

60th Anniversary Of The Berlin Airlift

– The First Battle Of The Cold War-

May 1948 – June 1949

The Cold War Museum Berlin Chapter

**Written by Horst Simon
Berlin 2007**



Berlin Sky

Many hero's of a long and bloody war
Flights to Berlin once more they saw
American, French, Commonwealth, British Air Force's fly
A great air armada in the Berlin sky
Dakota, Skymaster, York, Sunderland, liberator
Lancastrian, Halton, Tudor, Hastings, Bristol Freighter
All now forgotten in the march of time
In air corridors they flew line after line
On the ground they worked day and night
Not always remembered when the aircrafts in flight
Operation Vittles, Knicker, Cater Paterson, Plainfare
Named the Berlin Airlift by all those there
Luftbrücke, an air bridge the Berliners said
Bridge through the sky for their life bread
Its structure was tested day after day
The bond was so strong it never gave way
Month after month they never gave in
An impossible task they finally did win
Did the men of the airlift fly to glory
Ask the Berliners they'll tell you the story

W.L.Ball

William L. Ball –Royal Air Force



Spirit of Freedom

National Museum of the United States Air Force, Dayton, Ohio



**People of this world..... look upon this city and see that you should not
and can abandon this city and people.....**

Ernst Reuter September 9, 1948

The First Battle of the Cold War – The Berlin Airlift

The Berlin Airlift is in the past - 60 years – and the memories start to
fade.

For the young generation, is it history but for those of us who served on
the Airlift or lived in Berlin, it is one of the impressive highlights of our
lives.

By Baerbel E. Simon



The First Battle of the Cold War – The Berlin Airlift

When the Big Three (the United States, the USSR, and the UK) agreed upon this partition on the eve of their victory over Nazi Germany, they still saw eye-to-eye on many things—or so it seemed. At least the Western political leadership had little inkling of the problems to come. They would soon find that, apart from the Soviets' continuing basic hostility toward the West, a host of practical difficulties arose in the day-to-day joint administration of and policy toward divided Germany and Berlin.

The Western Allies had received their sectors of the city in exchange for areas east of the Elbe, which their forces had conquered in the last days of the war. American forces had advanced to that river and stopped there to wait for the Soviets coming the other way.

Thus the Western Allies effectively traded these areas (roughly present-day Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt) for the western sectors of Berlin. In doing so, they assumed as a matter of course that this exchange included free access to the city. After all, if they as co-victors of World War II had the right to *be* there, then they must also have the right to come and go as they pleased.

In a cable to Joseph Stalin of June 14, 1945, U.S. President Harry S. Truman declared himself willing to order the withdrawal of American forces from the Elbe beginning June 21, but conditioned this readiness on the simultaneous deployment of a U.S. garrison to Berlin *and* its unrestricted access by air, road, and rail. Truman referred specifically to the routes connecting the West German cities of Frankfurt and Bremen with Berlin. Nevertheless, the Soviets never gave such comprehensive guarantees in writing.

The situation in Berlin

Berlin was in the middle of the Soviet Occupation Zone, cut off from western Germany. Western Germany was divided into three occupation zones —American, British, and French. As the former capital, Berlin was divided in a way that

mirrored the whole country's partition, i.e. into American, British, and French "sectors" in its western two-thirds and a Soviet one in the eastern remainder

With the situation in Berlin now terrifyingly tense, the confrontation between Soviets and the West spilt over into Berlin's internal politics. The Berlin city council was the scene of a fierce power struggle between the East German Communists and their political foes, led by the Social Democrats. Ernst Reuter, a Social Democrat, was the leader of the anti-Communist coalition in Berlin, and a powerful orator. He and his family had forced to flee Germany because of Hitler, but returning in 1946, he hoped to help rebuild Germany as a democratic state. Reuter's election in 1948 as mayor of Berlin (Great Berlin) vetoed by the Soviets, now Reuter feared he wanted have to escaped again, from another form of political dictatorship. Intimidation, blackmail, and kidnapping characterized the tactics of the Soviet-likely East German Communists, whose agents operated in both East and West Berlin. Communists and socialists came together in a new party, Socialist Unity, led by Walter Ulbricht, Stalin's first man in East Germany.

Spring 1948

By Baerbel E. Simon –German Affairs-

Social and political developments in East and West diverged to such an extent that one could speak of emerging "blocs." Berlin, the past and presumptive future capital, was of course the focal point of attention. Here the growing tension manifested itself in increasing friction with and obstruction on the part of the Soviet authorities.

This came to a head in 1948. Here follows a chronology of the events:

January 24, 1948:

The Soviets detain a British military train en route from Berlin to Bielefeld, ostensibly because of "technical difficulties." The real reason is the presence on board of 120 German civilians with British travel permits whose validity for transit through the Soviet Occupation Zone the Soviets dispute. After eleven hours, the British are allowed to continue; the Germans must return to Berlin.

March 20, 1948:

After repeatedly charging the Western Powers with trying to erect a separate West German state, Marshal Vasily Sokolovsky walks out of the Allied Control Council (ACC). This marks the effective end of Four-Power cooperation in Germany (even though the ACC continues to exist on paper until 1990.) A few days later, the Soviet Military Government promulgates new regulations for traffic between the occupation zones that make for long delays at the checkpoints.

April 1, 1948:

Two British passenger trains on route to Berlin are stopped at the border of the Soviet Occupation Zone then sent back.

April 2, 1948 :

Barge traffic between Berlin and the Western Zones is interrupted, the Soviets citing "invalid freight documentation."

April 3, 1948:

Citing "bridge repairs and technical traffic difficulties," the Soviets discontinue rail traffic between Berlin on the one side and Hamburg and Munich on the other. They shrug off all Western paper protests. An attempt by the U.S. Military Government to respond more resolutely fails miserably as well. The armed military train it sends

is simply shunted onto a rail siding and left to sit there for several days. It has no recourse but to return to the Western Zone.

April 2-4, 1948:

Faced with a shortage of military supplies in Berlin, the Americans for the first time resort to a mini airlift tailored solely to the needs of the U.S. garrison there. General Lucius D. Clay, the U.S. Military Governor, orders 24 transport planes at Frankfurt's Rhein-Main Air Base into this service. When the difficulties with road and rail traffic cease after a few days, the "Baby Airlift" is discontinued.

April 5, 1948:

Airplane crash: Vickers Viking of British European Airways took off from an airfield in West Germany on a scheduled flight into RAF Gatow Airfield, one of the Allied air bases in West Berlin. As it came into Berlin, in one of the agreed twenty-mile-wide air corridors, the Viking buzzed by a Soviet Yak-3 fighter plane. It was not the first time this had happened. For a few days, Soviet fighters had been carrying out mock attacks on Allied planes flying into Berlin. However, this time, as the British transport plane took evasive action, it collided with the Yak fighter. Both planes crashed to the ground, killing all people on the BEA plane and the pilot of the Soviet fighter. The Soviets blamed the British for the collision, and the British blamed the Soviet pilot. A joint investigation of the accident broke down when the Soviets refused to allow German witnesses to testify. The British and Soviets separately concluded that the mid-air collision was an accident. However, it made both sides more nervous.

April 9, 1948 :

The Soviets now demand to approve and stamp in advance all lading bills for the freight traffic between the Western zones and Berlin. This marks the resumption of serious harassment, which continues throughout April and May.

April 30, 1948 :

Citing insufficient documentation, the Soviets send a British military convoy en route to the Western zones back to Berlin.

May 7, 1948 :

Two German freight trains are likewise denied passage to Berlin.

June 1. - 4. 1948:

Several trains carrying mail between Berlin and the Western zones are denied passage.

June 15, 1948:

The Soviets close the interstate bridge across the Elbe near Magdeburg. The detour arrangements via secondary roads and a provisional ferry service cannot handle the traffic volume, resulting in long delays.

June 20, 1948 :

The currency reform, having been promulgated two days earlier, takes effect in the Germany's Western zones. It does not, for the time being, affect Berlin's Western sectors. The Soviets respond by halting all road and rail traffic between their occupation zone and those of the Western Powers. No agreement on Berlin's Western sectors is reached.

June 22, 1948:

In line with the Soviet demand that Berlin's Western sectors use "a currency indistinguishable from that of the surrounding East [i.e., Soviet Occupation] Zone," Marshal Sokolovsky orders a currency reform for both areas—even the sectors of Berlin not under his control. The German public is therefore quick to dub this the "wallpaper mark."

June 23, 1948:

In response, the new deutsche mark of the Western zones is introduced into Berlin's Western sectors, stamped "B" for Berlin. Officially, at least, this money is not valid for Berlin's Soviet sector or the Soviet Occupation Zone. Then, shortly before midnight, it's literally "lights out" for the Western sectors. The Soviets have switched off the Golpa-Zschornowitz power plant that had been supplying power to West Berlin. In the small hours of June 24, they halt all surface traffic between Berlin and the Western zones, including that by barge, as well as all shipments of food from their zone into the Western sectors. The Berlin Blockade is on.

June 24, 1948

The West introduced a counter-blockade, stopping all rail traffic into East Germany from the British and US zones. Over the following months, this counter-blockade would have a damaging impact on East Germany, as the drying up of coal and steel shipments seriously hindered industrial development in the Soviet zone.

In the small hours of June 24, they halt all surface traffic between Berlin and the Western zones, including that by barge, as well as all shipments of food from their zone into the Western sectors. The Berlin Blockade is on.

To fully understand the effects of the Blockade, one must visualize Berlin's situation:

Geographically, Berlin is completely isolated by the surrounding Soviet Occupation Zone. Berlin's Soviet Sector comprises eight boroughs: Mitte, Friedrichshain, Pankow, Weissensee, Prenzlauer Berg, Lichtenberg, Treptow, and Koepenick ("East Berlin"). The three Western Allies between them occupy the remaining 12 boroughs: Reinickendorf, Wedding, Spandau, Charlottenburg, Tiergarten, Wilmersdorf, Zehlendorf, Steglitz, Kreuzberg, Schoeneberg, Neukoelln, and Tempelhof ("West Berlin").

Because of their larger share of parks and forests, the Eastern boroughs are called the "green boroughs." About 1.1 million people live here, compared with 2.2 million in the more developed Western boroughs.

Politically, Berlin's Eastern and Western sectors had embarked on divergent paths as early as 1945. Two very different political systems took shape cheek by jowl, with ample opportunity for comparison. Neither stick nor carrot could convince the West Berliners to endorse, much less want for themselves, what they saw every day in the other, Soviet-occupied half of their city.

