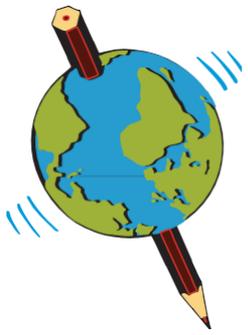


Uncle Wiggly Wings

The story of Gail Halvorsen, the Candy Bomber





Uncle Wiggly Wings was a pilot in the United States Air Force. His real name was (then) 1st Lieutenant Gail Halvorsen. (He retired as a Colonel.) He liked to fly airplanes. He flew a Douglas C-54 airplane for the events in this story. He was also called the Berlin "[Candy Bomber](#)." Watch linked videos and read on to find out why. Click on answer spaces to provide your responses to questions along the way.



After World War II, Germany was divided among the countries that won the war against Germany. What was then the Soviet Union 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. All roadways and electricity was cut off from more than two million hungry people.

The United States sent pilots to help fly food and supplies into Berlin. This was called the Berlin Airlift, which helped to overcome the blockades built by Russia.

Uncle Wiggly Wings
flew food and
supplies to Berlin a
long time ago.

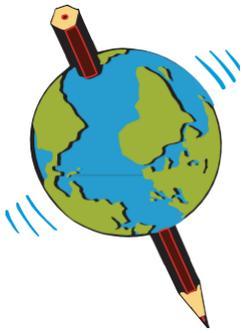
How many years ago did
he fly the supplies to
Berlin?

This year is 20____
Year Flown 1948

My answer is _____

Vocabulary:

Allied Forces
blockades



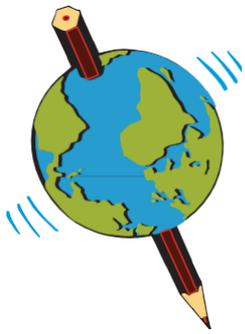
How many pieces can you tear your gum into?

Vocabulary:

runway

One day while he was in Berlin, Col 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. Uncle Wiggly Wings (Col Halvorsen) reached in his pocket and found he had two sticks of gum. "How do you share two sticks of gum with all these children?" he asked himself.



How would you let the children know that your airplane was the one that would drop candy and gum to the children?

Vocabulary:

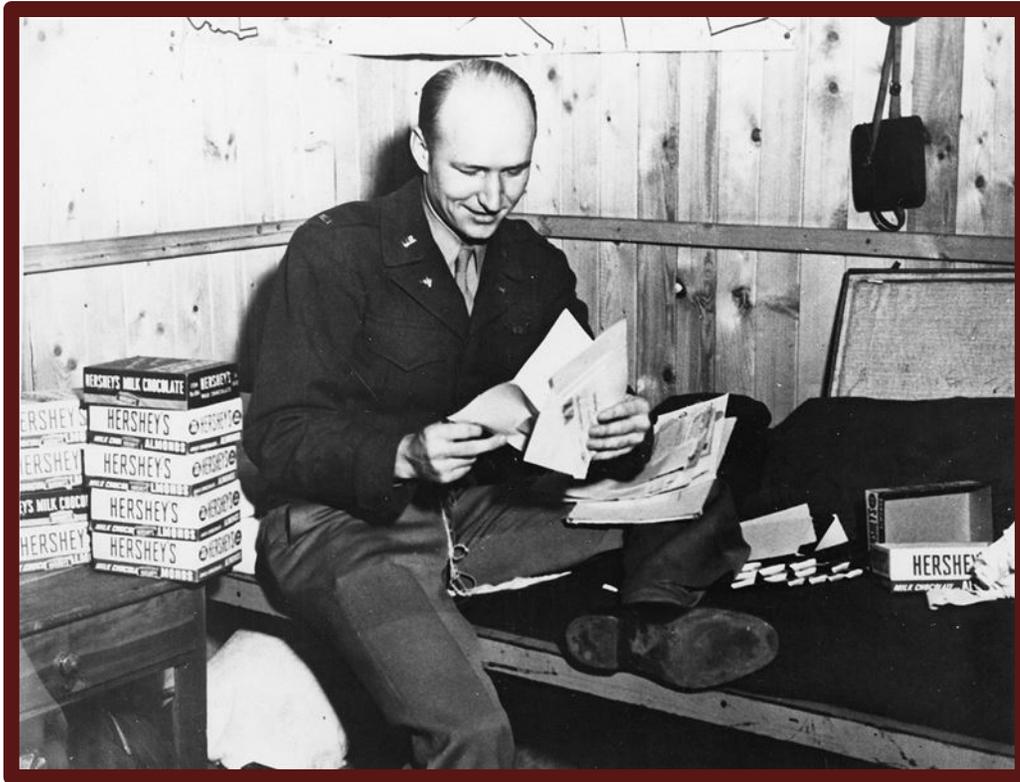
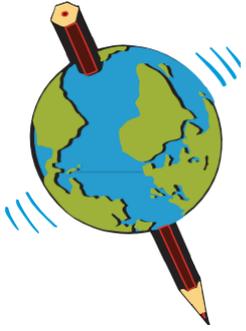
savor

Col 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. There was no arguing or fighting. There were only smiles of joy at having even a small piece to savor.

