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--that speaker.

First of all, you have to imagine, we were young, and we didn't see things as serious as they really were. And so this is just a for-instance. So we had this one guard. She was a woman. Imagine she was maybe 4'10", little, bitty, tiny thing, in this gray Nazi uniform, the big black boots. And on her head she also had that great cap.

But when you looked at her and when she talked you could see her teeth, and they were kind of pointed. All this gray uniform, the black boots, and those tiny little teeth, we called her The Mouse. She looked like one. I mean she did. And she was so small that they had to build her a bench.

Three times a day, at least, we had roll call, sometimes more than that, but she wasn't tall enough -- Well, you see that I'm not very tall. But she was smaller than I was, and that's kind of hard to do.

And the entire place where we had roll call they had her a bench that she had to climb upon to count us. Now, I've always said that the Germans can only count by fives. Everything was by fives. We had to stand in a row of five, five, 10, 15, 20. That they could do. If they had been six, they couldn't have counted. So she would go along and count us that way but always had to use the bench because she was so little.

So one Sunday morning she came in madder than a hornet. Oh, she was so aggravated. They had told her that she had to guard Sunday afternoon. She felt she was the head guard and that shouldn't be up to her. And she wanted something else to do besides guarding us on the Saturday-- on the Sunday afternoon.

We were never off on Sunday. That was the only time we ever knew that we got off. We still don't know why, but we got off that day, that afternoon. So she was going to get even with them, them. "Them" were her own people, all Germans and mostly Nazis, and she was going to get even with them. And she knew what she was going to do. She was going to bring her radio-- big deal. She's going to bring her radio and let us listen to the music on Sunday afternoon.

Well, I have to say, especially in the wintertime through spring, I would think, they had beautiful music going on Sunday afternoon, and of course, she wanted to listen to it, too. So here she came in the afternoon, radio under her arm, proud as a peacock. She was doing in her own folk. So she told the girl to plug it in in the window sill, and she did. And this beautiful music comes out.

And I'm sitting right underneath that window, and that music just flowed right over my head. And Madame sat herself upon her bench, and when she did she was directly across from me. She was such a foul mouth. She could curse better than any sailor I've ever heard, and I understood German. So it was pretty bad, this very common human being.

So at one point she has to sneeze. Now, here's this little, bitty body that looks like a mouse. It starts off with a sneeze you could hear three blocks, amazing. She just exploded. And she was all through, and I put on the prettiest face I had, a big, old smile, looked her straight in the face and said, in Dutch, drop dead, with that big smile, and she said, danke schoen, thank you.

So we had a ball. We had an-- that lasted for at least three weeks. We had done something that, oh, boy, we weren't supposed to do. And I was just lucky that she couldn't understand Dutch. I would have had it right there.

But that's what I mean. You have to keep a sense of humor and to live in the circumstance that we were living in, and that's so hard for people to understand. We were told what to do 24 hours a day, every day. You had to turn off your mind. Think about it. Can you do that? It's not easy.

These are things you have to prepare yourself while you're there. I always say that was some learning experience that we had. So that's one of the things. You might want to turn that off for the time being. You might want to ask me something else.

Well, I saw in an article that y'all had moved to Holland. So your father kind of-- did he see what was going on?

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My dad traveled. His territory was part of Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland. So while he traveled outside Germany, he could kind of see from the outside even what was going on. And he came back in 19-- at the very end of April 1933, and that's when they had the first boycott.

And he made up his mind right then. Since he knew all these other countries, we were moving. And that must have been the 30th of April that he made up his mind, and on the 18th of May, 18 days later, we were living in Amsterdam.

What do you--

And it's the same year. You've heard the Anne Frank story, haven't you?

Only--

You never read that book yet?

--bits and pieces. I've never-- I've never read it, just hearing bits and pieces, but I really don't know much about it.

Anyway, the Franks moved the very same year. They came from Frankfurt to Amsterdam. We came from Berlin to Amsterdam, also in the same year, and then turned out to be neighbors. That was real strange. So I knew the entire family there.

What all-- like your dad seeing that-- what did he tell y'all? Or did--

It was time to move out.

