah, executive director of diamonds and colored stones for the DMCC, said the project, which will begin sometime this month, will be undertaken as a joint venture with an

unnamed Australian company and should be in full production by September 2008.

Akoya pearls, the type currently produced in Japan, will be the first cultivated, but the prospect of culturing South Sea pearls are also being studied, Farah said.

He described the waters surrounding Dubai as environmentally-friendly, and noted that farming operations to cultivate pearls are already a year old at Rasal Khaime in the United Arab Emirates.

Throughout history, Dubai, and the United Arab Emirates as a whole, has been a pearl-trading center, and pearls were considered a backbone of the country's early economy, said Farah. Every major trading family in the United Arab Emirates could trace its roots back to pearl diving and trading, he added.

JAPAN

Could it be that Japanese akoya is making a comeback?

This is the report from Imperial's "Pearl Perspectives" (<http://www.pearls.com/news2/pearlperspectives28.htm>), an always interesting treatise on Peter Bazar's recent travels throughout the pearl world, what he has found, and what he has brought back to expand the scope of the goods that Imperial Deltah is offering in the U.S.

We travel the world to find the finest pearls. For the last month, we have covered the Pacific from Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong, New Zealand, The Cook Islands, and French Polynesia, Peter writes.

We are getting this good news on Japanese akoya from our suppliers in Kobe, he continues.

While this year's crop consists of roughly the same amount of hama-age as last year, the quality is better. By this we mean that the nacre coating is thicker and the luster is brighter.

The reason for the change is "Koshimono". The translation of this word means "second summer," and the Japanese literally leave approximately 50%-60% of the nucleated oysters in the water for a second summer or 18 to 20 months as opposed to the normal 10-14 months.

Last year only 35% of the crop was kept in the water for a second season.

This tells us that the oysters are healthier than they have been for many years. And these healthier oysters are a result of cleaner water with more nutrients and a successful crossbreeding of Japanese and Chinese akoya oysters.

Years ago when crossbreeding of oysters was tried, many of the oysters died from a virus... and those that survived were very weak. This situation has been rectified and we are seeing the positive results in better quality pearls.

There are three main cultivating areas in Japan; Mie, Kyushu and Shikoku.

The results in Mie this year were not very good due to unusually cold water during the winter.

This cold water was too much of a shock on the oysters' systems and, as a result, the output from Mie was 25%-30% less than last year.

Many of the smaller sized pearls are produced here so there will be less 5mm and under available, while the quantity of 6mm stayed about the same.

One positive result for Mie is that the farmers can now insert two nuclei in the oyster instead of

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the one that has been inserted for many years.

THE COOK ISLANDS

We had received reports from several sources that Peter, during his visit to the Cook Islands, had made a purchase of a crop of black SSPs, and was planning to display these at the Imperial booth in the JCK Show in Las Vegas.

Peter wrote about his visit to Manihiki as follows: *Manihiki sits atop an underwater mountain rising 13,000 feet (4000m) above the ocean floor. In common with most atolls, Manihiki is flat and only a few feet above sea level.*

The export of black pearls from Manihiki places it as the second biggest producer in the world of these fascinating gems, along with the export of mother-of-pearl shell. Not a bad effort for fewer than 600 people who live on two inhabited islands, Tukao and Tauhunu on either side of Manihiki's magnificent lagoon.

Pearl farms ingeniously sited on built-up coral boulders seem to float over this vast water and



Aerial and close-up views of Manihiki, in the northern portion of the Cook Islands.

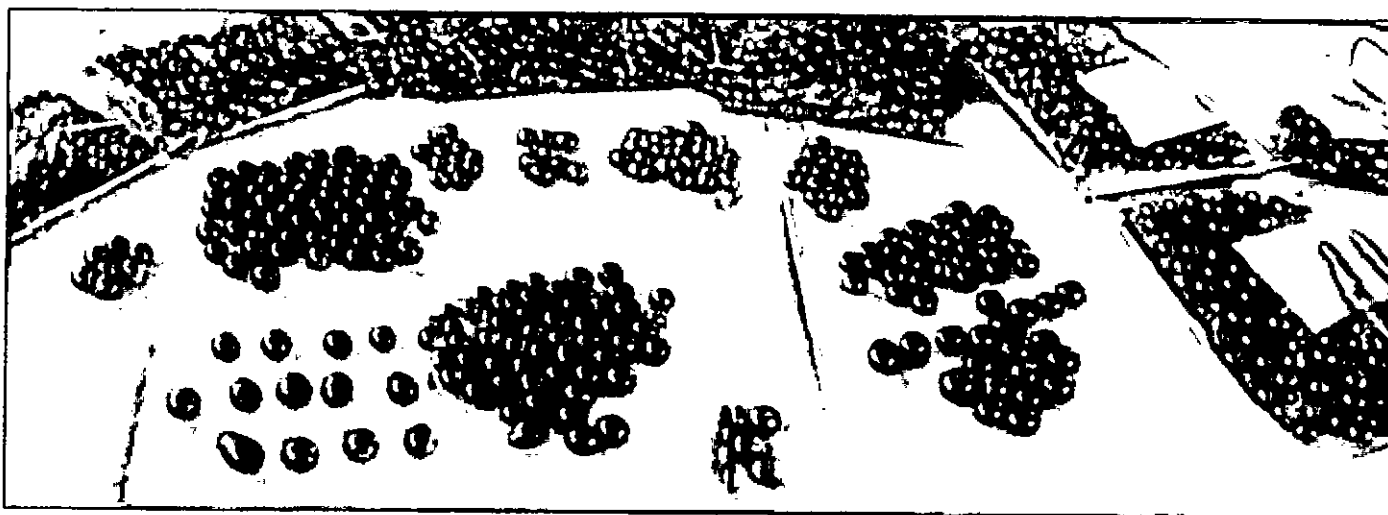
are dotted over the entire lagoon. Sizes vary, from large two-storied buildings belonging to companies, to modest constructions owned by small farmers.