But now that the Blockade was on, what was in store for the West Berliners? Would the Western Allies stand by them and stay for their protection from the Soviets? Where would the Berliners' food come from, and where their electricity and fuel? How the city's industries would be supplied with raw materials and spare parts, and how would their products be sold? No one knew the answers.

Although access to and egress from Berlin had been harassed for months, no had had really foreseen this. The Blockade had come as a rude surprise, and no contingency plans existed. Nor were Washington, London and Paris completely unified in their assessment of the situation in Germany and Berlin.

Enter the aforementioned General Lucius Clay, who from March 1947 to mid-June 1949 wore the twin hats of U.S. Military Governor for Germany and Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Forces in Europe. Clay is absolutely determined to maintain the U.S. presence in Berlin against Soviet pressure because in his view the very future of democracy in Europe is at stake and with it ultimately the prosperity and security of the United States itself. That has been the tenor of his reports to his superiors since early April, when relations with the Soviets over Berlin had started their tailspin.

But what courses of action are available to deal with the Blockade?

1. The use of force to restore rail and road access. The former had been tried on April 3, but had failed miserably because the Soviets had used their control of the switches to blunt the attempt. With this in mind, Clay suggests an armed road convoy. He is convinced that the Soviets will let it pass rather than risk an armed clash. President Truman, however, is less sure and rejects this proposal.

2. Clay then suggests a gigantically expanded repeat performance of the “Baby Airlift” of early April, which had successfully supplied the U.S. Berlin garrison via the air corridors for a few days. The new airlift he has in mind will not only cover the needs of Berlin’s civilian population as well; it will also settle in for the long haul. With his superiors’ consent, Clay orders the Berlin Airlift started on June 25. Airplanes are now being deployed to Germany from all over the world. The Americans get theirs from the Lower Forty-Eight as well as Hawaii, Alaska, Panama, Guam, and Japan. Great Britain, as mentioned above, orders military transports from England, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and India to reinforce her air fleet in Germany.

In the U.S., the Airlift is dubbed “Operation Vittles”; in the U.K., “Operation Plainfare.” (At first it had been “Planefare” in a clever word play that alluded to the mode of transport, but dour bureaucrats soon opted for a plainer name.)

An airlift of this size is a giant logistical feat requiring enormous organizational talent and rigor of execution. Here follow some interesting features of the Berlin Airlift as well as problems encountered and solutions devised.

The aircraft: Everything with wings was utilized, including flying boats capable of making water starts and landings. There were small, twin-engine, and large, four-engine transports, with load capacities ranging from four to nine tons and speeds of 300 to 500 kilometers per hour (200-320 MPH).

The airfields: At the start of the Airlift, West Berlin has only two airports: Tempelhof and Gatow. Neither can accommodate the volume of air traffic now required, both have to be expanded. In July 1948, construction work proceeds around the clock to provide Tempelhof with an additional runway. Gatow Airport is expanded in like manner.

France, while favoring the Airlift, is unable to contribute materially. It can barely provision its own Berlin garrison. But the French do help by permitting the construction of a new airport in a forested area of their own sector and by providing planners and technicians. This new airport, Tegel, is built in the record time of three months, a feat that is all the more remarkable in that it is largely accomplished without heavy earth-moving equipment: by 17,000 Berliners with pickaxes and shovels. Only in the final stages of construction does heavy machinery, cut apart for transport and welded together again upon arrival in Berlin, become available. Thus it is mostly by hand those 800,000 cubic meters of earth, 420,000 cubic meters of rock, brick, and gravel, 15,000 tons each of asphalt and cement as well as 4,000 cubic meters of mortar are moved. The ribbon-cutting ceremony at Tegel Airport is on December 5, 1948, but at that time the first runway has already been in operation for three weeks.



National Air Force Museum of the USA, Dayton, Ohio; USA

Construction of a second runway is begun immediately. Going into operation on August 1, 1949, it is at 2,300 meters (1.5 miles) the longest in Europe. (Facts and figures from: *Luftbruecke Berlin: Ein dokumentarisches Bilderbuch*. Magistrat Berlin, 1949)

The corridors: There are three air corridors, in which many problems occur due to the use of many different types of aircraft with varying speeds and operational requirements. Complicating the approach to Berlin is the fact that the Soviets have forbidden the Allies from flying over any of the Soviet airfields strewn around the city. Then there is the problem of overcrowding in the corridors, initially exacerbated by the seeming necessity of flying both ways at close quarters. This last difficulty is resolved simply and ingeniously: the southern and northern corridors are reserved for planes approaching Berlin, while the middle corridor serves as an exit lane only.

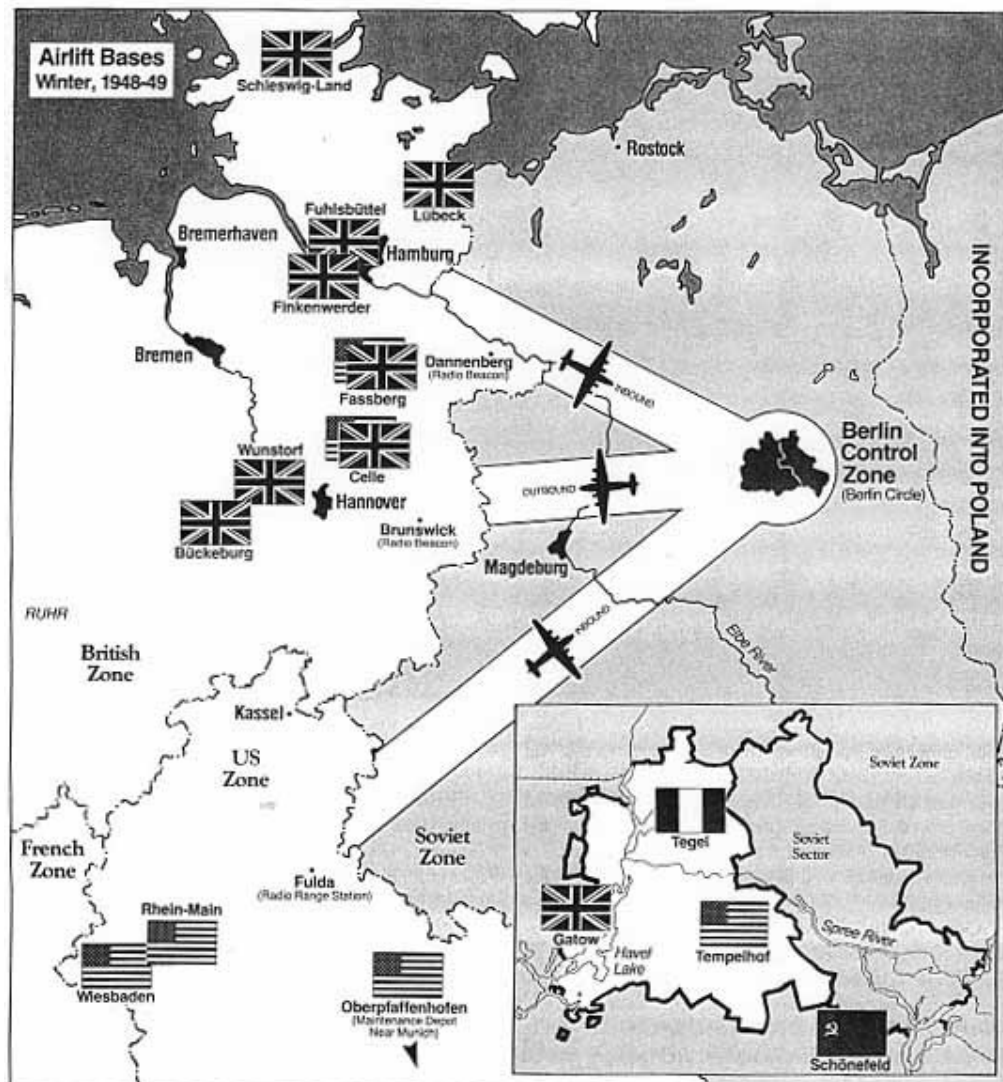
Instituting an airlift to provision a city the size of Berlin represented an enormous task and an unprecedented challenge. The requisite logistical structures did not spring into being full-grown. Only after a period of improvisation and a lot of trial and error were fully functional procedures developed.

Although the Airlift's tonnage and efficiency were steadily improving, doubts remained on how long the operation could be sustained. The Soviets certainly thought the demise of the airlift and West Berlin was merely a matter of time; in their view, it was clearly unrealistic to expect an operation of this scope to be carried on indefinitely.

How would the West Berliners respond to the inevitable glitches and shortages? The Western Allies would simply have to trust in their erstwhile enemies' patience and fortitude.

Given the Soviet confidence that the Airlift would run out of steam before too long, all Western attempts to lift the Berlin Blockade by diplomatic means failed. The Airlift continued.

Managing the Air Traffic



How works the Berlin Airlift
Marshall Foundation, Lexington, VA; USA

At the two existing West Berlin airports—Tempelhof and Gatow—expansion and upgrading was in full swing, while Tegel airport was being built from scratch. Without these expanded capacities, the required volume of traffic could not have been achieved.

Another problem was the great variety of aircraft used. All had different load capacities, flight characteristics and landing requirements that somehow had to be figured into the larger equation. It was not an easy task.

The Airlift started with about 80 military transports and 30 other planes. The military transports were almost exclusively twin-engine C-47 “Dakotas” with a payload of up to three tons. Only a week into the operation did the first four-engine C-54 “Skymasters” arrive; these had a load capacity of nine tons. It was clear that the smaller Dakotas would soon have to be replaced in the interest of efficiency.

The three air corridors were 32 km or 20 miles wide. Since the Soviets had not yet imposed an altitude ceiling except over Berlin, where it was 3 km or just under two

miles, the Allies could fly at whatever altitude was best for the plane in question. To avoid the hassle and risk of flying the crowded air corridors in two directions, they soon reserved the northern and southern ones for planes approaching Berlin, while the middle corridor served as an exit lane only. It turned out to be an excellent decision.

In the northern, mainly British corridor, different aircraft types flew at separate, prescribed altitudes to allow for their speed differentials. In the southern, mainly American corridor, the problem was not the profusion of aircraft types but the sheer volume of traffic.

Planes of the same type still had to fly at five different altitudes and observe a constant cruising speed of 270 km per hour (180 MPH) to avoid chaos. The interval between planes was three minutes, the distance while in flight, 13.5 km (9 miles).

The volume and density of air traffic demanded a rigorous execution of flight plans. Planes that, for whatever reason, could not land on schedule had to leave the Berlin air space and head home immediately, using the middle, exit corridor. There was no room for unscheduled landings. In the inclement weather conditions of fall and winter, it was difficult enough to maintain an orderly procedure.

