

CORRESPONDENCE

VOUGHT V-143

The Chance-Vought V-143 fighter, illustrated on page 106 of the AAHS Journal is a rare bird indeed - and one that had a rather lively history on the international aviation scene. Publication of this photograph will certainly generate interest in this aircraft among AAHS members so I'll add what notes I have to the pile.

Originally a Northrop design, submitted to the U.S. Navy as the XFT-1 fighter, full rights were sold to Chance-Vought after the failure of this type to obtain Navy approval. The design was modified by Vought and two fighter types evolved - the V-143 powered by the 750 hp Twin Wasp Jr., and the V-150 powered by the 525 hp 9-cylinder Wasp Jr. Airframes of both aircraft were virtually identical, and both mounted an armament of two .30 cal machine guns in the fuselage above the cowlings.

Only one prototype of the V-143 was built and the type was submitted to the Army Air Corps for testing. The photo in the Journal illustrates this original model in its Air Corps markings. Tests conducted at Wright Field by the Materiel Division showed that among other minor faults, the aircraft had bad spin characteristics and the type was rejected.

The prototype was extensively modified, the fuselage lengthened to increase stability, and the tail assembly completely redesigned. This modified model was licensed NR-56V (c/n 1228) and was re-submitted to the Army. Although the spin problem had been remedied the fighter was still not accepted by the Air Corps.

Following this second rejection Vought obtained a license for export and attempted to sell the V-143 to the Argentine Government. This also failed, and late in 1937 Vought sold the complete rights to the ship, including the prototype, to the Japanese Army Air Force for \$100,000. All plans, data and specifications were turned over to the Japanese, clearing out the manufacturer's files on the aircraft.

In Japan the V-143 was regarded as an exceptionally fortunate purchase, and one that would allow comparison of Japanese aircraft against contemporary American models based on the relationship between published reports and actual measured performance. The Japanese were quite proud that under JAAF testing the V-143, with a retractable gear, failed to match the performance of the Nakajima Type 97 Fighter (Ki.27 "Nate") with a fixed gear in "overall performance".

Following this the V-143 was tested by the JNAF and allotted the experimental AXV1 designation. In tests against the Mitsubishi Type 96 Carrier Fighter (A5M "Claude") the V-143 once again proved "inferior" in performance to the Japanese type.

The V-143's influence on Japanese fighter design is not fully known, and does not appear to have been extensive. The landing gear unit seemed to have been of prime interest to Japanese designers and Mr. Jiro Horikoshi, designer of the Mitsubishi Type 0 Carrier Fighter (A6M "Zeke"), writing in the current 1956-57 edition of Air Progress, states: "As virtually all competent airplane designers will hold with me, the business of creating any new airplane is a process of adapting the existing art and science to the problem at hand. For example, I will state that the undercarriage retraction design on the Zero was inspired by the Vought V-143..."

This, however, is confusing. The same writer, as co-author of the book "Zero-Sen" (The Zero Fighter) stated: "Nakajima's 10-Shi design (B5N1 "Kate") was the first carrier single-winged airplane to use a retractable under-carriage (in the JNAF). The decision resulted from the successful use of this mechanism in the Northrop BT-1 light bomber which the (Japanese) Navy purchased from the United States. (Note: This aircraft was actually a Douglas DB-19, an export version of the Northrop BT-1. It was assigned the JNAF experimental designation of DXD1). The retracting mechanism of the Chance-Vought V-143 fighter, purchased by the Army, was remarkably similar to the Northrop arrangement. After much initial trouble, the mechanism was satisfactory and served as the model for the undercarriage of the 12-Shi Carrier Fighter (A6M1 "Zeke"). Perhaps this is one reason why many people in the United States felt that the Zero was an 'imitation' of the V-143's; they failed to distinguish the obvious parentage of the landing gear."

Second-guessing would indicate that the V-143 was the actual basis for the Zero's landing gear unit as the Northrop aircraft had a rearward retracting unit rather than the fold toward the fuselage unit of the Vought fighter.

The ultimate end of this aircraft is unfortunately not known to me, but perhaps exposure of the V-143 story in the Journal may provide an answer.

