A Lighthouse Visit to Martha’s Vineyard Island

by Ted and Jo Panayotoff

It was with intense anticipation that we planned a one week visit to Martha’s Vineyard Island to vacation, relax, unwind and visit the five lighthouses there. We planned a two day trip from New Jersey to Martha’s Vineyard with a stopover in Newport, Rhode Island, so we could see as many lighthouses as we could on the way and also visit others on the return trip. We managed to achieve what is our current record for lighthouses photographed on a single trip with a total of 31 lighthouses and one lightship put on film. Although a few are of offshore lights and are only specks on the films, we did see them and photograph them nonetheless. The object of the our trip, Martha’s Vineyard, has five lighthouses on the 18 by 12 mile island. It is a charming place with several distinct and unique characteristics all its own depending on what area of the island you are visiting. Four of the lighthouses are easily accessible; one was only a short walk from our charming bed and breakfast inn. All the active lights are serviced by the ANT (Aids to Navigation Team) at Woods Hole, MA. We’ll cover our lighthouse visit in geographic order from West to East on the island.

Martha’s Vineyard

GAY HEAD LIGHT

All the lighthouses on Martha’s Vineyard Island are on the north shore along Vineyard sound with Gay Head at the westernmost tip. Although we brought our car to the island, we tried to use bicycles for transpor-

Gay Head Lighthouse - Photo by Ted & Jo Panayotoff

tation as much as possible.

The trip to Gay Head was our longest ride; a 42 mile round trip from our inn in Oak Bluffs. The ride is a challenging one, rather hilly for the last 10 miles as you approach Gay Head and climb toward the spectacular cliffs.

Our first trip there was disappointing because when we arrived, it was so foggy that the lighthouse was completely invisible from 100 yards away, not an uncommon occurrence, so we were told.

A second trip, by car, was somewhat more successful for photos but it was still an overcast day. It was on our final day on Martha’s Vineyard that we had our best visit to Gay Head. We had seen a note on a list of island events which spoke of a sunset lighthouse tour of Gay Head, weather permitting. Friday dawned rainy, but by afternoon the weather had cleared so we drove down. We were rewarded with spectacular views of
the cliffs and the lighthouse in the setting sun. Two volunteers from the Vineyard Environmental Research Institute (VERI) arrived to allow access to the small park around the lighthouse and the structure itself. For a $2.00 fee we had access to the entire lighthouse and, being careful not to bump our heads on the rotating acrobike, we watched the sunset from inside the lantern.

The original Gay Head Light dates from 1799 and was of wood construction. The present brick and stone structure dating from 1856, is a unique design and due to the fine efforts of the VERI is in very good shape. The 47 foot tower stands at the top of beautifully colored clay cliffs with the light 160 feet above the water. The area is one of the principal attractions on the island and there is a steady stream of tour buses arriving and departing. The light was automated in 1956 and the beautiful keeper’s house and all the other structures were removed in 1961. The surrounding area was

Gay Head Lighthouse Circa 1905-1910

an Indian reservation of the Wampanoag Indian tribe, several of whom served as keepers during the manned history of the light. The 1st order Fresnel lens, one of the first installed in the United States, was removed in 1952 and is very effectively displayed in a simulated lantern in Edgartown at the Dukes County Historical Society Museum. The sunset tour is a "don’t miss" experience if you visit Martha’s Vineyard. You can contact the VERI at (508) 693-4632 for more information. It is indeed refreshing to see organizations that are willing to work to preserve our lighthouse heritage and they merit our thanks and support.

WEST CHOP LIGHTHOUSE

The harbor at Vineyard Haven is defined by two lighthouses, West Chop (also called Holmes Hole) and East Chop. West Chop is about 2 miles north of the town of Vineyard Haven on Main Street. It is still a "fully equipped" light station with keeper’s house, assistant keeper’s house, oil house and fog horn building on the site. The keeper’s house is occupied by a Coast Guard family so please respect their privacy when photographing. We visited on Sunday and the "keeper" graciously allowed us access to the yard for photos.

West Chop Lighthouse - Photo by Ted & Jo Panayotoff

The 52 foot tall brick structure dates from 1891 and replaced a 25 foot stone tower built in 1817. West Chop Light was the island’s last manned light, automated in 1975.

