



The Berlin Candy Bomber

Gail S. Halverson

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In June 1948, Russia laid siege to Berlin, cutting off the flow of food and supplies over highways into the city. More than two million people faced economic collapse and starvation. The Americans, English, and French began a massive airlift to bring sustenance to the city and to thwart the Russian siege.

Gail Halvorsen was one of hundreds of U.S. pilots involved in the airlift. While in Berlin, he met a group of children standing by the airport watching the incoming planes. Though they hadn't asked for candy, he was impressed to share with them the two sticks of gum he had in his possession. Seeing how thrilled they were by this gesture, he promised to drop more candy to them the next time he flew to the area.

True to his word, as he flew in the next day, he wiggled the wings of his plane to identify himself, then dropped several small bundles of candy using parachutes crafted from handkerchiefs to slow their fall. Local newspapers picked up the story. Suddenly, letters addressed to "Uncle Wiggly Wings" began to arrive as the children requested candy drops in other areas of the city.

Enthusiasm spread to America, and candy contributions came from all across the country. Within weeks candy manufacturers began donating candy by the boxcar.

In May 1949, the highway blockade ended, and the airlift ended in September. But the story of Uncle Wiggly Wings and the candy-filled parachutes lives on-a symbol of human charity.

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