References: Air Progress 1956-57; "I Designed the Jap Zero" by Jiro Horikoshi.
(Also in November 1950 Air Trails)
Zero-Sen (The Zero Fighter), by M. Okumiya and J. Horikoshi. Nippon
Shuppan Kyodo K.K., Tokyo, Japan. 1953.
Janes, All The Worlds Aircraft - 1937, 1938

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VOUGHT V-143

The aircraft was developed during 1937 from original designs by Northrop and was considered a departure from the multiplace biplanes for which Vought was famous. It was powered with a 750 hp Twin Wasp Junior engine, swinging a 9' 6" diameter three bladed Hamilton constant speed propeller, and had a top speed around 300 m.p.h. The same aircraft with a 525 h.p. Wasp Junior was designated the V-150.

The V-143 had a span of 33' 6" and an overall length of 22' 2". It had 187 sq ft wing area, and a wing loading of 23 lbs per sq ft. The root chord of 83" averaged against the tip chord of 40" gave a mean chord of 71.7". A NACA 2415 wing section was used at the root, and modified to a NACA 2409 at the tip. The aircraft was of all metal construction with a semi-monocoque fuselage. It featured retractable landing gear and two .30 cal mg's firing thru the prop.

The Aviation Yearbook for 1938, on page 62, shows a picture of the V-143 with civilian registration NR-56V. Other references are ABC of Aviation by Victor Page (detailed three view and photo); Flying for 1937.

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CIVIL REGISTER, LOCKHEED Etc.

The comments by Mr. Kohn and Mr. Larkins (JAAHS-3, pp. 100-103) raise some interesting points for comparison. Mr. Kohn remarks on the excellent and wholly praiseworthy accomplishments of the British in compiling the British Civil Register. It would, of course, be of the greatest value if we in this country could bring the information now in our possession into a similar usable form. Mr. Smalley is spending hundreds of hours doing just that on one segment of the register. Nevertheless, the size of this task should not be underestimated in making proposals for its quick accomplishment. As of June 1953, there was a total of 1,697 aircraft on the British Civil Register including those whose certificates of airworthiness had expired. (Air Registration Board, REGISTER OF BRITISH CIVIL AIRCRAFT, No. 24, June 1953, page 10). In the United States, however, there were 9,845 active and inactive aircraft in the state of California alone. (U.S.D.C., Civil Aeronautics Administration, STATISTICAL STUDY OF U.S. CIVIL AIRCRAFT, January 1, 1952, p.2). The total number of Piper types was 18,746 on the same date (*ibid.*, p.19). The gross number of aircraft of all types in the United States was 88,545. These are only figures for aircraft extant on those dates. The task becomes proportionally larger as we go back over the years. I would certainly not dissuade anyone who could bring order to this data from doing so, but only feel that he should be forewarned of the fantastic number of hours he will log on the microfilm reader before he is done. The British and American situations in this regard are not really comparable. Our job is of an entirely different magnitude.

The De Havilland-Canada L-20A "Beaver" should be added to the ANG-NG list appearing on page 71. Practically the day after Mr. Olson and I finished this table, I shot L-20A, 51-16567 of CALIF-NG at Oakland Airport. It was olive drab with white around the cabin and the National Guard inscription in yellow.

In addition to the interesting listing of stamps illustrating aircraft, (JAAHS3, p.72), we may add the Belgian airmail 7 francs issued at the time Sabena inaugurated helicopter air-mail pickup and delivery service. It shows a Bell 47-DL in flight. A photo of the stamp is reproduced in Aviation Week, 9-11-50, p.48.