Some hobby farmers merely have pearl shell lines stretched out, and like all other operations, the lines are kept floating and visible to passing boats by buoys

The lines that crisscross the



lagoon are awaiting harvest time and— hopefully— the reward of quality black pearls that will end up in jewelry worn all around the world. ♦



A typical Manihiki *P. margaritifera* harvest.

A JOURNALIST'S OBSESSION

My name is Stephen Bloom and I'm a pearl nut.

Bo Torrey wrote about me in *Pearl World* several issues ago. I'm the journalist, author and professor, writing *Tears of Mermaids: The Secret History of Pearls*, to be published by St. Martin's Press in 2009. We're hoping the book will popularize pearls by revealing a raft of quirky and fascinating stories behind them. No photos, just a detective story of sorts, tracing pearls from grower's hand to woman's bosom.

I have some experience with book writing (*Postville: A Clash of Cultures in Heartland America*, a bestseller published by Harcourt in 2000), and magazine and newspaper articles (I was a newspaper reporter for many years at the *Dallas Morning News* and *Los Angeles Times*, and have written for *Smithsonian* and *The New York Times Magazine*). I'm not an expert on pearls, but I'm a fast learner.

The book's primary market isn't pearl dealers or even pearl enthusiasts. I want to use pearls as a metaphor to help understand issues like globalization, world politics, the environment, culture wars, colonialism, exploitation, danger and greed, fashion, wealth, adventure, and indomitable human spirit.

To get at all those stories, I've been traveling the world, pestering scores of biologists, growers, dealers, jewelers, wholesalers and retailers to tell me their insider stories.

In the winter, I started in Tucson (AGTA GemFair); in the spring, I visited Japan (Kobe,



Steve in the Forbidden City

Shima, Ago Bay), Hong Kong (Jewellery Show), China (Zhuji, Shanghai, Beijing, the Leizhou Peninsula), and the Philippines (Manila, Palawan). In April, I spent a week in New York City, covering the Baroda Pearls auction at Christie's. This summer, I plan to travel to French Polynesia (Papeete, Apataki, Marutea Sud) and Australia (Broome, Darwin, Kuri Bay, Sydney). Next year, I hope to get to Mexico (Guaymas) and to Margarita Island, where Columbus first caught a glimpse of pearls on his third voyage to the New World. I'd like also to go to Majorca (to see how the fakes are made) and the Baja California (where John Steinbeck's classic, *The Pearl*, takes place).

But why write a book on pearls in the first place?

I think my fascination has to do with a pearl necklace my mother used to wear when I was a child — but only on special occasions. The strand was modest and frugal, as was my family. The necklace had been given to

my mother by her mother as a wedding present.

Preparing to go out, perhaps to celebrate their anniversary, my father would dress in a dark suit and somber tie, my mother would wear a cheerful but demure dress, maybe cotton or rayon.

As a crowning touch, she'd ask my father to fasten the clasp to her one extravagance, the pearl necklace. This was an ordeal. My father would struggle with the clasp, my mother waiting impatiently till he got it right. "Stand still," I recall him telling my mother, both sternly and genially. I was mesmerized by what I thought were small shiny white marbles on a string.

I'd marvel at their sheen and radiance, but what I remember most was the clean clicking sound the pearls made when they touched each other.

Once, maybe twice a year, there they'd be, my parents — two ordinary Americans in the 1950's, arm-in-arm, strolling out the front door of an ordinary New Jersey suburban home, headed to celebrate another year together, a single strand of unfettered glamor around my mother's neck. ♦

Ed: We welcome Stephen back from his odyssey and look forward with eagerness to his anticipated opus. We were one of his earlier contacts, and were astonished that he plowed through all 68 back issues of *Pearl World* (over 16 years' worth) to gain a little knowledge and make contacts. He may be contacted at stephen-g-bloom@uiowa.com.

