

Many honor the legacy of Mahlon and Pauline Blosser

By **STEVE CARPENTER**
Conference Coordinator

Something significant happened the evening of May 9 as 125 people gathered at Eastern Mennonite High School in Harrisonburg to remember and honor the legacy of Bishop Mahlon and Pauline Blosser. No one came to the altar for salvation, and the Holy Spirit didn't fall in tongues of fire, but God was present, bringing healing to people separated over differences in doctrine and practice. Lloyd Horst, who is 94-years-old and was a co-bishop with Mahlon in the former Middle District, spoke graciously of him. He said, "Although we sometimes disagreed over church matters, I always felt respected by Brother Mahlon and our differences never affected our relationship." In 1971 the West Valley District requested and was given release from VA Mennonite Conference to form the more conservative Southeastern Mennonite Conference. Lloyd Horst served as a bishop in the newly-formed group. Thirty-seven years later he was present to honor Mahlon and Pauline's memory.

Mahlon and Pauline Blosser were servants of the church. He was ordained by lot in 1947 and served as pastor of Bank Mennonite Church. In 1960 he was chosen by lot to serve as bishop in Middle (later renamed Central) District. For 19 years he served as Vice-President, Treasurer, Field Worker and finally President of Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions (now VMissions). During his time as President, VMBM expanded its work into Jamaica. Jamaica Mennonite Conference recently celebrated its 50th annual Conference.

Pauline graduated from the Normal



Glendon Blosser and Glennys (Blosser) Heatwole. Photo by Steve Carpenter.

School for Women (now James Madison University) in 1923 with a degree in education and taught elementary children in public schools for four years. In 1927, one year after their marriage they moved to a dairy farm in Dale Enterprise which provided income to support their ministry. They had twins, Glendon and Glennys in 1930 and raised them on the farm. Soon thereafter Pauline became a member of the Weavers Mennonite Church's Sewing Circle. In 1963 she served a two-year term as President of the Associated Sewing Circles of Virginia Mennonite Conference. Pauline prayed and led singing at many sewing circle meetings. Mahlon was a capable chorister who moderated the Harmonia Sacra hymn sing held annually at Weavers Mennonite Church.

Glennys married Enos Heatwole and helped plant Barnwell Mennonite Church

in South Carolina which began as part of Southeastern Mennonite Conference. They, and more than a dozen of their family, traveled to attend the banquet and provided special music.

Glendon and his late wife Dorothy stayed in Harrisonburg and followed in the legacy of his parents as church leaders. Glendon served as pastor, bishop and a VMC leader for many years. He remains active on VMC's Historical Committee and on various boards for local Christian ministries.

This was the eighth Celebration of Ministry banquet held by VMC to honor the legacy of significant conference leaders. The banquets are also effective fundraisers which help support VMC ministries. The offerings from the Blosser banquet were nearly \$6,000.

> Hope > Purpose > Hope > Purpose

At Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly we celebrated “Christ Jesus our Hope.”

If hope is essential to life itself, how is it established, maintained, and restored?

I was challenged in my conversation with a mother whose only son took his own life in a very complex set of circumstances. Her comment that day was, “since he’s gone, I no longer have a purpose in life.” Because of the suicide prevention training I had been in some months earlier, I picked up on that as a fairly desperate statement. After making sure she was safe, I turned to her question of purpose.

I surprised myself by saying that family cannot be the only purpose for our lives. I had earlier observed her sharing deeply in the lives of her co-workers. I said to her, “I can’t ordain you but I commission you to be a representative of the love of Jesus in this setting.”