Mr. McKay's compilation of MacRobertson entries is of considerable value. No.32 listed as an Orion, was however, a Lockheed Altair. This was an extremely interesting ship, details of its history only recently having come to light. Lockheed No. 213, Altair 8, was originally registered X-14209. It was manufactured in 1933. The aircraft was sold to Okura Trading Company, St. Luke's and Ginza Avenues, Tokyo, Japan. From there it was sold, along with its mate (c/n 188, X-12230, also an Altair), to one of Japan's largest newspapers, the MAINICHI SHIMBUN (Daily News). The Japanese registration of 188 has long been known as J-BAMC. It was beautifully painted in Mainichi's colors. No. 213 seemed, however, to have vanished. Then, it appeared suddenly entered in the MacRobertson Race with its original license NR-14209 (NR-14209). The owner was listed as the Lyon Flight Expedition Company. It was withdrawn before the race and its history since that time is not known. Considering the time differential between manufacture and its acquisition by Lyon, many have speculated that it never got to Japan along with J-BAMC. It was there, however, carrying the full Mainichi trim and the registration J-BAUC. This information appeared in the August 1956 issue of Japan's leading aviation magazine AIREVIEW (Kōkū-jōhō). They have been recently running a series of articles on the long history of the Mainichi Shimbun's aviation section. Though the article, as the magazine, is wholly in Japanese, a clear photo of J-BAUC is published on page 111. This magazine is recommended as an excellent reference for those interested in WW2 Japanese aviation.

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WRIGHT FIELD PHOTOS, CIVIL REGISTRATIONS

Concerning the Wright Field photos, Mr. Canary is a bit overenthusiastic--- Unfortunately the collection does NOT cover all aircraft ever assigned to McCook and Wright Fields. For example, there were a great many German WW-I planes at McCook in the early '20's, and only four were ever photographed. Many ships assigned to Wright Patterson during WW-II likewise escaped the camera.

As for quality, the pictures taken at McCook are tops; much better than later stuff shot at Wright. However, many pix are copies of factory views, or are reproduced from prints obtained abroad. A few are copies of halftones; Working backwards, as Mr. Canary did, writing down the number after examination of the picture is fine. The reverse is often disappointing. When stationed at Wright, I ordered many pix from their titles in the index, only to find that there were many that were detailed closeups of such things as the back of the firewall. Nothing on the cards at times to indicate overall view of closeup. In general, when a plane was shot for identification purposes, four pix were taken, starting with a full front view, then a 3/4 front, a side, and a 3/4 rear. Where four numbers are listed in order, you can be pretty sure that is the sequence of views.

As for the problem of compiling a U.S. Civil Register for collector's use, similar to our British friends, we'll never be able to do it unless we can get the information as it is issued. Working backward through old registers and the like will get most of it, but never all. In addition to the staggering problem of just writing down all those numbers, there is the problem of relicensing the same ship with a new number every time it changed hands, as was done back in 1927. After I got as many as six ships for one number, in little over a year, and three numbers for the same ship in a similar time, I gave up trying to compile a list starting with No.1.

Knowing the owner of a specific airplane is of value only in an infinitesimal percentage of the cases, such as who owns a certain antique now. Students of Airline genealogy, or specialists in a certain line, like Bill Larkins and Fords, of which there were only about 200, without too high a turnover, stand to gain by a listing of original and subsequent owners, but what good would a listing of all the owners of all the J-3 Cubs from 1937 to date do anyone? The main purpose of a listing such as I tried to compile was mainly as a means of identifying photos of unknown ships through their registrations. This falls down when the ship has been re-numbered. As an example, anyone trying to identify 51Y and 52Y in a modern CAA listing would be sadly dissatisfied. The numbers used to apply to the Keith-Ryder R-1 and R-2 racers. Now they are assigned to two gliders that I own, a 1930 Detroit Gull Primary (52Y), and a Schweizer 1-26A (51Y).

How I got those numbers is an interesting story. After I obtained the primary a couple of years ago, I decided I'd like a 1930-type number to go with my 1930 ship, so I asked the C.A.A. if 2Y (ex Howard "Pete") was available, but it was not, and the closest they could give me was 52Y. This was the Ryder R-2 number, and by amazing coincidence, I worked with Chuck McGrew, the owner, for several years at Boeing. When I got the 1-26A, I thought it would be nice to have the next consecutive number, so I asked for 53Y. It was not available, but C.A.A. said I could have 51Y, so I took it. (Note to aircraft owners; You can have just about any number you want for your plane if it isn't already in use. You can even make up

special new numbers like N1JD for Joe Doakes, if you like. Only catch is the ten dollar fee, payable to Aircraft Registration Branch of C.A.A. in Washington.