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GOLD FEVER AT BASELWORLD

Gold Fever took the jewelry world by storm in BaselWorld 2007 as plays on the texture and color of this versatile metal were used to answer the creative imaginings of artists in designs of watches and quality jewelry.

Gold, a classic symbol of wealth and good fortune, was the medium of choice in many of the trend-setting designs on display this year. Partnered with colored stones, gold's warm tones temper the coldness of the most dazzling jewels, striking an ideal balance that catches the eye.

This luxurious metal is the ideal partner of natural-colored gold and champagne South Sea pearls, a fact noted by more exhibitors this year as more golden pearls were visible in booths.

Jacques Branellec, Managing Director of Philippine-based pearl producer Jewelmer, remarked: "Over the past few years, watch companies and top jewelers have been branching out by launching their own pearl jewelry lines. Most of them have created or are about to start their own golden pearl lines, showcasing golden pearls in their jewelry designs."

Furthermore, there has been an increased demand for baroque pearls, Branellec noted. "It seems that more designers and jewelers are recognizing the interesting possibilities of the baroque pearl in jewelry."

Indeed, the unparalleled beauty and versatility of this aquatic gem has been the inspiration of jewelry designs by

Jewelmer. For almost three decades, Jewelmer has showcased the beauty of Philippine SSPs in classic strand necklaces right up to the more elaborate, one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces for which the organization has gained worldwide recognition.

Jewelmer prides itself in being the leading distributor of natural colored golden Philippine SSPs of high luster and exceptional orient in the market today. With the increasing awareness



of pearls by consumers and participation of more players in the industry, the company recognizes the need to educate about the qualities of this mystical gem, including its cultivation as well as its role as a vanguard of Nature.

Jewelmer's participation in the BaselWorld fair has established the company's presence in the European market.

"We are proud to take part in BaselWorld as a representative of the Philippines and our

national gem, the Philippine South Sea pearl, in this part of the world," said Mr. Branellec. Indeed, Jewelmer is the only company from the Philippines that has taken part in this prestigious gathering of jewelers from all over the world.

Jewelmer works hand in hand with the Philippine Association of Pearl Producers and Exporters (PAPPE) and undertakes many initiatives in promoting the Philippine SSP to the rest of the world.

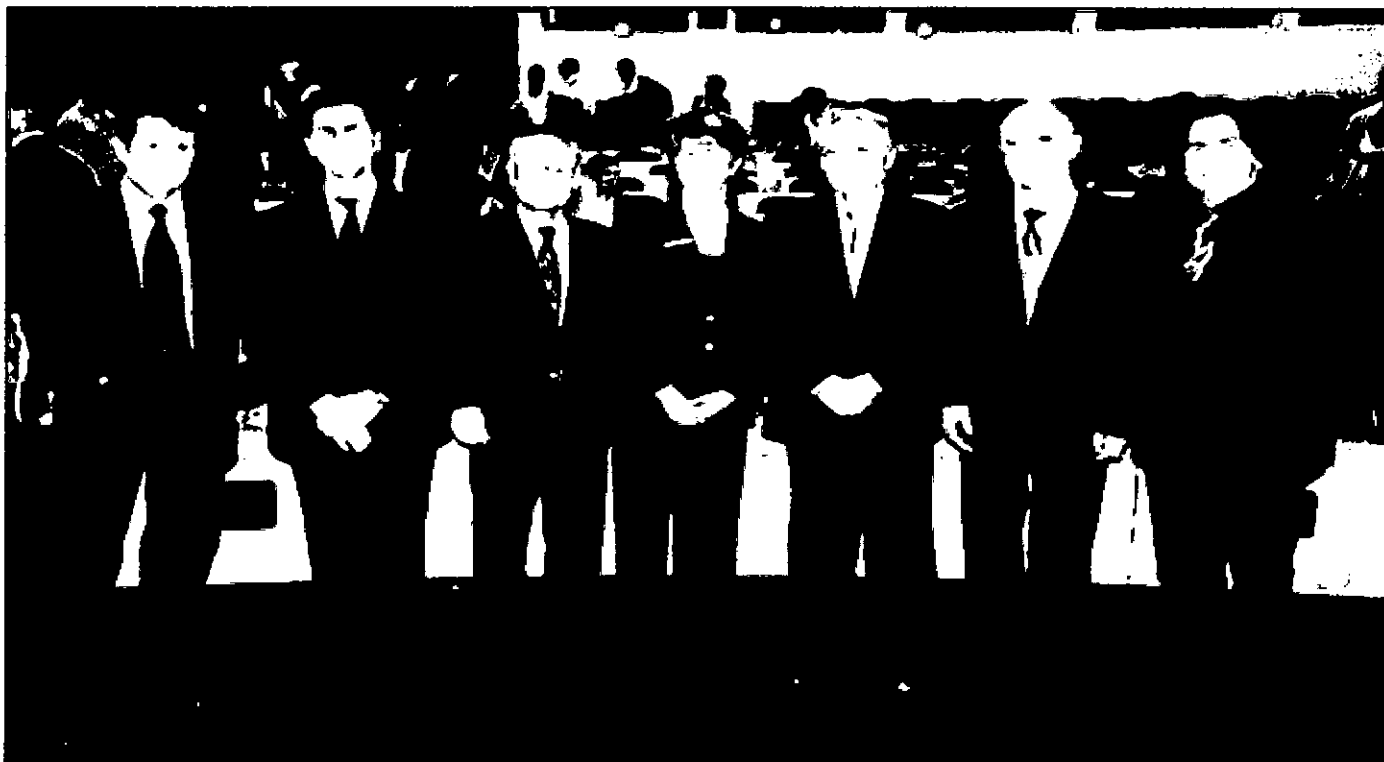
In fact, Jewelmer will be taking part in a Pearl Exhibition which will be held in the National Museum of Natural History in Paris this coming October where variable "art" jewelry pieces will be placed on display for the public to enjoy.