Seeing how thrilled the children were over the gum, Uncle Wiggly Wings 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 carrying supplies every day.

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

"I will wiggle my wings," replied Uncle Wiggly Wings.



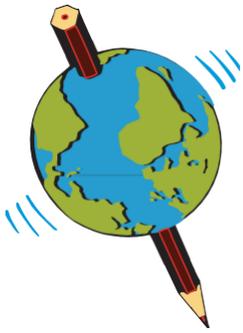
Why do you think the name
"Operation Little Vittles" was used?

Vocabulary:

parachute
handkerchief
operation little vittles

The next day, as Col 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, where food and sweets were dropped to little children.



Gail Halvorson reenacting the 'Candy Drop'
in 1969 at Tempelhof Airport, Berlin
USAF Museum Photo Archives



What have you done (or can you do) that shows your love and concern for others?

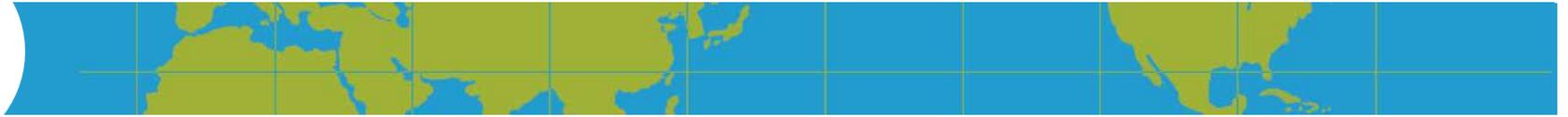
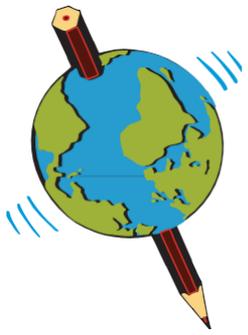
Vocabulary:

humanitarian
boxcar

To help Uncle Wiggly Wings with "Operation Little Vittles," candy was shared by fellow airmen and sent by schoolchildren from across America. Candy manufacturers, such as the [Hershey Company](#), also donated candy by the [boxcar](#) load.

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

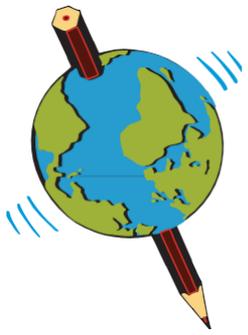
The efforts of Uncle Wiggly Wings will be remembered because of his love and concern for others. He had a true [humanitarian](#) spirit.



Col Halvorsen continued sharing the spirit of giving...

Retired Col Halvorsen recreated the spirit of his Berlin candy story in the United States, and, in other countries, such as in Tirana, Albania, in 1999, where he delivered school supplies, toys and candy to disadvantaged Albanian children there.