Or was it-- he didn't really give any-- what did you gather? Did you kind of grasp what was going on?

Well, to me it was kind of adventurous yet. I was between 10 and 11. That was something brand-new that you looked forward to.

But could you kind of-- how aware of what was going on around you did you-- how much of it did you--

Well, Hitler was getting bigger and bigger, and I had a little friend. She lived in the same building we did. And one day she came home with a brown vest. Ooh, I want a brown vest, too. Well, I was told good and proper, absolutely not. And that was kind of weird in a young mind. Why can she have it and I can't?

And so she knew then that I wasn't going to get a brown vest, but she provided me with a swastika, and this one was the real thing. That was party member. And boy, I put that on my coat, and the next day we marched off to school, she with the brown vest and her swastika. And I just had my coat on, and I also had the swastika.

And at one moment it so happened my teacher was outside. She knew who I was, and her hand just came over my shoulder, just nice and easy, and off came the swastika. She had it in her hand. She says, you don't have to wear that. She was one of the good ones, but there weren't too many of those.

She was a-- she was a social democrat, and she was the total opposite, of course, of what the Nazis wanted. And in the end, I don't know what happened to her, but she was pretty outspoken. And they had a certain type of clothes that they would wear, and you could recognize them as such. You knew always they were social democrats. So something must have happened to her, too, because she could have not lived through it, opening her mouth. I know that.

Being in Berlin, how much of the parades and all that type of stuff was--

I went to the parades with my little girl friend, of course, and it wasn't very-- I didn't have to go very far to be in the great, big, wide street. And they would parade through, and I did see Hitler there, too. I was nine then. And everybody

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held up their arms for a heil, and I stood there, at nine years old-- I did exactly like everybody else.

And then we got home. She went to her house, and I went to mine. And I came in singing. And what was I singing? I was singing one of the Nazi songs, and it was an awful song. But I didn't understand that at that time. My mother heard me sing that. Boy, I got one across my cheek you wouldn't believe. You could see all five fingers. You never sing that, my mother said.

Well, I went I went to my room crying because I thought that was so bad. She slapped me because I was singing a song, still not knowing exactly what it all meant. But we grew up pretty fast after all that.

But then we went to Holland, and that was something else, having to learn a whole new language. You didn't know one word, and the kids-- at that age, you don't want to be different. That's out of the question. You don't want to be different.

And I was different. I couldn't speak. That was terrible. But I learned. In nine months flat, I had a decent vocabulary for that age. And I spoke like a Dutchman, and nobody could ever say again that I was from Germany. I've mastered that.

What I would do is I go to bed at night, lie on my pillow, and I would make a shell out of my ear, like this. I made a shell. You have to try that some time. You have a totally different voice, totally different when you speak directly in your ear. And I would repeat every word that I had heard during the day, and it was Pete and Repeat, Pete and Repeat until I had the sound right.

I knew what it was supposed to sound like. And that's how I learned it. When I came to the United States I had the same problem again, another language. I think I got it pretty good. So most people expect to hear me speak with a big, old, thick accent. Uh-uh. [CHUCKLES] I learned when I was a child I didn't want to be different from anybody else, so I put effort into it. I think I did OK.

OK. When you were in Amsterdam, how much did you realize-- I mean was your dad gradually letting you know what was going on? Or was it--

We could hear it on the radio. We could hear it on the radio every day, and we listened. And we also listened to the BBC. and got the news from there. But as-- after the Germans came in, of course, we weren't supposed to look listen to the BBC. That was absolutely forbidden.

And everybody still had a radio, but it didn't take too long before the Germans put up big posters on the walls of houses and stuff that, as a Jew, you had to give up your radio, and it would go alphabetically. So my last name then started with a W, so we got pretty lucky. We could keep it for a lot longer time the people were the name of A. So we had to give them up, but other people didn't have to do that yet.

And our neighbors built the radio right below-- into the sofa. You couldn't find it. You couldn't see it anywhere. And we would go to their house, and then we all listened. We all laughed on the floor, on our stomachs, listening to it, to the radio that was built into the sofa.