Also on exhibit will be images from Jewelmer's extensive archives focusing on the golden Philippine South Sea pearl's cultivation, as well as the pristine environment in which it thrives.

The golden Philippine SSP has become both a symbol and an inspiration.

"It's high time that the jewelry industry pays more attention to the pearl and what it represents: the interdependence between man and nature that produces this magical gift from the sea."

All in all, auspicious tidings abound as "Gold Fever" grabs the imagination of the jewelry industry in the year 2007... and Jewelmer will definitely be basking in its glow as the company participates in major trade shows around the world. ♦



The panelists of the GIA GemFest Basel 2007 (from left to right): Mr. Nicholas Paspaley (Paspaley Group of Companies), Mr. Thomas Moses (Gemological Institute of America), Mr. Shigeru Akamatsu (Mikimoto & Co.), Ms. Alice Keller (GIA), Mr. Kenneth Scarratt (GIA), Mr. Jacques Branellec (Jewelmer), Mr. Martin Coeroli.

G.I.A. PEARL FORUM: BASEL

The Gemological Institute of America (GIA) convened leaders and members of the Pearl community for a Pearl Forum at the Basel Convention Center on the 14th of April to discuss the future of the pearl industry, particularly seeking inputs and feedback on their most recently unveiled comprehensive pearl grading system which integrates the different methods utilized by different pearl-producing countries in judging the quality of the gem.

Among the panelists invited to speak at the Pearl Forum was Mr. Jacques Branellec, Incum-

bent President of the Philippine Association of Pearl Producers and Exporters (PAPPE) as well as Managing Director of the Philippine-based pearl producer and fine jewelry maker, Jewelmer International Corporation.

Mr. Branellec's vast experience in pearl farming spans over three and a half decades, most of which has been focused on the cultivation of the golden variety Philippine South Sea pearl.

Other members of the distinguished panel of speakers were: Mr. Shigeru Akamatsu, Senior Manager, Sales Division of K. Mikimoto & Co., Ltd., Mr. Mar-

tin Coeroli, General Manager of Perles de Tahiti, and Mr. Nicholas Paspaley, Executive Chairman of Paspaley Pearls Group of Companies.

MR. BRANELLEC'S TALK

"There is a very strong element of subjectivity in the appreciation of pearls. . . appreciating the pearl will always require years of experience as well as the personal and individual touch (of the pearl expert); suffice to say,

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"Scanning" from page 17



Mr. Jacques Branellec speaks for the Philippine South Sea Pearl at GIA GemFest Basel 2007.

utilizing a machine or following a grading system or using of a reference scale will never be enough," Mr. Branellec stated.

He added: "All pearls are unique and each is an organic gem, thus making it difficult to calibrate its qualities perfectly. A pearl is a product of the environment being a biological crystal, which originates from the lips of the oyster solidifying through alchemic principles into

wonderful aragonite crystals.

"A pearl is subject to Nature's peccadilloes, thus the conditions must be ideal in order to produce a rare and precious gem among gems."

Mr. Branellec described the quality of pearls through the Japanese word *anadama* (a pearl that exhibits the best orient, luster, shape, skin purity, and natural color).

"This is why we pearl farmers have never considered the pearl a commodity but more as a prestigious living gem."

A true advocate for the environment, Jacques Branellec believes that the future of the industry depends on the environment where this "prestigious living gem" is born.

"A pearl is an indicator of the health of our world. The future of the industry will depend on the evolution and the respect of man on the environment. . . without it, gem quality pearls will soon be a thing of the past."

