
Gail Halvorsen

We want to ask you where you were December 7th, 1941 and what you were thinking and what got you involved in the service of our country?

Gail Halvorsen: Well, on December the 7th, 1941, it was a Sunday. And I was getting ready for church and things were going slow. I went outside for a minute and then I hear the radio. And all of the sudden it sounded like something was going on big. And came back in and it was Pearl Harbor. And we were expecting it because they'd been recruiting people to train to be pilots before this happened. Mr. Hinckley, right here from Utah who was head of the FAA, so called FAA, or CAA then had started a non-college pilot training program. And I was a farm kid. I didn't have any money to go to school and I was tied to the sugar beet up in Garland, Utah. And the notice came by, if you want to compete for a scholarship then apply and go to grad school. Well, I won the scholarship and had my pilot license before the 7th of December. And I was in the civil air patrol, this had barely started. So I was ready to go and as soon as I could I met the board over at Logan, evaluation board for aviation cadet and that's how I got going.

What high school did you attend?

Gail Halvorsen: Oh, there's only one. That's Bear River High School.

Bear River High.

Gail Halvorsen: Yeah. Cheer, cheer for Bear River High and all that stuff, you know?

So you enlisted right there and tell us about basic training, where you went.

Gail Halvorsen: Well, I didn't meet the aviation cadet evaluation crew until May of 1942. And got signed up. And with the basic training and later on the pipeline for pilots were pretty full, but Wichita Falls, Texas. In the spring in March went active duty March of 1943, went to Utah State for two quarters waiting for my call. And went to Wichita Falls in the mud and that was something else. But we was there and then went to pre-flight later on.

And then after basic where did you go?

Gail Halvorsen: Well, after basic they had a college training holding pattern. Pilot line was still lined up in Oklahoma City, and Oklahoma State University and then we got called into the aviation cadet training center in San Antonio, Texas and then we were cadets and they called us sir and all that kind of stuff. And one day I came back from our exercises and there was a note on the board: "Anybody that wants to apply for the Royal Air Force on an exchange program to get your pilot wing, sign up." So I signed up. You know, RAF, you can't beat that. And so I got my wings first in the RAF. With the

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RAF training as a fighter pilot in Miami, Oklahoma. They had their training bases in Canada and the United States because the weather and the congestion in England. And they wanted a few Yankees to train with them to evaluate their training program which was different than ours and to teach them how to drive on the proper side of the road at the same time and English had something to do with it too, I guess. But I trained with them. Got my wings with the Royal Air Force and then got transferred back to the Army Air Corps. They didn't need fighter pilots then, they need transports. So I got in transport ops and I was in transport ops in the south Atlantic theater during the war.

So you didn't fly with the RAF, you just got trained with the RAF?

Gail Halvorsen: That's right, Rick. Yeah.

When you first went overseas where did you ?

Gail Halvorsen: Went to Natal, Brazil. Really we were headed to the hump, to fly the hump, from India, to China, five of us in a group. And we got to Natal and the guys that were flying out of base, based out of Natal during transport ops, five of them were in I think it's three or four but it didn't matter there. But they'd crashed in a B25 just goofing around. So he pulled us off the plane and kept us in Natal. And we flew into Africa out of there and we also flew a few planes from Natal into England for the invasion. And our operation was I kept at Ascension Island for quite a long time, that was more night-time and weather time than daytime flying.

So your main base in those days was in Africa?

Gail Halvorsen: No, in Natal, Brazil. And then we flew out of there, up and down South America taking supplies in from the States. Wherever they wanted us, we flew those transport airplanes.

So you would fly transports out of Natal, pick up stuff.

Gail Halvorsen: Supplies.

And then

Gail Halvorsen: Deliver them to our bases up and down the coast and South Africa, and the Ascension Island halfway to Africa, it was a staging point for all of the aircraft going for the invasion. We kept that base supplied. Come up to the States to pick stuff up.

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So you were flying into England to take supplies for the Dday invasion?

Gail Halvorsen: Just delivering the airplanes for that and then we'd turn around and which back and get another one. This kind of broke up the monotony of the transport ops. So it was just the delivery airplanes and then we'd fly back military and get back and fly in the old transport runs until we got another chance to ferry an airplane.

Did you have any interesting experiences flying those transports?

Gail Halvorsen: Well, one, I took off in a two-engine airplane, (goody?) birds, flew goody birds at first before we got DC4, C54's later. And took off out of a really very short runway. And one engine caught on fire and we burned pretty good for a while and we got it turned around and got back on and didn't kill anybody, so that was good. That was during that period of time.

You're able to turn around and land at your base?

Gail Halvorsen: Yeah, well I turned around and landed at Rio de Janeiro right out in the harbor. It's just a really short, Santos Dumont was the name of the airport there, yeah.

During this time were you ever fired upon?

Gail Halvorsen: No, not even in our trips up through Africa, taking, delivering airplanes to England, I was never shot at. Trained as a fighter pilot, I wouldn't have mind shooting at somebody else, but that was my lot and I wasn't, but I flew a lot of hours.

And then tell us towards the end of the war, when you heard that Germany had surrendered, where were you and what were you doing?

Gail Halvorsen: Well, at the end of the war, I was in South America, heard the news that it was over and I thought I'd be coming home. I wanted to start a western auto store and I'd worked at that a little bit and continue my education. I only had two quarters at Utah State. Wanted to get out, but I couldn't because we were frozen. I had more time than I needed to get out on the criteria. We're flying back troops Europe and Africa and all over the place in South America. So we were frozen. We couldn't get out until we got the job done. And during that period, when I came back to Natal and I had several days off. And my buddy, the roommate with, Bob, he said, "Hey, they've got a regular Army board coming by here tomorrow, interviewing people that want to stay in." And I said, "I want to get out." And he said, "I want to stay in." And I said, "Well, what are you gonna do?" And he told me, he said, "Hey, not doing anything else, so try it." So I interviewed for the board and there was only two of us on the basic that got offered a regular commission. And I turned it down and says I want to get out, I don't want it to

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be like to raise a family in the military. I'm a foreign kid from a small town of Utah and I just don't know how, family wise and so I turned it down. Flew for two weeks, came back, one day the head of personnel on the base of Natal called me in and he said, "I see you turned down a regular commission." And I said, "Yeah, I did, I want to get out." He said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I want to keep flying. I had a license before I started this thing, I want to keep flying, and I want to take the GI bill and I want to start a business in western auto if I can." Then he said, "You want to go to school, and fly?" Yeah. He says, "Well how would you like to go to school, have your books bought, your tuition bought, paid your regular wages like you were still just right in the military, and fly at the same time, keep flying the big airplanes?" I said, "Oh, impossible." "No, it isn't," he said, "they just came out with a new policy that if you're a regular officer and do not have a degree, they'll send you to school, and pay your way, and keep paying your wages and you'll be flying your airplane too." I said, "I don't believe it." You know, coming off the farm I didn't have any inside plumbing until I got out of high school. And then they're trying to tell me all this stuff, you know? Holy cow, man. But he went in and got the letter and showed it to me and read it to me. Well, the big reservation I got is a family, concerned about my family. I'm not married. I got a great girlfriend and I just don't know about that. And they said, "Well, if you don't like it, resign your commission." "You mean I can resign after I sign up for a regular commission?" He says, "You bet you can." And I said, "Well, and I can fly and get paid?" "Yup." "Okay." So I signed up. And at that time you could choose one of three schools. I was in pre-aeronautical engineering at Utah State, just for two quarters. And I always liked science. And so I took Utah State, BYU, and University of Utah. And they said they'll give you one of them. Well, I didn't get the first, I didn't get the second. By that time I was really to resign my commission. And then the Berlin Airlift came along, it was in Mobile, Alabama flying foreign transport out of there at the time. And the airlift started. So I flew the airlift and after the airlift they put me into school and they gave me a bachelor's and a master's and I went into the space program after that. That's a little fast.

