

NATIONAL
SURVIVOR GRATEFUL TO ALLIES: MEMORIES SWEET FOR BERLIN GIRL

362 words

13 March 1994

Times-Picayune

NOTP

THIRD

A37

English

© 1994 The Times Picayune. Provided by ProQuest Information and Learning. All rights reserved.

Mercedes Simon lost her father in the war, survived the Allied bombing and emerged from the ruins of her home to find her block full of Russian soldiers.

Her house at 15 Haehnelstrasse was ripped open by bombs as the Allies advanced on Berlin. The Simons covered in the cellar.

"There was only one real bomb shelter in the neighborhood and most people tried to ride out the bombing in their basements," said Mercedes, who remembers seeing dead neighbors dug out from under collapsed building.

Little more than a shrapnelscarred china cabinet could be salvaged when the family started to rebuild.

Along Haehnelstrasse, life was difficult and risky in the first weeks after the war ended.

The Russian commandant had his headquarters just down the rubble-strewn street and Russian soldiers raped several girls in the neighborhood. "The Russian bear was feared," said Mercedes, now married to Peter Wild.

Then the streets got lucky. When the city was divided, it fell inside the American sector. The bar on the corner became a GI hangout.

Four decades later, terrorists would bomb another bar a block away called La belle. To U.S. soldiers were killed in the bombing and Mercedes Wild watched from her window as bloodied Americans straggled down the block.

In 1945, little Mercedes was given milk by the Americans and inoculated with American vaccines. "They were not seen as occupation forces," she said.

In 1948, the Russians sealed off all land routes to Berlin and airplanes became the center of 7-year-old Mercedes' life. Her family lived about a mile from Tempelhof Airport, where the Americans landed food and fuel day and night.

One day, **Gail Halvorsen**, an Air Force pilot from Provo, Utah, was moved by a group of children at the Tempelhof fence who were too proud to ask him for sweets. After that, as he approached to land, he dropped candy bars attached to miniature parachutes.

This month, 15 students from Berlin's ballet high school will visit the western United States. They are part of a government-financed program started by Halvorsen and Wild's husband.

Document notp000020011029dq3d00d2m

Search Summary

Text	"Gail Halvorsen"
Date	All Dates
Source	All Sources

Author	All Authors
Company	All Companies
Subject	All Subjects
Industry	All Industries
Region	All Regions
Language	English