



KATHLEEN MERRYMAN

When the skies above Berlin rained chocolate

Chocolate, as those who love it know, has magical powers of peace and healing. Chocolate from the sky is even more potent, as a young airman discovered during the Berlin Airlift in 1948 and 1949.

This weekend, that airman, Gail Halvorsen, is flying from McChord Air Force Base to Germany to attend the ceremony closing Rhein-Main Air Base, where the airlift began. He is taking cases of Hershey Bars with him. Halvorsen is, after all, the legendary Candy Bomber, or, as thousands of German children called him, Uncle Wiggle Wings.

Beginning with two sticks of Wrigley's Spearmint gum, he spearheaded an effort that eventually parachuted 23 tons of candy to the kids of Berlin. And that was just the stuff that went out the window as he flew into West Berlin with staples that kept 2.5 million people alive for a year of the Soviet blockade.

Friday, Halvorsen, who retired from the Air Force as a colonel, told his story at McChord to an audience whose members have logged humanitarian missions to tsunami and hurricane zones.

Berlin was just climbing out of the World War II rubble when the Soviets blockaded the free side of the divided city. The United States and Britain responded with "Operation Vittles." In July 1948, after landing his C-54 Skymaster with a load of flour, Halvorsen strolled over to talk to 30 kids watching from the other side of a barbed-wire fence.

"They told me, 'Don't worry about us. Someday we will have enough to eat, but if we lose our freedom, we will never get it back,'" he said. "Then I realized that though these kids had had zero for months, they would not lower themselves to put out their hands to be begged for something as nice as American chocolate."

Because they did not ask for anything, he dug into his pockets, found two sticks of gum, gave them to the kids, and told them he'd drop more the next day when he flew in. "I told them I'd wiggle the wings, so they'd know which plane it was," he said. "I went back to Rhein-Main and told everyone 'You've got to give me your ration.' I got one or two heavy handfuls, and figured that if I dropped them, I might make the wrong kind of impression."

So he made three little parachutes for the candy.

In no time, all his pals were making parachutes for candy, and kids were flocking to the drops. His commanding officer found out about the unauthorized activity when Halvorsen's plane made the front page of a Berlin daily.

Halvorsen talked fast, won him over, and before long word spread back to the States. Confectioners donated candy by the ton. Schoolkids made parachutes. Other pilots joined in the fun of what they called "Operation Little Vittles." German children responded with thank-you notes.

"One little boy, Peter, gave me directions to his house," Halvorsen said. "When I missed it, he wrote back, 'I will build a fire so you can see it.'"

The pilots occasionally ventured over East Berlin until the Soviets demanded they stop trying to influence children with chocolate.

After the program Friday, the Air Force audience agreed on two things: Uncle Wiggle Wings is a hero, and relief work is one of the most meaningful elements of their job. It's a privilege to be able to help.

Capt. Stephanie Soltis told of Marines stuffing food and water around the equipment they had loaded onto her plane bound for Biloxi, Miss., the day after Katrina struck.

Master Sgt. Adrian Rivera smiled when he told about raiding charter flights for their snacks to give to Thai kids who'd lost everything to the tsunami.

"It shows what America's all about," said Senior Airman Brian DeRosa, who flew to the tsunami and hurricane zones. "We're surrounded by heroes."

True. But don't try to tell them that, or that, like chocolate, they have magical powers of peace and healing.

They are too modest to accept that truth.

Kathleen Merryman: 253-597-8677
kathleen.merryman@thenewtribune.com

State to pay injured woman

Ex-prisoner hit truck on Narrows Bridge, hurting driver, killing mother

The state of Washington will pay \$1.2 million to a woman hurt in a 2002 crash caused by a convict under Department of Corrections supervision.

BY KAREN HUCKS
The News Tribune

The state Department of Corrections has agreed to pay \$1.2 million to settle the lawsuit of a Tacoma woman who was hurt and whose mother died when a former prisoner still under state supervision

crashed into their truck on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in 2002.

