

# Uncle Wiggly Wings

World War II had decimated Germany. Citizens clamored for supplies.

Russia reduced Berlin's buildings to skeletons and sought to do the same to her people. They blockaded food-bearing trucks, trains and boats. Without help, the city would starve.

The United States and British military responded with the 1948 airlift. For 11 months, they air-dropped tons of food to the 2.5 million Berliners.

Max Lucado, author and minister, in his book *You Changed My Life*, told how one American pilot lit up the gloom for thousands of children suffering during that time in Berlin.

Gail Halvorsen, 27, landed his plane in Berlin one day and found himself talking to 30 or more German children through a barbed-wire fence. Although hungry and needy, they didn't beg or complain.



Impressed, Halvorsen reached into his pocket, produced two sticks of gum, broke them in half, and handed the pieces through the wire.

"Those kids looked like they had just received a million bucks," he recounted. "They put that tiny piece of paper to their noses and smelled the aroma. They were on cloud nine. I stood there dumbfounded."



Touched by their plight, Halvorsen promised to return the next day and drop more gum from his plane. With supply flights landing every half-hour, the children asked how they would recognize him. "I'll wiggle my wings," he replied.

Halvorsen returned to Rhein-Main Air Force Base and bought gum and candy rations from his buddies. He tied the sweets to tiny handkerchief parachutes, loaded them on his C-54, and – true to his word – wiggled his wings over Berlin.

Kids in the city streets spotted their friend and ran to gather the falling candy.

(more)

*Operation Little Vittles* had begun. Momentum mounted quickly. Within three weeks, the Air Force sanctioned the crusade. During the following months, U.S. planes dropped more than 23 tons of candy on the city.

Halvorsen became known as Uncle Wiggly Wings.



*Operation Little Vittles* was not the end of Halvorsen's military and humanitarian career. Over the next 25 years, he advocated for and performed candy drops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Japan, Guam and Iraq. Halvorsen received the Congressional Gold Medal for his role.

Halvorsen's story proves that small deeds make big differences in the lives of people.

At Life Care and Century Park, we are involved in a grand mission and great responsibility. But it is often the little things – a new sweater for a resident, the framing of a family photo, a cup of hot coffee on a cool morning, reading the Bible for a blind patient – that can have huge impact.

I'm glad our associates are practitioners of the art.

*The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped* (Proverbs 11:25 MSG).

– Beecher Hunter