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LOCKHEED VEGA

...On page 38 I saw the XB-MAA photo...and I would like to give more information on this airplane.

This plane was brought back to Mexico City from Chiapas, where it had a severe accident. The only parts in good shape were: 1) The front section from the engine firewall to the first window; 2) The after section from the door back, and ; 3) the struts and wheels of the landing gear.

The rest of the airplane was completely rebuilt by Maestro Rafael Montes de Oca and his assistants Julio Lopez, Gerardo Najera Lopez (engine), Maestro Rafael Montes de Oca, Adrian Montoya, and Francisco Granado.

They had a Wasp 450 HP engine in the plane after it was rebuilt. This plane was owned by Ing Luis Struck, owner of COMPANIA MEXICANA DE AEROFOTO, S.A., and it was used for aerial photography until it was sold in the U.S. recently.

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ALASKA, CANADA, MANUFACTURERS NAMES, N.G., DC-7

It was somewhat of a surprise to see my letter appear on page 102, but if anyone is interested, perhaps I can supplement it a bit. I spent the summer in Alaska working as an Episcopal missionary with the indians at Eagle, on the Yukon River. Never missed the opportunity for a flight, however, and picked up a little time in bush planes: Wien-Alaska Airlines "Norseman" and Cessna 180; Stinson 108-3 Modified "Station Wagon" on Edo Floa ts; plus the Episcopal Church's Piper PA-20 "Pacer" and Cessna 170-B (Last three with new and bigger engines). (Within the last couple of years the recent Cessna 180 has started to dominate the "Bush-Plane" field in Northern Canada and Alaska. War-surplus "Norseman" types are expensive to operate and good only for bulky freight; newer "Beavers" still require a high investment; Pipers are common but too small for real utility work; winter ski operation almost precludes tricycle gears on short, rough fields. The Cessna 180 is increasingly popular up there, and appears to have a long arctic career ahead.)

Returned to the "outside", as the Alaskans say, via PAA "Strato Clipper United States" N-1041V, Boeing 377-10-26, serial 15941, Fairbanks-Whitehorse-Juneau; and then by Pacific Northern Airlines Lockheed 649A-79-60 (Built as a 749) N-86525, serial 2662, Juneau-Annette Island-Seattle, the first week in September. The crews courteously invited me up to the flight deck on all airline flights. In Juneau I again visited the Alaska Coastal Airlines dock in the heart of the city, on the Gastineau Channel. Was determined not to leave until I got a flight in either their famous "Vega" float-plane or their equally-old Bellanca on floats. Low ceilings and rain were discouraging, but made the grade the second afternoon, September 5th. With

Sheldon B. Simmons flying (one of the airline's originators), flew 45 minutes in N-47M (see page 99), Lockheed Vega 5-C, serial 99, Built 9-9-29, Factory rebuilt 5-22-31 (from the nameplate), ATC 384, 5240 pounds allowable gross weight (CAA Operation Limitations form ACA-309), 7pCSM with two Edo floats and a 450 hp P&W R-985-AN.6B "Wasp Junior SB-3". Flew under a low ragged overcast up the Taku Inlet, a beautiful fiord with spectacular glaciers, with a landing at the Taku Lodge to leave two passengers. With the old Vega cabin to myself on the return, I wondered how many "Ancient Aircraft Enthusiasts" would like to have been along! (Editor: BC, do you mean ancient enthusiasts, or enthusiasts of old airplanes? Hmmm?) Took many Kodachrome slides.

In Seattle I enjoyed the hospitality of AAHS member and old friend Gordy Williams. Visited Kenmore Air Harbor at the north tip of Seattle's Lake Washington, saw a rebuilt Curtiss "Robin" N-348K on Edo floats, with a 220 hp Continental R-670-5 (W-670-6A), but with no nameplate or registration papers. Also noted the yellow fuselage of a Bellanca CH-300 "Pacemaker" modified, N-251M, with an R-985 "Wasp Jr". It is in perfect rebuilt condition, and will be assembled in the near future and put on floats. There is also a beautiful "Norseman" on floats at Kenmore Air Harbor, as well as a few post-war planes.