So this occurred when the war ended. Tell us a little detail of this Berlin Airlift, how you got into that, what it was like. As much detail as you can.

Gail Halvorsen: You got that much film?

We've got a lot.

Gail Halvorsen: I'll give a shot. Well, the Berlin Airlift was no surprise to those of us who stayed in the military. Because every month we'd have pilot briefings of what goes on in the world. And Stalin had just taken Czechoslovakia. And he'd just taken Hungary. And he wanted West Germany. And West Berlin was an island in the Red Sea and a thorn in the old Stalin's side. And he had to get West Berlin out of the way first. Because the British, French, and Americans were deep inside 110 miles deep inside of

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East Germany and he had to get rid of them. So it wasn't a big surprise to us. At that time, when I was flying out of Mobile, I was flying the C74's, they were the biggest transport airplane that the Air Force had, that we had at that time. And then when it happened I volunteered. A girlfriend wasn't writing very good letters so I volunteered to go over to the airlift and change back to the C54's because I was current in both. And we had about 24 hours.

Tell us about after the war in 1945 and you're taking the troops throughout Europe. We want to hear some details about that. What the guys were like, how you picked them up, and landing them.

Gail Halvorsen: Well we didn't go around Europe picking them up. They gathered them there, put them in the funnel, got them to Natal

So the troops flew into the down in Brazil?

Gail Halvorsen: Okay, well after the war, when I want to get out and couldn't and flying troops back, we were picking them up in Natal, Brazil. They were being ferried in from Europe and Africa via Ascension Island, the middle of the Atlantic, south Atlantic. And bringing them to Natal. And then we'd pick them up there and fly 'em from there back to the United States.

Why were they brings them to Natal?

Gail Halvorsen: Most of them came through the north Atlantic. These were just people that were leaving all the bases. They're closing the bases in South America. We handled most of those. Some of them came from Africa and Europe, then Natal. But most of them we were closing up the bases, all over South America, and phasing down the Ascension Island. And when we'd go to Georgetown and British Guiana and Belem, Brazil and Fortaleza, Brazil and Uruguay and Paraguay. We had people all over the place.

Bases.

Gail Halvorsen: Yeah, American bases were all. They had bases and all kinds of things. So we mostly were cleaning out South America where we were. We got some people from Europe, but most of our effort was to clean out all the base we had people all over South America.

How many could you take back at one time?

Gail Halvorsen: About 60. 50 and 60 people in these old bench configuration in the

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C54. And we hauled back a lot of equipment that they didn't turn over. They turned over a lot of equipment, you know, small highend items back to the people where they were and gave them to the local military people. But personnel, the main folks were getting back to the States and getting discharged from the service.

And they sat on kind of benches along the sides?

Gail Halvorsen: Yeah, we'd get a lot more on just the canvas fold-down benches. So you'd just really tight to get the most people in you can.

And your crew, it was you and a co-pilot, and did they have anybody else?

Gail Halvorsen: No, we flew occasionally with a navigator. Not all the time because we could find our way back to the States okay without one. Our main crew consisted of two pilots and a flight engineer and a load master, somebody to take care of the passengers and occasionally someone would even serve them coffee or whatever else, stewardess. But the best guy that helped the dumb pilots was the crew chief. The guy that really knew all about the airplane and made sure it was in shape to fly. Yeah.

And were these people, any instances where they got out of line or any funny experiences that occurred while you were taking these people home to America?

Gail Halvorsen: Well, some people still had some bandages here and there, and you know, still affects. And they if they were mobile, those were the few coming from Europe. We picked up some guys around the place in South America that had had problems and you ran a jeep off the road or something like that. But nothing really unusual except everybody was just headed for home and really in a great frame of mind, they were really happy to get out of there.

How long was the flight from there to where you landed?

Gail Halvorsen: Long time. Gee, about 10 hours, about 10 hours to get back from Nat- al well, 10, 12 hours.

Where would you land?

Gail Halvorsen: Well coming back we'd stopped for gas in Atkinson Field in British Guiana and that's where our main refuel, picked up a lot of people there too. And then we'd come in from there to Miami, and Miami was the main

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And land them in Miami?

Gail Halvorsen: Yeah, we'd drop them off there and they'd scatter all over the place.

And did they eat on the way?

Gail Halvorsen: Oh, yeah, we had what we thought were pretty good box lunches. We had a great kitchen and for the guys going home, why the bakers outdid themselves. We had cinnamon rolls and besides good beef sandwiches and all the stuff that guys like to eat. So they were well fed. They were well fed on the way back because everybody was in a good mood and boy, the world had changed colors, it was just wonderful.

Did they let them drink alcoholic beverages on the way back?

Gail Halvorsen: No, not on the aircraft. And if a guy had been too happy before, they'd hold him over a few days to sober up. When that word got out why most everybody was ready to go home when they got on the airplane.

You landed in Miami, and then they'd give you another assignment to go right back?

Gail Halvorsen: Oh, yeah, we'd go right back, we'd take mail back the guys left, take supplies back to those that had to stay in the different units. After the mission was finished we'd still have some people support. Bare bases some of them. Bring back a load of whatever we needed. But always come back pretty light, yeah.

Now take us to where you finished doing that, up until the Berlin Airlift.

Gail Halvorsen: We came back from Natal in 1946. And I was assigned to West Palm Beach, Florida, flying the C54's, same one that I'd been flying down there. Flying back to South America. And so I couldn't get out of there. Most of our bases, Panama would supply the Central America out of West Palm Beach. And from there, I was assigned with the air tactical school in Panama City, Florida. Same as (squatter? @ 20:41) officer school now for junior officers, tactical training and that sort of thing. And then after I finished that, they transferred the base out of West Palm Beach to Mobile, Alabama, to Brookley Air Force Base. And that's the base that was pretty well closed, but it's opening back up again. But it flew out of there to South America and Central America. Same thing, I flew out of West Palm Beach. It was there when we got the word that Stalin had in fact blockaded West Berlin, cut off all food supplies to two million people and gave us a notice. Well, we got a call all the props were called in one evening and they said, "Look, this is it, we've got four airplanes, we've got to get in the air tomorrow headed to Frankfurt to Rhein-Main Air Base in Frankfurt. And here's the list of guys that are going." And I wasn't on the list. It was natural because I was flying the bigger air-

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planes, the C74 which was a really big airplane. Well on the list was Pete Soa. And he was a really good friend. There was two LDS guys in that whole outfit, myself and Don McCullough from Pocatello, Idaho. And we were the only two regular officers in that whole outfit. And he and I were invited every Sunday to Pete Soa and his wife's house. We were bachelors. On Sunday dinners we were there. And they were just good friends and they'd give us a great chicken dinner. But they just had a set of twins and when I went to see what was going on, the roll call, and Pete Soa was on the list. And Pete was in the air from Panama City to Mobile. And I knew he didn't want to go because he just had the kids. And we knew that trouble was brewing, they had already cut off some of the supplies on the 24th of June, 1948. And this was just after the first of July when we got the call. And so I called his wife up and I said, "Do you mind if I can change squadrons, if I can volunteer for Pete?" Alta Jolley wasn't writing me very good letters at the time and she was out West and I couldn't get out West and prove things. So I said I just as well be over there as here. And so she said, "Oh, boy, we'd really be in debt to you if you'd do that." So I got a hold of Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert who was my commander in the C74 and I said, "I'd like to transfer back to Colonel Hans' outfit and replace Pete Soa." And he said, okay. And so Hans said sure. I'd flew for him before. We'll pick you up. So I was able to change that the next day.