Owen Burkholder
Conference Minister

Hope rises out of a sense of purpose. And purpose goes to the heart of God in creating persons in God’s image. What did God have in mind with these humans? Presumably, when we are in tune with the intentions of God we will be experiencing life as it was purposed

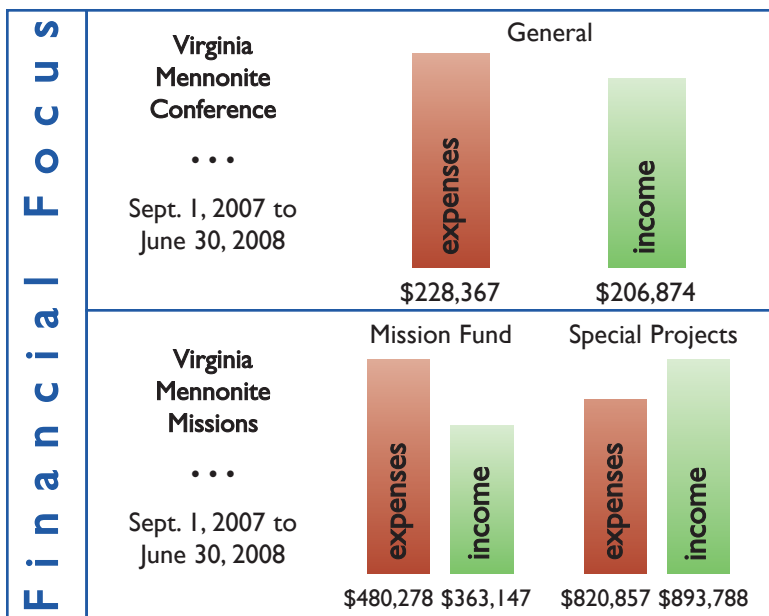
and therefore, life at its fullness—life filled with hope.

We are still in process with helping my father-in-law make the transition to living in a retirement community. He is experiencing there both the advantages and the limitations of life in that context. On the one hand, he now has companionship—as much as he chooses—in place of the aloneness in his isolated home. On the other hand, he is surrounded by persons who are struggling with major limi-

tations brought on by the aging process. Indeed, for some the difficulties of this time yield again to the question of purpose. Sometimes it even brings questions about the purpose of one’s earlier life.

It is a joy to observe that my father-in-law is choosing to engage in ministry with his peers to bring words of comfort and prayers for healing to those with whom he interacts. That gives him purpose and it brings hope to those about him.

Who can capture the purpose for life in a phrase? Let me try: partnership with Jesus. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (John 20:21)



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Fixing the sheriff's car on the way to jail

By **JIM LEHMAN**

Conference Archivist, who included this story in his history, *Sonnenberg: A Haven and a Heritage*

Young men from the Sonnenberg (Ohio) Mennonite Church faced the draft. Earl Gerber, Aldis Gerber, Menas Nussbaum, and David Baumgartner were drafted on October 4, 1917. Earl and Aldis went to Camp Sherman where Earl was discharged several months later for physical reasons.

Not long after he was home he got a questionnaire from the draft board. Since he had already served and been discharged, he ignored the questionnaire. To his surprise in late March 1918, Sheriff Miller came to take him to the Wayne County jail.

They had barely left home, gone over the railroad tracks and the bridge over Sugar Creek in that small valley, when they began to ascend the steep hill with the Model T Ford with which the sheriff had come to get Earl. In shifting from high gear to low gear the clutch slipped.

Much to the consternation of the sheriff the auto refused to continue. Farm-boy Earl recognized quickly what was wrong but said nothing. Sheriff Miller finally asked Earl, "Where is the nearest phone?"

Earl answered, "I guess the one at my home." When he saw they were about to go and call for a repairman to come and fix the car, Earl piped up, "Do you have some tools? I'll see if I can fix it."

So they took the back seat out and fumbled for some tools. Finally finding a wrench and a pair of pliers, Earl took them and shortly had the clutch tightened. Then he looked at the sheriff and told him, "All right, she'll run now."

"Are you sure it will run?" asked the sheriff.

"Go on, get in. It will run now," Earl reassured him. They restarted the Model T and up over the hill they went, and hauled Earl off to jail!

Prison ministry in VMC recognized

Part three of a three-part series

By **STEVE CARPENTER**

Conference Coordinator

About fifteen years ago, when the Harrisonburg jail was built near Court Square, the chaplain, at the time, asked some churches if they would establish "church services" for the women inmates on the first Monday of each month. Community Mennonite (CMC), First Presbyterian and Dayton Mennonite churches took up the challenge. Linda Pfamatter, a member of CMC, gathered a team of other women to help present a Bible topic, song, scripture reading and prayer. The program and discussion lasts one hour. Linda remarked, "It is humbling to realize we live in different cultures and circumstances...It is difficult and a privilege to be with these women. It is a true servant experience to express compassion and offer their hurt and pain to a merciful God."