Missing from Lake Union in Seattle is the one and only Lockheed 2-D "Vega", serial 40, built 1-20-29, N-199E, which was on floats when I saw it one year ago. It still retained, at that time, its original engine, a 300 hp P&W R-985-A, serial 7! Rumor has it that this rare 2-D Vega went to Paul Mantz in Los Angeles. Does anyone know what happened to another old Vega which Paul Mantz once had, many years ago; on November 7, 1937, my first log book shows a flight in a Lockheed 1 Vega, serial 11, NC-7044, built 7-31-28, with its original 220 hp Wright J-5A Whirlwind. It was all white, named "Miss Patsy", had no engine cowling, and was based at the Burbank airport near Los Angeles. (Editor's note: A photo, and information, on this plane will be published in the next issue of the Journal)

After leaving Gordy Williams in Seattle I returned to Vancouver where I'm in my second year at the Anglican Theological College at U.B.C. The Vancouver International Airport at Sea Island still has a goodly number of rare and ancient seaplanes: an extremely old Junkers W-34, CF-AQW; A Stranraer biplane flying boat with two Wright R-1820 Cyclones, CF-BYM; The prototype Beech A-18-A (on "Norseman" floats!) with Wright engines, CF-BQH; plus numerous other rare and wonderful types. Many are owned by Pacific Western Airlines Ltd., the old Queen Charlotte Airlines. On Sept 22, 1956, got 40 minutes copilot time in a Barkley-Grow T8P-1 float plane, CF-BMW, serial 6, an 8 passenger 10pCSM, with two huge Edo floats (Note photo on page 220c of 1939 Janes, and page 160 of this Journal), and powered by two P&W R-985-AN.14B "Wasp Junior SB-3" engines. Does anyone have any additional information on this plane, date built, possible service with the R.C.A.F., etc.? I understand that Pacific Western is also operating a Barkley-Grow on wheels, somewhere in Western Canada.

Problem No. 2 (page 63) raises the question of manufacturers names, and I'd like to stick my two-bits in. In England, 1943-1945, I flew among other things a Boeing DB-7B "Boston III-A", and many Douglas B-17F and G "Flying Fortresses". On the face of it, there is an obvious mistake in manufacturers here, until you consider: who built what? From an operational viewpoint, a B-17 was a B-17 and they couldn't care less who built it. From a maintenance standpoint, sometimes it made a great deal of difference when it came to matching a Vega-built wing to a Douglas-built fuselage, which happened when battle-damage required us to make one operational B-17

out of two "hangar queens". Then, I've flown a Vega 35, and you wouldn't call it anything else, but what about its prototype, the North American NA-35? And I've got time in a Canadian Vickers SA-10A-4-VI "Catalina" of the USAF, but it certainly was not a Consolidated PBV-5A in any sense of the word. On the other hand, shortly after the Second War, I wrote to the C.A.A. to ask if the Curtiss P-40N had a limited certification. Instead of a simple "yes" or "no" answer, they sent me the Limited Type Certificate for this aircraft:2 (LTC No. L-18-2, P-40L and P-40N, Approved May 8, 1947). Does that make it a "Reed P-40N"? Hardly!

Generally speaking, my rule-of-thumb is to go by the manufacturer of the airframe, not by the original designer, neither by a company which modified it, nor by someone who acquired the design at some later date. Obviously this can never be a hard-and-fast rule, and the exceptions are ever with us.

While we are on the subject shouldn't we be equally careful and accurate with model designations? The aircraft manufacturers themselves are generally the worst offenders in this regard, often through ignorance, sometimes through pride, and occasionally to standardize early model designations with current practice. An example is found in the excellent and much-appreciated article by Joe Barry on pages 51 and 52. Here, the original Lockheed "Vega", serial No. 1, is described as being the model "V-1" and it so appears today in Lockheed engineering specifications. But was it always a model V-1 or is that a later accretion? What did the old Lockheed Company call it, when it was first built? That is what we should call it today. Correct me if wrong, but I believe its original designation was: Lockheed 1 "V_ega"/ I never heard of any "V"-prefix being used prior to the Vega Aircraft Corporation (1937-1943), which Lockheed both formed and absorbed.