But they went-- outside they ran cars with a kind of loop antenna. My husband runs a ham radio, so I know how that was done. And they could find, locate, where the radio was from that outside and definitely which house, and then they found out what apartment. They just knocked the doors in, and came in, and started looking, and tore the house apart till they found it.

Same thing happened with our bicycles. We had to give them up, too, alphabetically. And we couldn't use the street car, and of course, in the end, I was not allowed to go to school anymore. I just happened to have the wrong religion, according to them.

I wrote some stuff down, but.

Read it.

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Well, they're pretty just-- I was just writing some basic stuff as I was studying. How much a racial attacks or-- as they considered racial attacks-- did you observe or were you-- in the beginning--

It was all over, yeah.

In the beginning?

Yeah, it was all over. [INAUDIBLE] stars, the Jewish star, star of David on our houses, and on businesses. And it was an ongoing thing all the time, and you never knew ahead of time what was going to face you the next day.

I got a letter from the Gestapo one day-- that was in August of 1942-- that I was to be at Gestapo headquarters in Amsterdam. the 25th of August, I had to have a backpack-- and they told you what you could have-- loaded up, and I had to be there voluntarily, in capital letters. I had to be there at 9:00 in the morning.

Well, it didn't take too long before the 25th came around, and on the night of the 24th we were at dinner. I was an only child. You can imagine how my parents felt. They knew I had to go to the Gestapo the next morning, 9:00, voluntarily. They felt pretty bad.

And suddenly, I said-- it was close to 7:00 at night, and mind you, we had curfew from 8:00 at night till 6:00 in the morning every day. And I said, I am going to the hospital. My dad looked at me and said, what are you doing in the hospital? I said, I'm going to have my tonsils out. You know how bad they are.

And he slammed his hand on the table, and he said, couldn't you have thought of that before? I said, no, I just thought of it. I said, we have exactly one hour to get you there. I said, but you can't come with me because you can't be back by 8:00.

So I left on my bike-- I still had that at the time-- and pedaled all the way to the middle-- to the center of Amsterdam, where this particular hospital was. And I was lucky to know that there was the doctor that did ear, nose, and throat, the most well-known in Amsterdam. And he was in that particular hospital.

And so I parked my bike and went in. And they wanted to know what I was doing there. I said, I have a bad throat. Well, do you have an-- no, I don't have an appointment. Well, we can't help you then.

And I started screaming. I did like I was going out of my mind. I screamed so loud and stamped my foot, and I did it on purpose. I knew exactly what I was doing. And I demanded to see Dr. Fernandez. He was the one that was the big doctor.

Well, he apparently heard me screaming out in the hallway. I was pretty loud at that time because I made up my mind. I was not going back home. And he finally came out, and he said, what's going on here?

And all I did was look him straight in the face. I said, all I want you to do is look in my throat. He did. And he did. He said, oh my God, she's got a little illegal meat market in there. That's how bad they were. Yes, indeed. And that's another thing that I'm alive today. They kept me, and they did operate on me the next day.

But those tonsils were so big, and the operation itself took so long. Mind you, now, I didn't-- I wasn't put in a regular operating room. This was the thing that you could do like outpatient, more or less.

But anyway, they put me on a chair, and he told me to hold on to the bottom. And they put an apron on me, a rubber apron and a white sheet. And then I got a local anesthetic into my tonsils. I wouldn't recommend it. It is awful. Great, big, long needles went in there, and they worked on me you know, clipping of tonsils, didn't take any time. They worked on me over 45 minutes to get all this gook out.

And then I had to hold my mouth open for all this time, and then they told me to shut my mouth. And I did, and it

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wouldn't open. I was in the hospital-- it used to be, you stayed maybe overnight in the hospital for tonsils. Now you go home, but then you still had to stay in the hospital, and they gave you ice cream and 7UP afterwards.

And I couldn't open up my mouth. I guess that the muscles had been stretched so that when they were released wouldn't work anymore. It took me 21 days before I could open up my mouth far enough to get a spoon through. I was totally on liquid diet before. I couldn't even open it far enough to let a straw through. They were shut and wouldn't open again.