They thought they'd been given a gift of a lifetime right there.

Gail Halvorsen: Well, they're such good friends, and it didn't matter to me. I wasn't really getting anywhere and I thought, well, and too, they said, "This isn't gonna be very long." Three weeks, you'll go on temporary duty three weeks. Holy cow, you know, how bad can it get? Well, a month before that, I was in a Caribbean, I'd flown the Caribbean down by St. John's and Puerto Rico and was able to buy a car. And you couldn't get cars in those days in the States. But this little place in the Caribbean had more cars than they could sell so I bought a car in the Caribbean, got it delivered in the States. A four-door red Chevrolet. And boy, was I in high cotton then and that was so neat. And then this thing came in. That was my principal reason for not wanting to go. But that was secondary. So I drove the thing up in the palm trees at Mobile, turned off the key and put it in my pocket and never saw the car again. But that's one of the reasons I didn't want to so I left the next day. I left the next day. We had three flight crews and one navigator. And our instructions were we had four airplanes and our instructions were you don't stay overnight anywhere. You go up the east coast to Newfoundland, St. John's. And then go to the Azores, then go to Brest, France, and to Frankfurt. And you just keep it going. In the C54 there are two bunks and you can get some rest there. And so we'd trade off. And we could find a way to St. John's without the navigator, we kept him on the side. And we'd just stop for something to eat in Westover Air Force Base and then to St. John's and gassing up. And then from St. John's the long haul into the Azores and that's where the navigator came in. And just stop there long enough to

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get something to eat and gas and switch seats, all the time, going over with different pilots and then over to Brest, France, and into Frankfurt. That's how we got there.

How many hours was that? You left Mobile.

Gail Halvorsen: Mobile, Alabama, it must have been about 15 hours. It had to be more like 20 hours. 20 hours to Frankfurt.

It was about a 20 hour deal with one gas stop or how many gas stops?

Gail Halvorsen: Well, we had two gas stops. We had St. John's in Newfoundland and the Azores, and then into Frankfurt.

You flew from the Azores right into Frankfurt?

Gail Halvorsen: Right. We came over Brest, France, and that's where we hit the coast and then right into Frankfurt.

And in those days they didn't know whether the Russians were gonna shoot at you or what. You went from Frankfurt over East Germany into Berlin.

Gail Halvorsen: Exactly. The bases that we had in West Germany of course we were based in West Germany naturally RheinMain at Frankfurt of the main base. Lisbon, which is about 35 miles away from RheinMain, old (inaudible @ 27:38) fighter base was the second base we had. The third base we had was in Celle in northern Germany. And also we had Fassberg in northern Germany. That was in the British zone, the Britain loaned us those bases. They had a lot of bases up there. So those were the bases that we flew out of. And as you mentioned, from there, we would fly through three air quarters. The Northern Quarter that came in from Hanover in the northern Germany into Berlin, across east Germany. And the Southern Quarter coming up from Frankfurt into Berlin. And the Center Quarter coming out. The airplanes of the north would go in the north one way, south would go up the quarter one way and all come out one way. Center would then split and go the other way. The quarters were 20 statute miles wide and if we stayed within the quarters they weren't supposed to bother us or force us down or whatever. Because the agreement we signed that's why the airlift started we signed the agreement with them we could fly to Berlin, about 188 miles Frankfurt across East Germany day or night, no matter what. And they signed off on that. But the treaty in Yalta, when they set up this thing in splitting Germany, the group troops didn't require that we had access to Berlin from West Germany over the ground. So Stalin says, "I don't have to let your supplies go to two million people." He cut off the rail. He said the bridge at Magdeburg over the Elbe was unsafe, you can't use that with the trucks. He froze the locks on the canals, put that bunker fuel and heavy coal and stuff into Berlin

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across East Germany. And so we had a decision to make. You gonna fight your way in? And General Clay, the head guy for the Americans, governor of West Germany said they're bluffing. Let's fight our way in. Let's open up the rail, let's open up the autobahn and fix the canal, fight our way in. Well, the politicians said that's not a very good idea. And some military too. Stalin had 100 divisions in his control. He had 300,000 troops in East Germany. He had more tanks and airplanes than East Germany than he had anywhere else in the Soviet Union. The buffer to the west, ready to go west. And so to make a long story short, everybody decided not everybody but Truman says, "We're in Berlin, we're gonna stay and we're gonna fly supplies." And most of the advisors said, "We're gonna look stupid. You can't supply two million people by air. It's never been done before. It's not our responsibility." We hear that every day from people trying to do a job that's different. But Truman got tired of that, he says, "Look, end of discussion." And the British were right like (Bevin and Attlee?) and the French said we agree. We're gonna do that rather than start World War III and start a fight. And so that's how we were flying. That's why we were flying stuff in to Berlin because we had a right to. And we didn't want to go proactive and start a fight going in, because according to what we agreed, we didn't have a right. We didn't have any written agreement to access Berlin on the ground.

That was really the first altercation in the Cold War wasn't it?

Gail Halvorsen: It was the first battle. First battle of the Cold War. It was a showdown. And we didn't know if they were going to shoot us coming into the quarters. We flew day and night, whatever the weather was, we went in. Sometimes when the fog was so bad we couldn't get anybody out on the other end, and we wouldn't fly. But we'd come down the quart in a Yak3. We'd fly where there were fighter fields. I mean they had fighter fields everywhere. I got movies of them. I got a movie I'm leaving with you that shows the fighter airplanes down at the (inaudible @ 32:02). I didn't get one (inaudible) because I was too busy dodging them. But they'd come up head on and they'd come up right head on with ya, and at the last minute would pull off. And some of them would come up behind you, come up behind your wing and go over your wing. Well we were just waiting for them to shoot. This was early. I was there right almost at the beginning, the 11th of July, and it started the 26th of June, 1948. And then we find out why they didn't shoot. President Truman put 60 B29 bombers on the runway in England. And he sent a note to Stalin. He said, "Hey, buddy, if you shoot at those transports you're gonna have a fire and loss column." And we voted for Truman every time we came back because then we thought it was kind of fun. Broke the monotony, here are these guys. But we were a little worried of whether the Soviet fighter pilots had had a recent physical to check their depth perception because in April of 1948 a British transport coming in the North Quarter to Berlin was buzzed by a Soviet plane and he ran into them and killed everybody, including the pilot. So we uh just hoping the guy hadn't had a physical and

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couldn't tell when to pull up. All we had is flour and cold sacks to throw at him, so that wouldn't have been very effective.

You had no guns on board or anything like that.

Gail Halvorsen: No, no.

So these Soviet fighters would harass you right from the getgo?