EAST CHOP LIGHTHOUSE

The east side of Vineyard Haven harbor is lighted by East Chop Light. This light is in a small park on Highland Drive at the north end of the town of Oak Bluffs on Telegraph Hill. It was a short walk from our inn so we visited several times including once at night which is always a great way to see a lighthouse. The 40 foot tall cast iron structure at East Chop is on a high bluff 79 feet above the water. Only the lighthouse remains at the site; the ancillary buildings and keeper’s house were torn down in the 1940’s. It is well maintained by

East Chop Lighthouse - Photo by Ted & Jo Panayotoff
the same organization that is responsible for Gay Head Light. According to some information there is an occasional "open house" during the summer months. The site is unusual in that the earliest light, dating from 1869, was privately maintained as was its replacement in 1872 after the first light burned down. The U.S. Government purchased the lighthouse and land in 1875 and replaced the light with the present cast iron structure in 1877. The light was automated in 1973. The bluff has an impressive view and at night you can make out a number of lights along the southern Cape Cod coast.

EDGARTOWN LIGHT
The next light going east is the harbor light at Edgartown. This light, the second one at this location, has an interesting career having originated in Ipswich, MA.,

Edgartown Lighthouse - Photo by Ted & Jo Panayotoff

as the Crane's Beach Light. The original Edgartown light, built in 1828, was a combined keeper's house and light of Cape Cod style similar in appearance to our New Jersey East Point Light but of wooden construction. This was its downfall and when continued repairs were no longer practical the Coast Guard proposed replacing it with a skeleton steel structure. The townspeople would have none of that and their efforts to have a "real lighthouse" in Edgartown were successful. In 1939 the current cast iron structure built in 1875 was barged from Ipswich and installed in Edgartown. The lighthouse is of the classic cast iron design and is very similar to the East Chop Light. The original wooden lighthouse was at the end of a long wooden foot bridge but sand has filled in the area and the light is just a short walk from North Water Street in Edgartown. The light was probably automated when it was installed so there are no other structures at the site. The tower is at harbor level and presents some very nice photo opportunities with boats in the background. The Dukes County Historical Society of Martha's Vineyard has published the journal of one of the early keepers, Jeremiah Pease, and it is very fascinating reading offering many insights into the life of an early lighthouse keeper.

CAPE POGE LIGHT
The last light, Cape Poge Lighthouse, was the most challenging to reach. It is by far the Vineyard's most remote, a condition which was of considerable concern to the keepers over the years. In addition to its remoteness the location has been hard on lighthouses. The first light was built in 1801, was moved in 1838, was replaced in 1844 and again replaced in 1893 by the present 55 foot wooden tower. This third structure was moved three times, in 1907, in 1960 and most recently by helicopter in 1987.

The trip out to Cape Poge Light is a long hike (12 miles round trip) along the Chappaquiddick Island beach from Wasque Point, the only access, north to the lighthouse and back. If you attempt it be sure and take plenty of water and a substantial lunch and inform the ranger at the wildlife refuge gate of your intentions. They may offer you a lift in their 4 wheel drive truck as they did us! A four wheel drive vehicle track goes up the beach to the lighthouse but is only available to official vehicles or holders of season passes.

The light was automated in 1943 and now only the lighthouse exists at the site. The keeper's house was sold and dismantled in 1954. The previous lighthouse foundation is still visible at the edge of the bluff along with what appears to be the remains of the keeper's house foundation now partly over the edge. The hostile environment at Cape Poge can be judged by the guy

Cape Poge Lighthouse - Photo by Ted & Jo Panayotoff

wires needed to anchor the wooden structure to its foundation. We were able, also, to see damage to the
weather vane structure on the lighthouse caused by the recent hurricane Bob.

Martha’s Vineyard is a beautiful island, perfect for a vacation with a lot of interesting things to see and do in addition to the five lighthouses. The island is accessible by auto ferry from Woods Hole, MA, if you want to bring your car (reservations recommended), or by passenger ferry from New Bedford, Falmouth or Hyannis, MA., during the summer. You can rent bicycles, mopeds and vehicles on the island if you choose to leave your car on the mainland. There are also a number of connections to the island by air. It is well worth the visit.