But that, too, saved my life because I didn't show up on the 25th of August. And I didn't know where I was, and nobody came looking for me either. So that postponed it again. And it took some kind of guts. [LAUGHS] I had to-- 21 days in the hospital just to take the tonsils out.

I guess it was meant to be.

Right. Right. You had to be gutsy. That's the best way I can say it. You had to dare and double-dare if you could. But then it took another nine times that the Gestapo came to our house, and somehow we always did all right. And they'd go without us, eight times.

On the ninth time-- I always opened the door. I happened to hear it. The ninth time I didn't hear. I was sleeping so hard I didn't hear the doorbell, and my dad opened up. And when I woke up, Nazis were standing by my bed and tear me out of bed. And that's when we had to go and put on trucks and transported it to a place where-- it used to be a theater but now it was a place where-- a gathering place, let's say. And when I went to the theater was full, we were being transported to a camp.

So that y'all were all on the same bus?

Bus? Freight train.

Well, I mean from your house.

Oh, that? No. A bus? You kidding? Truck.

Truck, yeah.

It wasn't that-- and I wasn't that easy to get in a truck. That's pretty high. Then you got pushed in if you couldn't make it on your own.

So what did your parents say? Or did they say anything to you?

Anything you say--

Was everybody quiet?

At that point, you couldn't say anything when they were right there. They slapped you across the face.

I mean when y'all were being transported, was somebody in the back with you or--

Oh, sure, always a guard, and he had a rifle. And it could fire. Believe me, it could fire. And if you said something or asked something, they slapped you right across the face. That many, many times. It was pretty hard, believe me. Your whole life was upset. You didn't say goodbye to anybody.

But what was the last time you saw your parents?

I saw them in camp, but I couldn't be with them. The men always were in another part. They split us up and made my mother the head of a children's barrack. And I wasn't supposed to go there either because I was no longer-- as far as they

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were concerned, I was no longer a child. And so I couldn't go there.

But I sneaked in there occasionally. You had to know exactly what you were doing. You found a notepad somewhere. Somebody had one. I said, I need that for a minute, and then you had the pencil already in your hand. And you marched up and down the little roads that we had from barrack to barrack, and you walked right by them, the guards, with it. [INAUDIBLE]

The people that-- the guards were up in a tower. You walked right by there, pencil behind your ear, notepad in hand, and you marched. They knew you were going somewhere or you must be doing something. I did that many a time. They never knew I was going to visit my mother. But as I say, you had to be gutsy.

Did you ever-- did you-- being able to, I guess, do stuff like that, were you involved in kind of relaying messages since-- like to some of the other kids?

Oh, we did that all the time. We did that all the time. And we also learned to speak like this. Like later on, when we were in various camps, we weren't allowed-- not only weren't we allowed to speak to each other unless it was something about what we were doing-- and we certainly couldn't speak to the Germans, even if they were civilians when we would be in a factory.

We learned to speak without moving lips, and that worked pretty good as long as they couldn't see it, that the guards couldn't see that we were actually talking. Oh, you find all kind of ways. And you can get caught, too, after all.

So you said you went through 10--

Nine.

--nine, nine concentration camps. Where were most? Were most of them in the-- they were all over.

I mean the ones that you were--

Well, I went from Holland straight to Auschwitz. This is in Poland. We were released from there because they found out we were specialized laborers, we had to-- that's a long story. But I have that. Matter of fact, I have a tape also.

We were specialized labor. We made radio tubes, radio tubes were for the V-1 and V-2. The Rockets that they sent to England-- well, if you look back, most of them fell into the North Sea. They didn't reach London like they were-- some did. But those little tubes were so tiny, and the materials inside them, like in the light-- the filament-- the filament was finer than a hair, if you can imagine. And it had to all be built.

But there were several pieces that were metal that went over some of the pieces that were already in there. So that, in fact, you couldn't look in anymore. So we had needles, and we destroyed the inside. We put it all in, but we had destroyed the inside and then put the metal pieces over. And nobody could ever tell somebody did anything to them. So we destroyed about 60%.

So they just kind of thought they just had bad weapons?