Mr. Branellec ended his speech with a short video clip of the unique characteristics of Philippine South Sea Pearls.

Featured in the clip were the five value factors (size, shape, color, skin purity, and orient) that the members of Philippine Association of Pearl Producers and Exporters (PAPPE) have been using over the years in grading the quality of the exquisite and majestic golden Philippine South Sea pearl. ♦



Jeweler models adorned with natural-colored gold Philippine South Sea pearl strands distribute educational DVDs to participants of the GIA GemFest.



Jacques Branellec, incumbent president of the Philippine Association of Pearl Producers (PAPPE) and Managing Director of Jeweler, with Jeweler model at GIA GemFest Basel 2007.

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A WATERFALL OF PEARLS

A first-of-its kind product, a necklace with over 100,000 individually strung Japanese akoya “poppyseed” keshi pearls approximately .8mm in size, was recently unveiled by The Pearl Exporting Company, the largest purveyor of akoya keshi pearls in the world.

“These keshi are natural Japanese seawater pearls strung by hand in the traditional method by skilled professionals,” said Sundeep Shah, CEO. In contrast to the average keshi necklace, which has 20 or 30 strands and uses 20,000-30,000 pearls, the new offering incorporates over 100,000 into its design. “We have perfected the art of stringing keshi and brought our pieces to a whole new conceptual level,” said Shah.

New customers are often mystified as to the stringing process. “Customers have asked about breakage of strands, but you have to consider that some of these pieces have over 70 strands in the necklace, which actually makes them very strong.”

“I was amazed at the stringing process,” said Akiko Matsumura, owner of the Shinju Boutique in Kobe, Japan. “There is a natural texture to these pearls, which makes them feel like silk. When wearing this necklace, one feels as if they are wrapped in a waterfall of pearls.”

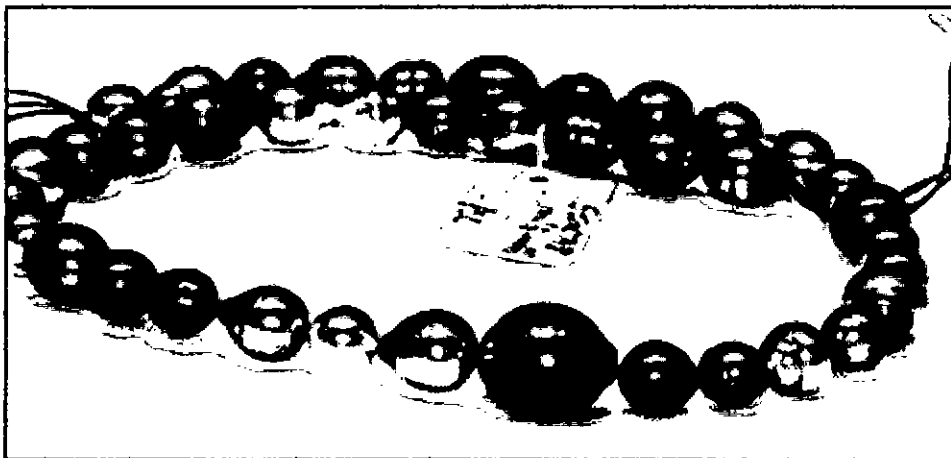
These tiny Japanese akoya keshi have been used in the past for necklaces, pendants, brooches, and earrings, but “never on such a grand scale,” said Shah. ♦

PHOTOS & PRICES **FROM THE TUCSON 2007 SHOW**

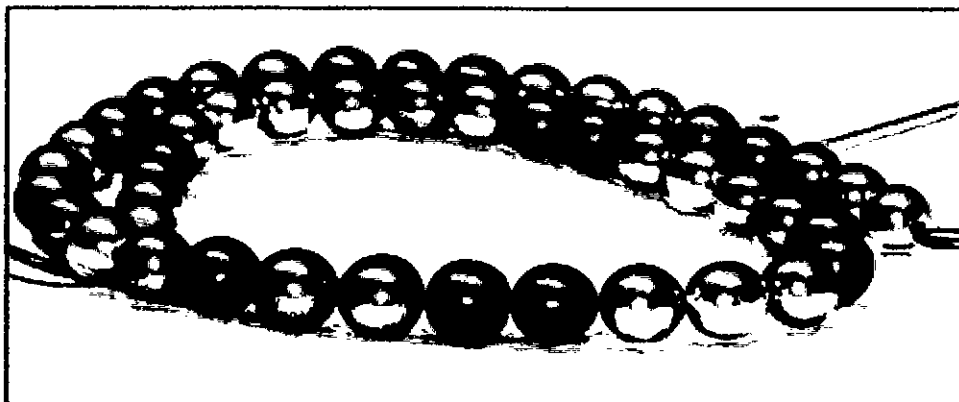
In our last issue (April/May/June 2007) we ran a comprehensive article by Lois Berger on what she found of interest at various pearling venues during the show. However, the issue was so "busy" (one third larger than normal) that we were unable to accompany her statistics and commentary with any photographs and captions of goods being displayed by pearl dealers who were willing to let her grade, photograph and

publish pricing of some of their goods. Well, here they are: a concise snapshot of what the market at the time was looking like in February. We hope you enjoy seeing what the pearl buying public was facing at the time, and hope you refer back to the previous issue for more generic facts and figures. Our thanks go out to Lois for her energetic professionalism in pursuing, year after year, what the American buyer is seeing.

