

Local
hero of berlin airlift highlights N.C. event marking first flight

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By Kristin Davis

The Virginian-Pilot

dare county, n.c.

Six decades after he dropped candy bars suspended under tiny parachutes from his lumbering aircraft over Berlin, retired Col. **Gail Halvorsen** will recreate his mission on the Outer Banks this weekend, in a plane that also will fly over a celebration of the first powered flight.

Halvorsen, born in 1920, flew transport planes during World War II and in 1948 joined the Berlin Airlift, a response to the Soviet blockade of the German city.

A PBS biography tells the following: Halvorsen met a group of children who said they could go without food but not without freedom, which the airlift provided. He gave them a few sticks of gum and promised to return the following day with more candy. Halvorsen kept his promise, fashioning parachutes from handkerchiefs and string and attach them to candy bars. The Berlin newspapers caught wind of it, and other pilots joined in. Halvorsen earned the name Candy Bomber.

The "Spirit of Freedom," of which Halvorsen is first officer, is scheduled to arrive at the Dare County Regional Airport on Roanoke Island today. of the Wright Brothers' first flight.

Orville's and Wilbur Wright's 12-second, 120-foot flight occurred on the windy morning of Dec. 17, 1903, in present-day Kill Devil Hills.

A commemoration marking the 108th anniversary starts at 8:30 a.m. Saturday at the Wright Brothers National Memorial there.

It includes the induction of the United States' only World War I Navy Flying Ace into the First Flight Shrine. Lt. David Ingalls flew a Sopwith Camel record six victories during the war in the single-seat fighter plane, according to the First Flight Society.

The event Saturday includes a fly-over by Navy F/A-18 Hornets at 10:35 a.m.

Civilian fly-overs will follow. Among the craft: the propeller-driven C-54 transport plane that dropped provisions over Berlin in 1948 and 1949.

And on Sunday, the Candy Bomber will be back at the Dare County airport to drop chocolate bars beneath tiny parachutes to children below. That's happening starting at 1:30 p.m.

ed andt will wing over the dunes of Kill Devil Hills on Saturday, joining the incommemoration Kristin Davis, (757) 222- 5131, kristin.davis@pilotonline.com

doing it up Wright

A commemoration marking the 108th anniversary of the first flight begins at 8:30 a.m. Saturday at the Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills. Sunday at 1:30 p.m., the Candy Bomber will be back at the Dare County airport to drop chocolate bars beneath tiny parachutes to children below.

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Date	All Dates
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Region	All Regions
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