
Deseret News

'Bomber' sweetens day for Kosovars

By Marci WilliamsDeseret News staff writer

498 words

24 May 1999

Deseret News

DN

B01

English

(c) 1999 Deseret News Publishing Co.

PROVO -- What would have been a dentist's nightmare was a sugar-sweet dream for Kosovar refugee children in Tirana, Albania.

The "Candy Bomber," as this Provo resident has been affectionately called since the 1948 German blockade, was at it again.

During his recent trip to Berlin for the 50th anniversary of the end of blockade, U.S. Air Force Col. **Gail Halvorsen**, 78, was asked by the commander of the air force in Europe to take a quick jaunt to Albania so he could spread some of the same cheer he brought to the Berlin children 50 years before.

Halvorsen brought bags and bags of peppermints and caramels, as well as school supplies and teddy bears to the children of Camp Hope, a place he found well deserving of its optimistic name.

"There's hope because they see people coming outside of their country bringing them food, bringing them blankets, bringing them cots to sleep on," he said. "They were hopeful the same as the Berlin kids 50 years ago."

Halvorsen became the legendary "Candy Bomber" in 1948. As a pilot for the U.S. Air Force, he was called to airlift supplies to post-World War II Berlin. At first he was shocked that the United States was going to so much trouble to help its once bitter enemy, but after seeing the Berlin kids waving and smiling at him from behind a fence, Halvorsen melted.

He realized that "people are the same on either side of the border."

Using his and a few of his buddies' candy rations, Halvorsen tied

chocolate bars and packages of gum together, connected the bundles to handkerchief parachutes and then dropped them from his plane.

His sweet service technically could have gotten Halvorsen into big trouble, but when news broke, his deed became the large-scale Operation Little Vittles. The American Confectioners Association, among others, donated tons of chocolate and handkerchiefs to support the effort and soon candy rain was in Berlin's everyday forecast.

Like the Berlin children, Halvorsen said, the Kosovar children, "take the brunt of an unrighteous dictator."

"I never thought 50 years later the world would be as wicked as it was with Hitler."

Halvorsen said all people have a "blockade" of sorts at some point in life. His blockade was four months ago when his wife died, but like the Berlin and Kosovar children, he said he still has hope.

"You can live on thin rations, but if you lose hope, your soul dies," he said.

Halvorsen said there are about 1,500 refugees in Camp Hope, located in Albania's capital city, and about two-thirds of the refugees are children. The children attend school within the camp and are, as Halvorsen described, "in good spirits, they're bright, inquisitive."

Another similarity he noticed that the Berlin children of 1948 and the Kosovar children of today share is their will to be free.

Document dn00000020010827dv5o00g5w

Search Summary

Text	"Gail Halvorsen"
Date	All Dates
Source	All Sources
Author	All Authors
Company	All Companies
Subject	All Subjects
Industry	All Industries
Region	All Regions
Language	English