Gail Halvorsen: No, there wasn't a steady stream of fighters. These were off and on. And I think I only got buzzed about three or four times. And or the guys got buzzed too. But further on in the airlift, they just gave up. Stalin was getting such a black eye in the world press. You know, that was a crucial time, not only the first battle on the concentration of the Cold War, but Stalin and the Soviet system, the Communists had planted in other governments France and Italy particularly longrange plans, looking for the longterm, changing everybody over one way or another. And they were neutral countries. Well that sounded like a pretty good idea, this communism. Well, everybody helping each other out and all this stuff. But boy, when they saw the black and white difference between starving two million people and everybody flying day and night to feed 'em, overcoming whatever was necessary, it changed the attitude. You know, I wasn't, of course there in the occupation force. I was in the airlift. But a lot of them were in Berlin, military. We took over the base about July, 1945, at Tempelhof in Berlin, from the Soviets, and we had lot of military guys there. The army had a brigade there. And some of those guys we talked to, as we flew the airlifts said, "Boy, it was like and day." He said, "We'd go into a bar and the Berliners, the Germans would move out." Hear the enemy is coming in the bar and we had a right to be there. When I'd go in the bar I never got to a bar in Berlin anyway. I'd drink lemonade and I'd take my buddies that had problems, take them home. But these guys said they'd come into the bar and the Germans would leave. This was before the airlift started. He said after the airlift started, they'd go into a bar and they'd buy them a drink. And that's the one small sliver illustrating the difference. And from then on, you know, I think, Rick, the point you're getting at here is, a key point that is missed a lot of times is the feelings. The feelings, the psyche of the people that were called. You know, we've just been back a couple of years from the guys that started the whole thing. Getting their lives in order. Some of the guys come back and see their kids for the first time that they were conceived and here they come back and then they're asked to leave that fast to support the former enemy. And in my case, after staying there, and for those who did, we knew who the new enemy was. So that helped a bit. We knew that we got to do something here. The second feature that changed the attitude was that they were starving women and children. Most of the people in Berlin were women and children. But the thing that really solidified it for me was my first flight into Berlin and came over (inaudible @ 37:07) moonscape. And you'll see it in my film. Just like how could two million people live in

this rubble? And then land with 20,000 pounds of flour in Tempelhof and wonder what these super guys with gonna look like. They just came out of the States, I didn't have any interaction with the community and what they're like. Got out of the cockpit, walked back there, you open up the back doors of the big truck, back up, pick up 20,000 pounds of flour. And about six of these guys came forward to unload the flour. Instead of starting they came right up, put out their hands, couldn't understand what they were saying, but boy, from their eyes, looking at that flour and back to us like we're angles from heaven, we were on the same page. We had flour, and we had freedom and they wanted both. From then on, I only knew one person during the airlift that was complaining about feeding the former enemy from then on. Why? Because their gratitude and doing the right thing. The people were so grateful. They let people come out on the field in control, but talk to the pilots while they were unloading. And boy, they'd bring us gifts, all kind of little gifts. I've still got a bunch of things they brought to me. They handed it to me not because I was the Candy Bomber, that didn't come till later. But they'd bring things out and express their gratitude. One woman and her little daughter came out to my airplane one day and she had a teddy bear. And she holding it tight and came right up to me and handed it to me. And I said, "Holy cow," I could tell it was probably the only thing she had left. And I tried to refuse it. And I said, "No, no, that's okay, I don't need your teddy bear." And I said, "Why do you want to give it to me?" And her English, she learned in school, and her mother was prompting her here and there, but she couldn't get the word, but she wanted to tell me herself. She said, "During the bombing of Berlin, and we were in our own cellar or if we didn't have time, or in the air raid shelter. And this teddy bear was with me all the time, it was my good luck symbol. And it saved my life. And I want to give it to you." And I said, "Why?" And she said, "So it will save the lives of the people that are flying into Berlin. I want to do all I can to help you." And her mother said, "You need to take it." I took it. I still got pictures, bringing it into Hill Field when I came back, of that teddy bear. And my girlfriend, Alta Jolley, agreed to marry me and I went through three kids with that teddy bear. But that was the indication of the change and the shift and the feeling. And it fully brought the West Germans into the western camp. They wanted the East Germans to come. In 1953, they revolted and were slaughtered trying to join their western brothers and sisters because they want to be free. So the transition. The Berlin Airlift was a healing balm on the wounds of war. It spawned NATO. The Marshall Plan was hand and glove with it. You know, it was such a powerful force of America and England, Great Britain doing what they could to help. Reenergizing it, getting it alive. The reason that Stalin blockaded Berlin was it was a showcase of capitalism deep inside of East Germany. He had a fiveyear plan on how you guys are gonna be benefited by the Communist system. But inside that, he had an open market of capitalism. 300,000 troops walk across the border. No problem. 1961, August, when the wall went up. Back and forth, back and forth. And they said we want to see what these dirty capitalists are like. What did they find? Find oranges, bananas, they found food in the shop that they didn't have anywhere else. They found clothing that was not the standard old stuff. They found shorter lines.

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The people owned their apartment house. And the rubble was picked up in front of it. If there's just a wall standing next to part of the building it had a window box of flowers in it. And some of the places started to show some signs of paint. And these Soviet soldiers would go back to the barracks at night and say, "Holy cow, if that's capitalism, we like some of that stuff." And of course Stalin had all these spies in every battalion, and they sent them no emails, but they were sending their mail back real fast. "Hey, we got trouble, you're not gonna be able to convince the East Germans how great our system is if you've got a showcase in your backyard." And he had to do it. And he got the blockade, thought there would be food rations, he thought when the rations would start they'd all come across the border. And just put down, here, we can't have this going on inside our territory and ease out our influence. And that's important. Stop communism going west. It was the biggest humanitarian effort, for a sense, a number of people involved. The number of people that were being supplied solely by air.

That's a great chapter in world history and American history.

Gail Halvorsen: It is. It's a great day in American history.

Any other experiences when you would land in Germany and they would unload? Would you take off or stay overnight?

Gail Halvorsen: That's a good point, Rick. No, when we'd land, when I first got there, General Joe Smith, a one-star general was in charge right at first and then toward the end of July, 1948, they brought in General Tunner. He was the wizard that directed the airlift over the hump and supplied the Chinese. And he is an airlift genius. He just deserves all the credit. He's an airlift genius. And he's the guy that changed the policies right away. When we first started in July, landing in Tempelhof, we'd go into the terminal building where they had a great snack bar. And you'd get hot dogs, hamburgers and I had a hot chocolate and go out in the airplane and we would not stay there, we'd stay there long enough to unload. And we wouldn't take any fuel on. And actually, we'd fuel in to fly out we'd have enough to get in and back out and just a little bit more. And so when Tunner came, he went into Berlin and he found some airplanes sitting there empty and guys in the lines at the snack bar inside, waiting to be served. And he said, "No more of that stuff, guys. You don't leave your airplane. You stand right by that airplane and by the time that last sack of flour colds off that airplane or dried potatoes or dried eggs " everything was dried, we could dry to cut down the weight he said, "You get that number three engine started and get that bird out of here and get another load." And we thought, oh, that's gonna be kind of miserable and raining. "I don't care if it's raining or snowing, get in an airplane, sit in the cockpit and wait for them to unload it." But he made up for it. He sent the weatherman around to the airplane. He sent the clearance guy around the airplane to say you're clear to go or whatever. And then he made mobile snack bars, a bunch of mobile snack bars on wheels. And he put some beautiful Ger-

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man frauleins in there and they'd come by with hamburgers, hot dogs, hot chocolate, everything that the guys wanted. And they were very friendly and wave and boy, that was better than inside, you know? No line. We were the only guys in line. They were friendly because they knew I never had a date on the airlift. It was forbidden. But anyway, but that didn't matter to a lot of the guys. But guys flying, that's all we were doing. At first we had to fly three roundtrips a day, day or night, or whatever it was. That took about 16 hours. But the requirement for starvation diet in Berlin was 4,500 tons a day just to keep them alive. And all we had was two-engine airplanes in Europe when we started. And the first day they flew 80 tons. And boy, they sent out the panic signal immediately bringing all 4 engines from all over the world. So say came all from Japan and Hawaii, South America, everywhere. And that was at Tempelhof. And at first we had to fly three roundtrips a day. Now up north, they were an hour closer to Berlin than we were. So that's why we put half of our airplanes up north. So that was high density flying and later on, after we got more airplanes we could back off to about two flights in 24 hours.