Speaking of names, has anyone ever heard of the Douglas DC-7 being called the "Cloudster"? While flying in Delta-C&S N-4872C (serial 44,262), N-4879C (serial 44,683), and United N-6307C (serial 44,271), up on the flight deck I noticed the word CLOUDSTER on the door to the passenger cabins. Yet, no one I've ever asked seems to have heard of the DC-7 being called the "Cloudster". I've been in DC-6B's built both earlier and later and noticed particularly, but there is no similar writing or name on the door to the passenger compartments. Who knows the answer?

Corrections: Page 29, picture 4, photo caption should read 110th Photo Section not Squadron. There were no Photo Squadrons in the pre-war National Guard Aviation, only Photo Sections within Observation Squadrons. I was a member of the 115th Photo Section at Griffith Park, Los Angeles, 1937-1939. On page 30, Table 1, the one single Northrop should be the model A-17AS ("S" for Special). This particular job was built as a V.I.P. executive transport, had neither guns or bomb bay, the cockpits were noticeably closer together than with operational A-17A's (in which I have flown), and if memory serves me correctly, the rear seat was pushed up, and it had a smaller engine, the R-1340-45. General Oscar Westover, then Chief of the Air Corps, was killed in this type of plane (two were built) on September 21st 1938, when he apparently fell out of his turn on the final approach to the old Lockheed Aircraft Factory field (now Plant B-1) at Burbank, California. I saw the wreckage shortly after.

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VULTEE, VENTURA, N.G., CRASHES

I would like to offer some additions and corrections...to the first three issues... I have a neg in my files showing Vultee V-1A, NC-13774, which was not included in the list. It is pictured as belonging to Phillips Petroleum Company...

In addition to those...Venturas...listed as registered in the U.S. there is also N-1592V, owned by Trade-Ayer Inc., of Linden, N.J.

Noticeably lacking from the aircraft history of the NG was any mention or reference to the 126th Observation Squadron of the pre-war Wisconsin N.G. This Sqdn., was based at Milwaukee County Airport...and was equipped with at least two North American O-47A's, and two North American BC-1A's.... Hiller H-23A, 51-16100, is assigned to the 121st Field Artillery Battalion of the Wisconsin National Guard, part of the 32nd Division, and located at Milwaukee. They also have another, and possibly a third.

I have ...the following to add to the crash listings; N-85M(X) Scoville "Stardust", built and owned by John R. Scoville of Rochester, N.Y. Crashed and destroyed on July 8, 1956 during midget air race elimination heat at Niagra Falls, N.Y. Beech D-17S, N-39392, c/n D17S-68, Mfg 3-29-44, crash landed at Iron Mountain, Michigan, in the spring of 1956, reduced to spares for existing D-17S belonging to Falk Corp. of Milwaukee. N-81249, Fairchild 24R-46, crashed and destroyed while attempting emergency landing during squall, at Manitowoc, Wisconsin on July 1, 1956.

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VULTEE, "K OF NEW HAVEN"

The 1944 issue of Air News Yearbook, Vol. 2, page 176, contains a SOVFOTO picture of the Vultee V-1A, designated R-10, and clearly shows the registration as URSS H208, not N-208 as reported in the Journal.

The "K of New Haven", NR-9696, is a Stinson SM-4, c/n X-10, mfg 1929, Wasp eng. It was registered to H. G. Partridge, New Haven, Conn., in January and June 1930 registers only.

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TACTICAL RECON GRP, N.G.

In Roger Freeman's letter in the Journal, he mentions the 67th Tactical Recon grp, and the fact that it was the only unit to operate P-51A a/c in the ETO. I have been interested in this motley group for some time now, and one aircraft Roger doesn't mention them using was the P-38. After the grpe moved to the continent very soon after "D" Day, they were equipped with P-38's (109th and 310th Tact Recon Sqdns) and P-51B's (107th Tact Recon Sqdn). Before they moved to the continent the 107th had the P-51A's. I have a photo...showing P-51A, 43-6163, of the 107th (AX-G). Another of this same type was AX-T, 43-6053. In regards to National Guard a/c... South Dakota NG is flying an L-20 Beaver 52-6079. The SD ANG flies F-94C's, one of which is 51-3586.

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