

Business

Dropping Bombs of Candy on Berlin, CNNfn

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RHONDA SCHAFFLER, CNNfn ANCHOR, MARKET CALL: We're going to switch gears and move away from the markets entirely for a moment and talk about the Wright Brothers. Remember them? They probably never dreamed what their 120-foot flight would mean for future of air travel.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of that 12-second experiment. And the U.S. Air Force celebrated by opening the Nasdaq for trading, which you saw a short time ago. Retired Colonel **Gail Halvorsen**, nicknamed the Candy Flyer for dropping chocolate bars from his plane during the 1949 Berlin airlift, joins us from the Nasdaq MarketSite.

Very good to have you on the program.

COL. **GAIL HALVORSEN**, U.S. AIRFORCE: It's wonderful to be here.

SCHAFFLER: You know it's such a fabulous story, from that time, so long ago and quite frankly, a lot of people might not know the story. Tell us briefly how you earned that name.

HALVORSEN: Well we met some kids in Berlin, a barbed wire fence around the airport and blockaded Berlin, didn't have enough to eat, didn't have any gum and candy, talked to them for an hour, but not once did they beg for anything.

So I offer them two sticks of gum, 30 kids. Thought there would be fights but there weren't. They just smelled the wrapper, the ones that didn't get any candy - any gum. And so I decided to drop more to them so everybody would have some. They hadn't had gum and candy for months and they were so grateful, I started to fly over the airfield. And I said, "How will I know what airplane?" I said, wiggle the wings like this. When you see that airplane, get ready, that's got the stuff. And so they really liked that.

So I became Uncle Wiggly Wings, the chocolate pilot. Got lots of letters. One little boy who wrote me says, "I'm nine-years-old and can't run very fast and I'm not getting this stuff". He said, "when you take off, (INAUDIBLE), you come down the canal, the second bridge, turn right, one block, I live in the bombed out house on the corner. I'll be there at two o'clock, drop it there". Well I couldn't get to it. I had trouble. He wrote me a letter, said, "I'll build a flyer, watch the smoke, drop it up wind". Well, finally, I still missed it. He wrote me a letter and says, "You're a pilot? I gave you a map! How did you guys win a war anyway?"

Well we got thousands of letters like that. I took a big package of gum and candy to Berlin and I mailed it - I hate to admit this being an Air Force pilot, mailed it to him in the German mail within the city. You couldn't mail it to Berlin, across East Germany, they cut it off and they'd eat it before it got there but I mailed it in the city and got it. He wanted to be adopted. He was finally adopted, American citizen from (ph) Pennsylvania. But all the kids wrote great letters and we're still doing it, still dropping the kids all over the United States and Europe yet.

NED RILEY, CNNfn GUEST HOST, MARKET CALL: Colonel, this is Ned Riley. I applaud you for such an act. By the way, did you pay for the candy yourself or did somebody else?

HALVORSEN: Well I paid for it myself. I didn't want anybody to know about this thing, you know? I didn't have permission. And when they found out about it, some newspaper guy, they always get you in trouble, he took a picture of my airplane in Berlin with a tail number with parachutes coming out of it and my boss saw it.

And boy, they called me in and were going to court marshal me. But General Tanner (ph), he was a pretty smart guy and he says, "Keep doing it". And so I did it. So we did buy it out of our own pocket. We did try to keep it a secret, but after about four drops and a big crowd, we got caught. After that, all the confectioners in America, the Confectioners Association said, we'll send you all you can drop.

And we couldn't tie the parachutes, of course, so we had them send it to Chickape (ph), Mass, 22 schools there tied all the parachutes. We dropped 23 tons in 14 months all over Germany, I mean, all over west Berlin, a blockaded city. East Berlin kids wrote, said, we can't help it, we're over here with the communists. We like the Americans. And hope you're not mad because we're over in west Berlin catching these things for the free Berliners. And they said, drop it over here when you come over east Berlin.

I did, for two weeks. And then they stopped me in west Germany, at the airport, and says what are you doing over east Berlin, Halvorsen? I said, I'm dropping those nasty communist kids (ph). They say, you can't do that. I said, the law of the gravity is the same on both sides of the border. They said, that's not the problem, they said. The Soviet Union's complained to the State Department. (INAUDIBLE) trick, trying to influence the minds of the young people against us. You have to quit. So I quit.

But later on, many years later, I met those Germans, east Germans, flew the old Berlin airlift airplane back to Germany in '98, they came through the airplane with tears in their eyes to tell us how grateful they were for the short time we dropped and they were playing for their west Berlin uncles and aunts that they would - the airlift to succeed, and that America, British, the French, would make this thing work, which it did.

SCHAFFLER: Colonel Halverson, taking us back to 1949. Enjoyed your stories. Thank you for spending time with us on MARKET CALL. Appreciate it.

HALVERSON: Good to be with you. Good luck, and up with the market!

SCHAFFLER: We'll have you drop some stock certificates, depending on how things go. Colonel, thanks so much.

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