So how many planes landing every how many minutes?

Gail Halvorsen: Well, we got it, that very totally, as we built up the force. We started out saying five minutes. We finally got up to five minutes an airplane was landing.

And that's 24 hours a day?

Gail Halvorsen: 24 hours a day. Now at first we didn't have radar to help us land in West Berlin. And one day, in August, it was August the 11th, I came into a terrible storm in West Berlin. And we couldn't land the airplane because we were in the cloud, except by using an old-fashioned radio range that we had, low-frequency range that had clock range nobody knows about anymore. But it takes you about 15 minutes to make a procedure and command. The airplane coming in stack every five. So they're stacking us in Berlin. They stacked me up to 10,000 feet, still in the soup and holding on (inaudible @ 48:00) in Berlin, coming inbound and I come head on in the cloud with another C54. Head on. Our props just about tipped. But thank goodness we were both level at the time. You see the pilot's eyes, boom, they were gone. Holy cow. They lost total control of the airplanes, so many coming in. You raised a good point. They lost total control. I found a hole, came out in a hole somewhere, I circled out there till the clouds cleared and then they finally worked us down. The next day, General Tunner had heard about it, he came in, and the problem was still there, the cloud was still there, and they still got a problem. Finally he called up to control and he said, "Control, send everybody home. And when they're gone I'm coming down." And he came down, shut down the things for a while. He got Red Forman, his chief pilot, and Bettinger, two great guys that was his staff and head staff guys to change the procedures. And they changed the procedures. And that was one of the procedures that came out of this, the snack bar. But that was

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for good. For bad weather procedures he got radar. He got expedited ground control approach radar, the radar that can bring you through the cloud and get you down fast. You just come in and you just keep going instead of holding like not holding, but approach of a low-frequency range. So he got the radars coming in. He said, "When the weather's bad " and in November of '48 it was terrible fog "when you come in with radar, and even with radar you can't see to land, to a certain minimum, you pull up and you take the load right back to Germany. You don't circle. You got to take it back to West Germany. The guy's right behind ya. They're not gonna stack you anymore, you're gonna have to come right through the system." So we got longrange radar that looked into East Germany toward West Germany from West Berlin, and over the Elbe River about 70 miles out, they can pick us up on the longrange radar and just say, "Slow down five miles, you're fast." Boy, your blood pressure went way down. It was so much better. And that funnel, that longrange radar that gets you focused and then they'd turn you over to guys on the ground, where the ground has close radar, and they'd just keep you coming. And you'd come down too low, couldn't see the land, took it back. That was the big change. And then they changed the clearance procedures besides. When you took off from West Germany to Berlin, if the weather was good in West Germany sometimes they'd clear you of visual flight and then pick up your instrument later. But he changed it every flight. You fly every flight as if you can't see the ground from the time you take off. And I think that's why I'm here, it saved my life.

There was a lot of lives lost. Tell us about that.

Gail Halvorsen: Well that ties to the feeling too, that even though we had losses the guys still were totally dedicated. Jesus Christ said, "Greater love than this hath no man than he lay down his life for a friend." Thirty-one of my Air Force buddies and 39 of my British comrades gave their lives for an enemy to become a friend. That's how much the feeling changed, how important it was in the minds of why? Because of gratitude. Going back to gratitude again. When people are so grateful and their lives are on the line, we accept it. I know I didn't think I'd ever be one of those 31, but that was just the attitude you had. You do your job. So there were losses but again, every time we'd lose a crew or something, I never felt like hey, I shouldn't be in this business. I was glad to be there. One of my buddies, the bombed Berlin, he was a bomber pilot during the war, and bombed Berlin. And after this thing was getting rough I said, "Well, you know, how do you feel about it? How do you feel about flying in ice and snow and everything else to support these guys?" And he stopped and then he says, "It's a whole lot better to feed them than just to kill them. I'm glad I'm here. Makes me feel better." And so the heart of this thing is the change of feelings that you brought up earlier. Transition. Because of the cause we're in. And that underlines the thing that we're taught all the time in the Utah community and in my family and in my church, that service before self is the only way to fulfillment in life. Genuine fulfillment in life. It's not more bucks, you're chasing something you never can catch up with. But the only real fulfillment is service

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before self. I slept in a barn. I nailed hammers in the rafters in a barn because the barracks, the displaced persons and Hitler's captive crews that he had building stuff for them, terrible – pot-bellied stove and that's all, and a cot. I found an old barn in and went upstairs and lived in a barn. And the food wasn't good, but we had plenty to eat and look at the other guys and say man, how grateful, grateful again for all we had. It reinforced how grateful I was for freedom. But that idea of service, looking back on it, there were three times in my life that I felt worthwhile, something worthwhile. Occasionally some other times too, raising a family. But one was the Berlin Airlift in a miserable nation because you were serving somebody else. One was a mission in my life to serve for the Church in England. And then we served a mission with the enemies again in the Soviet Union. Served a mission in Russia of '95 to '97 and the people were great. It's the system, it's the system. People are great whenever you get down person to person, they're great. But on the mission, well, all you're doing is serving somebody else. You're not watching TV and you're not doing anything for yourself except feeding yourself and how can I help somebody else? And that in spades gratitude, service before self, and little decisions in life. And integrity. Integrity of Truman and the British and France to hang together. Now this airlift, I want to make clear that it is a three-nation airlift. The French didn't have any airplanes to speak, just a few. Indochina was on with them, all their resources were committed. They freezed the place in the French sector for Tegel, the third airfield in Berlin. And they supported everything together. But the Brits were flying like mad. We were, but not just the air crew, the ground, the army was deeply involved. I mean that's how the stuff got done. The army, yeah, they don't get enough credit. The navy don't get enough credit. They had a sea lift, they were bringing this stuff across the ocean. And they had two squadrons, two R5D's, the same as C54's that were flying on the airlift. And boy, they were the top squadrons. So it wasn't just air force. And it wasn't the pilots that were the outstanding guys in the trenches. They weren't the heroes. The heroes were the 31 guys and 39 guys that gave their lives. They're the only heroes of the airlift. But General Tunner, if it wasn't for him, he was a genius, and he made it work. And he saved a lot of lives by the procedures that he set up. In the military, it's the air force, not the pilots. There would be no airplanes over Berlin if it weren't for the aircraft mechanics on the ground. There are so many airplanes at Rhein-Main you couldn't get them in a hangar. They were out changing the engines out in the open field in the winter with a snowstorm coming. A wooden frame with canvas flapping in the breeze in the middle of the night. There's no vacation, no time off. And those guys, changing engines with their hands freezing the head bolts, I tell ya, in my view, they were the the other guys on the ground were the ground control approach guys that were bringing us through the fog if it hadn't been for them, there wouldn't have been much food got to Berlin in November of '48. And we wouldn't be able to go if it hadn't been for the cooks and the bakers, the security police. General Tunner said the airlift ought to be as dull as water dripping on a stone. He said the airplanes ought to be either loaded or unloaded or in maintenance, used all the time. The crew ought to be resting or preparing for the next flight. And he said that had has to be

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a symphony. He said, "I don't know anything about drum sticks, I think they come on chickens, but I know that the airlift has to be a symphony." And he recognized the security police, the cooks, the bakers, the guys, the engineers on the field that rebuilt Tempelhof. In the beginning we landed on pierced steel planking and you'll see that in the video. Pierced steel plank. That's a big plank of steel just panels hooked together. Because they didn't have a paved runway. They never paved the runway for us at Tempelhof in Berlin. And we landed in the same place because the runway's really short, we had to get downright quick, pound and pound. And the women, we had women work for us on each side of the runway. And as soon as that airplane passed, landed, they'd come on with oldfashioned wheelbarrows and sand and sit on crowbars, raise it up, pour sand under this mat. And a guy, only one man on this whole crew, he'd pour tar under it. And then they'd blow a horn as an airplane was about to land, they'd get off the runway. You'll see it. Actually, I didn't see any air force footage, I took it myself. And try to repair it. And then we madly built two hard-surface runways almost before it was too late, just barely before this thing was not usable. So the guys there, you know, it's a symphony. The guys out there pouring foundation for runways and making it possible for us to have something to land on. It's a symphony, just like Tunner said.