Modern-day computers and other hi-tech navigational aids make it hard to appreciate the stellar performance of the Berlin Airlift's pilots and crews and of the air safety centers on the ground. In those days, pilots flew solely on sight (in good weather), altitude meter and radar readings, and instructions from the "tower."

Since Berlin's (and West Germany's) weather is often bad and the visibility poor, pilots and crews with expertise in all-weather operations were sorely needed. Especially the United States Navy supplied many whose training and experience stood them in good stead during the Airlift.

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The only feasible, though extremely labor-intensive, way was to load, fly and unload the coal in sacks, and even these had to be dampened to prevent a dust explosion. About 180 sacks fit in the cargo hold of a big transport—the equivalent of a U.S. Army semi-truck load of the era. These 180 sacks had to be loaded or unloaded in 20 to 30 minutes to accommodate tight airport schedules. In addition, since there weren't enough sacks, in Berlin they had to be emptied and taken back for re-use. Berlin's coal airfield was Gatow, in the British sector. All coal transports from West Germany unloaded their cargo there.

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From Gatow airfield, army trucks brought the coal to the nearby Havel River, where it was transferred (by means of specially constructed slides) onto freight barges that could carry 20-25 truck loads each. The barges then brought the coal to the power

plant. Bottlenecks occurred over the winter, when a lot of coal had to be diverted for the heating of West Berlin's homes.

Coal made up about 63% of the total of airlifted freight; foods, 28%; industrial and other goods, 9%. Facts and figures from Udo Wetzlaugk, "Berliner Blockade und Luftbruecke 1948/49," published by the Berlin Landeszentrale f. Politische Bildung.

To keep Berlin supplied at the requisite level, it was essential to achieve a quick turnaround of planes.

In Berlin, the planes had to be unloaded in 20-25 minutes. This isn't much time, considering that almost all the labor was manual and that this involved routinely lifting and carrying loads well beyond what would now be regarded as reasonable or healthy. There were a few forklifts and cranes mounted on trucks; but these were used only for extremely heavy items.

How could this be achieved, given the great number of planes involved?

It could only be done by minute planning and efficient execution. The moment the plane had taxied into position, crews began transferring their cargo onto trucks at a furious pace. Once full, the trucks went on to warehouses from where the distribution of the goods began.

The unloading crews were not the only ones under pressure. Maintenance and fueling crews were also hard put to it.

The pilots and flight crews did not get much rest, either. The stopovers were too short for excursions into Berlin. Nor was it possible to go to the airport cafeteria—often a mile or so away from the plane's unloading position--or indeed anywhere else.

Thus refreshments as well as weather and scheduling updates had to be brought to the planes. This was done by mobile units that moved swiftly from aircraft to aircraft during unloading, maintenance and refueling.

Everything about the Airlift worked on the fly, so to speak.

Not too long after the start of the Airlift, Berliners had already come up with a nickname for the aircraft (and the pilots) supplying them around the clock. They called them "candy bombers."

No one symbolizes the humanity and generosity of the Airlift better than

Gail Halvorsen.

How did he come to be a living legend?

Gail S. Halvorsen was born in Utah on October 10, 1920. His parents owned a small homestead there, and like all farmers' children the world over, he worked in the fields from a young age. Unlike most, however, he had a dream: "I'm going to be a pilot." And unlike even fewer, he made that childhood dream come true.



National Air Force Museum of the USA, Dayton, Ohio; USA
USAF Lt. Gail S. Halvorsen of Garland, Utah

In 1948 he was serving in an air transport wing in the United States. The whole unit was transferred to Germany when the Berlin Blockade began. None of the young pilots had really known what to expect, and all were shocked and depressed by the wartime devastation and the dismal living conditions they found in Germany and its gutted former capital. Halvorsen in particular felt the urge to go beyond his duty as an Airlift pilot. What more, he asked himself, could he do?

Whenever Halvorsen's plane approached Tempelhof Airport, he could see many children below; they were standing in groups at the fenced-off edge of the airfield, on the Tempelhofer Damm and the Herrmannstrasse cemetery, waving to the incoming planes. Halvorsen was touched; and during the brief stopovers, he often walked over to the fence and handed the children chewing gum. He was always rewarded with beaming faces.

This gave Halvorsen an idea. He bought chocolates, chewing gum and other sweets, made small bundles and attached them to mini parachutes constructed out of strings tied to the four corners of a hanky. On the next (and every following) approach to Tempelhof Airport, he dropped the goodies out of his cockpit window. Almost needless to say, they were exceedingly well received by the children below.

The children soon knew Halvorsen; but which of the many incoming planes was his?

Before long, Halvorsen identified himself by wagging his wings on the landing approach. From then on, he was known as

“Uncle Wiggle Wings.”

Halvorsen's resourceful and charitable gesture provided a ray of light for the children of blockaded Berlin, whose lives were anything but easy.

Halvorsen himself could not, of course, supply all of West Berlin's children with candy, a problem illustrated by the steadily growing numbers of those waiting at the fence. Meanwhile, however, the story of the “candy-bombing” American pilot had made the papers and was spreading around the world. As might be imagined, from then on it did not take long for American private citizens, civic groups, and public-minded companies to lend a hand. Unnumbered volunteers donated money and time to buy sweets and ship them to Germany, to be airdropped over Berlin by countless American Airlift fliers.

As the candy parachutes had been Halvorsen's private idea and had not interfered with his duties, he had not thought it necessary to inform his superiors, much less ask their permission. One morning he was summoned by his commanding officer, who made it very clear that he should have been asked and that Halvorsen had violated regulations. That said, the C.O. added that he nonetheless thought it a “great idea” and that all the military brass did, too. Thus Halvorsen was in the

clear, and the candy-bombing runs went on with official support and on a much-expanded scale.

Embedded in the larger story of the candy bomber is that of a little girl named Mercedes, who lived in Berlin's Friedenau ward, beneath the air corridor used by the planes approaching Tempelhof. Her mother had told her about the candy bomber and had even taken her to Tempelhof Airport,

but Mercedes was never been able to catch one of the little parachutes.

So, like many other Berlin children, she wrote to the "chocolate pilot." She asked him to look for her parents' house—one with many white chickens about—on his next flight to Berlin, and to please drop her something right there.

After a while, Halvorsen regretfully replied in writing that he could not fulfill her wish; it was impossible to look for white chickens on his approach to Tempelhof. To soften the blow, however, he mailed Mercedes a "candy bomb" of the kind he had been dropping all over West Berlin.

USAF Col. Gail Halvorsen and his comrades laid the foundation for our German-American friendship and he is the patron of the Berlin Chapter

The Berliners' Daily Grind:

When the Blockade started, most Berliners did not know what to expect. How could they? A peacetime blockade and an airlift of this magnitude had never occurred anywhere in the world before. Prior to the Blockade, West Berlin's provisioning with foodstuffs and other necessities had just barely "normalized" after the long war and the hardships of the first postwar years, though it certainly remained dismal by prewar standards, to say nothing of modern ones. Indeed, most people nowadays, if they traveled 60 years back in time, would find the living conditions of pre-Blockade Berlin quite intolerable.

With the onset of the Blockade, however, even these poor conditions deteriorated drastically. West Berlin's population started feeling the pinch immediately since the Airlift was just then being put into operation and many glitches had to be ironed out before it achieved full capacity. The people were hardest hit by the sudden shortages of foodstuffs, particularly fresh fruit, vegetables and meat. The supply situation was to remain tight for months to come.

Everything, from foodstuffs to soap to tobacco, was rationed. A ration card entitled an adult to buy up to 400 grams of bread and a like amount of dried potatoes or vegetables, 50 grams of cereal products like flour or semolina, 40 grams of meat, 40 grams of sugar, 30 grams of fat and 5 grams of cheese per day. Infants, the elderly, the chronically ill, and workers performing heavy labor had special allowances.

But these maximum daily allowances did not guarantee that the amounts allowed would actually be available. Even basic foodstuffs were often in short supply. The vagaries of getting what the ration cards theoretically entitled the bearer to were akin to a game of chance; it depended on having the right information at the right time as to which store was selling what, and on making it there before the stocks dwindled. Flyers and radio announcements distributed that information. Here are a few examples:

Western Sectors of Berlin, 12 January 1949: Special Section B of the January meat ration card, presented in conjunction with Section 500-W of his bread ration card, entitles the bearer to purchase one 475-gram bread pudding.

Wilmsdorf: Households without electrical or gas cooking stoves but with Section 5 of the coal ration card may purchase 12.5 kg (30 lbs) of coal.

Steglitz: Tree stumps available to people with the right firewood ration card. Wilmersdorf: 1 kg of pickled veggies and 62.5 grams of dried ones for people presenting Section K-2 and K-6 of the January potato ration card. Diabetics and blood donors are entitled to another 62.5 grams of dried vegetables against Section B or Section 2 of their January Supplement.

Western Sectors, 18 January 1949: dried potatoes as a substitute for fresh ones at the weight ratio of 5:1.

Facts and figures from: „Luftbrücke Berlin, ein dokumentarisches Bildbuch, Magistrat von Groß-Berlin, 1949“

For those seeking luxury foods like chocolate or, for example, more butter than their ration cards allowed, there was the black market, where people exchanged what they could spare against what they needed or wanted, for good or ill. It was common practice for smokers to obtain additional cigarettes by trading away foodstuffs to nonsmokers. The central location for these activities was the area around Potsdamer Platz, at the junction of three sectors, though there were rigorous police raids from time to time. To many people, however, the black market forbade itself for the simple reason that they had nothing to give in exchange. Their only resort was to go on trips outside Berlin and beg or scavenge food and firewood from the farms and forests of the surrounding countryside. This they did on overloaded trains (infants had to be handed in through the windows, the aisles and doors being jam-packed with people and, on the way back, their pickings).

West Berliners faced other problems besides food shortages. The lion's share of the coal flown in went to the power plants, but even so it proved impossible to provide the city's industries and its private households with electricity around the clock. E-powered public transportation, like the subway and tramway, suffered drastic cuts in service, while electricity (and gas) for private and industrial purposes were available for only two hours at a time, the hours differing from one ward of the city to the next. Since a certain share was reserved for industrial uses with daytime work hours, the power grid supplying private households could often be switched on at night only. An announcement by West Berlin's public utility company shows that in some grid sectors of the city certain household chores, such as cooking and ironing, thus had to be done in the small hours of the night.