Ronald Friesen, a leader at Staunton Mennonite Church, has also been active in prison ministry. For many years he has been visiting detention centers in Augusta County. He developed a very close relationship with one young man, Jordan, whom he led to Christ and disciplined while incarcerated. Jordan has since been trans-



ferred to Powhatan and then Warren Ridge Prison in Stony Gap, Va. Yet Ronald has been faithful in staying in touch with him and feels motivated by the responses he receives.

Early in 2009, Mennonite Media will release *Ex-Con: A Long Road Back*, a production focused on prisoners' reintegration into society. The show by Mennonite Media, in cooperation with Faith and Values Media, will air on the Hallmark Channel. The completed program will examine the difficulties people face when released from prison.

Men and women in prison ministry serve in obedience to the Biblical injunction, "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners..." Heb 13:3a. There will be a special blessing in Heaven for them. We say a big *thank you* for their work. May God continue to richly bless them as they minister in his name.

Editor's note: Harry Kuhns was licensed for prison chaplaincy in the Virginia state penitentiary system, 1970-1982. Volunteer chaplains have served at the Linville prison camp since 1950.

WCRC hosts 4th "Pedal the Peninsula"

By **MARCIA A. ROBERTSON**

WCRC Development Director

Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center held its fourth Pedal the Peninsula fundraising bike ride on May 10. Despite overcast skies and cool weather, 44 cyclists completed the routes which ranged from ten to 67 miles. Net proceeds totaled over \$6200.

"Pedal the Peninsula lets people have fun while supporting the ministry

of WCRC," said Bob Briscoe, executive director. "Our riders range from families to recreational riders to serious cyclists."

Eight businesses contributed to the success of the event as T-shirt sponsors. Local retail shops donated prizes.

"We anticipate having Pedal the Peninsula in 2009," Bob continued. "We're hoping more people become aware of this great opportunity for cycling."



Ruth Vitor, Larry Vitor, Bishop Ramon Bansan, longest pastor in Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines, Luke Schrock-Hurst and Richard Early.

Grace Mennonite Fellowship Learning Center receives special visitors

By **LUKE SCHROCK-HURST**

Photos courtesy of Luke Schrock-Hurst

Grace Mennonite Fellowship Pastor Richard Early has been writing to Filipino pastor Larry Vitor for nearly 25 years. In 1999 Grace Mennonite began to support Larry and his wife Ruth as they launched a kindergarten program in their native southern Filipino island of Mindanao. In April, Pastor Richard and Larry and Ruth Vitor finally met for the first time, when Richard traveled to the Philippines with former MCC Country Representative to the Philippines, Luke Schrock-Hurst.

Early and Schrock-Hurst spent three days visiting “Grace Mennonite Fellowship Learning Center,” named after the congregation which supports the school. The congregation sponsorship has grown from 15 children in 1999 to 60 students studying at three preschool levels. The children, who mainly speak the native Surigaon language before entering the school, study in both English and the southern Filipino language Cebuano at this Christian school, which gives them a tremendous head start upon entering local public schools. Larry Vitor serves as the school director and Ruth



coordinates the teachers. The children also learn Bible verses and Christian songs.

Prior to hosting Pastor Richard and Luke, Larry and Ruth traveled with them to the northern Filipino island of Luzon to attend the biennial conference of the Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines. The four also visited the Mennonite affiliated Binuangan Christian School, an elementary and high school nestled in “the Cordillera” mountains.

In conjunction with Virginia Mennonite Missions, Grace Mennonite Fellowship in Lacey Springs, Va., is inviting other VMC congregations to also consider sponsoring additional children studying in the Philippines (\$15/month). Further, a vision to plant a Mennonite congregation in conjunction with the school ministry is under prayerful consideration and planning. Schrock-Hurst is available to preach and share pictures in VMC congregations about this Philippines’ education and evangelization partnership. For more information, contact Early at (540) 442-6235 or Schrock-Hurst at (540) 746-8844.