That's interesting. Tell us about the Candy Bomber episode and how you got started in that and what led you into that?

Gail Halvorsen: The way I got started interacting with kids and got me wanting to do something with the kids was quite natural. Anybody would've done the same thing I did. People in service have been giving their rations since the continental armies, they go through place with the kids. That's nothing new. But for me, and how this thing particularly started was I came back from Berlin one day in July, the 17th of July, came back from Berlin. Landed at Rhein-Main. Was supposed to go to bed. And in the wee hours start to fly again that night. And I thought this airlift would be over right away. A kid off the sugar beet farm in Utah wanting to see what it was like on the ground in Berlin. I thought it's gonna be over in two weeks and they're gonna send us home. We're never gonna get around the town on the ground. And so I had my movie camera, carried my movie camera with me all the time. And right next to me, on the next hard stand, getting ready to start the engines, just finished loading, was Bill Christian, a buddy of mine from Mobile. And he was just about ready to take off. And I said, "Holy cow, I can just get on that airplane and Bill and go back to Berlin, I got a buddy there that says he's got a jeep. If I ever get to Berlin he'll drive me all over, get movies on the ground." And I said, "Here's the chance." So I told my copilot, John Pickering and Sergeant Elkins, and the engineer, I said, "Go to bed, I'm going to Berlin." "You're crazy." "I know it, but I'm going to Berlin. I'm gonna get on with my buddy." And so I got on with Bill Christensen, all I had was this uniform, and my ticket. And the airplane coming back every five minutes, I wouldn't have any trouble getting home. And so I went back to Berlin. And it was a beautiful clear day. And before I got the jeep I called my buddy, Larry (Casky?)

and says, "Hey, hold the jeep, I want to get some pictures of the approach. If I ever get married I want to show my kids the approach, coming over the bombs out buildings and getting down right quick. And I'm gonna go around two miles around the airfield and shoot pictures and I'll be back and just hold the driver." So I ran, I was in good shape. I ran out the side of the field from the terminal building. And inside the barbed wire all the way around. Shooting the movies. And suddenly right in front of me I was aware that there were 30 kids plastered right up against the barbed wire. About 30 kids. They were standing between the bombed out buildings and the barbed wire fence. And they were friendly. I wondered, you know, look at the uniform, we were killing them a few years before. But their aunts and uncles were coming across into West Berlin to go to the library to see what was happening in the world. The Soviets wouldn't film what's happening in the world. And they told them. Your aunts, uncles, cousins, whoever, boy, you don't want anything to do with this outfit. American style freedom, it was a dream to these kids. And Hitler's past and Stalin's future was their nightmare. These kids had their heads screwed on straight. And they had school English, I didn't know any German. And I was there, and I got so interested in them. And they were encouraging me. And they said, "Hey, you know, it's July. You just wait till fall and winter comes. You're not gonna be able to get in here. Not very often you're gonna have trouble even with radar. But when that happens don't give up on us. We can live without everything we want to eat if someday we have our freedom." Eight to fourteen years old these kids were, were telling me, an American, what freedom meant. I couldn't believe it. And all of the sudden I went, holy cow, I been here enough. "Sorry, I gotta run, kids." "Don't worry, we'll never quit, we'll never give up." Started to run. Little voice said boy, these kids are unusual. How come? Boy, they know what the value is, freedom's more important than flour, and enough flour. The pleasure of enough flour. I'll put that pleasure off for something downstream. And that told me something about decision making in my own life and I reflected back on that. And I told the kids I talked to, "if you put your principle before pleasure you're gonna have pleasure. But if you put it the other way around it's gonna reverse on you." And those kids, that hit me. And I started walking again. And then it still bothered me, and then I knew immediately why the change was so distinct and there was a trigger that caused this thing to happen. During the war and after and flying foreign countries in South America and other places where the kids had some chocolate and gum and had maybe not all they wanted to eat, but enough. And you see, walking down the street in those towns and the Americans in uniform, they'd chase you in groups like that. Grab ya. Gum? Chocolate? You got American chocolate? And we'd carry stuff with us. I'd give them stuff and they'd take off. These kids had no gum. No chocolate for months. Not enough to eat. And I suddenly realized that not one of 30 kids had put out their hand, or by voice inflection triggered me to say, "Hey, these kids like some chocolate." That restraint, I couldn't believe that maturity. That not one would break ranks. And when that happened, boy, if one kid had put out his hand and said "gimme" that trigger would never occurred. They're all the same, don't worry guys, I knew I didn't have any chocolate anyway. It would've never have

happened if one child had said "gimme." And because when I realized that, it blew my mind, I reached in my mind and all I had was two sticks of gum. Double-mint Wrigley double-mint gum. I thought try and give them that, you're gonna have bloody noses, you're gonna have a fight, get out of here. And I said, "I'll never see them again." I'll be flying 24 hours without sleep but I had a good copilot and I had an automatic pilot and I'd be napping coming and going; probably, but I couldn't come back to fence. I don't know how will I ever I'll never see them again. It was a freak that I was there. And so I said, "Well, give them what you got. They're incredible." So I put my hand in my pocket and looked back at the fence and boy, when I put my hand in my pocket those kids just really came to attention. Pulled it out and two sticks and broke it in half, went back, four pieces, through the barbed wire to the kids that were talking to me most. And here come the rest of them. And I thought, boy, I hope, mix of boys and girls. But they didn't, they were asking for something. And then it was obvious. They wanted a piece of the wrapper. And they guys and gals that got half a stick of gum tore off the outer wrapper in the tinfoil and passed it to the other kids. And the kids that didn't get any gum took that piece of paper and held it up to their nose and smelled it and smelled it. Just the smell on a piece of paper. I just stood there dumbfounded. I just couldn't believe it. I said, boy, I got to do something for these guys. And about that time the airplane came over my head and landed right behind me, taking pictures, and I got an idea. I said, boy, I can deliver tomorrow to these same kids without losing any sleep. I can drop it out of the airplane. And then the red light came on, you can't do that. You got to have permission for something like that. And then I rationalized and that's how you get in trouble rationalize. I said, you know, this airlift's not according to Hoyle. Starving two million people, what's a few sticks of gum, you know? So I just almost feel bad. I said, look, kids, boy. I shouldn't be saying this, but I'm gonna say it anyway to them. I said, "Kids, just come back here tomorrow and I'm gonna drop enough out of my airplane. If you'll share, enough gum for all of you to share. If you'll do that." Oh, boy, they just blew up. "Ja wohl, ja wohl, ja wohl, we'll do it." And so I started run and they said, "Wait a minute," and I said, "What's the matter?" "Got to know what airplane you're in. Every few minutes an airplane comes in, we can't watch them all, tiny package. Got to know the airplane." And then I said, "Well, I fly a different airplane every time, it might have red markings on it, come from Alaska, with snow, or coconut trees on the nose if it's from Hawaii. I don't know, whatever's loaded I'll fly. I just know it's a four-engine still a two-engine plane, four-engine." "But we just really need to know." And then I remembered, when I learned to fly in Garland, Utah, in the summer of 1945 no, what am I saying? 1941. Can you scrub that? In summer of 1941, when I first learned to fly from Brigham City, in that first flights class, went up over Garland, and then over to Logan and across country. And when I got over Garland, or farm, my dad was down there with the two horse cultivator, cultivating beets and Mom was in the garden. But in those days, before you (inaudible 01:09:45) you had to learn how to recover from the spins, you don't have to do that anymore. And so I knew how to spin really well. I thought I'll show them how I can fly. Pulled up the nose and did a two-turn spin over the