SOUTH SEA CULTURED PEARLS

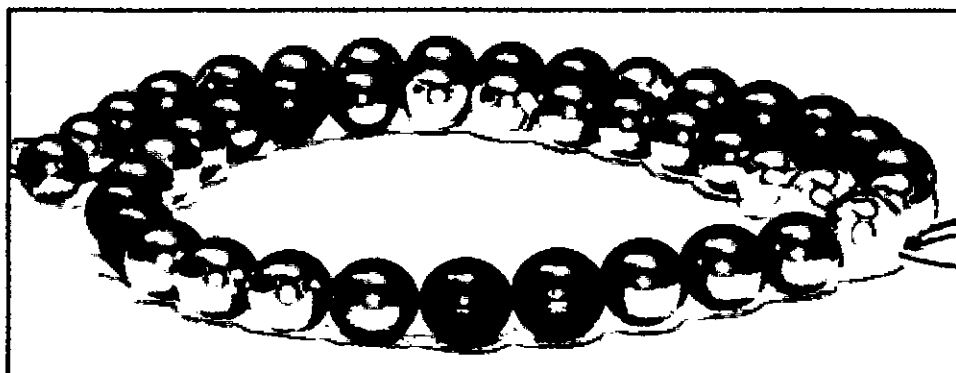


Sea Hunt
Tahitian South Sea
cultured pearls
8x14.8 mm
\$800

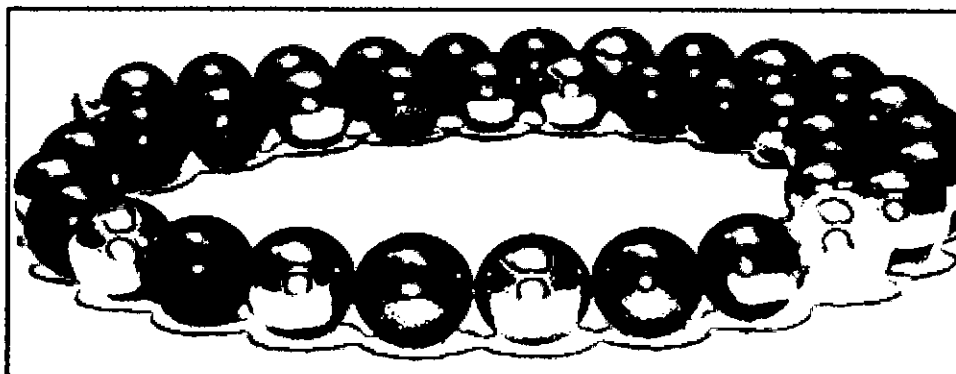


Sea Hunt
Tahitian South Sea
cultured pearls
8x10mm
\$2,500

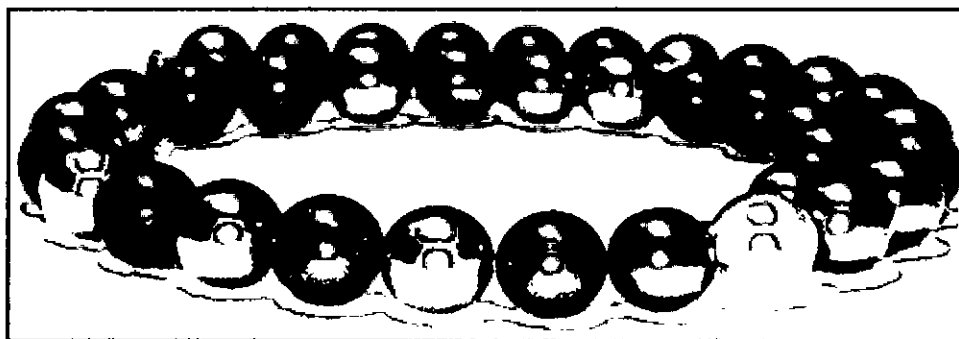
SOUTH SEA CULTURED PEARLS



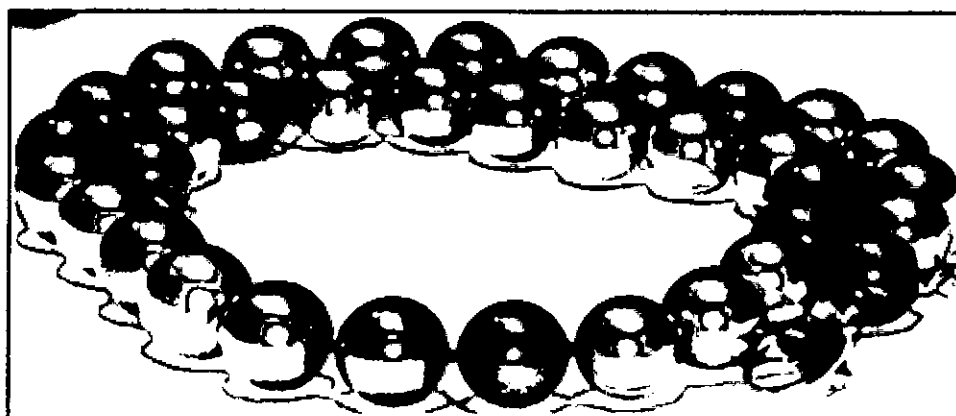
Sea Hunt
Tahitian South Sea
cultured pearls
9x11mm
\$3,500



Sea Hunt
Tahitian South Sea
cultured pearls
10x13.3 mm
\$5,000

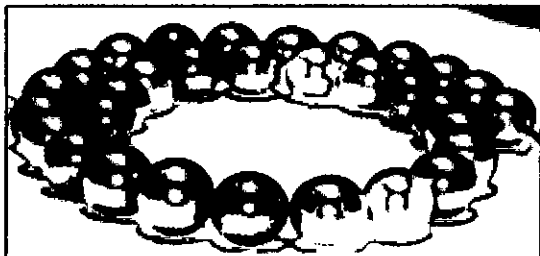


Sea Hunt
Tahitian South
Sea cultured pearls
11x14.5 mm
\$6,500

