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## 'Candy bomber' honored at Hill AFB

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Thirteen is a lucky number for **Gail Halvorsen**, the famous "candy bomber" of the Berlin Airlift. The retired Air Force colonel was inducted recently as the 13th member of the Utah Aviation Hall of Fame.

Halvorsen, a Provo resident, was honored by the Order of Daedalians during a ceremony at Hill Air Force Base. The order is a national organization of military pilots, said spokesman Ed Hawkins, Ogden.

In June 1948, three years after the end of World War II, the Soviet Union blocked roads leading to the western sector of Berlin, Germany, cutting off the flow of food and supplies. "More than 2 million people were faced with starvation and economic collapse," said Hawkins.

American, English and French forces began a massive airlift to ferry food to the city. Halvorsen was one of the Air Force pilots flying in the operation.

As Hawkins tells the story, Halvorsen was talking with a group of children standing near the fence of Templehoff Airport, Berlin. He gave them two sticks of gum, and the children were thrilled by his gesture.

"Halvorsen promised to drop some more candy and gum to them on his next trip into the area." The next day he wiggled his plane's wings to identify himself, "then dropped several small bundles of candy, using parachutes made of handkerchiefs to slow their fall."

Word of the gifts spread among the children of Berlin. The gifts continued and letters began to arrive addressed to "Uncle Wiggle Wings" as children in other parts of the city requested candy.

The Air Force encouraged the effort, which became "Operation little Vittles." Candy was air-dropped onto playgrounds, parks, school grounds and church yards.

In 949 the Soviets ended the blockade and the Berlin Airlift ended.  
But the memory of the candy gifts remains.

"Col. **Gail Halvorsen**'s actions truly brought great credit to himself,  
the Air Force, the nation and the state of Utah," Hawkins said.

"His heartwarming actions to the children of a vanquished enemy grew  
into an international effort of kindness and good will, an operation  
that touched the hearts of millions in both Germany and America."

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