With the onset of winter, it likewise proved impossible to maintain the coal-generated power supply (such as it was) and provide West Berlin's private homes with coal for heating. The effort to do so produced a feeble 12.5 kg (30 lbs) of coal for each household—for the entire winter! It was barely enough for two days, so most of Berlin's homes went basically unheated all winter. What this meant, especially for the elderly and the very young, can only be imagined. To alleviate the shortage of fuel, the authorities eventually permitted the controlled cutting of trees that lined the streets and adorned the parks, even the cemeteries. The stumps, too, were laboriously dug up. Almost needless to say, none of this green firewood burned very well. But, like all the other stopgap measures adopted during the Blockade, it did help a little.

Besides the Berlin airports—Tempelhof, Gatow, and Tegel—there was another area for planes to land. This was not an airfield but a body of water at the confluence of the Havel river and the Great Wannsee lake. Straining to make the most of all available aircraft and resources on the ground—and the water—the British government had ordered the use of 10 Short Sunderlands here.

The Short Sunderland was no ordinary aircraft but a flying boat developed before the war in response to Britain's imperial needs. In 1933, the British Postmaster General had awarded to the Short brothers in Rochester, England, the contract for a long-distance, large-capacity flying boat capable of water starts and landings that was to haul mail between the motherland and her faraway colonies. The result was the Short Sunderland, of which several types entered service in 1937. There was even a military version with bombs fitted under the wings that was used to great effect in the hunt for German submarines in World War II.

These planes were now deployed to help save Berlin. With a wing span of over 38 yards and a load capacity of nine tons, they were among the largest used in the Airlift and now saw their first service within Europe. Designed for marine operation and specially sealed against corrosive salts that caused problems in ordinary aircraft, the Short Sunderlands were particularly suited for hauling salt, of which Berlin needed about 38 tons a day. In the latter half of 1948, they flew back and forth between Hamburg-Finkenwerder and Berlin, starting and landing on the Elbe and Havel rivers, respectively.

The Children's Airlift:

The situation in blockaded Berlin—the slender rations, the lack of fuel for heating, and the spotty power supply—were particularly hard on the children and the elderly and infirm.

They needed more than the bare minimum that the Airlift was capable of providing. Especially elderly persons who lived alone were hard put to it. Some of them died because they had no access to medications; others starved or froze to death in their dwellings.

Working hand-in-glove with German civilian institutions, the Allied military authorities decided to provide relief for needy children and some of the infirm elderly by flying them out to West Germany for a time. The cargo planes' empty return flights from Berlin that carried only a few industrial goods besides were generally available for this purpose. Although there were some adults beneficiaries, the undertaking was quickly dubbed the "Children's Airlift." In West Germany, the children were accommodated by host families or charitable institutions where they could be properly housed, fed, and cared for.

Aside from the homesickness most of them suffered at first, here they experienced a small "paradise" without the privations they had known in Berlin.

Between 20 September 1948 and 21 March 1949, 15,426 children benefited from this relief effort. Of these, 7,923 came to the British, 6,535 to the American, and 968 to the French Zone of West Germany.

In 1953, long after the end of the Berlin Blockade, the Children's Airlift was resumed to counter a different kind of encirclement. Since West Berliners were prohibited from entering the Soviet Zone, for some years their children had had no opportunity to get out of the city. Now, however, they could spend a few summer weeks in the West German countryside, where many indeed saw their first-ever cow, pig, or horse in the flesh.

Christmas 1948:

For nearly all in the nominally Christian West, the Feast of Our Lord's Birth is a very special time of year. Families customarily gather around a festively decorated

and candle-lit Christmas tree and feast on something not served at any other time—Christmas goose—while a well-heated stove keeps the cold where it belongs: outside.

Almost needless to say, this was not the way it worked in blockaded Berlin. Families did get together and people decorated their homes as best they could, but feasts were in short supply despite the efforts of housewives to save up some of the rationed food for the special day. There were few candles, and homes went unheated for lack of fuel.

Since the Airlift, of course, continued over the holidays, the allied military personnel in West Berlin had their own Christmas problems. While none went hungry or cold, they missed their nearest and dearest and their hometowns.

Their superiors did their best to compensate them. The British military put on a festive Christmas dinner at Gatow Airport. The American brass had thought of something very special to entertain their troops. They had commissioned an Airlift musical, “Operation Vittles,” from the famous composer Irving Berlin. At Christmas 1948, the Army Air Corps choir and orchestra performed it in Berlin before an American military audience. A number of Hollywood stars participated, including comedian Bob Hope.

. . . and Easter 1949:

In April, the Airlift entered its 11th month. Initially, few of its organizers had dreamed that this improvised effort would have to go on for so long or that it could indeed save West Berlin and the Allied position there if it did. The beginnings had not looked promising. The longer the Airlift continued, however, the more routine and efficient its planning and operation became. The daily tonnage hauled had risen far above what anyone had thought possible, and the Berliners’ provisioning had improved markedly, though the situation remained far from normal.

Both amongst themselves and with each other, American and British flight and ground crews soon started competing for the distinction of having moved the most goods per day. The net result was to raise everyone’s, and thus the overall, performance. On April 15-16, 1949, during its so-called “Easter Parade,” the Airlift hit its peak. With a staggering 1,398 flights in 24 hours, it hauled an equally staggering 12,941 tons of supplies into the beleaguered city.

The Airlift’s success and the Blockade’s failure were achieved by the exertions of tens of thousands of helpers, both military and civilian: planning staffs, pilots and flight crews, technical ground personnel, tower crews, and countless workers.

To honor the contribution of all their brothers-in-arms, the Cold War Museum presents one American and one British soldier.

Commander Maurice B. Jackson was serving in a U.S. Navy air reconnaissance wing in Guam when he was ordered to Berlin. He then flew over a hundred missions as a public information officer charged with creating a color-film record of the Airlift. Equipped with a 16-mm cine-camera, he captured various everyday scenes—aircraft in flight from Frankfurt to Berlin, soldiers getting refreshments at a Tempelhof Airport food stand, and other comings, goings, and doings. Fifty-nine years later, Maurice was kind enough to let the Cold War Museum have a 13-minute documentary, meanwhile copied onto DVD. Thank you, Commander!

William L. Ball joined the Royal Air Force at the age of 17. The postwar years were hard in Britain, and he wanted to make a better future for himself. Stationed at Cambridge, the whole unit was suddenly transferred to Wunstorf, Germany, in late June of 1948. They were told it would be for just two weeks. As it was, Ball and his comrades-in-arms served in the Airlift and ended up staying in Germany until the fall of 1949.

Ball was a soldier, of course—but the demands of the Airlift left little time for weapons drills. In what little time he had to himself, he captured his Airlift experience in poems. So many years later, the reader can still gauge how deeply the events moved the young airman.

The Berlin Blockade and its defeat by the Airlift was a historical milestone. The tensions between the two political camps that had swiftly resurfaced following World War II reached their first crescendo here. The Cold War, which fortunately never turned into a hot one that would have led to World War III, was now openly joined. Thus the Berlin Blockade marked its first battle.

The first Battle of the Cold War

Joining and winning this battle demanded of the Western Allies a large measure of courage and generosity—financial and otherwise.

The lion's share of the Airlift's financial burden was, of course, borne by the United States, for obvious reasons the only country with the requisite resources. Since France, at the time beset by various internal and external problems, was unable to play more than a marginal role in the Airlift, the only other significant contribution came from the United Kingdom—a fact that becomes all the more remarkable when one recalls the history of British-German relations as well as Britain's precarious postwar position.

Britain had, of course, fought Germany in the war. She had indeed entered World War II as early as September 1939, honoring her alliance with Poland after the

latter had been invaded by the Germans (and the Soviets).



It is true that Britain, due to its geography, had suffered less than Germany's continental foes, of whom all but the Soviet Union were quickly defeated and occupied. The insular United Kingdom was protected from invasion by the barrier of the English Channel, which British sea power proved more than

capable of defending. All German invasion plans, sapped additionally by the demands of the Eastern Front, came to naught. Moreover, from the first the Royal Navy blockaded German ports in answer to the attempted German naval blockade of the British Isles.

With Britain thus immune from direct assault by land or by sea, Nazi Germany resorted to aerial warfare with a vengeance. Massive bombing campaigns sought to

undermine Britain's war making capacity by targeting her industrial plant, her civilian morale, and the Royal Air Force.

But the Germans failed to score decisively, and in that sense lost the air war. The RAF fought tooth and nail, for all her exertions Germany could not achieve air supremacy in the West, and Britain remained undefeated by the time the Germans attacked the Soviet Union (June 1941). With the start of Operation Barbarossa, all hopes of a German victory over "perfidious Albion" faded for good.

While German conventional air raids on Britain dropped off thereafter, the British Isles were increasingly subjected to terror attacks by weapons of two new types: the V-1 and V-2. The V-1 or Fi-103, a flying bomb or primitive cruise missile powered by a pulse-jet engine, was brought near the target area by German medium bombers and then released. Both the V-1 and the delivery vehicle were sometimes shot down by the RAF. But there was no defense against the V-2 or A-4, the first true ballistic missile, which was launched from ramps in north-east Germany and fell on English cities with devastating effect.



Partly in retaliation and partly to hasten Germany's collapse, British and American air fleets now began their own, hugely destructive carpet-bombing raids on German cities. The best-known and most gruesome of these was the combined air raid on Dresden, which was almost completely leveled with untold loss of life. Germany finally surrendered unconditionally in May 1945. Europe had been laid waste, and streams of bedraggled, dispossessed refugees were picking their way through rubble heaps in search of new hope. This then was the situation at war's end.

"Without the British, air and ground crews, Civilian Charter Airlines and the British Airfields in Western Germany, - the airlift would have not been possible. At home, in the UK many cities had been destroyed and many civilians killed. The survivors suffered rationing and gave even more! They shared their bread with the Berliner's. The people of the United Kingdom built up the burned bridge and turned it into a bridge of friendship

Aerial Photo of Berlin-Tempelhof Airport: The Berlin elevated train loop, and on the left toward the bottom, the later Airlift Plaza, are clearly visible.



Airfield Tempelhof - National Air Force Museum of the USA, Dayton, Ohio; USA

Touching down at Tempelhof Airport.

Without the expansion of West Berlin's existing airfields and the construction of a new one, the Airlift could not have succeeded.

The loading and unloading crews consisted overwhelmingly of German civilians, while tower and aircraft-maintenance crews, whose mission was just as vital, were mostly Allied military personnel. Only their concerted efforts made the Airlift a success.