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farm. Came back that night, Dad met me at the door and said, "You're through flying." I said, "Why?" He said, "Mom thought you were gonna crash and she's still not feeling very good, you almost gave her a heart attack." I said, "I won't do that anymore. I promise I don't do that anymore." When I come over the farm after that flying in the summer of 1941, I wiggle the wings of the airplane. So I got that idea. I told the kids, when I come over the airport first, I have to come over a beacon over the airport. When I come over that at first, if you can see me, not in the clouds, I'll wiggle the wings of that big airplane. When you see the four-engine airplane's wings wiggle, that's got the stuff, just watch that one airplane. "Oh, boy," they said, "get out of here, let's start it." Well I took a lot of movies over town, went back that night, that evening, two hours before I had to start flying. I went to the base exchange, bought all of it, candy and chocolate and gum I could. Had a ration card. You couldn't buy very much. And then I went to my copilot and engineer and I said, "I gotta have your ration." They gave it to me. Had candy bars and gum, big double handful. Boy, that's heavy. I smelled that. I couldn't wait to get back. But hit in the head with that going 110 miles an hour make the wrong impression. Could be going fast right over their heads about 100 feet in the air. And then I got the idea of putting handkerchief parachutes on it. I had a lot of handkerchiefs so I took three handkerchief parachutes, tied a third on each, rolled them up. Went back that night, of course, not even a thought of doing next day about, before noon, still a good day. Looked down there, there's those 30 kids right in a bunch, they didn't tell another soul. I wiggled the wings and they just blew up. Came over their heads. Pushed it out of a flash. There's like a stovepipe out of the flight deck behind the pilot's seat for emergency flares. My engineer just pushed them out. I worried that the airplanes lined up to take off and seen what come out and reported it. But I was more worried that I pulled it over the barbed wire fence on the runway where they couldn't get it. Taxied out to take off along the barbed wire and there were three handkerchiefs waving through the barbed wire at all the airplanes. And their mouths were going up and down, and they shared it. And they were waving like crazy and I said, "I wish they wouldn't do that." And Pickering says, "They knew who you are?" And I says, "No, they don't know who I am. I didn't have my name tag on, they don't know who I am. I had my hat on " I was almost bald-headed. So we waved back at them. Every day they were out there. Every day we come out, more kids, waving every day. And we got a ration, a weekly ration. And I said, "Let's do it again." And we did it again. Three times we did it. And then the weather was bad in West Germany, we couldn't tell where to land in West Germany. So I said we're half unloaded, I'm going to run into the base office and ask why the weatherman didn't come by. Got the word is we didn't have much fuel to find a place to land. Ran into base ops. There's a huge planning table for maps, on top it was a stack of mail. I wondered what the mail was doing there for? My girlfriend hadn't written me for a while. Didn't expect mail in Berlin but I wondered why the mail wasn't delivered. I went and looked at and it says, "to Uncle Wiggly Wings: Tempelhof, base operations." "To (chocolaten flagger?) Tempelhof, base operations." I said, "Holy cow, we're in trouble." I forgot about the weather, ran back out, and said, "Guys, we're

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in trouble, we got to stop, there's a post office full of mail in there." And we stopped. For two weeks we stopped. And then (inaudible @ 01:13:13) was still coming. And then we looked at each other and said, the way we were saying we wanted to quit right quick. We said, "Once more and that's all." And whenever you say that you're already too far. So once more we took six parachutes, came back the next day, wiggled the wings, Mayday celebration, dropped it, and said that's it. We're through. Too late. Next day, came back from Berlin, Rhein-Main, on officer came on the airplane. "Halvorsen, Colonel Han wants to see you right now." I said, "What for?" He said, "He'll tell you." Colonel says, "Halvorsen, what are you doing?" "Flying like mad." "Not stupid," he said, "what else you been doing?" And then I knew he knew. For 15 minutes why I thought I was gonna be courtmartialed for not following regulations. And then he pulled out a newspaper, threw it on the counter. There's a cad of my operation. I almost hit a German newspaper guy in the head with a candy bar on that last drop. He had the story all over the world. And General Tunner had called him up and said, "Han, what are you doing dropping parachutes over Berlin?" And Han said, "General, we're not dropping parachutes over Berlin." And he said, "Colonel, you better find out what's happening in your outfit." Well, they had the tail number, they had the parachutes coming out. And he said, "General Tunner says it's a good idea, keep doing it." Han was a good guy. Don't sandbag your boss. You know, you want to keep your boss informed, not your boss's boss. And I learned management procedure from that. But Han was a great guy and I don't blame him for being a bit angry with me. And coming back from Berlin, my bed would be filled with candy bars and gum. Women's clubs would be tying up the parachutes and we went to Berlin, took mail bags, picked up the mail and brought it back and we had two German secretaries that the base commander had gave us to answer all the letters. And we got a lot of really good letters. Ran out of parachutes and the kids sent back old ones for refills. And it just went crazy from there on.

How many drops do you estimate that you made?

Gail Halvorsen: Well, I have a document. First of all, in September, 1948, General Tunner says they want somebody to go back to New York and tell the press all about what the airlift's like from a personal standpoint. And they want you to go and pick up an airplane and bring it back. Went to New York and we the people and television and radios and all over the place where a week. And then American Confectioner's association president, Mr. King and Mr. (Inaudible @ 01:16:12) from one of the candy company said, "We'll give you all you can drop. Whatever you can do, we'll send it to you. Just tell us how much to send." Well they sent over 6,600 pounds of candy bars by boat and by rail to RheinMain before Christmas and my guys ferried that over and we had a ground party on the ground in Berlin for that 6,600 pounds of candy bars at Christmas Day, not Eve, because there were no lights all over the city. The volume aside, we could tie the parachutes. So Elm's College, junior college in Chicopee, Massachusetts got a hold of me and said we'll tie up the parachutes. They organized 22 schools

