

**Weekend  
Edition**

# The Gilmer Mirror

Since 1877 – Upshur County's Oldest Business Institution



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One Section • 50 Cents

## Candy event highlights Airlift

By MARY L. KIRBY

Wednesday, as the day turned from sunny to cloudy, Jeff Rash and other members of the Gilmer Independent District School Board read to students of the third grade at Gilmer Elementary School.

Rash read to the students about *Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot*, a true story about a little girl the age of the students getting candy from a U.S. Air Force pilot during the Berlin Blockade.

"Life was grim in 1948 West Berlin, Germany. Josef Stalin blockaded all ground routes coming in and out of Berlin to cut off West Berliners from all food and essential supplies. Without outside help, over 2.2 million people would die.

"Thus began the Berlin Airlift, a humanitarian rescue mission that utilized British and American airplanes and pilots to fly in needed supplies," read an online review of the book.

While the planes flew essential elements to the city to keep it function, coal for the furnaces to keep people warm, food, blankets, water and even light-weight rice paper so the newspaper could help keep up morale, students gathered on the rubble around Tempelhof Airdrome watching the silver birds, which only three years earlier were destroying their city with bombs and were now saving their lives.

Lt. Gail S. Halvorsen met some of the children and was



**THE THIRD GRADERS** at Gilmer Elementary School break ranks and start racing for candy which was dropped by their principal from Steve Dean's T-6 Trainer (inset photo) to accompany a story. Jeff Rash, Gilmer School Board president, had just finished reading *Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot* by Margot Theis Raven to the students, their teachers, and members of the Gilmer School Board, when the students waved to planes flying overhead, then raced for the parachuted candy.

struck that unlike other places he had been, none asked for candy. They were so grateful for the food. He then gave them a reason to hope for a better world. He started parachut-

ing out candy to the children. Other pilots would join him in the effort

To bring alive this true story of a 7-year-old girl named Mercedes who lived in West

Berlin during the Airlift and of the American who came to be known as the Chocolate Pilot, Steve Dean took the Elementary School principal, John Wink, up in his T-6 trainer to drop out

fruit chewables.

Instead of individually dropped candies with its own parachute, Mr. Wink dropped the whole box which the children raced to clean up.



### Briefly Speaking

#### Early *Gilmer Mirror* deadlines announced

Early deadlines for news and advertising for the Saturday, Nov. 30, edition of *The Gilmer Mirror* will be Tuesday, Nov. 26, at 4 p.m.

#### Masonic Lodge to sponsor blood drive

Bethesda Masonic Lodge No. 142 of Gilmer will sponsor a blood drive from 1 to 6 p.m. Monday at the First United Methodist Church.

Carter Blood Care will be taking the donations in the church's Christian Life Center.

The blood drive is part of Texas Masons' "Gift of Life" program, which benefits the fraternity's three hospitals in Dallas, Houston and Galveston, and community hospitals throughout the state, said Wayne Oney, Worshipful Master of the local lodge.

Mirror Photo / Mary Laschinger Kirby