

NEWS

**RETURN OF THE CANDY BOMBER
UNCLE WIGGLY WINGS IS BACK IN THE SKY AGAIN**

BILL REDEKER, AARON BROWN / ROBIN ROBERTS

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AARON BROWN, Host: While Wall Street analysts, auto mechanics, and others are still pondering the impact of the world's largest industrial merger, the proposal this week that Chrysler and the people who make Mercedes-Benz merge. But in Berlin, the focus is on another partnership between Americans and Germans, and this one was forged 50 years ago during the very, very early days of the cold war.

Tuesday is the anniversary of the end of the Berlin Airlift, a chapter in history that has brought some of the people who helped write it back to Berlin. ABC's Bill Redeker now with a look at one man's sweet, and we do mean sweet, memories of making history.

BILL REDEKER, ABC News: (voice-over) It's been 50 years since retired US Air Force Colonel **Gail Halvorsen** flew a C-54 cargo plane to Berlin.

GAIL HALVORSEN, US Air Force Colonel (Ret.): It's better than high blood pressure medicine. Lowers my blood pressure. Not anxious.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) Now, the 77-year-old pilot is once again on a mission, heading to Germany to reenact the heroics which earned him the nickname the Candy Bomber. It all began during the Berlin Airlift in 1949.

GAIL HALVORSEN: The airlift was the biggest airlift operation in history. We hauled 2.3 million tons of food supplies and coal into the city during the airlift. It was the biggest humanitarian effort in history.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) In 1948, Stalin had cut off all roads to the divided city to assert Soviet control over Berlin and frustrate the Western allies. The airlift was crucial to keep Berlin alive, to keep Berliners from starving.

GAIL HALVORSEN: This was Operation Vittles, aptly named for food.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) For 11 months, planes loaded with flour, coal, and dried food landed every three minutes. But one day, while talking to some children at an airfield, Halvorsen came up with a simple idea that would have profound implications.

GAIL HALVORSEN: I reached in my pocket, and all I had was two sticks of Wrigley's Doublemint gum. Broke it in half, four pieces through the barbed wire. Boy, they -- eyes lit up.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) Soon other pilots were donating their candy rations to Halvorsen, and since they were pilots, delivery was no problem. They would simply drop the candy from their planes. Operation Little Vittles took off.

GAIL HALVORSEN: I had really got involved with the kids.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) But how would the children know which planes? Well, Halvorsen came up with another solution. He gave the kids a signal.

GAIL HALVORSEN: And I says, "I'm going to wiggle the wings of that big airplane like this. I'm going to rock it. That's got the stuff, get ready."

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) Within days, Halvorsen was dropping candy all over Berlin, bundles of gum, Mars and Hershey bars tied to little parachutes made from handkerchiefs.

GAIL HALVORSEN: These were actually chutes we dropped, and the kids sent them back, and we kept them for souvenirs. This was the New York World's Fair of 1948, and this was my hometown of Garland (ph), Utah, that made hundreds of these and sent them over with candy already on them.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) At first, Air Force brass frowned on the idea, but that quickly changed when word got out and sympathetic Americans donated tons of candy. The favorable publicity humanized the allied powers, encouraged West Germany to join the alliance, and made Halvorsen a cold war hero.

(on camera) And what was your nickname?

GAIL HALVORSEN: The Berlin Candy Bomber, the Uncle Wiggly Wings, the Schokoladenflieger, Bon-Bon Pilot.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) In all, the Candy Bomber and his fellow pilots dropped more than 250,000 pounds of gum and candy, making life a little bit sweeter for 100,000 kids. In turn, they sent him thank-you letters, which he's kept for a half-century, along with memories, memories that are equally strong for those who caught the parachutes, the Candy Kids.

GAIL HALVORSEN: Good to see you. Ahh, Berliner Kindel?

BERLINER KIND: Yes.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) This past week, at his home in Provo, Utah, Halvorsen was reunited with Helga, Wallie (ph), and Bergita (ph).

HELGA BASSON: I got a candy bar once and a piece of gum.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) Although they are now in their 60s, they remember the Candy Bomber and are still overwhelmed by what he did 50 years ago.

HELGA BASSON: You had a choice, and you came for your (inaudible). So I think I ought -- like I said, the thank you came 50 years but it's.

..

GALE HALVORSEN: I appreciate that.

HELGA BASSON:... still from the heart.

GALE HALVORSEN: Thank you very much.

Going to start engines.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) In a few weeks, for a few moments, Halvorsen will again become the Candy Bomber when he reenacts his mission and drops little parachutes over Berlin. As he looks forward to that moment, he thinks back on what it all meant.

GAIL HALVORSEN: It was hope, was more important than food. You can't buy it, the ingredient of hope that brings the people through a crisis.

BILL REDEKER: (voice-over) And if anyone wonders which plane will be dropping the candy, the Candy Bomber promises to wiggle his wings.

Bill Redeker for Good Morning America Sunday.

AARON BROWN: I love that story.

ROBIN ROBERTS, Host: It is.

AARON BROWN: I just love that story.

On this Mother's Day, quickly before we go, we can't send you all flowers, though we considered it.

ROBIN ROBERTS: We did.

AARON BROWN: We can't even send you a copy of Cokie's book, though we considered that.

ROBIN ROBERTS: We did consider that also.

AARON BROWN: We can, though, show you how much we appreciate you, because we know how stressful your lives are, Mom. Look at that, the fourth most stressful job.

(On Screen: America's Most Stressful Job: 1, US president, 19 percent; 2, air traffic controller, 18 percent; 3, police officer, 16 percent; 4, mother, 14 percent; 11, father, 1 percent. Source: Denavir Poll)

ROBIN ROBERTS: Wow.

AARON BROWN: Just below police officer. I think for my mother, who raised five kids, it was probably right there with air traffic controller.

ROBIN ROBERTS: She probably felt like an air traffic controller sometimes.

AARON BROWN: I think so.

ROBIN ROBERTS: But look at dear old Dad, coming in at number 11.

AARON BROWN: Yes, well, if Mom's doing her job right, Dad's job's a lot easier, I'll tell you.

ROBIN ROBERTS: It's a lot easier. You know, the number one gift, by a survey, flowers and plants.

AARON BROWN: Flowers and...

ROBIN ROBERTS: And plants.

AARON BROWN:... and plants.

ROBIN ROBERTS: And did you send anything to your mom?

AARON BROWN: Yes, we did, we sent...

ROBIN ROBERTS: Flowers?

AARON BROWN: Are you kidding? We sent something. I know my wife sent something.

ROBIN ROBERTS: Yes, we'll check with your wife. A couple of program...

AARON BROWN: That's why the job's so stressful.

ROBIN ROBERTS: A couple of program notes before we go. Be sure to watch This Week With Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts later this morning, and, of course, tonight, don't forget about World News Sunday.

AARON BROWN: And a big week ahead for Good Morning America. Kevin Newman takes a look at that.

KEVIN NEWMAN: Well, this week, if you're tired of the hustle and bustle in your life and daydreaming about getting away, come on and join Good Morning America, because we're going to help you. We have five days of ideal vacation ideas, some spectacular sports, some great fun. You got to check us out this week on Good Morning America.

ROBIN ROBERTS: Good to have you on the team, Aaron.

AARON BROWN: Nice to be here. We'll see you all next week on GMA Sunday.

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