Yeah. Well, what you do if you are a slave laborer. Let's face it. And we had to make at least 100 a day, seven days a week, 12 hours every day. We worked, believe me. And we all had loupes. You see jewelers sometimes have a loupe. That's how we worked every day.

So they thought they just had some-- they were probably blaming the guy punching the button.

You got that right.

I guess that's a good--

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I'm mighty proud of that. That's why I say we weren't always so good.

Well, it depends on what perspective--

It was the dumb Dutch, the dumb Dutch, couldn't stand the dumb Dutch. They told us to whistle when we marched. We always had to march. And that's the way they lived. You got to march, left, two, three, four. And then they told us to whistle. When they said whistle, we sang. When they say sing, we whistled. We always did the opposite what they would tell us, [INAUDIBLE] much what about that. We just made like we didn't understand anything. I spoke German fluently, so-- stupid. I don't know. I couldn't understand.

And the next time I asked a question and said in perfect German, that's it, and he realized that the last time they saw me I couldn't speak German. It was a mess. It was a big mess.

So each time you got moved, what was really going through your mind?

When is it going to end? And it didn't, and it didn't, and it didn't. And each time we thought, well, maybe this time. It lasted for us five years. They invaded us in 1940, and then the war wasn't over-- that was in May, and it wasn't over until May 1945.

And think about that. These are supposed to be the best years of your life. That's when you are growing up. And you're what? 20? You're 20 now? Well, it lasted for me from the time I was 18 until I was 23.

And when we got out of this when it was over, we had lost five years, and then we tried to make up that time. Don't ever try that. You can't make up for time. There's no way. But we would go out. We-- still. 23, you're not that old. But we would go out and go dancing. We would meet somewhere, have a party, all of those things, trying to make up time.

After six months, we understood it wasn't possible. We'd stay out until maybe 3:00 and 4:00 in the morning and then had to be at work the next morning at 8:00. Well, we couldn't keep that up, and we realized you couldn't do that. You had to do the best you-- the best you can. But we sure did try hard.

Did you have a lot of-- like what you said, you were wondering when it was going to end. I know you might have kind of gathered from what was going on around and heard rumors. Did negative thoughts really come into play or--

We tried not to, and I guess being still young helped on that score. Escape we couldn't. In Poland, in Auschwitz, they had the barbed wire, had 25,000 volts on it. All you had to do a touch it. You fried. That was it.

And where the heck would you go to? And in Germany, where would you go to? You couldn't go to ask a German to hide you. You couldn't do that his neighbor might turn him in, or he might turn you in himself. There was really no way for us to go.

And besides that, we all had these tattoos on our arms. How could you hide those? Maybe in the beginning you put some tape on it. How can you keep the tape on? And they would ask, what's wrong with your arm? Anything like that, they'd take it off, and they'd see that big, old, black number on your arm.

No way. There was really no way we could escape that. And they always ask us, too. Couldn't you defend yourself? With what? We had two fists. That was it. There wasn't anything else. How far would you get?

They had a thing going, the Germans, and that was in every camp. And I can't think of the name of it now. What do you call the things that-- triangular like that? You put the table on top of it, and you can saw with a saw.

That not a saw horse but a--

Yeah, saw horse.

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Saw horse?

OK, similar to a saw horse they would put out on the place where we had roll call, and if somebody had done something, that person would be called out, put his body over the saw horse, legs still on the ground but lean over, and then they would hit you 25 times with a thing that was close to a baseball bat. And they also made you count it yourself, one, two. That's how-- and hard. That really gets you.

And they usually did that with a man. I never did see a woman get that. But I saw my father get it. Well, and they've asked me, well, how did you feel? I said, I had two clenched fists. That's all I had. And I stood there and had to watch it because we were all standing on a roll call. That's when they did that, so you could all see how good they were at hurting you. And it was mostly 25 licks that you would get.

And when they were through, then you had to do-- another name I can't think of right now. Get down-- not on your knees.

Push-ups?

Not push-ups, that--

Squats or--

Yeah, yeah. Also, at least. And what that was for was to get your circulation started again because it was pretty upset back there. And you had to stand there, and watch it, and take it. And what went through your mind-- you can't-- you can't even imagine what you would like to do at that point. There's nothing, nothing. There's a "g-nat." So what else is "g-new"?