National Air Force Museum of the USA; Dayton; Ohio, USA

The ground crews' work was hard and performed under severe time pressure, 24-7, rain or shine, heat or cold. Perhaps the heaviest labor was that of the coal crews. Every sack had to be picked up by hand, carried down the gangplank, and emptied onto waiting trucks.

This was hard and dirty work. The people unloading flour sacks did not fare any better, the only difference being that they ended up covered in white dust instead of black.

SHORT- SUNDERLAND

The Short Sunderland flying boat was one of the most unique aircraft used in the Berlin Airlift, though it flew in that operation only from June to December 1948. With the onset of winter, ice on the rivers and lakes precluded its use, and by spring 1949, more conventional aircraft types were more than able to carry on the Airlift alone. The Sunderland still has legendary status in Britain, and not just because of the Airlift. By the end of World War II, Sunderlands equipped 28 Royal Air Force Squadrons the world over and were still to perform critical services for many years to come.

Almost all Berlin Airlift photos of the Sunderland were taken on the Havel River in Berlin. On this one, the Grunewald Tower is clearly recognizable in the background.



private archive Frank Stillwell BBAA

Airfields In the British Zone, Germany - Berlin Airlift 1948 / 49

Wunstorf

A bomber base to 1940 - then used by single or twin engine fighters. The runway was built after the war and the station was used by RAF fighters

- Dakotas from 25th June 1948 to 29th July 1948.
- Yorks from 3rd July 1948 to 29th August 1949.
- Civil Four engine aircraft from 4th August 1948 to 15th August 1949

Lubeck

Built 1935 - initially used by Heinkel HE 111's - then became a fighter training station, later Junkers JU88 night fighters.

- Dakotas from 20th August 1948 to 23rd September 1949.

- Civil twin engined aircraft from 28th August 1948 to 5th October 1948

Fassberg

During the war was a technical training station - then used by retiring squadrons towards the end of the war - used 1946/7 as an RAF fighter base.

- Dakotas from 29th July 1948 to 29th August 1948
- Civil twin engined aircraft from 4th to 28th August 1948
- USAF C54's from 21st August 1948 to 1st September 1949

Celle

1935 became a Luftwaffe training school - concrete runway laid in early 1948.

- USAF C54's from 16th December 1948 to 1st September 1949

Schleswigland

1936 a glider club - night fighters during the war - concrete runway laid in early 1948.

- Hastings from 11th November 1948 to 5th October 1949.
- Civil four engined aircraft from 25th November 1948 to 16th August 1949 - mainly tankers.

Finkenwerder

Used as an Airlift flying boat base on the river Elbe at Hamburg.

- Sunderlands from 5th July 1948 to 16th December 1948.

Fuhlsbüttel

Civil airport for Hamburg.

- Used by civil airlines from 5th October 1948 to 15th August 1949.

In the American Zone, Germany - Berlin Airlift 1948 / 49

Rhein-Main

Near Frankfurt. The European terminal for USAF Military Air Transport Service. Had a 2,000 yd runway. Also used for Commercial Flights.

- Used by the USAF, initially by C47's and then by C54's.

Wiesbaden

The other principal USAF transport base in Germany. Had been a Luftwaffe fighter base during the war.

- Again used by USAF C47's and then by C54's.

In the Allied sectors, West Berlin - Berlin Airlift 1948 / 49

Gatow

In the British sector, Berlin. Initially a grass airfield - Luftwaffe training station in Berlin, the equivalent of Cranwell. A PSP runway was laid by the RAF and in 1947 a concrete runway was laid and extended to 2,000 yds in 1948. The original PSP runway laid in 1946 was relaid as a concrete runway after damage by a USAF Stratofreighter and extended in 1948.

- Used by the Royal Air Force, USAF and Civilian aircraft.

Tegel

A new airfield built by the Americans in the French sector of Berlin during the Airlift and opened for traffic in November 1948. Is now the principal commercial airport for Berlin.

- Used by USAF, Royal Air Force and Civilian aircraft.

Tempelhof

The pre-war civil airport for Berlin and in the American sector.

- Used by the USAF on flights from Rhein-Main near Frankfurt and Wiesbaden.

Havel Lake

The widest stretch of the Havel river and adjacent to RAF Gatow.

- The lake was used by Royal Air Force Sunderland flying boats and Civilian Hythe flying boats on flights from Finkenwerder. Ceased to be used in December 1948 when ice on the water became a hazard

British Berlin Airlift Association

LONG LONG AGO

NOW THAT MANY YEARS HAVE FLOWN
BERLIN THEN BLOCKADED, THEY WERE ALL ALONE
FOR MANS INHUMANITY TO HIS FELLOW MAN
LET'S GIVE THEM ALL THE HELP WE CAN

PLANES WILL ASSEMBLE, WHEN THIS IS DONE
GROUND AND AIR WILL WORK TOGETHER AS ONE
PLEASE HAVE NO FEAR OF THE AIRCRAFTS DIN
ONLY YOUR SUPPLIES, THEY WILL BE FLYING IN

THEY WILL FLY BY NIGHT AND DAY
HOW MANY AIRCRAFT WE CAN NOT SAY
THEY WILL BE FLOWN BY MANY NATIONS
AND WILL LAND AT ALL THREE STATIONS

GATOW, TEGEL, TEMPELHOF, STAND BY
TO RECEIVE YOUR SUPPLIES FROM THE SKY
LET'S HOPE, THE WAR NOW OVER AND DONE
WE ALL CAN WORK TOGETHER AS ONE

THE GERMAN PEOPLE DOWN ON THE GROUND
WAITING TO HEAR THE FIRST AIRCRAFTS SOUND
WONDERING HOW MANY OF THEM WOULD COME
WOULD IT BE HUNDREDS, OR WUOLD IT BE ONE

ALL TYPES OF AIRCRAFT FILL THE AIR
GIVING HOPE TO THE PEOPLE DOWN THERE
SYMASTERS, DAK'S, YORKS, A LOT MORE TOO
ALL WITH ONE AIM, TO GET THE SUPPLIES THRUUGH

WE ALL FEEL PRUOD OF THE JOB WE DID
FRANZ, TOM, HEIDE, JOHN, JURGEN, AND SID
AND ALL LOOK BACK AND SAY WITH PRIDE
THAT AFTER A WAR WE WORKED SIDE BY SIDE

THEY ALL GROW OLD THAT WORKED ON THE LIFT
GONE THE MOUNTAIN OF SUPPLIES THEY DID SHIFT
ALL CAN SAY NOW THAT IT HAS BEEN DONE
THAT NATIONS " CAN " WORK TOGETHER AS ONE

W.L.Ball

William L. Ball RAF

It was a grandiose achievement in the past and is should still be recognized today

This booklet is dedicated to all Berlin Citizen who lived during that time in Berlin
To all the Western Allies Veterans on air and ground who support the Berlin Airlift
activities actively.
In memorial of all peoples who lost their life to save the city.



Photo by Horst Simon Cold War Museum Berlin Chapter

In Memoriam

„They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and the morning.
We will remember them.”

Binyon



British cemetery of soldier in Berlin
By Horst Simon



National Arlington Cemetery, USA
By Horst Simon

The Names of the Fallen

Casualties:

American military

1st LT Ralph H. Boyd (Fort Worth, Texas), C54 42-72629, 12Jan49
Cpl George S. Burns, construction acc. Tegel, 29Oct48
AD/3 Harry R. Crites (Lafayette Indiana), R5D USN56502, 11Dec48
CPT Joel M. Devoletine, C47 43-16036, 24Aug48
Maj Edwin C. Diltz, C47 43-15116, 24Aug48
1st LT Eugene S. Erickson (Collinville Illinois), C54 42-72688, 18Oct48
Carl v. Hagen (civil) (New York City), New York, C47 43-48256, 8Jul48
1st LT Willis F. Hargis (Nacogdoches, Texas), C54 42-72698, 5Dec48
T/Sgt Herbert F. Heinig, C54 42-72476, 12Jul49
Cpt William R. Howard, C47 43-15116, 24Aug48
1st LT Charles H. King (Rutherford N. Jersey/Britton, S. Dakota), C47 43-49534, 25Jul48
1st LT Craig B. Ladd (South Minniapolis, Minnesota), C54 42-72629, 12Jan49
2nd Lt Donald J. Leemon, C54 42-72476, 12Jul49
1st Lt William T. Lucas, C47 43-16036 24Aug48
1st LT Robert C.v. Lueharte, C54 42-72476, 12Jul49
PFC Johnnie T. Orms, C54 45-520 Grnd acc.
CPT Billy E. Phelps (Long Beach, California), C54 42-72698, 5Dec48
T/SGT Charles L. Putnam (Colorado Springs, Colorado), C54 42-72629, 12Jan49
CPT. William A. Rathgeber (Portland, Oregon), C54 45-543, 7Jan49
1st Lt George B. Smith, (Tuscalosa, Alabama), C47 43-48256, 8Jul48
1st LT Royce C. Stephens, (San Antoine, Texas), C54 44-9086, 4Mar49
PFC R.E. Stone (Sterling, Kentucky), C54 45-543 7Jan49
1st Lt Robert W. Stuber, (Arlington, California), C47 43-49534, 25Jul48
CPL Norbert H. Theis, (Cunningham, Kansas), C54 45-543, 7Jan49
Cpt James A. Vaughn, (New Haven, Connecticut), C54 42-72688, 18Oct48
SGT Bernard J. Watkins (Lafayette, Indiana), C54 45-543, 7Jan49
1st LT Robert P. Weaver, (Napa, California), C54 45-563, 18Jan49
T/SGT Lloyd G. Wells, (North Kansas City, Kansas,) C54 42-72698, 5Dec48
1st LT Lowell A. Wheaton Jr. (Chorpus Christie Texas), C54 45-543, 7Jan49
1st LT Leland V. Williams, (Abeline, Texas), C47 43-48256, 8Jul48
Sgt Richard Winter, (Seattle, Washington), C54 42-72688, 18Oct48
1st LT Richard M. Wurgel (Union City, New Jersey), C54 45-543, 7Jan49

British-Military:

Fl.Off I.R. Donaldson, 16 July 1949 Berlin-Tegel Hastings TG611
Sgt F. Dowling, 17 Nov. 1948 n.Luebeck Dakota KP223
SIG II A. Dunsire, 16 July 1949 Berlin-Tegel Hastings TG611
Eng II R.R. Gibbs, 16 July 1949 Berlin-Tegel Hastings TG611
NAV II L.E.H. Gilbert, York MW288
SIG II J.D. Grout, 24. Jan. 1949 n.Luebeck Dakota KN491
F/Lt G. Kell, York MW288
SIG III B.A. Lough, 17 Nov. 1948 n.Luebeck Dakota KP223
Nav I W.G. Page, 16 July 1949 Berlin-Tegel Hastings TG611
M SIG A. Penny, 22 Mar. 1949 n.Luebeck Dakota KJ970
F/Lt H.W. Thomson, York MW288
Sgt J. Toal, 16 July 1949 Berlin-Tegel Hastings TG611
SIG II S.M.L. Towersey, York MW288