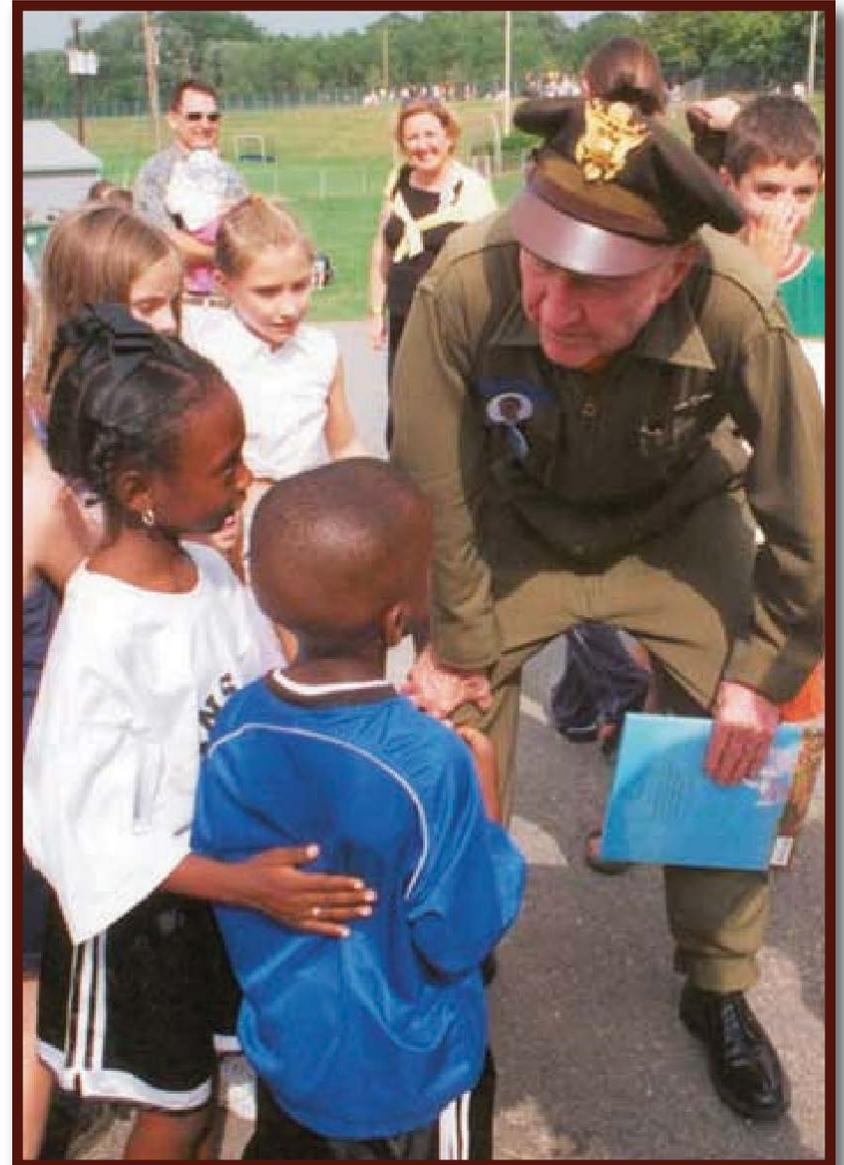


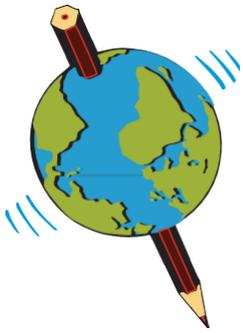


And...

Uncle Wiggly Wings also offered his special gifts of hope, caring, and candy to the victims of Hurricane Katrina in south Mississippi in 2005.

At 101 years old, Col Halvorsen died February 16, 2022, but his legacy will live on in the hearts of everyone who continues his spirit of giving and sharing hope.

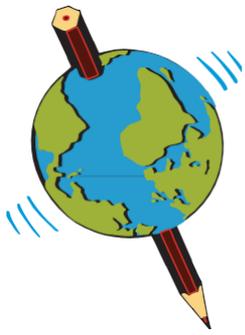




Col Halvorsen also visited many schools...

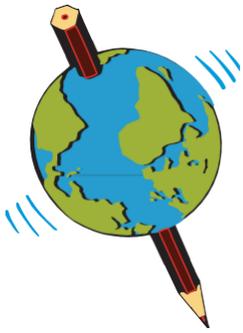
School children, educators, and many other groups enjoyed the story of Uncle Wiggly Wings. He conducted class visits and discussions with students, and, continued to [reenact](#) the Berlin Candy Bomber story over countless schools and communities in honor of the Berlin Airlift's humanitarian efforts to bring hope to those in need, even until the last days of his life.





Writing to the Candy Bomber...

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



Where in the World...

Extension activities from the [Teacher's Guide](#):

- Your teacher will provide you the specific maps described below for you to locate and color the following places on a map and talk about why each location is important in the life of Col Halvorsen:

Berlin, Germany - (where the blockade and candy drop happened)

-- On the map of Europe, color the country of Germany green.

Tirana, Albania - (where Col Halvorsen also gave children hope)

-- On the map of Europe, color the country of Albania blue.

Utah, United States of America (where Col Halvorsen was born)

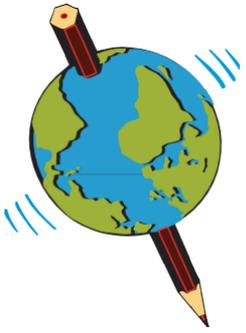
-- On the map of the United States, color Utah orange.

Mississippi, United States of America (where Col Halvorsen shared his humanitarian spirit to victims of Hurricane Katrina)

-- On the US map, color Mississippi red.

- Making postcards from the past: Find out one fact about each of these locations to put on a postcard from each location with a message on the back as if you are living in that location at that time in history.



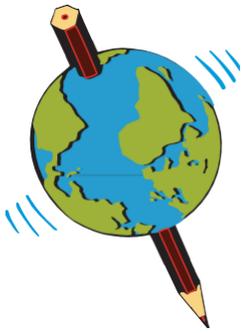


Col Halvorsen - "Service Before Self"

- The candy dropped by Col Halvorsen did not just represent a sweet treat, it provided hope for the children of East Berlin. It also showed that someone cared enough to bring a little joy to them. The children explained to Uncle Wiggly Wings (Halvorsen) that they could go without enough food for a bit, but if they lost their freedom they may never get it back. So, using a handkerchief parachute with candy attached, Col Halvorsen provided the children with a bit of hope of freedom they needed to survive. This effort represented the optimism of a brighter future ahead.



- What simple act of kindness can you and/or your family, classmates, or friends do for others?



Col Halvorsen Timeline...

Cut out the pictures below and put them in order from the beginning of the Uncle Wiggly Wings story until after the war. Or, just fill in the blanks in correct order, from 1-4.