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**History of United States Lightships Project**

Ken Black, Curator of the Shore Village Museum, is developing a video presentation about lightships. He is trying to obtain as many pictures of lightships as possible for the project, which will include narration and soundtrack. He urgently needs photographs of lightships #8, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29-35, 37, 38, 50, 78, 92, 93, 107 and 108 to round out the video.

If you can help Ken out, he requests slides, but will gladly accept B&W photos 8 x 10” or even photocopies of photos. His address is:

Ken Black  
Shore Village Museum  
104 Limerock Street  
Rockland, Maine 04841  
(207) 594-0311

At present the collection includes over 340 slides of various vessels, mostly profiles. There is a lot of interest in this under-explored and researched topic. I’m sure Ken would appreciate your help.

**New Jersey Chapter Election Results**

Elections were held at the North Wildwood Meeting for officers and board members. Re-elected for 1992 were Jack Granger, President; Jim Gowdy, Vice President; Carl Nelson, Treasurer and Katie Moser as Secretary. A 2nd Vice President position was created and Kim M. Ruth elected to the new post.

Board Members elected to one year terms were George Feirer and Rich Hellenbrecht. Elected to the Board for 2 years were Tom Laverty and Bill Geilfuss. Standing committees remain as before with one addition; Elaina Ryan volunteered to act as Membership Chair.

We wish to thank Barbara Nelson for her contribution to the Chapter as membership chair. Barbara stepped down from the post she so dedicatedly handled due to an ever increasing work schedule. Our thanks to Barbara for the wonderful job she did and the human touch she brought to managing the membership listing.

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**Lower Chesapeake Cruise**

by Herb Entwhistle

In conjunction with Tangier Island Cruises of Crisfield, Maryland, the Virginia Chapter is arranging an overnight cruise from Crisfield to Portsmouth, Virginia, and back that will view at least 11 lights, most of them not readily viewed from shore. Lights to be seen are: Somers Cove, Tangier Sound, Windmill Point, Stingray Point, Wolf Trap, New Point Comfort, York Spit, Thimble Shoal, Old Point Comfort, Middle Ground and Old Plantation Flats. Some of these are former screwpiles lights on which the house has been removed and a modern aid placed on the base. Others include caisson and masonry types.

The plan is to leave Crisfield, Maryland, at 9:00 am on July 11th, see the first ten lights, stay overnight at Portsmouth, Virginia (the lightship and naval museum are adjacent), and return 6:00 p.m. July 12th via Old Plantation Flats. Ample time will be available at Portsmouth for exploring the city and/or Norfolk, both of which have modern waterfronts.

The cost is $125.00 single, $215.00 double, and $290.00 triple. Cost includes 2 days cruising, lodging at Portsmouth and lunch on board both days. You will be responsible for dinner at Portsmouth, as people will have different interests at that point. Lodging before or after the trip at Crisfield or elsewhere is not included in the package. There are two fine motels in Crisfield; Somers Cove Motel at the marina and The Pines Motel in town. The Entwhistle’s will be staying at The Pines Motel. If enough people are interested, we can arrange a group rate. Both motels are in the $60.00-$70.00 per night per room range.

We must firm up plans with the Tangier Island Cruises by early March. At this point I need to know your wishes as soon as possible. As soon as we firm up the plans I’ll send each interested party a detailed trip itinerary including word on deposits, payments, etc. If we don’t fill the vessel (80 people) the cruise line will market the rest of the space (at a higher rate) as a special lighthouse cruise for the general public.

If you are interested or have questions not answered above, please contact me as soon as possible.

Herb Entwhistle, VACHAP President  
211 Ross Drive, S.W.  
Vienna, VA 22180  
(703) 281-9040
Bald Head Lighthouse

by Carole DiNapoli

"Old Baldy" - Photo by Carole DiNapoli

In my constant quest for lighthouses and islands, I was doubly rewarded in the summer of 1987. It was this summer that I discovered Bald Head Island, North Carolina. The island was special to me the moment I arrived. Peace and serenity greet you and a lighthouse awaits discovery.

Bald Head Island is a magical place, a respite from civilization. As you approach the island by ferry, you see Bald Head Lighthouse poking her head above the trees, standing guard over nature and solitude.