PI F.Trezona, 17 Nov. 1948 n.Luebeck Dakota KP223
ENG II E.W.Watson, York MW288
PI J.G.Wilkins, 17 Nov. 1948 n.Luebeck Dakota KP223

British- Civilian:

Eng/Off John Anderson, World Air Freight, G-AKAC
Nav/Off Alan J.Burton, Refueling Ltd. ,G-AHJW
Nav/Off Edward Ernest Carroll, World Air Freight, G-AKAC
Nav/Off Michael Edwin Casey, Flight Refueling Ltd. , G-AHJW
Cpt William Cusack, Flight Refueling Ltd. , G-AHJW
Rad/Off Peter James Edwards, Skyways Ltd. G-AHFI
Cpt Robert John Freight, Lancashire Aircraft Corp. G-AJZZ
Cpt Cecil Golding, Skyways Ltd. G-AHFI
Grd/Eng. Patrick James Griffin, Lancashire Aircraft Corp.
Cpt Reginald Merrick Watson Heath, Flight Refueling Ltd. ,G-AHJW
Cpt. William Richard Donald Lewis, World Air Freight, G-AKAC
1st OFF Henry Thomas Newman, Skyways Ltd. G-AHFI
Grd/Eng. Edward O'Neil, Lancashire aircraft Corp.
Eng/Off Henry Patterson, Lancashire Aircraft Corp. G-AJZZ
Rad/Off Dornford Winston Robertson, Flight Refueling Ltd. ,G-AHJW
F/E Kenneth Arthur Seaborn, Flight Refueling Ltd. ,G-AHJW
Nav/Off James Patrick Lewin Sharp, Lancashire Aircraft Corp. G-AJZZ
Grd/Eng Theodor Supernatt, Lancashire Aircraft Corp.
Cpt Cyril Taylor, Flight Refueling Ltd. ,G-AHJW
Cpt Clement Wilbur Utting, Airtflight Ltd.
Rad/Off Kenneth George Wood, World Air Freight. G-AKAC

Australian (RAAF):

F/Lt Mell J. Quinn, 22 Mar.1949 n.Luebeck Dakota KJ970

South African (SAAF):

F/O K.A. Reeves 22 Mar.1949 n.Luebeck Dakota KJ970

Deutsche:

Hans Fiedler Transportarbeiter Berlin-Moabit
Willi Dühring Transportarbeiter Berlin-Kreuzberg
Hermann Schwarz Transportarbeiter Berlin-Kreuzberg
Kurt Schlinsog Transportarbeiter Berlin-Lübars
Kurt Zülsdorf Polizist Berlin-Spandau
Richard Karl Otto Neumann Busdorf
Gudrun Giessler Bonn
Ursula Grasshoff Bielefeld
Irmgard and Emanuel Kelch Berlin
Johann Lercher Berlin
Gerti and Silvia Zimmermann Berlin

Casualties

(Details of those killed in the crash involving a Yak 3 fighter and a BEAC Vickers Viking G-AIVP were as follows)

Crew (were all ex R.A.F.men):

Captain John Ralph, DFC., 30
First Officer Norman Bradley Merrington, 32
Radio Officer Charles Manser, DFM aged 27
Steward Leonard George Goodman, 25

Passengers:

Mrs. Frances Clough
Miss Jane Shea, daughter of General Sir John Shea of Rivermead Court, Hurlingham, SW.
Mr. Reginald E. Roberts of London who was chief of the postal section at the Control Commission HQ.
Mr. Stephen J. Stocking, 34 a bachelor of Waldo place Mitcham, Surrey
Captain Flemings, stationed in Berlin
Mr. Robert Collier, 24 year old correspondent of the British United Press
Mr. H. REead-Ham & Mr. Lewin both joined the aircraft at Hamburg
Mr. Waldemar Hald of Sydney Australia
US Sgt.Pintus, stationed in Berlin

The Heads of the Berlin Airlift

Without their courage and knowledge would have been the Airlift not possible

The three Western Powers knew - West Berlin has to be free and alive - West Berlin cannot fall - they reminded themselves of Sir Winston Churchill's warnings..

However, - by air - General Lucius D. Clay and Sir Brian Robertson suggested that but we should also not forget air commodore Rex Waite who was a logistic expert, and who was the first to come up with the idea of an Airlift.

USAF Major General William Tunner, who was the Commander and he instructed the staffs – how the Airlift had worked

Air Commodore R.N. Waite C.B., C.B.E., R.A.F. (b. 1901 d. 1975)

THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

(Compiled by Romilly Waite, romilly@free.fr)

In 1945 Air Commodore R.N. Waite had been in charge of disarming the German Air Force (Luftwaff) for the British Air Force of Occupation (B.A.F.O.).

R.N.W was awarded the C.B.E. for this work.



In December 1946 he was posted to Berlin as head of Air Section Combined Services Division, Control Commission for Germany, British Army of the Rhine. (B.A.O.R.). His duties there are described in the following letter to Air Commodore R.G. Gardner C.B.E., D.S.C. on the 12th September 1947.

“This is the most interesting jobs I have ever had. We are the leaders in all matters for the western zones and my team of three nations is now firmly consolidated against the machinations of the Soviet. The latter are constantly making difficulties so that the western powers shall find it ore awkward to maintain themselves in Berlin and just recently they have intensified their campaign.

Since January I have been trying to improve the communications to and from this sorry country and at last we have managed to persuade the State Department and our own

Government to our own way of thinking. My little branch has now become the “Air Ministry” and the “Ministry of Civil Aviation for Germany”, in a manner of speaking, so I am a proprietor of civil airfields and air attaché as well as joint chairman of the civil aviation Panel which governs affairs for the Zones. One problem is to make decent travel arrangements for the thousands of foreign business men whom we must attract to Germany if our export business is to be successful: and in the next few months I hope to have as many as eleven foreign airlines on regular routes to our zone and also flying internal services for us.

The country is just showing the first signs of turning the corner but coal and transportation are still the major headaches. Foreign buyers just refuse to come here if we can only offer transport by broken down motor cars and the outside of passenger trains., which are often hours late and frequently have locomotive breakdown”.

Of the events leading up to the Blockade, R.N.W. was particularly involved in the following:

- a. April 1st 1948. The British and USA passenger train from Berlin to Helmstedt was held up by the Russians just before Helmstedt, the frontier of the British Zone. RNW, as Senior officer on the train had to take charge. (see RNW tape and transcript).
- b. The Yak fighter incident with the Hamburg-Berlin Viking Airliner crash. RNW was president of the enquiry 14th to 16th April and presented his report to the British Government. White Paper published by H.M.S.O.

Anthony Mann describes the situation just prior to the blockade in his book "Comeback: Germany 1945-52" (published Macmillan 1981)

The idea of mounting an organised operation to supply the essential needs of 2,200,000 West Berliners by air had at this stage not even been examined in detail, because experts had dismissed it as impossible. An impression has since grown up, and with constant repetition has become almost an article of faith, that the original project for the Berlin Airlift was American and that it derived essentially from General Clay himself. But, although the basic plan for the lift would never have stood a chance without Clay's enthusiastic backing, it was in fact the work of an RAF officer, Air Commodore R.N. Waite, at that time director, Air Branch of the British Control Commission in Berlin.

Two days before the total Soviet blockade began, Waite alerted RAF Transport command to the probability that "some form of air-lift" into Berlin would shortly be required. On 23rd of June he submitted to Major General Herbert, Commander of the British Sector of Berlin, a rough plan for an Anglo-American airlift to sustain the city.

Herbert told him it was out of the question.

Waite sat up all night with a slide rule, calculating cargo priorities, theoretical availabilities of transport aircraft and load factors. Next day he returned to Herbert with a more detailed plan filled with figures, and persuaded the General to get him ten minutes with Robertson. The British Military Governor looked the plan over and said he still thought it impossible, but he agreed to show the proposals to Clay later that day.

'Clay read through Waite's project and was at once full of enthusiasm,' Robertson told me three years later. 'He took a second look and then he said "Okay I'm with you!" Then he telephoned his Air chap to get busy immediately.'

RNW is also cited in Allan Bullock's book 'Earnest Bevin, Foreign Secretary' Voll II (published Heinemann 1981)

On the 26th the airlift had begun. The idea of supplying the civilian population of Berlin, not just the garrison, originated with an RAF officer, Air Commodore Waite. He succeeded in persuading General Robertson that it really was practicable and the two went together to put the figures to Clay. Clay preferred the idea of sending an army convoy up the autobahn, with orders to fight it's way through to Berlin if necessary; but he knew there was a group in Washington who wanted to pull out of Berlin altogether and he guessed that they would be willing to accept an airlift as a temporary measure which could always be dropped whereas they would refuse to agree to the convoy. This converted Clay and the airlift began on a small scale.

So RNW was then sent to Military Head Quarters in the centre of Berlin to work with Major General Herbert. RNW became the Commandant of the 'Airlift' Headquarters. An Air Commodore in an Army office! There he describes his work to Air Commodore Gardner

"I shall be sorry to leave. Nobody could have a more interesting job than I have at the moment. As soon as the 'Airlift' begun General Robertson appointed the G.O.C. British Troops as the 'dictator' of our besieged sector and sent me over to him as a sort of Chief of Staff with a roving commission, which involves everything from the daily demanding, recording and forecasting of supplies for the city to co-ordination of the Military Government Troops and Civil organisations in the complete rearrangement of life for siege conditions. In the last six months I think I have had to work harder than for the past 28 years but it has been great fun working with the first rate team we have had in Berlin."

In a Daily Telegraph article August 1st 1948 by Edwin Tetlow the scene is further described with RNW working with the British Military Governor, General Sir Brian Robertson.

US General Lucius D. Clay



US Army General Lucius D. Clay
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Ernst Reuter, Government Mayor of Berlin and general Lucius D. Clay.

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Lucius D. Clay was born in Marietta, Georgia, on April 23, 1897. His father, Alexander Stephens Clay, was a United States Senator from Georgia for 14 years and young Clay served as a Senate page for a time. He was related to Kentucky's famous Henry Clay.