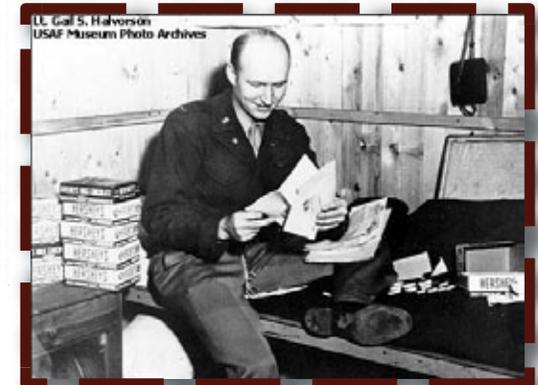
Dropping candy parachutes in Berlin



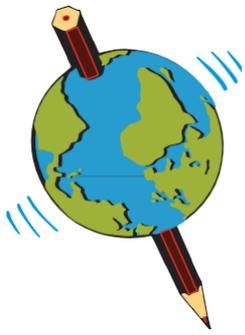
Receiving a thank you from a German child after the Berlin airlift



Receiving a thank you from an American child after Hurricane Katrina

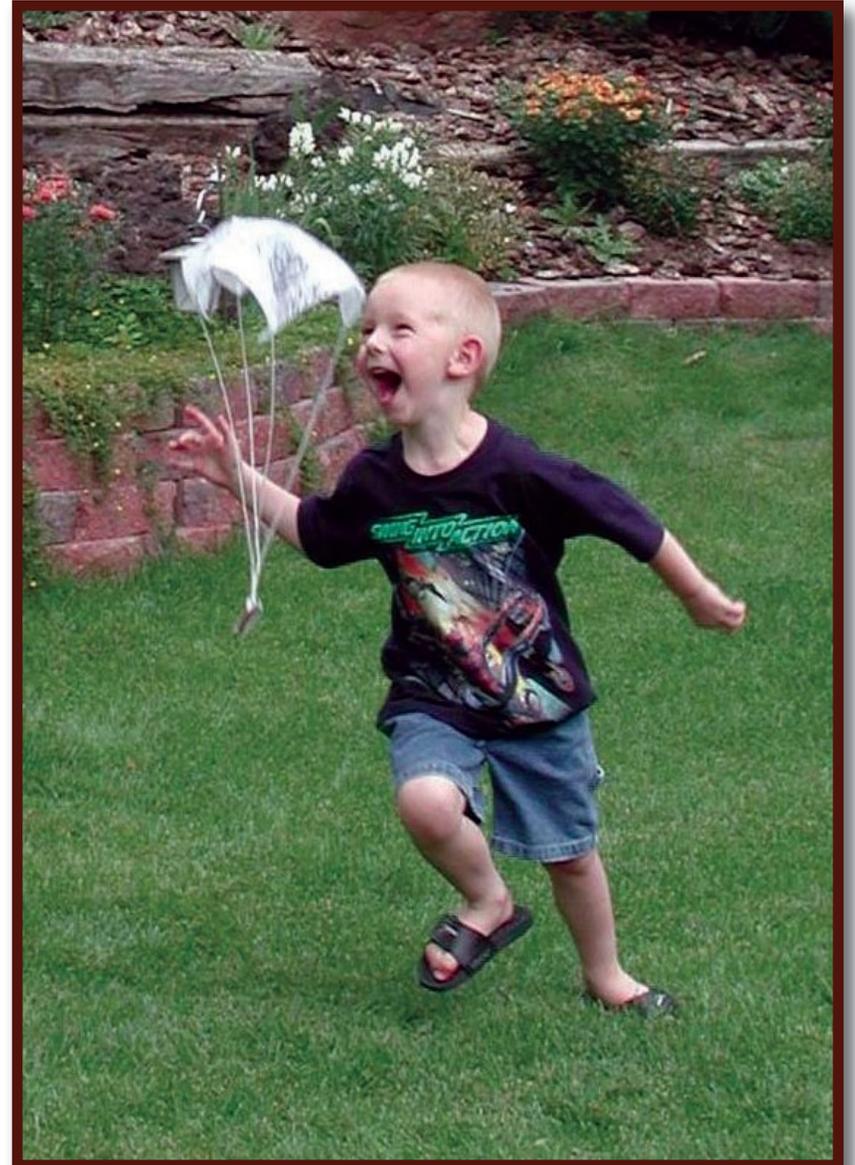


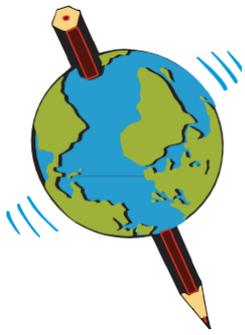
Reading letters from children throughout Berlin



Make a Candy Bomber Parachute!

- Take a paper napkin and open it up completely.
- Cut 4 pieces of string (each about 18 inches long).
- Take four pieces of tape and attach one end of each string to a piece of tape.
- Place each piece of tape in a corner of the napkin.
- Gather the strings together so they all hang straight down, and tape a miniature candy bar to them at the bottom.
- Very loosely, roll your napkin, string, and candy bar.
- Toss the parachute and candy up in the air and watch what happens!
- Did your parachute "catch" the wind and allow the candy bar to gently land on the ground?

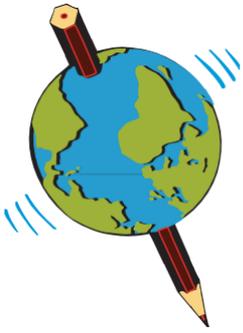




What if...

- You made your parachute the same size but with a different material, such as a piece of plastic, a paper bag, or tissue paper? (See how to with plastic, [HERE](#).)
 - You used a lighter weight than the candy bar to tape to the strings? (Or, a heavier weight?)
 - You used longer strings? (Or, shorter strings?)
 - You used a larger piece of material for the parachute?
- * Choose one or more of these ideas, or others of your own, and test each to see what the difference is compared to your original parachute.





