



## NEWS

**INTERNATIONAL ATLANTA 'Not chocolate, but hope' Tribute to the 'Candy Bomber': Berliner brothers who were children during the airlift of 1948-49 say the massive effort not only saved lives, but changed them forever.**

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Life in Berlin was a disaster even before the blockade. Brothers Winfried and Hans Hoyer were children then. Their father, a soldier in the German army, had been captured in Russia; in 1943 he had walked all the way back from Russia to Berlin. Conscripted again, he was escorted grimly by his family to the station to roll down the tracks toward yet another front. His wife, afraid, moved Winfried, Hans, and their sister, Margot, out of Berlin.

When they returned after the war, they found their fourth-floor apartment damaged by bombs. "It was pretty much destroyed," said Winfried Hoyer. As was the rest of Berlin.

"Our parents and many other people were involved in rebuilding the city virtually with their own hands," said Hans Hoyer. "Women were in the streets picking up the rubble." Then things got worse. Berlin was divided into four sectors --- Russian, American, English and French. In an effort to force the allies to leave --- in effect, to starve them out --- the Russians in 1948 instituted the blockade. The Hoyers lived in the Schoneberg area, in the American sector. "They blocked off the autobahn; they blocked off the whole city," said Winfried Hoyer. There was no food, no coal, none of the things people needed to stay alive. The Hoyers remember going with their father to the edge of Berlin to dig up tree stumps to use as firewood to keep warm. Berlin survived, thanks to a massive airlift by the allies, in particular the United States, and a few private agencies, most notably CARE. "It was a massive operation," said Kevin Henry, of CARE-USA, which is based in Atlanta. "They hauled in everything that was necessary to continue life." The bulk of the airlift was handled by the U.S. government. But between 1946 and 1949, Berlin also was sustained by more than 650,000 CARE packages containing such

things as canned meat, dried fruits, flour, sugar, and chocolate. The airlift did not begin until June, but President Clinton traveled to Berlin this week to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of its beginning. He plans to present an original CARE package, approximate vintage 1948, to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl today to mark the occasion. Winfried and Hans Hoyer, both of whom now live in the metro area, were children, but they remember. Winfried, 58, a tooling engineer who lives in Peachtree City, was 8 years old when the airlift began. "I knew the planes were flying over Berlin in 1948 and 1949," he said. He remembers boxes drifting down from the sky on parachutes. He never worried about getting hit. "You know, when you're 8 or 9 years old, you're kind of on the ball," he said. "I remember all the goodies that were inside the boxes. That was terrific." There was Crisco, he remembers, and chocolate and lettuce and cocoa. Hans, now 53 and living in Stockbridge, was only 3 1/2 when the airlift began, but the images remain for him, as well.

"What I remember is from the sky falling these little parachutes in which they distributed candies to us," he said. "And this was done by an American Air Force pilot."

The children of Berlin would scramble for the candies, he said. "And the bigger ones kicked the little ones. And I was the little one." The American pilot's name was **Gail Halvorsen**. Now 77, Halvorsen, who came to be known as the "Candy Bomber," returned to Berlin this week and told reporters that he started dropping candy, tied to miniature parachutes, to raise the spirits of the children of West Berlin.

"What it meant was not chocolate, but hope, which is the most important thing you can have in a crisis," he said. Hans Hoyer agrees that more than just food arrived in those parachuted candy bars, government planes and CARE packages. "There was the whole notion of people in Berlin that some people cared for them by providing the things they did." The blockade ended finally in May 1949, 11 months after it had begun. But the experience had a lasting impact on Hans Hoyer. He has spent his life trying to let the poor and dispossessed know that someone cares for them, just as parachuted candy bars brought him that message in those desperate days. He went to Chile in the Peace Corps in the 1960s. And for the last 30 years, both as an academician and with various development agencies, he has worked in third world development. "I can identify with people living in poverty," he said. Now, things have come full circle. For the last year and a half, he has worked as director of the program and development group at the agency that stood with Berliners in their time of need --- CARE.

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Graphic : ABOUT THE BERLIN AIRLIFT The Soviet blockade of Berlin lasted 11 months, from June 1948 to May 1949, and affected 2 million people in the American, French and British sectors of the divided city. The Soviet goal was to force the allies to abandon Berlin. Pilots flew 278,228 flights. More than 2.3 tons of cargo was delivered, about two-thirds of it coal. Thirty-one Americans, 39 British and at least nine Germans died in crashes. Two-engine American C-47s were replaced later with four-engine C-54s

that had three times the load capacity. Britain used military and civilian aircraft, most smaller than the C-54. The largest private participant in the airlift was CARE, a relief agency formed to help Europe recover from the ravages of World War II.

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