

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Metro

**German native meets patron pilot The St. Peters man greets a retired Air Force colonel who dropped candy for kids during WWII.**

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CORRECTION PUBLISHED August 15, 2006 - Retired Air Force Col. **Gail Halvorsen** became known as the "candy bomber" during the Berlin Airlift after World War II. A headline in Sunday's Metro section gave an incorrect time period.

#### SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE

Retired Air Force Col. **Gail Halvorsen**, known by many as the "Berlin candy bomber," came face-to-face with his past Saturday at Scott AirFest, which featured more than 40 vintage and current military aircraft.

Halvorsen, 85, of Provo, Utah, who once flew the C-54 cargo plane that was on display at Scott, served in the Berlin Airlift in 1948 and 1949. While in Germany, he dropped tiny parachutes carrying bags of gum and candy to children below, which became known as Operation Little Vittles. The Berlin Airlift involved U.S., British and French forces flying supplies into Berlin when the Soviet Union blocked railroad and road access to West Berlin.

Halvorsen came up with the candy idea after he gave two sticks of chewing gum to a group of children watching planes at Tempelhof Air Base in West Berlin in 1948. He noticed the children didn't beg, but they were very grateful, and they divided the pieces of gum among themselves.

"It was their gratitude that brought me back," Halvorsen said.

Children in West Berlin, such as Hans Feierabend, dubbed Halvorsen "Uncle Wiggly Wings" because he would maneuver his plane such that they could recognize it in the air.

A retired St. Peters bricklayer, Feierabend, now 63, was a 6-year-old West Berlin boy when Halvorsen first began his candy campaign. Some of his first memories are of searching the sky for the pint-sized parachutes.

"I remember waiting for the planes to come," said Feierabend, standing on the tarmac at Scott after he met Halvorsen for the first time Saturday. "We looked forward to it because we didn't have anything then."

After posing for a picture with the German boy he once brought joy to, Halvorsen did something he has not done for 57 years: He handed Feierabend a stick of Wrigley's chewing gum.

"Seeing the plane and meeting him really brought me back to that time," Feierabend said, choking back tears. "It's amazing."

Halvorsen co-piloted the C-54 from Pittsburgh this week. When he flies "all the nerves connect, and you feel like it's a youth potion. You feel that power and lift just like back in Berlin," he said.

Highlights of the air show included two F-15 Eagles and an F/A-18 Hornet, along with a Volga Dnpr AN-124, the world's largest cargo aircraft, and an AC-47 Spooky Gunship.

Lt. Col. Dave Hayen, AirFest director, estimated Saturday's turnout at "tens of thousands." Previous air shows have attracted about 250,000 people in the two-day event.

Several heat-stress incidents were reported at the air show, Hayen said.

The popular air show was absent from St. Louis skies the past two years. Base officials said a large number of those stationed at Scott were deployed to Iraq and elsewhere, making it too difficult to put on shows in 2004 and 2005. The base also canceled its 2002 air shows as a result of the terrorist attacks less than a year earlier.

For more information, visit [public.scott.af.mil](http://public.scott.af.mil) or call 618-256-4241.

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#### AirFest

When: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday Cost: Admission and parking free

Events: \* 11 a.m. -- Opening ceremony \* Noon to 2 p.m. -- Military and civilian aerial performances \* 3 p.m. -- Thunderbirds air show

#### Do's and don'ts:

No pets, alcohol, glass containers, firearms, pepper spray, spray paint or silly string. Confiscated items will not be returned.

Purses, lawn chairs, cameras, video recorders and binoculars are fine.

Coolers are allowed but must be left in vehicles. Food and beverages will be for sale.

#### How to get there:

Take Interstate 64 to Exit 19A, which is Illinois Route 158. Go to the second light, which is Air Mobility Drive; follow it to the gate. MetroLink riders should get off at the Shiloh-Scott station.

A shuttle from that MetroLink stop will take passengers onto base and to the show. The shuttle costs \$2 for adults and \$1 for children.

More information: Log on to: <http://public.scott.af.mil> or call 618-256-4241.

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STLtoday.com See more photos from AirFest at Scott Air Force Base.

#### Scott Air Force Base AirFest

PHOTO | PHOTO - Hanna Joseph, 8 (left), and her father, Air Force Master Sgt. Jeff Joseph, both of Mascoutah, have their lunch under the shady wing of a C-17 Globemaster cargo plane Saturday at the Scott Air Force Base AirFest. Jerry Naunheim Jr. | Post-Dispatch

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#### Search Summary

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