Richard Early (center) with Larry and Ruth Vitor.



God works in surprising ways

By **ALDINE MUSSER**

Co-pastor, Stephens City Mennonite Church

Stephens City Mennonite Church wondered if VBS, as we had experienced it, may be a program of the past. There was very little energy for VBS in the Christian Education Commission meetings in the spring. No one had voiced a passion to be the director this year. In March, we borrowed the 2008 Mennonite VBS curriculum *Listen Up! Messages from God* from the Congregational Resource Center at Eastern Mennonite Seminary to review and discern what direction to go this summer.

We invited anyone interested in participating in this VBS decision to come to a meeting. Melinda Kleman, a 16-year-old, was in the group. She looked at the materials and said, “We can do this! I’ll be the director.” She immediately began asking people for various roles: Bible story narrator, drama, music, recreation and snacks. She involved only people who wanted to be involved. Tractor and wagon rides for the children were included.

The children who came were blessed and learned about Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jonah, Amos and Daniel. The last evening the parents were invited to hear the children sing and share about what they learned. She showed a presentation about the week’s happenings. Everyone was invited to fellowship with donated ice cream and brownies. Families were not in a hurry to leave. I asked Melinda at the end of the week if she enjoyed serving in that role. She replied, “I’ll do it next year, too!”



Students and leaders involved in VBS.

Courtesy of Aldine Musser

Eastern Mennonite School

Senior Presentations

Eastern Mennonite School is a unique place where students have the opportunity to grow with the influence of the school, home and church. This connection between these three influential areas in a youth's life is seen very clearly when our high school seniors give their Senior Presentations. The Senior Presentation is a review and summary of a student's academic, spiritual, and social growth during high school and a projection of plans for life beyond graduation. These presentations, which began last school year as part of the senior-level Kingdom Living Bible class, are becoming an annual tradition. As you know high school seniors at EMHS in your congregations, plan to attend these meaningful times of sharing and reflection in January and May each school year and see for yourself how the school, home and church are working together in the lives of our youth. Below are some excerpts from three members of the class of 2008.



Erica Lehman

Choosing EMHS was an important and positive choice. My decision was influenced by parents and two older siblings who very much enjoyed the academics, social life and atmosphere of a smaller Christian school... Making that important decision has

brought me closer to God and my faith grew stronger as EMHS examined and allowed for discussion and study of many faith issues. I really enjoyed coming to school every morning knowing we can practice our faith in school. Also, I looked forward to chapel or neighbor group every day. It is unique that we can worship God in school, and it is a great blessing to me.



Josh Kanagy

My mini-term in 10th grade was to Alabama to work with Mennonite Disaster Service, and I learned about faith in action, helping

others we didn't even know and building relationships. I also learned on this trip that I am a hands-on person. I enjoy physically doing things, not just thinking or typing on a computer (I couldn't stand an office job), but like to be able to see what I have accomplished at the end of the day.



Hannah Eberly

A "green pasture" of my life has definitely been my four years at EMHS. I have grown as a person at this school and appreciated the small atmosphere where I've been able to find mentors in my teachers and I've been able to ask the big "why" questions of life. Although my teachers have rarely answered the tough questions, they've encouraged me to think for myself. I recall Bergen White and myself staying after class in AP Biology and talking through lunch with Mr. Blosser and Mr. Hoover about DNA, new medicines, poverty and how we as individuals can impact the world. During study halls, I've been able to head to Mr. Stutzman's room and ask for advice in my own life and what to do next year.

AUGUST 2008

Connections

Prayer Calendar

Sunday

31 Look for an opportunity today to show Christ-like love to someone who doesn't expect it. Surprise them with grace!

Monday

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by

Richard and Wanda Good

Dedicated in memory of Kenneth Seitz who challenged and encouraged them with his love for missions and study of the Word. Kenneth passed away in June 2008, leaving a legacy of faithfulness.

Tuesday

3 Mennonite Church of Trinidad & Tobago expressed appreciation for Paul Kniss' ministry in Trinidad during May and June. Add your prayers of blessing for Paul.