Progressive Insurance, which insured the ex-prisoner, Amy Hood, also will pay Lynn Torgerson \$200,000 as part of the settlement.

Torgerson and her husband, Jon, sued

the state, the Department of Corrections and Hood — also known as Amy Brooks — in 2003. They contended the state and the Department of Corrections had negligently failed to supervise Hood, who had a drug problem and a history of violence.

Hood, then 32, was driving back from trying to see her community corrections officer just before 1 p.m. Oct. 29, 2002, when her car crossed the center line and

hit Torgerson's Toyota pickup.

Torgerson's 78-year-old mother, Lillie C. Olsen, died.

Hood, who was not charged in the crash, told investigators she had fallen asleep, though she also admitted she had cocaine in her system from using the drug three days before.

Torgerson, then a 55-year-old former

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HE WEARS A COLLAR TO MAKE THE COLLAR



Max, the Sumner Police Department's German shepherd, responds in a training exercise with handler Chad Kiblinger and dog trainer Ron Pace. After Kiblinger opened his car door by remote control, Max successfully went after Pace, posing as bad guy in a traffic stop gone wrong.

Woof! You're under arrest

Sumner has a new, four-legged officer to help catch criminals. Max and his partner are on the job, tracking suspects on the run and searching vast warehouses.

BY ROB TUCKER
The News Tribune

The timing couldn't have been better. Sumner wanted to start a police dog program and Max was available.

So was \$30,000 from a Seattle foundation to

fund training and equipment for the German shepherd tracking dog.

"It was great," said Sumner Police Chief Colleen Wilson. "He proved to be an exceptional dog."

The city needed a police tracking dog to help officers thoroughly search huge warehouses in the growing industrial district.

"They are too big to search with humans," Wilson said. "It's better to send a dog in."

Max's handler, officer Chad Kiblinger, said he spent two to three years as a dog trainer before he

became a builder and then a police officer. Kiblinger and Max trained as a team and were certified for duty June 8.

"I've always wanted to be a K-9 handler," Kiblinger said this week.

Ron Pace, Max's former owner and a dog trainer, helped start the Tacoma Police Department's dog program in the early 1980s. Pace raised Max from a puppy and sold him to an owner who later had a change in his life and could no longer keep

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'SHE WAS A TOMBOY'

Auburn tells tales of Gov. Lead Foot

The City of Auburn puts up a sign to honor a local girl who made it big — Christine Gregoire.

BY STEVE MAYNARD
The News Tribune

Gov. Christine Gregoire loves her hometown of Auburn.

A year ago, she returned to sit in the Rainbow Cafe downtown where her late mother worked as a short-order cook. In August, she talked for three hours with Auburn Senior High classmates at their 40th reunion.

And on Friday, Washington's 22nd governor came back to be showered with affection and honored with a new sign declaring her roots.

"I am so proud of my hometown," said Gregoire, who was greeted by the Auburn High marching band playing the school's

FUN WITH FORMER GOVERNORS

Now that you know where Gov. Christine Gregoire went to high school, try to guess her predecessors' alma maters. Two of them went to the same school.



Gary Locke
1997-2005



Mike Lowry
1993-1997



Booth Gardner
1985-1993



John Spellman
1981-1985



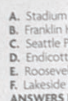
Dixie Lee Ray
1977-1981



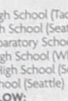
Dan Evans
1965-1977



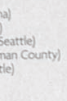
Albert Rosellini
1957-1965



F. Ives Speller
1957-1965



C. Ray
1957-1965



E. Rosellini
1957-1965

Locke, B. Lowry, D. Gardner, F. Spellman, C. Ray, E. Evans, E. Rosellini, A.

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'LIKE A SKELETON KEY'

A former state worker gets the top sentence possible for making fake IDs. B2

COMING UP IN SOUTH SOUND

What makes a perfect day? Readers share their ideas, fact and fiction. SUNDAY IN YOUR AREA