Uncle Wiggly Wings wants to know...

1. Why did Uncle Wiggly Wings' candy land safely?

2. What is a parachute?

3. How are parachutes used?

4. What is gravity?

5. What would happen to a person or an object if a parachute was not used to get the object from the plane to the ground?



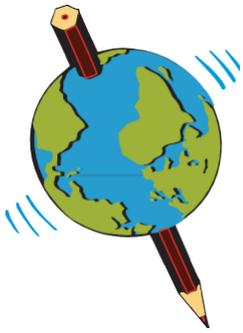
Lt. Gail Halvorsen
USAF Museum Photo Archives

Try this:

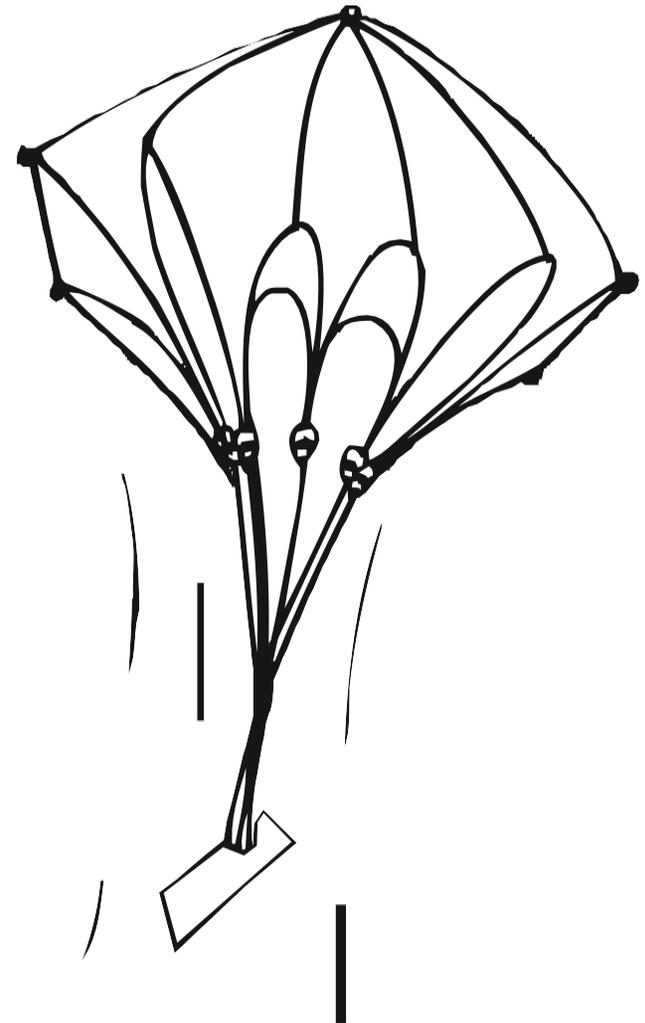
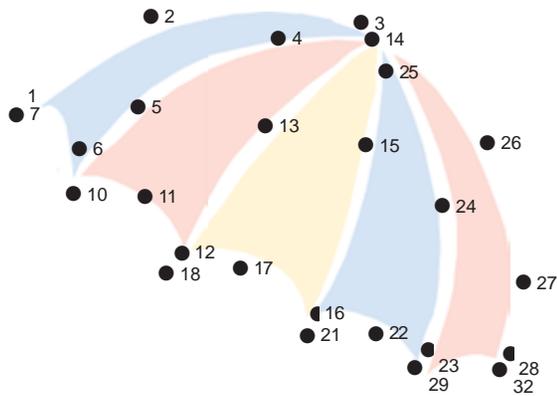
Hold your parachute in one hand and a Popsicle stick in the other hand. Drop both at the same time.

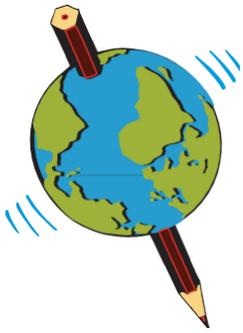
Which one will land on the floor first? _____

Why? The _____
landed first because _____.