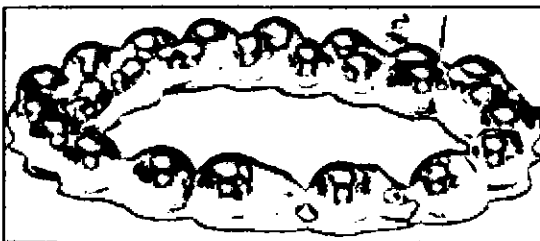


Sea Hunt
Tahitian South Sea
cultured pearls
11x13.4 mm
\$9,200

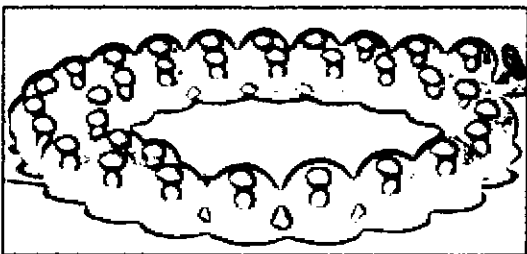
SOUTH SEA CULTURED PEARLS



Sea Hunt
Tahitian South Sea cultured pearls
13x16.1mm
\$16,000



Sea Hunt
South Sea cultured pearls
12x16.2mm
\$5,600

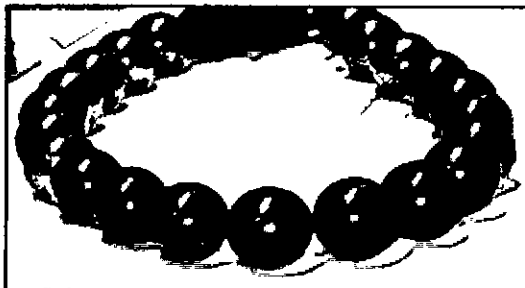


Sea Hunt
Golden South Sea cultured pearls
12x15 mm
\$16,000



Mastoloni
South Sea cultured
pearls
13.7x16.7 mm
\$13,500

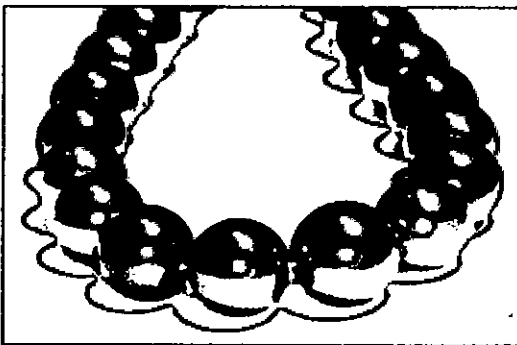
Tara & Sons, Inc.
Tahitian South Sea
cultured pearls
11.2x10.2mm
\$3,000