The lighthouse, the only high rise on the island, is affectionately known as "Old Baldy." Built in 1817, she is the oldest standing lighthouse in North Carolina.

Old Baldy was not the first lighthouse built on the island, nor the last, but for over a century and a half she guided ships into the mouth of the Cape Fear River. She withstood three wars, numerous storms, and years of neglect. Old Baldy is distinguished by an off-center lantern. Her outside diameter is 36 feet and the wall at her foundation is five feet thick!

Old Baldy was replaced in 1903 by the Cape Fear Lighthouse on the southern tip of Bald Head Island. At that time, she became a fourth order fixed light and remained in that capacity until she was retired in 1935. Unfortunately, in 1988 Old Baldy was closed to the public.

Today, happily, the Old Baldy Foundation exists; and Old Baldy is being lovingly restored. The brick structure's facade has been replastered and the windows, redwood door, and copper roof of the lantern have been replaced. The Foundation is currently raising additional funds for the interior repair, so once again we will be able to climb her 112 steps and enjoy the wonderful view.

Bald Head Island is a semi-tropical paradise containing live oaks, palms, palmettos, unspoiled beaches, loggerhead turtles, pelicans and egrets - all creating a beautiful home for "Old Baldy." Old Baldy stands as the island's centerpiece, nestled creekside and surrounded by natural beauty.

Three miles out in the Atlantic, Bald Head Island can be reached by ferry from Southport, North Carolina.

Further Reading:
- Bald Head: A History of Smith Island and Cape Fear by David Stick.
- Exploring the Lighthouses of North Carolina by Cindy Corey.

Maryland Lighthouse Brochure

By Herb Entwhistle

The Maryland Commission To Save The Lighthouses has recently published a brochure describing the 25 lights in the state.

In addition to brief historical data, there is detailed information on how to reach the lighthouses and a contact for information. The Virginia Chapter has been working with the Commission in a small way.

In an effort to assist the Commission and because we know the brochure will be of interest to lighthouse enthusiasts, the Virginia Chapter has agreed to act as a distributor to many places. Additional copies may be obtained by sending a stamped (.29) self addressed #10 envelope to Herb Entwhistle at the above address.

Virginia Chapter Fund Raiser

The Virginia Chapter has a new fund raiser. Recently two photojournalists from Maryland produced a beautiful poster with an individual picture of each of the 25 Maryland lights.

The pictures are very professional. It's on quality paper and comes shipped in a mailing tube. It is 18 1/2" x 25" and suitable for framing. The cost is $15.00 per copy postpaid. Send check payable to the Virginia Chapter, USLHS to:

Herb Entwhistle, VACHAP President
211 Ross Drive, S.W.
Vienna, VA 22180
Lighthouses of New England

Edward R. Hamilton, Bookseller, has a lighthouse book that we weren't aware of. *Lighthouses of New England - From the Maritimes to Montauk*, by Donald W. Davidson, published 1990, by the Wellfleet Press, Secaucus, New Jersey, is a large (9 1/2" x 12 1/2", 128 pages) pictorial work with illustrations, bibliography and index. The photographs are by a score of different photographers and are excellent. The text is descriptive and well written. Chapters on the history of lighthouses, women keepers, and heroic rescues are just a few of the chapters.

Order stock number 267750 available for $14.95 (check only) + $3.00 postage from Edward R. Hamilton, Bookseller, Falls Village, CT. 06031-5000.

New Jersey Chapter March Meeting

**PLACE:** Barnegat Light Firehouse  
**DATE:** March 14, 1992  
**TIME:** 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

The Barnegat Light Firehouse is on the main drag, two blocks from the Lighthouse. Our speakers will be Sidney Rothman, Curator of the Lighthouse, Mr. Walnut, President of the Barnegat Light Historical Society, and Commander Trias, Coast Guard Commandant.

In addition to the meeting and speakers, we will have access to the Historical Society Museum and the Lighthouse (no admission charge). Bring your lighthouse memorabilia and lunch.

German Lighthouse Pen Pal

by Jack Granger

My newest lighthouse friend who is interested in swapping photos and postcards and other lighthouse memorabilia is:

Christoph M. Heise  
Steingaustrasse 10  
W-7311 Owen/Tech  
Germany

He is a real enthusiast and I'm sure he'd welcome hearing from you.