Dot-to-Dot and Color





Uncle Wiggly Wings Crossword Puzzle

Down

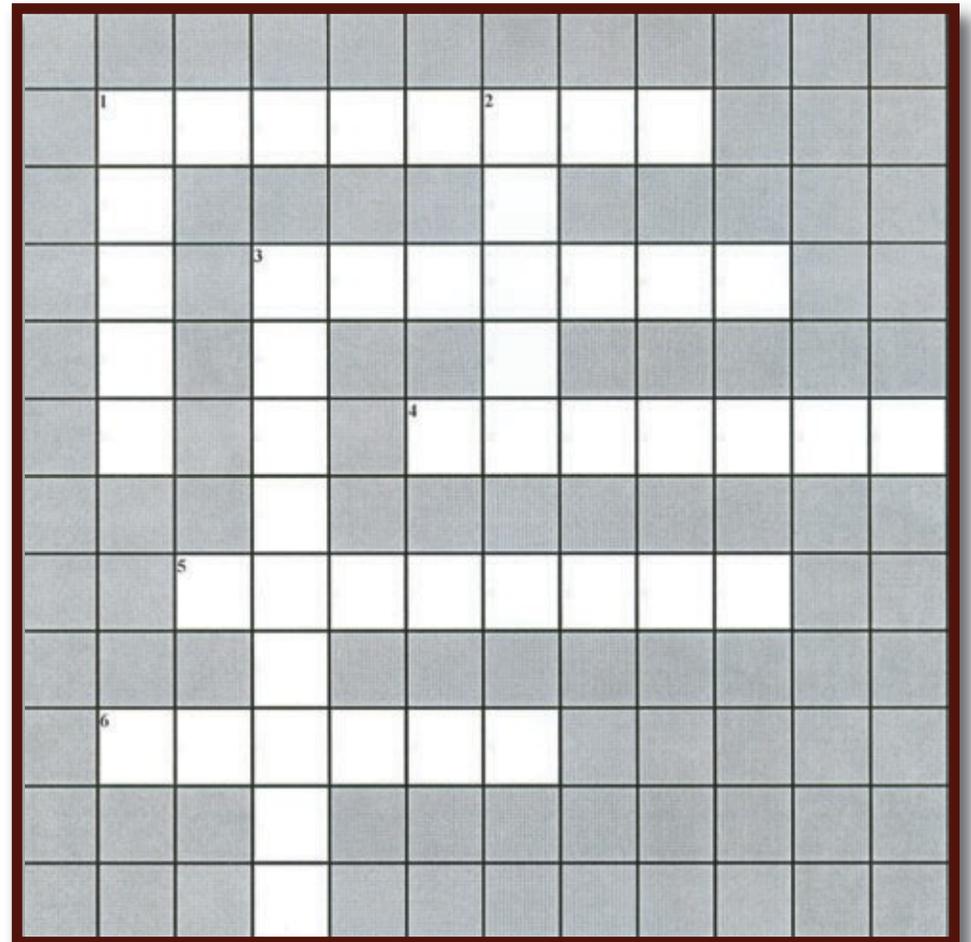
1. Uncle Wiggly Wings was a _____.
2. The children of Berlin tried to _____ the two sticks of gum.
3. Uncle Wiggly Wings liked to fly _____.

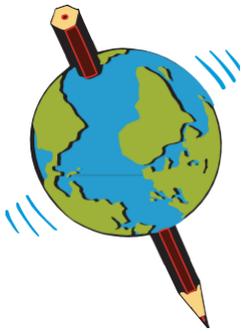
Across

1. Uncle Wiggly Wings _____ to bring the children candy.
3. In 1999, Col Halvorsen recreated the spirit of Berlin in _____.
4. Russia would not let food and supplies into Berlin, _____.
5. The highway _____ ended in May, 1949.
6. The children of Berlin were _____.

Word Bank:

hungry promised Germany pilot
Albania airplanes share blockade

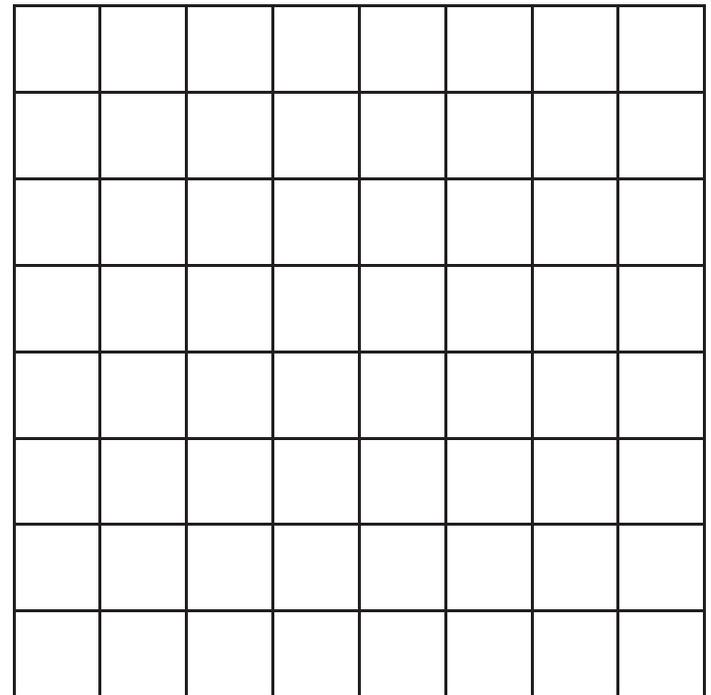
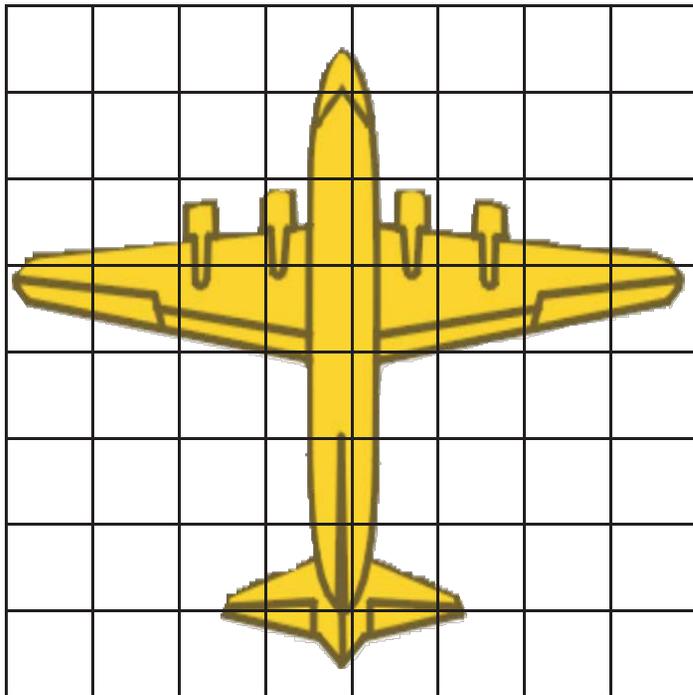