4 A work team led by Dennis & Carol Rhodes is serving in Belize, making repairs on the house Nancy Marshall lives in, and where Jesus' Deaf Church meets. A double portion of your strength for them, Lord!

10 Today all five congregations of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad & Tobago meet for worship. May each person be inspired to live as a witness for Christ in the year ahead.

11 Thank God for the soup kitchen at Little Grill that has operated for 16 years, giving a free lunch every Monday. Early Church Ministries now picks up this ministry at Our Community Place in Harrisonburg.

17 Jamaica Mennonite Church youth camp is held this week at the Maranatha School. Pray that the leaders will effectively minister to the youths so they hear a clear call from God on their lives.

18 Today Shawn & Laura Green, ^{TranSend} participants, leave for Termini Imeresi, Italy, where they will assist with the emerging Mennonite congregation. Pray for a safe arrival and smooth transition to this place.

24 This week is the seminar/vacation for families on Mt. Etna in Sicily, designed to challenge and encourage Italian Mennonites. Pray that God will truly be in their midst to accomplish His purposes.

26 Skip & Carol Tobin have returned to Thailand where they are assisting with church development and micro-enterprise. Thank God for their commitment to this place and ask Him to enable them daily.

Wednesday

"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philipians 1:4-6 (NIV)

6 Pray for the Italian missions team serving with the Cizmanskis in Montenegro, assisting in outreach activities to establish relationships with new people.

7 Outlet 10.27, Graham, N.C. leaders are thankful for God's goodness at the Back Yard Bible School at Parkridge apts. in June. Join them in praying for opportunities to build connections with families there.

13 Pray for the pastors and lay leaders of Jamaica Mennonite Church as they witness for Christ daily. May they bring the light of the Gospel to their everyday settings.

14 Steve & Betsy Dintaman have returned to their work at Lithuania Christian College. Thank God for their enthusiasm for Christian education in this place.

20 Today is the wedding of Dino and Mara in Bari, Italy, who are almost the only believers in their families. Pray that this joyful occasion will powerfully witness to guests who haven't met Jesus personally.

21 The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship gave a worship renewal grant to The Table. Pray for them as they plan workshop events to resource the broader church.

27 Eastern Mennonite University and Seminary open today. Pray for the faculty and students as they engage in educational and spiritual journeys.

28 This summer, Mennonite camps have touched the lives of youth in a profound way. Ask God to bless the campers, especially the ones who made a commitment to Christ.

Thursday

1 Evelyn Kratz trains and assists congregational treasurers in the Mennonite congregations in Trinidad. Thank God for her gifts and her willingness to use them to His honor and glory.

8 Donovan and Sandra Maitland are Jamaican delegates to the Annual General Meeting of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad & Tobago. Pray that they will experience warm fellowship with the church in Trinidad.

15 Pray for the evangelical churches in the Balkan region. May the church leaders and members will be bold witnesses for Christ.

22 Willard & Eva Eberly in Bari, Italy, connect with mission workers in the Mediterranean region, giving sound advice and praying for them. Pray for their health and strength for each challenging day.

29 Both VMC and VMM are at the end of the fiscal year. If you have contributed to the needs for them to meet their budgets, thank you! If not, please send a contribution today.

Saturday

2 Pray for Norma Teles who is visiting churches and friends in USA and Canada that God will move people to commit to prayer and financial support for Norma's ministry to children and youth in Albania.

9 Receptionist for VMC and VMM, Laura Campbell, is preparing for ^{TranSend} service with her husband, Steve. They will go to Montenegro in Sept. to work with an evangelical church. Pray for them.

16 Jared & Traci Stoltzfus, ^{TranSend} participants leave for Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, today. Pray for their safe arrival and good connections with the people in that community.

23 Mennonite Youth Fellowship camp in Trinidad is held this weekend. Ask God to deeply bless the leaders and youth as they focus on Gen. 39:4 and the theme, "Youths in Charge."

30 Pray for the Leon Zimmerman family as they return to Albania following a three-month home leave—that they return refreshed and encouraged, and quickly find their places of ministry once again.