On graduating from West Point, on June 12, 1918, as a second lieutenant of engineers, he was simultaneously promoted to first lieutenant and captain because of war-caused shortages of officers. On September 21 of that same year, Clay was married to Marjorie McKeown. They had two sons, General Lucius D. Clay, Jr., United States Air Force, Retired, and Major General Frank B. Clay, United States Army, Retired.

In the years before World War II, Clay served in the engineers, both in the United States and abroad. During World War II, Clay was briefly in charge of the ports in France in mid-1944 after the Allied invasion. For most of the war, however, General Clay served as Director of Material for the Army and as Deputy Director for War Mobilization and Reconversion under James F. Byrnes.

In 1945, immediately after the war, General Clay was made Deputy Military Governor to General Eisenhower for the United States Zone of Germany. In 1947, he became the United States Military Governor and the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Forces in Europe. He held this position during the Berlin Blockade and Airlift.

General Clay retired from the Army on May 31, 1949, and in April 1950, became Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Continental Can Company, Inc. Also in 1950, he wrote the book, *Decision in Germany*. He retired from Continental Can Company on December 31, 1962, and on February 1, 1963, he became a Senior Partner in Lehman Brothers investment banking house until his retirement on October 1, 1973.

While Clay was with the Continental Can Company, he returned to Washington on leave of absence during the Korean War to help organize the Office of Defense Mobilization. In 1954, he was appointed by General Eisenhower to serve as Chairman of the President's Advisory Committee on a National Highway Program. From August 1961 to May 1962, Clay, again on leave of absence from the Continental Can Company, became Personal Representative of President John F. Kennedy, with the rank of Ambassador, in Berlin during the critical period

following the construction of the wall. Early in 1963, President Kennedy appointed General Clay to head a committee to study the nation's foreign aid program.

General Clay was Chairman of the Board of Radio Free Europe, Inc. until 1975. He was an Honorary Trustee of the Presbyterian Hospital in the City of New York and of Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. He was an Honorary Member of the Business Council in Washington, D.C. Clay served as a member of the Board of Directors of a number of major U.S. corporations including General Motors. He was National Finance Chairman for the Republican Party from 1965 to 1968. In 1966, at the request of Mayor John V. Lindsay, Clay formed and headed a Public Development Corporation to help revitalize New York City's industry. In 1972-1973, he served as a member of the New York City Chapter Revision Commission. General Clay remained active in civic affairs after his retirement from Lehman Brothers in 1973, serving as fundraising chairman of groups such as the American Red Cross and the George C. Marshall Research Foundation. He died April 17, 1978 in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

Among the many military decorations received by General Clay from the United States and other countries are: The Distinguished Service Medal (three times); the Legion of Merit; and the Bronze Star. He received numerous honorary degrees and other awards including the Hoover Medal of the Engineering Societies. In 1976 he received the first President's Award of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

US General William H. Tunner

In the seventy-seven years of his life, Lieutenant General William H. Tunner was the most outstanding authority on airlift operations of the United States Air Force.

He was born on July 14, 1906 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and died on April 6, 1983 in Ware Neck, Virginia. Tunner was buried with high honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

He was married twice, first to Sarah Margaret Sams of Meridian, Mississippi. They had two sons, William S. and Joseph C. Tunner. After his first wife died, he married Ann Hamilton of Enid, Oklahoma, who gave birth to his daughter, Suzanne.

After completing High School, he entered the United States Military Academy at West Point, from which he graduated in June 1928 with a commission as a second lieutenant. In 1929 he graduated from the Advanced Flying School at Kelly Field in Texas. Between 1929 and 1960, when he retired, he not only earned several medals, but was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General.

In the 1930's and early 1940's he served various tactical and training units, and in 1941 he was assigned to help General Robert Olds organize the Ferrying Command. By now, war was raging in Europe and the Pacific. As a result, the Air Corps began reorganizing the Ferrying Command to reflect the ever increasing role it would play. In July 1942, the name "Ferrying Command" was changed to Air Transport Command. General Tunner, by now a Colonel, was made Commanding Officer of the Ferrying Division. At that time, this division was ferrying 10,000 aircraft monthly to the Allied Forces, which was of vital importance in the early days of World War II.

In September 1944 he was called to the China-Burma-India Theater to command the India-China division of the Air Transport Command. There he supervised the airlift of supplies and people to China, and it was in China that he showed his exceptional organizational ability to direct a successful airlift with efficiency and safety. This was the legendary "Hump" airlift, so named because the airplanes had to clear the 16,000 foot high Himalaya Mountains. And even though all air traffic had to be channeled over this enormously high range, Tunner and his crews



Lt Gen William H. Tunner
27 Jul 1953 - 1 Jul 1957

delivered 71,000 tons of material to China, far beyond what had ever been carried by air before. In *OVER THE HUMP*, published in 1964, he told of his experiences in this operation.

The Hump airlift was the first large strategic airlift, it would be the foundation for future airlifts, like the immensely successful, almost unbelievable, Berlin Airlift.

On June 21, 1948, the Soviet Union blockaded all approaches by land and sea to Berlin. The Russians had tried to call the shots in Berlin, but the Americans fought back with a miracle, the supplying of the world's fifth largest city, 2.5 million people (plus 6000 occupation troops), by air alone. General Tunner became the obvious choice to direct such a large scale operation. Sheer insanity on the face of it, one would think. From all over the world, veteran Air Force personnel had been jerked from their peacetime homes and were now flying endlessly through three 20-mile-wide air corridors, which were the only means of access. The immensity and the danger of the mission should never be forgotten. In the heavy-laden and slow cargo planes, the pilots would have been clay pigeons for Russian fighter aircraft if Moscow had chosen to block the air lanes, too. Day after day the planes kept coming. The runways were repaired. A third airport (Tegel) was built. The crews were rotated. The planes refurbished and augmented. And the tonnage crept upward and upward, reaching the 4,000 daily minimum, then exceeding it, and eventually, in the spring of 1949, reaching the old pre-blockade level. There were bad weather periods, and hard weeks, and frightening moments, but the personnel and General Tunner continued to perform and enlarge upon the miracle, which was lovingly known as "Operation Vittles". Because of the masterful direction by General Tunner and his crews, the airlift was succeeding far beyond all calculations. By May 1949 the battle was finally over and won. Once again General Tunner had set new records for tons of food, material and coal into Berlin, and flying a total of 124.5 million miles. He had also proven that great bodies of troops, or great numbers of civilians, could be sustained by air transport alone.

General Tunner repeated this performance during the Korean War as well. For that airlift operation, he received on the spot Distinguished Service Cross from General Douglas MacArthur.

On July 27, 1953, by now Major General Tunner returned to Wiesbaden, Germany, as commander in chief of United States Air Forces in Europe, and received a promotion to Lieutenant General.

When Lieutenant General Tunner retired from the Service May 31, 1960, he had successfully organized and commanded the three largest airlift operations up to that time.



British Military Gouverneur in Germany – Sir Brian Robertson

Most people later believed that all who had worked on the airlift were troops from the United States of America and the United Kingdom. This is, of course, not the case; troops from the British Commonwealth supported the Berlin airlift actively. Therefore, we should remember all of them who struggled during the Berlin Airlift with courage for freedom and democracy in West Berlin.

I am pleased to present the written experiences of a South African Air Force General Major, USAF Flight Instructor and Royal Air Force aircraft mechanic. Many thanks go to SAAF Major General ret. Duncan Ralston, USAF LTC (ret) Ed Robertson and RAF Aircraft mechanic ret. William L. Ball.

SA AIR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

By SAAF Major General ret. Duncan Ralston Chairman
SA Berlin Airlift Reunion Committee

SA Air Force participation in the Berlin Airlift was limited to two contingents of ten air crews each. Each individual crew comprised a pilot, navigator and wireless operator. There was also a special aircrew in each contingent for Gen Poole the South African Ambassador in West Germany. The two contingents were flown to England and returned in SA Air Force Dakotas via East Africa, Egypt and Malta; the trip taking five days. The South African crews were given intensive training by the RAF at Bassingbourn in England before flying to Lubeck in West Germany. RAF aircraft were flown on the Airlift but each SA Air Force contingent acted as an individual entity under its own OC. In all other aspects full use was made of the various facilities provided by the RAF. The two separate contingents flew a total of 2 500 sorties into Berlin and delivered 8 333 tons of supplies into the beleaguered city. Other South African Air Force aircrew were attached to 24 Commonwealth Squadron, RAF, and also flew some sorties on the Airlift. A total of 81 members of the South African Air Force flew on the Airlift. Sadly only some 14 of them still survive today.

It is interesting to note that all the SA Air Force navigators who flew on the Airlift were also pilots and had been trained as navigators by Duncan Ralston. He served first as a navigator for a year with 27 Squadron, SA Air Force, in 1942/43 before qualifying as a pilot and returning to the same squadron in late 1944. Only Joe Joubert and Gardner-Atkinson did not have WW11 experience.

The route to England was from Pretoria via N'Dola, Tabora, Nairobi, Juba, Khartoum, Luxor, Fayid, El Adem, Luqa, Istres and then to Bassingbourn via Oakington. SA Air Force Dakotas were used for these flights being returned to South Africa by separate crews. The total flying time to England was about 41 hours.

All the missions flown by the SA Air Force crews were without a major incident except one. At four o'clock in the morning in a thunderstorm as it approached Fronhau Beacon the aircraft flown by Lt Tom Condon suffered an engine failure. Unfortunately the radar lost contact with the aircraft in the heavy rain during the final approach to landing at Gatow. When Tom broke cloud at about fifty feet above the ground he found he was at an angle to the runway and in no position to attempt a landing. He immediately applied full power to the live engine and, struggling to maintain control of the aircraft and gain height, he shouted to the navigator, Lt Joe Joubert, and the wireless operator, F/Sgt Ted Bengston, to jettison the load which comprised 6 500 lbs of coal in 100lb sacks. This they did in record time. Ted recalled throwing the bags out of the door and watching the sacks bursting in the trees below the aircraft. One of the bags broke through the roof of the kitchen of the house of Sir Brian Robertson, the commander of the British forces in Berlin – the only direct delivery of coal to a house during the whole Airlift. As the aircraft was relieved of its load, Tom was able to gain height and eventually make a safe landing at Gatow. For this display of flying skill and airmanship Tom was awarded the Air Force Cross by the RAF.

