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## 'Candy Bomber' Is to Buzz Berlin Again

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Fifty years ago, a young Air Force lieutenant named **Gail Halvorsen** gave the Berlin airlift a personal twist. Between June 1948 and May 1949, the allied operation carried more than 2.3 million tons of coal, flour and food to Berlin, which was cut off by a Soviet land blockade. Over the same period, Mr. Halvorsen dropped candy and gum to the isolated sector's children.

This morning, the Candy Bomber, as he was christened, will take off from Brooklyn on a quest to recreate his past feat. Co-piloting a Douglas C-54e cargo plane that was used in the original airlift, he will shower the now-unified city with sweets on June 26 as part of the celebration of the airlift's 50th anniversary.

"I tell you, it knocks 30 years off my life," Mr. Halvorsen, 77 and sprightly, said of the trip yesterday at Floyd Bennett Field, where the "Spirit of Freedom" was waiting. Mr. Halvorsen, a retired colonel, will have company on his trip: 12 people, including four other airlift veterans, will make the journey with him in a plane that has been altered to make additional space. Mr. Halvorsen and his companions will tour Europe before arriving in Berlin.

The plane was decommissioned by the military in 1973 and reclaimed by the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation in 1994. The trip, which will cost some \$250,000, is being underwritten largely by the German Government and the city of Berlin.

Mr. Halvorsen's airlift initiative began when he encountered 30 German children on the other side of razor wire encircling Tempelhof Air Base, where the American planes would land and unload their cargo. He began attaching his and his co-pilots' rations of candy and gum to small parachutes, and dropping them to the children.

He continued doing so, unbeknownst to his superiors, until his plane --with parachutes drifting beneath -- landed on the front page of a Berlin newspaper. His superiors sanctioned the endeavor, and "Operation Little Vittles" took off. German children called him "Uncle Wiggly Wings," because he would wiggle his plane's wings to signal his approach.

Colonel Halvorsen stayed in the Air Force for 25 more years, at one point returning to Tempelhof as a commander. His wife, Alva, was at the field yesterday, making the trip from their home in Provo, Utah. She said she planned to meet her husband in Germany. "It probably wasn't as exciting then as it is now," she said, as her husband posed next to his plane for photographers and film crews.

Photo: **Gail Halvorsen**, a retired colonel, yesterday inspected the cockpit of the cargo plane that he will use to re-enact his heroics of 50 years ago, when he dropped candy to children in Berlin during the Soviet blockade of the city. (Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times)

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