Announcements

August Vesper Services at CrossRoads

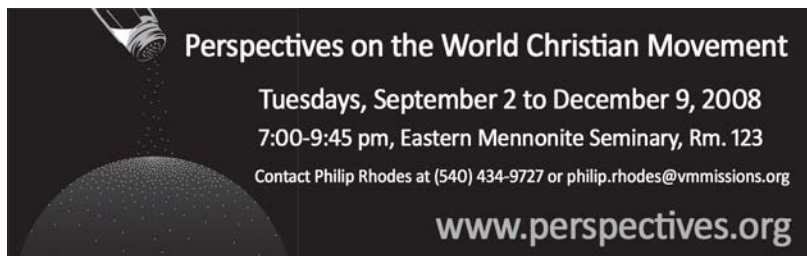
A 45-minute service of music and a meditation will be held each Sunday evening during August in the amphitheater in the woods at CrossRoads, 1921 Heritage Center Way (off Garbers Church Rd.) The public is invited. Each service begins at 7 p.m. Bring a lawn chair. In case of rain, meet in the nearby Whitmer School. www.vbmhc.org (540) 438-1275.

Mennonite Women of Virginia Retreat,

September 26-28, at Holiday Inn Koger South, Richmond. "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" is the theme. The speaker is Martha Karam, licensed clinical psychologist with Beacon Counseling and Consulting in Williamsburg. Registration deadline: September 1.

The annual **Young Adult Fellowship Retreat** will be held Oct. 30 - Nov. 2, 2008 at Camp Overlook, Keezletown, Va. The theme is based on Philippians 2:1-11—entitled *Rise Up!* Young Adult Fellowship is a bi-national gathering of young adults from Canada and the United States. Registration information will be available soon. Contact Scott Hartman, scottth@mennoniteusa.org, (574) 523-3049.

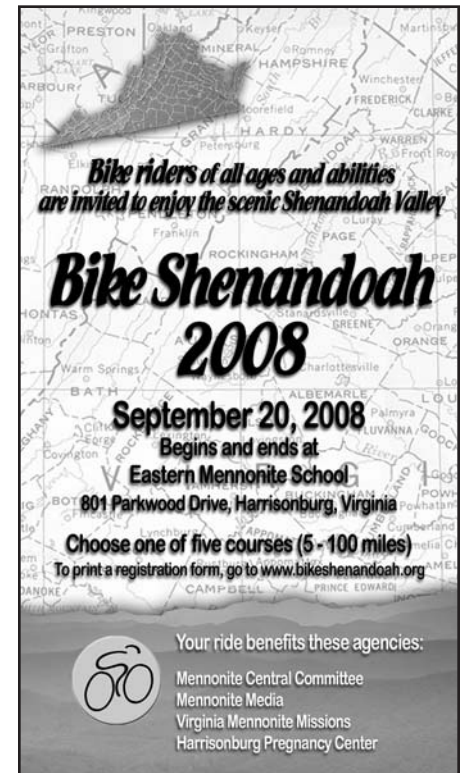
Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center's **Quilting Retreat** is planned for Nov. 14-16. Instructor Lorraine Moody will conduct workshops; quilters should also bring their own projects. Start quilting on Thursday for an additional fee. Registration deadline is November 10; register by August 30 for a \$20 discount. Details available at www.wcrc.info or call toll-free (866) 566-9272.



Perspectives on the World Christian Movement
 Tuesdays, September 2 to December 9, 2008
 7:00-9:45 pm, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Rm. 123
 Contact Philip Rhodes at (540) 434-9727 or philip.rhodes@vmmissions.org
www.perspectives.org



2008 Penny Power
 Your spare change makes a difference!
 Bring jugs of coins to:
Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale
 Saturday, October 4, 2008
 Rockingham County Fairgrounds
www.varelietale.com



Bike riders of all ages and abilities are invited to enjoy the scenic Shenandoah Valley
Bike Shenandoah 2008
 September 20, 2008
 Begins and ends at Eastern Mennonite School
 801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, Virginia
 Choose one of five courses (5 - 100 miles)
 To print a registration form, go to www.bikeshenandoah.org

Your ride benefits these agencies:
 Mennonite Central Committee
 Mennonite Media
 Virginia Mennonite Missions
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