The only other incidents were when on two separate occasions one of our own aircraft passed others in the same stream at night and in cloud and arrived at Fronhau Beacon ahead of schedule.

much to the consternation of aircrew of the other aircraft who had been passed on the way. On another occasion our stream of aircraft ended up in a severe electrical storm on the return leg to Lubeck, the St Elmo's fire made all the aircraft glow an eerie green. The one aircraft was hit by a peculiar ball of lightning about the size of a football that exploded with a huge bang when it hit the nose cone removing most of the paint on it and rendering the compass, intercom and other electrical circuits unserviceable. It was a terrifying experience for the crew but the poor refugee passengers were in a very bad way, several of them having had accidents and soiling themselves.

The SA Air Force aircrews were privileged to have been given the opportunity to fly on the Airlift and gained a lot valuable flying experience. Flying on the Airlift was demanding requiring skill, concentration on the task at hand and, at times, involving some considerable degree of tension. But it was also rewarding in giving all those who participated a sense of achievement and of having done a good job. It was a never to be forgotten experience.

We are aware of the significant role that the Airlift played in foiling Russian expansionism in Western Europe and proud of the contribution that we were able to make. The attempted Russian blockade of Berlin was a direct challenge to those who wish to preserve freedom throughout the world. It was a challenge met and defeated by the unique Berlin Airlift. To quote a more profound acknowledgement "The Berlin Airlift was born in peace, lived in peace and today died in peace". For perhaps the only time in history a major threat to world peace was averted by peaceful means.

Finally, it was a privilege to fly with the Royal Air Force and to continue our close association with them that goes back to WW1 and to General Smuts' recommendation to the Imperial War Cabinet that the wartime Royal Flying Corps should be made an independent Arm of the Service. This led to the RAF becoming the first independent Air Force in the world to be closely followed by the SA Air Force as the second.



Fig.2 SA Air Force Officers of the second contingent
SAAF officers who were part of the second group. At the back are Jannie Blaauw (OC), Albie Gotze, Willem Steylter, Vic de Villiers. Mike Pretorius, Duncan Ralston, Bill Nicholas, Jack Davis, and Dormie Barlow. In the front are Jenks Jenkins (RAF instructor), Pat Clulow, Tom Condon, Johnnie Eloff, Micky Lamb, "Shadow" Gardner-Atkinson and Joe Joubert (at the far right).

Wherever they worked on air and ground - they worked for air traffic control, telecommunication, and weather service, as aircraft mechanics, as aircraft

Electricians, as logistic manager - or as co-worker for other facilities anywhere in the background with the task as flight instructor who trained the aircrews in Montana USA or Canada.....

Written by USAF LTC (ret) Ed Robertson

I was stationed at Great Falls, MT. I was Admin Asst to Col Jack Chennault, and I always flew with him.

The dates are blurry, but the facts I state are the facts.

One day some people came to the base and looked around, saying something about maybe a school might be started. No plans were made. We were an Air Transport Group flying the scheduled flights to Alaska - Tacoma -Alaska and back to Great Falls. We had scads of closed barracks, and all the stuff that formerly had been part of a B -17 training base and a staging base



for the nearly 7,000 Lend Lease aircraft that we ferried to Fairbanks. They didn't trust us in Siberia.

Blam! We received a wire to implement a school to train pilots and crew for the Berlin Airlift. I was put in charge of getting all the ground school equipment to Great Falls that was at Fairfield-Suisun AFB near San Francisco. I et up a small airlift using all the planes not on scheduled runs.

All the needed buildings had to be opened and made habitable. All support personnel had to be ordered in. Pilots were recalled from Reserve. I don't know where the enlisted crew came from - but they got there. Pilot and crew instructors had to been secured, as well as ground school instructors. Also an admin bunch came in the run the school.

Captain "RED" Smith was sent to us with a C-47 and a co-pilot - his job was to "get" (heh heh) whatever critical stuff that was not available through supply channels. We had a critical need for transformers to run the ground school equipment, and some paint.

Red took off, went to California, found a base that was closed, borrowed a truck, climbing gear, tools and a block and tackle from the local phone company. He and his copilot climbed poles, cut transformers loose, lowered them to the truck and was soon back at Great Falls with 14 transformers and 125 gallons of white paint. (He never said where he liberated the paint.") With the Post Engineer, I met the airplane when it

landed. The Engineer said the transformers were to wrong kind. Red found out what kind was needed and soon was back with 12 (I think that's the number) of the right kind he had swapped with Montana Power and light. True!

Meanwhile the School Admin people were operating on our base and not even asking Col. Chennault to their meetings, as if they had no responsibility to Three Wing Commander.

My office was next to the Colonel's, and when Maj. Gen. Bob Nowland from San Antonio, our boss, came up, I heard Col. Chennault tell Gen. Nowland about the situation and request he be relieved of the command as he was responsible but was prevented from having any control. I remember Nowland's exact words, "Jack, I can't afford to let you go. You are the best Base Commander I have!"

Shortly, Frank Hager, our Chief Pilot and I took a C-54 to Frankfurt to deliver to the Airlift and try to get some ideas about what was happening. We were delayed 5 days in Paris by a fog so dense that at noon, visibility at Orly Field was about 25 feet.

I was almost blown away in Frankfurt when I heard from a new arrival the Col Chennault had been relieved of his command.

As soon as I got back to Westover AFB MA, I called Col Chennault who asked me to go see B/G Archie Olds, who previously had been our commanding general. (Gen. Olds later led the formation of B-52s around the world non-stop for a new record) Gen Olds told me that thre had been a bad cold spell at Great Falls and the school airplanes which had come from southern climates and had not been winterized just wouldn't fly, and the warm weather mechanics that came to maintain the planes didn't have a clue about what to do.

(This event later became a case study at the Air War College, showing Gen. Nowland's handling of the matter to be a classic case of bad command.)

So when I got to Great Falls, I found Col Chennault the Commander, Major Evensizer, the Chief of Staff, Captain Tommy Moye Base Maintenance officer - who had absolutely NOTHING to do with the school airplanes. The airplanes we used on the north runs never missed a beat. Major Evensizer has NOTHING to do with the school. The 4th bad guy was me, and after I got the ground school equipment there, I had nothing to do with it.

But the job got done anyhow. It took 10 days for a pilot to go through the school, and about 3 days to get to Germany. EXACTLY 28 days after we got the wire to set up the school the first school graduate landed in Berlin with a load of coal.

Funny story, Les Greenwood, one of our Alaskan Pilots was made an instructor in the school. One day a student asked what would happen if they feathered all 4 engines at the same time. Les said, "Let's find out," and feathered (shut down) all four engines. The next day he was on his way to Frankfurt. Soon he was Gen. Tunner's personal pilot - and he landed at Orly in that 25 yard fog.

Gen. Gaffney wanted me in Fairbanks to be his Aide. He asked Nowland for me. Gen. Nowland knew I flew with Col Chennault all the time, and he asked if I were a four engine pilot. I affirmed I was. Gen Gaffney what I was going to do and I told him I had orders to an Air Evac Squadron in Georgia. Gen Gaffney asked what kind of airplanes they flew and I told him C-47s. Let's just say that you do not want to be the cause of a Brig Gen cussing and screaming at a Maj. Gen.

So I went to Georgia for 3 months and got orders to Fairbanks - on the way I accidentally met Pat Brown, and we were married 13 months later 1950. In 2002, I needed a kidney and she gave me one - so the Berlin Airlift worked out pretty well for me, too. Cheers! Ed Robertson LTC (ret)

.....They and their jobs were very important – and necessary. The operation never stopped, the mission worked none stop 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.....

My Airlift Experiences written by RAF ret. William L. Ball

I was a member of 77 Dakota Squadron ground crew, we were at Waterbeach just outside Cambridge, the Squadron was ordered to Wunstorf in late June 1948, the aircraft were loaded with equipment we would need for the two weeks we were going for, yes two weeks, that is what the information was, all the personal things we needed were put in what we called small kit, such as change of socks, shirt, underclothes ect.

We did know that the two weeks would last a year, looking-back that time no one knew how long the operation would last, the rest of the personnel equipment we needed was sent to us at a later date

When we arrived at Wunstorf there was little there, I was eighteen years old and it was my first time in a foreign land, I had my nineteenth birthday there two weeks later, the Squadron prepared two aircraft as soon as possible they were loaded with supplies and took-off for Berlin, little did we know the airlift for us had started, the two pilots were our C.O. Squadron Leader Shaughnessy and Flight Lieutenant Corbet, A Flight Commander, sadly they are no longer with us I have never seen an airfield fill up so quickly by the early weeks of July more Dakota's and then the York's soon the airfield was saturated with aircraft and the weather was not at all seasonal, rain, low cloud, thunder storms, and even snow, with so many four engine aircraft at Wunstorf we were moved to Fassberg, then the Americans arrived, we were then moved to Lubeck then finally we were at Celle, we got on very well with our American friends their P.X. was far superior to our N.A.A.F.I. After leaving Wunstorf there were no Squadron crews looking after their own Squadron aircraft we worked on all aircraft regardless of what Squadron you belonged to, during the cold weather it was difficult to do the repairs required especially in the dark, dipping the fuel tanks to get the correct fuel load at night the fuel on the stick evaporated very quickly and the fuel load had to be spot on, on one cold night I was changing an oil filter on a Dakota, and I was covered in oil, at least it was warm, the Sergeant said I was lucky people pay a lot of money to bathe in oil. On one occasion a screwdriver was dropped into a fuel tank, the airman's hands were blue with cold, with a piece of wire we managed to make a tool to

hook it out, more by luck than skill, after this in cold weather we tied tools to our hands when refueling aircraft.

You wrote in your letter that you are grateful to the R.A.F. flying with the other Nations to "Save the City" because our country was bombed, I lived in London during the war we lost our Home during an air raid, my Wife also lost her Home we used to watch the flying bombs and listen to their motors stop, the first rocket the V2s we called them dropped very close to where I was working. Germany also went through a terrible time when bombs were dropped we both have something in common to experience the horror of war. We were also rationed with bread during the airlift in Britain, grain was diverted from us to Germany not even during the war did we have bread rationing. The airmen of Britain worked with the other Nations and the People of Germany to preserve the peace, all nations had known the futility of war.

My wife and I became great friends with a man we thought would never be possible he was a man from the Luftwaffe and I was man from the

R.A.F. Franz Gerlach from Cologne and Bill Ball from London as you can see enemies of the past can be friends of the future, Franz was a pilot and flew the Me 109 and the Fw 109.

.....Therefore, they together the heroes of the airlift, their names never find in the history books. Each of them wrote a part of the history of the city of Berlin, Germany, Europe, and World

The men and women did a great job, and they can say full of pride, we were one of them.....

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SA Berlin Airlift Reunion Committee

The Children of RAF Air Commodore R.N. Waite