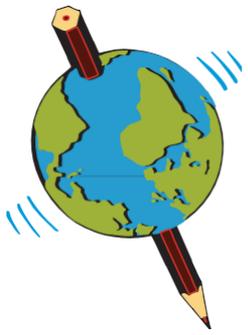


Douglas C-54

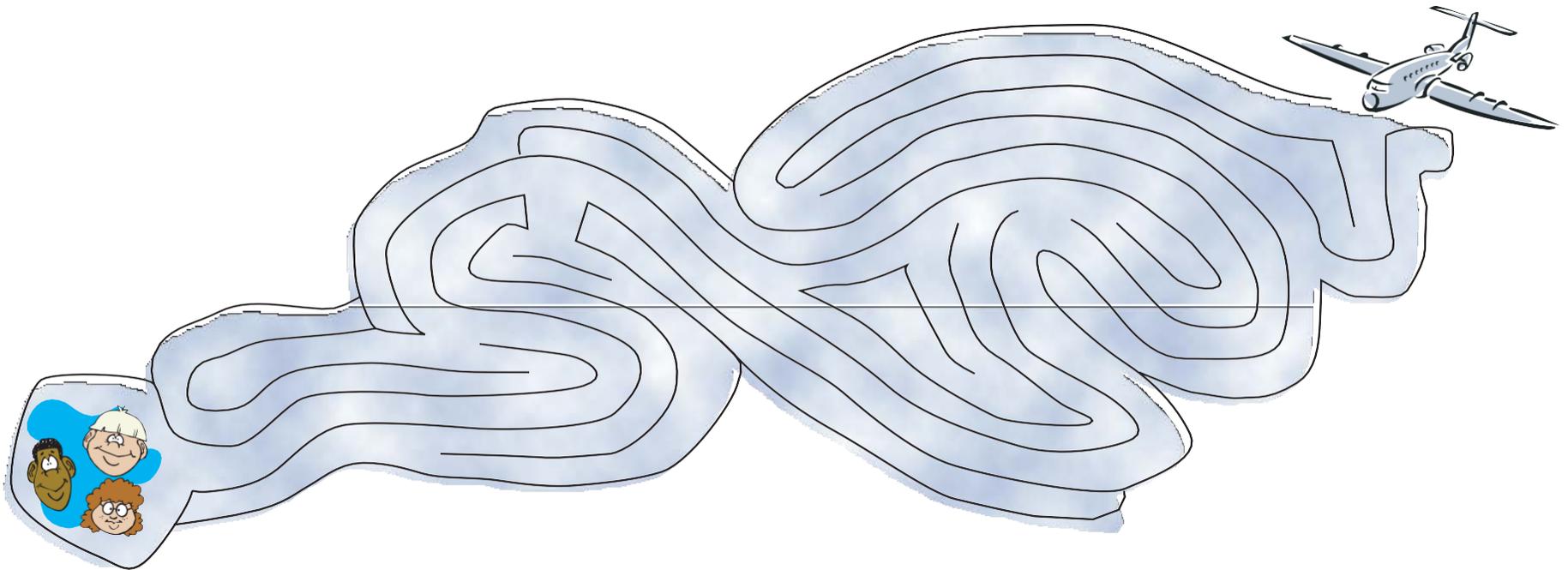
The "C" in the C-54 name stands for cargo. A cargo airplane is like a big truck. It transports all types of materials inside the big plane. Some cargo planes are big enough to transport cars and trucks from one place to another!

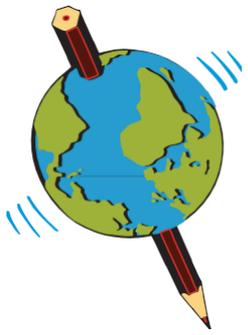
Copy the picture of the C-54 that Uncle Wiggly Wings flew on your own grid on right:





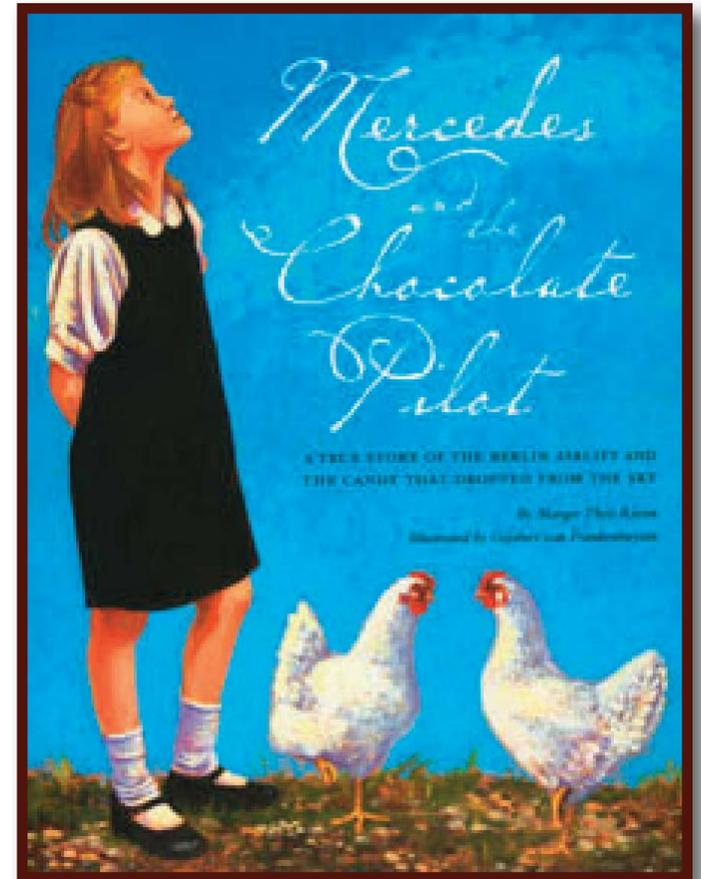
Help Uncle Wiggly Wings
fly his airplane to
the children of Berlin!

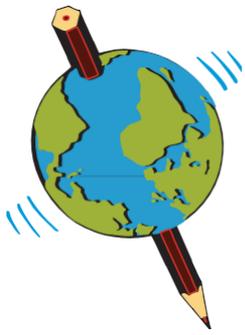




Read more about Col Halvorsen.

Read or listen to the book
[Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot](#) by Margot Theis Raven.
Answer the questions on
following page after reading
or listening to the book.





Answer the following questions about the book.

1. What animals did Mercedes and her family keep in the small courtyard garden behind her apartment building?

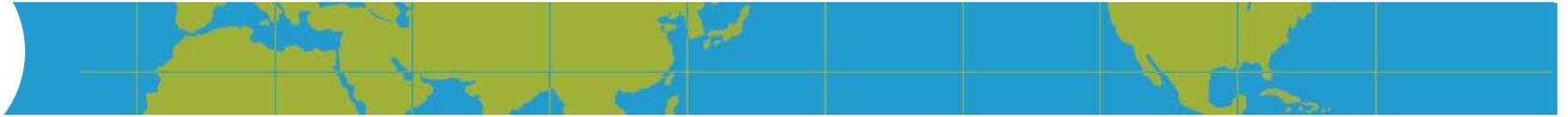
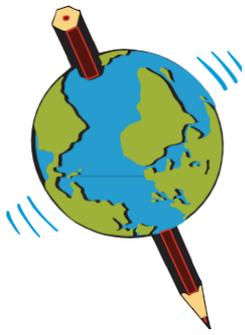
2. What did everyone in Mercedes's town call the supply airplanes that brought supplies to them?

3. How many pieces of gum did Col Halversen divide among the children he talked to at the fence?

4. How did Uncle Wiggly Wings answer Peter Zimmerman's request for candy?

5. When did Col Halversen finally leave Berlin and return home to America?

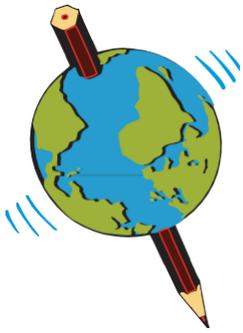




2019 Marked the 70th Anniversary of the End of the Berlin Airlift...

- Even though Col Halversen has gained fame from his simple act of kindness and offer of hope to the children of Berlin, he does not take the credit for this himself.
- Col Halversen felt "...the real heroes were the aircraft maintainers and the airfield operations personnel, who worked tirelessly and often in extremely difficult conditions to accomplish the mission. The Berliners were also heroes because despite the most difficult of circumstances, they never gave up."
- Hear more of his reflections of this event [HERE](#), to include his final words about what the children felt, "Someone in America knew we were in trouble and someone cared."



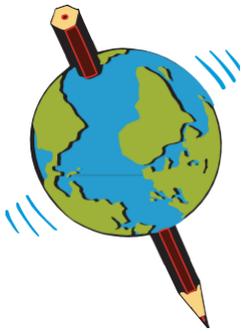


Final Thoughts...

"Everyone needs hope today as much as the West Berliners needed it then. Hope is a universal need. Transport aircraft, and the airlift they provide, deliver hope to the unfortunate around the world who are oppressed by man or nature.

My experience on the airlift taught me that gratitude, hope, and service before self can bring happiness to the soul when the opposite brings despair. Not one of 30 children begged for chocolate, but thousands of children in Berlin received over 20 tons of chocolate, gum and other goodies delivered on the ground or dropped from C-54 Skymaster aircraft over a 14-month period. It all came from other aircraft and other crews in addition to myself."

— Taken from IMPRESSIONS OF A BERLIN AIRLIFT PILOT
Gail S. Halvorsen, Col USAF (Ret)



Uncle Wiggly Wings



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