From the President's Desk

by Jack Granger

On behalf of the Officers and Board Members we wish to express our appreciation to the membership for your mandate to continue to oversee your organization. Remember, we continue to ask for your ideas so that we can continue to plan the activities that you like.

The membership renewals are not complete, but at this stage we are encouraged by the results.

We are looking forward to joint meetings with the Virginia Chapter at Fenwick Island Lighthouse in Delaware and a Chesapeake Cruise in July. Our own Hudson River Trip, New York Harbor trip and Long Island Cruise are all under the final stages of preparation. (ed. - see details in this issue).

I have finally made contact with Dick Bomisar of Massachusetts. Dick owns a Life Saving Station near Plymouth, Massachusetts, and is a world-renowned collector of lighthouse memorabilia. It is my desire to develop this contact with the idea of planning a Massachusetts trip in 1992.

A continuing request I have of all of you is to share your experiences with the membership. Please send information to Kim Ruth so he can place it in future issues of *THE BEAM*.

Other Notes:

Your Board of Director's has approved a contribution of $100.00 to Ken Black and the Shore Village Museum in Rockland, Maine. Ken's contribution to lighthouse recognition and knowledge is well known. Those of us who have visited Ken found the experience to be quite memorable. Ken's newsletter is full of hard-to-get information.

We would recommend a visit to the Shore Village Museum if you are in that area. The museum is a definite "must see." Thanks for all you do for us. Be Neighborly!
Crossed the bar

Just after we went to press for the December issue, we received word that one of our members, Charles M. Crowell, grandson of Barnegat Lighthouse Keeper’s Clarence H. Cranmer, passed away on November 17, 1991. Mr. Crowell is remembered for providing his grandfathers memorabilia that is on display at the Barnegat Light Historical Society.

We offer our belated condolences to his family in this time of grief, and our apologies that we could not print the notice in the December issue.

1st Annual New Jersey Chapter Photography Contest

by Rich Hellenbrecht

Welcome Keepers! You are invited and encouraged to submit slides and photographs of lighthouses, lightships, and other lighthouse related items to our 1st Annual Photography contest.

When should you enter? Now! We will begin accepting entries immediately, but all entries must be received by the September meeting at the Sandy Hook Lighthouse.

We will accept 35mm slides, color photos, and black and white photos. Photos should be at least 5"x7", preferably mounted for display purposes. Up to five entries per person. All photographs should have the name of the photographer and the subject on the back (on labels please so they don’t ruin your prints!). Slides should have the same information placed on the mount. All submissions become the property of the New Jersey Chapter.

Eligibility - New Jersey Chapter Membership. Judging Committee not eligible.

Awards - Awards will be 1st, 2nd, 3rd place. Honorable mentions will depend on the number of entries received and the quality of the submissions.

Judging - New Jersey Chapter Photography Committee.

Send entries to:

Rich Hellenbrecht
39 Hillcrest Boulevard
Warren, NJ 07059

Delaware Trip with Virginia Chapter

We have been invited to join the Virginia Chapter in a Delaware lighthouse trip on Saturday, March 28, 1992. Cost is $18.00 which includes lunch, boat fare, and donations to lightship. Optional dinner on the evening of March 28 at the Lighthouse Restaurant in Lewes, Delaware is an additional $16.00 and includes choice of seafood casserole or chicken breast, and gratuity. Make checks payable to VA Chapter USLHS, 211 Ross Drive, S.W., Vienna, VA 22180. If you have any questions contact Herb Entwhistle at (703) 291-9040.

Agenda 9:30 a.m. - Assemble at Fenwick Island, Delaware Town Hall on Route 1, between Canon and Bayard Streets.

10:00 a.m. - Orientation by Herb Entwhistle, Virginia Chapter President. Receive information packet and itinerary.

10:30 - 11:30 - Visit Fenwick Island Lighthouse
11:30 - 12:30 - Lunch at Dirty Harry’s Restaurant (Turkey Club, fries, beverage).
12:30 - 1:45 - Travel to Lewes, Delaware
1:45 - 3:00 - Tour OVERFALLS Lightship and Life Saving Station Museum
3:00 - 5:00 Cruise to Breakwater Lights (boat will stop for pictures)

Payment must be received by March 7, 1992.