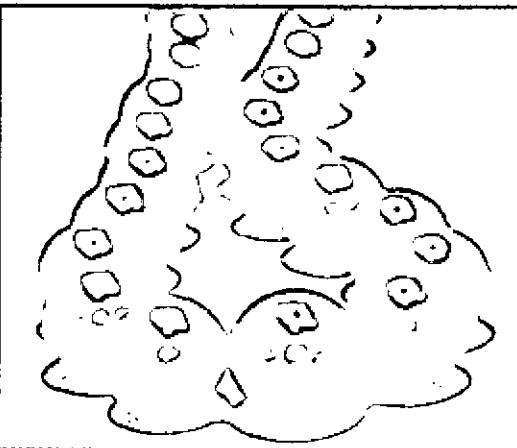
169a
Tara & Sons, Inc.
South Sea
cultured pearls
16.1x14mm
\$12,000



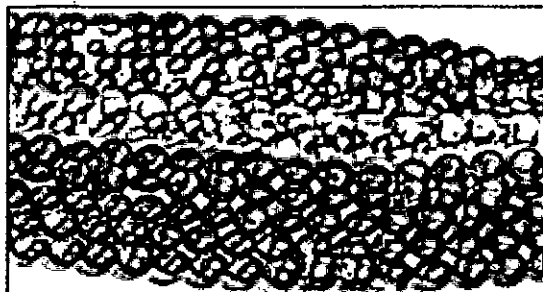
Tara & Sons, Inc.
Tahitian South Sea
cultured pearls
11.2x10.2mm
\$3,000



Mastoloni
South Sea
cultured pearls
14x17.2 mm
\$25,000



CHINESE FRESHWATER CULTURED PEARLS



King's Ransom
CFWCP
8x8.5 mm
White
\$70

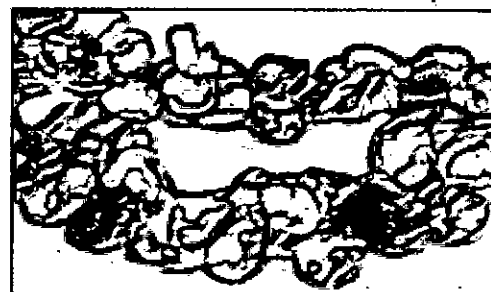


Sea Hunt
CFWCP
7x11 mm
\$250

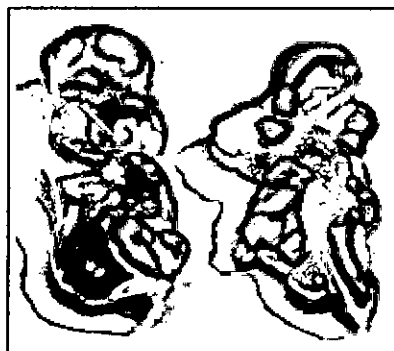


Sea Hunt
CFWCP
20x25 mm
\$1,250

King's Ransom
CFWCP
12x13x35 mm
\$180



King's Ransom
CFWCP
11x16 mm
\$2,200



Freeman Gem Co.
CFWCP
13x6
\$225

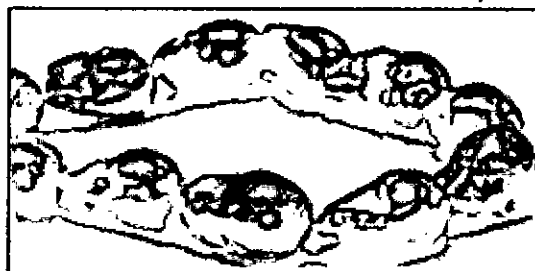


Sea Hun
CFWCP
20x23x18 mm
\$2,500



Sea Hunt
CFWCP
12+ mm
\$1,400

King's Ransom
CFWCP
12x15x30 mm
\$1,500



Die Verbindung. The connection.

NEW & FRESH

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SCHLIESSEN SYSTEME
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KUGELKOPF für

- Perlketten
- Goldketten • Ohrhaken
- Eanhänger • Ringe

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BALL-TYPE for

- pearl necklaces
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QUALITYinside

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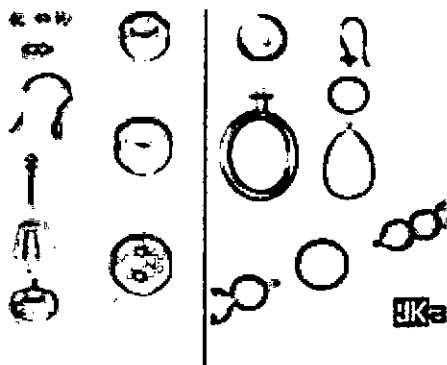
ISO 9001:2000

JK

VICENZA ORO I
14. - 21. 01. 2007
Halle I, Stand 3016

BASEL WORLD
12. - 19. 04. 2007
Halle 2.0, Stand C02

VICENZA ORO II
12. - 16. 05. 2007
Halle I, Stand 3016



TEST THE BEST

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