

## Candy Bomber: The Story of the Berlin Airlift's 'Chocolate Pilot'

After World War II, Germany was divided among the countries that won the war against Germany. The Soviet Union (now known as Russia) took control of the eastern half of Germany and the western half was divided among the Allied Forces of the USA, Great Britain, and France.

Beginning June 1948, Russia built blockades and would not let food and supplies reach the city of Berlin, Germany.

More than two million people were hungry. The United States sent pilots to help fly food and supplies into Berlin.

One day while he was in Berlin, Gail Halvorsen saw a group of young children at the end of the runway. They were watching planes landing and taking off.

The children were hungry, but they did not complain nor beg for anything. Halvorsen reached in his pocket and found he had two sticks of gum.

Gail Halvorsen gave the two sticks of gum to the group of children. And, amazingly, the children tore the gum into enough pieces for every child to have a small taste or smell.

Seeing how thrilled the children were over the gum, Halvorsen promised to bring them candy the next time he came. He said he would drop it to them from his plane. There were many airplanes that passed over their city.

- How will we know your plane?- asked a young girl.

- I will wiggle my wings - replied Uncle Wiggly Wings.

The next day as Halvorsen flew over Berlin he wiggled the wings of his plane to let the children know that he was going to drop candy to them. Then, he dropped many small parachutes made from handkerchiefs, each bearing sweet treats.

Soon letters addressed to "Uncle Wiggly Wings" began to arrive with children requesting candy drops in other areas of the city. **Operation Little Vittles** had begun.



To help Uncle Wiggly Wings with "Operation Little Vittles," candy was shared by fellow airmen and sent by schoolchildren from across America. Candy manufacturers also donated candy by the boxcar load.

In May of 1949, the highway blockade ended, and the airlift delivering supplies ended in September.

The efforts of Uncle Wiggly Wings will be remembered because of his love and concern for others.



- How was Germany divided after World War II?

- What did Halvorsen find in his pocket?

- Why do you think Halvorser was known as Uncle Wiggly Wings?

- Why do you think the name “Operation Little Vittles” was used?

- Write a letter as if you were a child in East Berlin during the Berlin Airlift. How would you ask Gail Halvorsen to drop his candy parachutes in your neighborhood? Remember, the children of Berlin did not beg for anything. So, write your letter of request without begging, but with self respect.