around Chicopee, Massachusetts near Westover Air Force Base, the major air force base that supplied RheinMain. And they got a fire station and they turned out 800 pounds every other day in cardboard boxes big cardboard boxes parachutes ready to drop. And I've got documentation from Chicopee that they had processed 18 tons through the seven months, first seven months. We figured we dropped over 20 tons. The estimate is 250,000 parachutes over West Berlin. Quit dropping around the airfield, afraid of kids getting hurt. So we'd drop it at 1500 and 2000 feet as we'd come around the city, all over the city, plaster the city. The kids of East Berlin wrote and they said, "Hey, we can't help it where they put the border. You know, we over here have these rations. I hope you're not mad at us, but we're catching some of these things that you mean for these free Berlin kids. We don't have any chocolate either." And then the last paragraph was pay off, he said, "When you come over to East Berlin to land, drop it over here. There's not many people and we'll have a lot better chance at it." And I said, "Why not." So we were getting stuff like crazy. So I'd save it and go over East Berlin, see a soccer match and drop it, and the soccer ball would take off and the kids would chase the parachutes. And they'd have two weeks of this. Came back from Berlin, Tempelhof to RheinMain and an officer met at the airplane. Okay, what's up? He said, "What are you doing over East Berlin?" And I said, "I'm dropping it to those nasty Communist kids." "You can't do that." And I knew he was the colonel to Gilbert, the guy that transferred me to the 74 squadron in (inaudible @ 01:18:49). They brought him over. I said, "The law of gravity's the same on both sides of the border." He said, "That's not the problem." He said, "The Soviets have complained to the State Department, it's a dirty capitalist trick. You're trying to influence the minds of the people against them. You gotta stop 'cause we haven't jurisdiction over that air space you're using." So I had to stop. But when we flew that airplane, and I'm flying it now today, back to Berlin in 1998, hundreds of people came through that airplane and some of them were former East German kids that caught the parachutes in 1948. They gave me a hug, hard to let go. What a great experience. So the letters, other letters came. A little boy named Peter Zimmerman wrote me a letter. These two secretaries answered all the letters, we couldn't answer them. But they'd give me three special letters and say what you gonna do about this guy. Well Peter Zimmerman, says, "I'm nine years old. My legs aren't very long and I'm not getting this stuff. Almost got it today. But a bigger kid beat me to it." And he said, I saw the parachute. He said make me a parachute, a perfect parachute. And they made me a map. And he said, "When you take off out of Tempelhof come down the canal, second base, turn right, one block. I live in the bombed out house in the corner. I'll be in the back yard every day at 2 o'clock, drop it there." And so I tried to find Peter. They'd let me do that. In good weather I'd unload the load, the tower would let me fly around and make special deliveries hospitals and other stuff. And I couldn't hit Peter Zimmerman. Finally he wrote me, he said, "Look, you're a pilot? I gave you a map. How you guys win the war anyway?" Well, I gave up on Peter. Took a big package of gum and candy to Berlin. I mailed it to him in the Berlin mail. You couldn't mail it to Berlin, but you you could mail it in the mail. His dad and mom were

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killed during this bombing of Berlin, and he lived with an uncle and he wanted to be an American citizen. And I had various bags with kids that wanted to write kids and send for pen pals and State Department, put this in the State Department bag and he was adopted by a family in Pennsylvania. He needed shoes, we took some shoes to Berlin with an imprint of the size and we became good friends. Never met him. Never met him. And a little girl wrote. She says, "I'm Mercedes and you're causing us a terrible problem." And of course that got my attention right away. Says, "We live right on the approach just before you land in the apartment house and when you come over our apartment you scare our chickens. We've got a bunch of white chickens down there and they're not laying eggs anymore." And being raised on a farm in Garland I knew all about white chickens. Had to clean out the coop on Saturdays while my buddies went fishing. But she says, "They're running the coop, they're losing their feathers. No eggs." But she says, "When you see the white chickens, drop it there, I don't care if it scares them." Well, I couldn't find the white chickens. By that time, we were getting supplies out the ears. I told my buddies, "Bomb the approach." My buddies were dropping. Bombed the approach. Still missed Mercedes. So I took a big patch of gum and candy to Berlin and mailed it to Mercedes. In 1972, because of two sticks of gum in 1948, I went back to Berlin as the commander of Tempelhof Air Base for four years with my family. And everybody that ever caught a parachute wanted me to come to their house to dinner so they could tell their kids and show their kids that I was real and how it happened for them. But I couldn't. Almost every night we were out officially. It was Vietnam time. Riots and things going on. And I was out every night, my wife and I, except for family home evening, we kept (inaudible @ 01:22:32). Couldn't take private invitations. But one kept coming two years. And in 1972 we said this is the only one that keep asking, let's go. So we canceled something Wednesday night and went out to this apartment house, rang the clanger. Down came a young couple. Two kids. Two boys, age two of my boys we had with us. Went upstairs, they introduced themselves. She went to the china cabinet, opened up a cabinet, handed me a letter and said, "Read this." This is 1972, and it was dated November, 1948. So well I know what this is about. And I opened it up and I said, "Holy cow." It said, "Dear Mercedes, I can't find your white chickens. I hope this is okay." (Inaudible @ 01:23:13) that I'm Mercedes. Step over here five steps and I'll tell you where the chickens were. Well, I stayed with Mercedes two months ago in Berlin, her and her family. Stayed with them about 33 times since 1972. Her husband was a science teacher in high school in Berlin. We established an airlift from West Berlin before the wall came down to Utah County. We had students going back and forth to understand cultures better. Some of them became LDS, some of them became Mormons and married people eventually here in the States. And I'm supposed to be, on the 15th of this month, in Wiesbaden, Germany with Mercedes in the yearly fest they're having there. And the honored guest is Mercedes. I'm supposed to be there but I'm gonna be in Washington, D.C. with the old C54 airplane. It's incredible. They came out here and they stayed with us for a month and went all over the state of Utah and loved where I lived. When we went back in 1998 with that

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airplane, we could tell immediately everybody that came through the airplane that had been through during the blockade of Berlin, by the look in their eyes, they're moist, hardly can speak they're so emotional. Shake your hands and say, "Thank you for our freedom, thank you for our freedom." One man I could see him stand off to the side, gaining his composure. And when people stopped coming through, came up to him and he said, "I'm 60 years old," he said, "50 years ago I was a boy at ten going to school and the clouds were low and the rain was coming down. I could hear your airplanes landing but I couldn't see any. And suddenly, out of the cloud, came a parachute with a fresh Hershey candy bar." He said, "It took me a week to eat that candy bar. I hid it day and night." But he said, "It wasn't the candy that was important, what was important was that somebody in America knew I was in trouble and somebody cared and that's what it meant to me." And he said, "You know, I can live on thin rations but not without hope. Without hope the soul dies," he said. And how true that is. We see people in our communities that have lost hope. They have no connections with the outside force whether it's a teacher, a parent or a buddy. If they haven't got an outside connection like this man had to give him hope in life, for whatever it might be spiritual, or material or whatever, then they lose hope. I lost my great wife, Alta Jolley of 50 almost 50 years -- five kids, 24 grandkids, 14 great-grandkids -- suddenly of a heart attack years ago. And I need outside help. And for me it was our Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave me assurance that we would see each other again. But that's what it was for (inaudible @ 01:26:23) it wasn't the dried eggs, it wasn't the dried potatoes, it wasn't the coal, it wasn't the flour. They were just symbols. Symbols that somebody, the British, French, and Americans weren't going to give up. They're gonna stay with them. Russians offered them food rations. We'll give you all you want. Just sign up with us. And only a few percent capitulated. They said we'll never give in. They put principle before pleasure, the principle of freedom was more important than the pleasure of enough to eat. And they could put that off. And that's what we need to learn today. We need hope in the world today as much as we did during the Berlin Airlift. As examples used today in the military. You know that right now, today in the world, the air mobility command runs all of the transport for the air force. We launch an airplane somewhere on this earth every 90 seconds, there's an airplane on a mission of mercy or to support troops that are in harm's way. The air mobility command at Scott Air Force Base, I work with them in Europe. Today, in this terrible thing in Burma with a new name that I've forgotten, it's wiped out 100,000 people. We finally got, today, we got some of our first airplanes with an American flag on the tail. For every 90 seconds then an earthquake, in tsunami, in disasters, we're there

[END TAPE]