

# The Washington Post

KIDS: READ ALL ABOUT IT

Prince William Extra

## 'Candy Bomber' Recalls Bittersweet Memories

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\* This is a reading comprehension exercise for children. It is written by Susan Fineman, a reading specialist in the New Haven, Conn., school district.

The original "Candy Bomber" pilot, who came up with the idea of dropping sweets for the children of besieged Berlin, returned recently to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the historic airlift.

**Gail Halvorsen**, a 77-year-old retired U.S. Air Force colonel, landed at Tempelhof airport in the Spirit of Freedom, the C-54 cargo plane used during the airlift.

The airlift of food, coal and other supplies for the 2 million West Berliners began June 26, 1948, after the Soviet Union blocked all land routes in an attempt to force the western allies out.

Halvorsen said he started dropping candy tied to little parachutes to help the hungry children in the cutoff western half of the city.

Over the airlift's 15 months, he and his squadron pelted the city with more than 20 tons of chocolate, raisins and gum.

"What it meant is not chocolate, but hope, which is the most important thing you can have in a crisis," he said.

The feeling of peace and fulfillment that he got out of serving others has stayed with him all his life, he said. "So I received more than I ever gave the Berliners."

Halvorsen will remain in Germany for several weeks to participate in events marking the airlift's anniversary, including a ceremony with President Clinton at Tempelhof and a reenactment of his candy drop next month.

## QUIZ

1. Do you think the "Candy Bomber" is a good name for **Gail Halvorsen**? Explain.
2. In what branch of the military did the 77-year-old retired colonel serve? What was his job?
3. During the airlift, why did Berlin have to get all of its food and coal by air?
4. When did Halvorsen start the candy drops? How long did they last?
5. What type of plane was used to carry the candy?
6. Name three kinds of sweets that were airlifted to hungry children in Berlin.
7. Why did Halvorsen tie little parachutes to the candy before dropping the treats from the aircraft?
8. Why did the gifts of chocolate mean hope for the youngsters living in the western half of Berlin?
9. What does Halvorsen mean by "I received more than I ever gave the Berliners"?
10. How does the "Candy Bomber" plan to mark the anniversary of his historic air drop 50 years ago?

Answer key (wording might vary):

1. Answers will vary.
2. **Gail Halvorsen** was a pilot in the U.S. Air Force.
3. In 1948, supplies needed to be airlifted to Berlin because the Soviets blocked all land routes to the city.
4. Halvorsen's first air drop was on June 26, 1948. He and his squadron continued the airlift for 15 months.

5. The "Candy Bomber" flew a C-54 cargo plane.
6. The children of Berlin were given chocolate, raisins and gum.
7. Answers will vary.
8. Answers will vary.
9. Answers will vary.
10. The retired colonel will celebrate by staying in Germany, meeting with President Clinton and reenacting his candy drop in June.

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#### Search Summary

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