New Jersey Chapter - Hudson River Cruise

On April 25, 1992, the New Jersey Chapter is sponsoring a lighthouse cruise aboard the RONDOUT BELLE out of Kingston, New York, with Captain Ken Backofen. Cost is $15.00. Departure is at 10:00 a.m. and this will be an approximately 6 hour cruise visiting the Rondout II, Esopus, Saugerties and Hudson-Athens Lighthouses. There will be time at the Saugerties Lighthouse to tour the light and enjoy a box lunch (bring your own). Drinks are available on the boat.

Reservation check, made out to NJUSLHS, must be received no later than March 1, 1992. Send to Pat Paulus, 163 Twillight Court, Toms River, NJ 08753.

Those wishing to stay over either Friday or Saturday nights should arrange for their own lodging. Rooms are available at the Holiday Inn, Ramada Inn, Howard Johnson’s and others in the Kingston area at about $59.00 per night.

Lighthouse Memories

From Elizabeth Osborne

Having been a "lighthouse nut" ever since I learned to read many, many years ago, I have visited as many as possible in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, South Carolina, and of course, New Jersey, through the years. We’ve had several interesting and notable experiences during the visits; I’d like to share some of my favorite
recollections.

Captain Barna Norton of Jonesport, Maine, has a long history of voyages on his boats in that part of Maine waters. We signed up for one of his special trips to Machias Seal Island to enjoy the enormous varieties of bird life along the way, especially the puffins on the island as well as a session of "picture taking/history learning" of the lighthouse.

The two hour boat trip to the island took us past the Libby Island Lighthouse - which we were not able to actually visit - into areas where whales were spotted and many varieties of birds were seen overhead and on the water, and finally to the anchoring spot where eight of us hopped into Captain Norton's dinghy for putting us onto the island. What a surprise it was to discover that we had to climb out into huge rocks covered with seaweed and scramble over to a long metal plank leading up to the grassy land area. My heart was in my throat but we maneuvered the slippery rocks with the help of the two Canadian lighthouse keepers who told us where to put our feet and lifted us across some large crevices!

It was planned that we would spend an hour there, enjoying the puffins and the lighthouse. Imagine our surprise when ten minutes later we heard a shout telling us to hasten back to the rocks so Captain Norton could get us off the island "in time." Just as he'd finished unloading us, a fisherman nearby informed him that a sea swell was approaching fast and that he'd better "rescue" us in a big hurry before it was impossible for us to get back in the dinghy. We certainly were shocked, after safely climbing back into the dinghy, to see how fast the rocks disappeared under the rising water and to realize how close we'd come to spending many unplanned hours on the island.

Captain Norton then slowly circled the island so we could take pictures of the lighthouse and enjoy the puffins which were swimming, feeding and playing right beside us in the water. The storm never hit us during our trip, but we heard later that it had been a rather severe one.

Before many of the Maine lighthouses became automated, we were lucky to visit with the keepers who were manning them at the time. One Coast Guardsman, Larry Baum, was special - he was nicknamed "Lighthouse Larry" because of his intense interest in and research on lighthouses up and down the coast. He was written up in Life Magazine some years ago, because he had been instrumental in setting up the "Santa by Helicopter" program which delivered Christmas packages to children living on some of the remote islands and lighthouse stations. When he was stationed at Stockton Springs, Maine (Fort Point Lighthouse), he spent an entire afternoon telling and showing us all about that one, its history, and how it operated.

We also visited Doubling Point in Maine, when the couple who manned it were both in the Coast Guard and took turns doing duty so they could alternate responsibilities while living there.

Now that they are automated, it's not always possible to get inside (ed - How we know!). For the past several years though, we've managed to overcome that obstacle for one lighthouse. Our friends in the Booth Bay Harbor area actually owned Hendricks Head Lighthouse until this past summer, so while vacationing in Pemaquid Harbor (near my favorite lighthouse), we have enjoyed special visits to Hendricks Head.

The Beam, the official journal of the United States Lighthouse Society - New Jersey Chapter, is published quarterly. Membership dues are $15.00 single and $20.00 family. Memberships are for the calendar year. Back issues are available for members joining mid-year.

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