Do you think that your dad-- when he moved y'all away to Amsterdam, do you think he probably thought he was--

--safe? Well, it get's back into history. The reason he chose Holland was simply because Holland had not been in a war in 100 years. They always were neutral. The Germans walked in and walked all over us. They had some 60 million people. We were 7--

Needed to get to France and-- they needed to make their way to France and England.

That's right. Well, the funniest thing is that during this time, when they invaded-- and we were out in the streets to see all this-- the soldiers would come up to us and say, where's the bridge to England? This is how stupid they were. They were told there was a bridge in Holland that went straight to England. That's what they told them. My mother scared--

How many people said, that way?

Oh, no, we did better things than that. There was a blackout in Amsterdam, like in all the countries that were involved, and a blackout. And that didn't mean that people had to be in. We had to be in. That was the rule. Us Jews didn't have to be out on the streets after 8:00.

But anyway, they-- and of course, the German soldiers were out in the streets. They roamed around, and they went to the pubs, and cafes, and to all Dutch places. And sometimes they got lost in the dark. It's only natural, especially when you're not familiar with the city and it's in total darkness. You know how many canals we have in Amsterdam? Hundreds of them.

And they would ask, could you tell me to get to-- whatever they wanted to go to. And there wasn't a Dutchman that said, no, I don't know. They always knew. And what they would do is they'd kind of take him by the elbow a little bit like that, to lead them because it was so dark.

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They led them to the nearest canal, and when they knew the canal was right there, they held in that step. And he was still going, fell in the canal. We lost more Germans that way. In the canal they went. We did crazy things. This was before I was in camp, of course.

We celebrated all the royal birthdays because we were used to that. Those were national holidays. On this particular day, it was going to be Prince Bernhard's birthday. He had married Juliana. She was the mother of the-- she was the daughter of the queen. Wilhelmina was still the queen.

And Prince Bernhard was known to wear a white carnation, a fresh, white carnation every day in his buttonhole, and everybody knew that. So being in Holland, you have flower stands all around the city. And flowers were very inexpensive, too.

So we all went to the flower stands and got us a white carnation and pinned them on, everybody, men, women, children, everybody. Suddenly, that was very strange to the Germans. Why are these people all wearing white carnations? And so somebody must have told them what it was.

So they would come after us, and grab that carnation, and tore it up, and pitched it. Well, we weren't discouraged over that at all. We went back to the flower stand, got us a new one, went home, got us a razor blade. We put the stem of the carnation into the metal hole and then pinned it, back out in the street.

And here came the German, and they would grab that carnation. Only their hand was cut to pieces. But did we run. Oh, and did we run. But these are the things we did, crazy things like that.

And then we had the-- the first day that we had to wear the stars, the yellow stars, we had to go to a certain place to obtain them. What they didn't know was the Dutch all got them, everybody, not just Jewish people. Everybody went after stars.

That got confusing. They ran out of stars, and it had to be made again. They didn't have as many as people that asked for them and wore them, and they couldn't tell Jew from Gentile. There was no way. Everybody was wearing the store. And if you came late and couldn't get one anymore-- like a man would walk in the street, and you had your star on, and he didn't have one, he'd tip your hat-- he'd tip his hat as recognition. The Dutch were that way.

The Dutch also struck. They had a strike of 24 hours-- this wasn't-- it didn't take that long, but it showed the Germans that the Dutch didn't like it. We had no light. We had no gas. We had no bus. We had no train. Everything closed up. There was not a factory working. There was no street car, nothing. The town stood still.

And then during the evening time here came the big posters again. If you participate in the strike tomorrow, after these 24 hours were over you were shot. So there was really no more strike, but they showed they didn't like this, this was not their way of living.

We never had any in Holland, whether you were Jewish, or Gentile, or Catholic, or whatever you were. To them it didn't make a bit of difference. Nobody cared. That never-- we never had that. And so the Dutch were not very well-pleased with the idea of what the Germans were doing.

What-- were y'all Orthodox?

No, Reform, and the word is a Reform, not Reformed. reform means you can't keep on doing that. Once you're

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