

## **USMVC (G) provides „Taxi Jeep’s“ for WW2 Veteran COL Gail Halvorsen (ret.) – a.k.a.: “The Candy Bomber” (96) – to visit memorial stone inauguration**

**The Berlin Airlift Association donated in November 2016 a crash site memorial stone for the first lost crew during the Berlin Airlift operation in 1948/49 and could bring Veteran Gail Halvorsen to the site in the Taunus Mountains with a group of WW2 Jeeps and Dodge ¾ ton trucks, provided by the US Military Vehicle Club (USMVC), Germany. A touching moment with a smiling Veteran and outstanding guests of honor in place.**

Our “Mission” started with a simple phone call in early Nov. 2016: my friend Dr. John Provan, an local historian, collector and Vice President of the Berlin Airlift Association, called me up and asked for help: “Hey buddy, we are planning a memorial in the Taunus mountains and the inauguration with COL Gail Halvorsen in place...”

“The legendary “candy-Bomber”? That sounds interesting to me” I replied. “So what is the plan?” I asked. There was a short brake and then John continued to explain his idea: “Well, the memorial stone we (the Berlin Airlift Association) are planning, will be located at the crash site of the first aircraft, that has been lost during the Berlin Airlift Operation back in 1948, a C-47 with two Pilots and a civilian employee of the Army. The former Berlin Airlift Pilot Colonel Gail Halvorsen (ret.), the legendary “Uncle Wiggly Wings” or nicknamed also the “Chocolate Flier”, is coming to Germany and we want to bring him to the crashsite...”

“So....?” I asked, knowing that there obviously would be some work waiting for me. “...we need some of your Clubs WW2 Jeep’s – the crashsite is located at a hilltop 2.5 km in the forest – ort to be more exact - in the middle of nowhere.”

Okay that was the Mission I thought. Easy thing. some phonecalls and with the support of some of our USMVC members and supporters we should find a solution, knowing that November would not to be “the perfect month” to organize such a “Taxi job” for this outstanding Veteran.

But there was another point, John had in mind: “The memorial stone is finished on next Monday and I need some help to set it up at the “Steinkopf Peak”. I know you have a 4x4 SUV...”. I don’t have to explain the rest of the phonecall. Even worse: John is a nice fellow, but a “paper men”. No expert on rebuilding historic MV or memorial stone construction tasks.

So, some days later after a heavy snowfall, John and me started a first scout tour to the crash site. About 1.5 km thru the “German forest” in the Taunus hills on good grabbel roads, then a look at the map and up a hill on a muddy “greenlane”, full with broken trees from the snowfall. It took us about an hour and the SUV with a rope, to clear up the greenlane and to access finally the Steinkopf Peak (570 m high).

At the Peak was a small pile of stones and the wooden cross, that I had seen on older photos, was missing. 50 m. from the top of the Steinkopf you could see an area with younger trees, towards the direction of the Wiesbaden Erbenheim AFB. The crash site of the C-47 with the reg. no. 43-48256, built in 1944, that was lost on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1948.

The C-47, fully loaded with goods for Berlin, that was shut off from supplies because of the Soviet blockade, seemed to have problems to climb fast enough, to pass the Taunus hills and hit at 2200 h. the first peak, the Steinkopf, on its way. About 2 km North of the City of Koenigstein. The reason for the crash is not known. Some sources are stating too much freight on board, but technical problems might have been involved too. But the lack of flight recorders at this time turned it in to an unsolved mystery.

A local forest ranger heard the noise of the crash and could see the fire after the crash from his house in about 2 km distance. He was first at the crash site but the crew was dead, after hitting the trees at the Steinkopf.

Later-on the fire brigade from Koenigstein was in place and a recovery team of the AFB approached, to remove the wreck from the crash site.

The two killed Pilots, 1st Lt. George Bates Smith, born 26th Dec. 1918 in Los Angeles, CA and 1st Lt. Leland V. Williams, born 6th March 1920 in Tuscola, Texas have then been buried in the USA and the third victim, the German emigrant Karl-Victor Hagen, employee of the Department of the Army, born 4th October 1912 in Berlin, was later-on buried in the family grave at (East-) Berlin.

So our second task was clearing up the Peak for the memorial stone inauguration and then to set up the memorial stone, organize the invitations and roadbooks and to bring Gail Halvorsen and the guests to the site.

One week later John and me had 60 kg of concrete, tools and the memorial stone in the back of my SUV and started our second tour, to set up the memorial stone, that we added to the pile of stones, that are marking the Steinkopf Peak. In addition John had constructed a new wooden cross, that we added at this occasion. So the memorial was finished and everything prepared for the inauguration on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Nov. 2016.

On that Saturday John picked up Gail Halvorsen at the railway station and drove him to our meeting point North of Koenigstein. At the parking area we had a small line-up of our WW2 MV, waiting for the "Candy Bomber": 3 WW2 Jeeps, an Dodge WC52 and a Dodge WC54 Ambo.

Among our guest of honor: Helen Patton, granddaughter of General George S. Patton Jr., LTG Hodges, Commanding General of the US Army in Europe, Col. Fish, Commander of the Wiesbaden Garrison and Major Perry, a military Chaplain from Wiesbaden.

Our oldest Club member Peter Jaberg (71) was the "designated driver" for Gail Halvorsen and provided the first "Taxi Jeep" in the line. Gail Halvorsen was standing in the Jeep, while driving up the steep hill, bouncing over tree stumps and had a wide grin in his face, when the Jeep approached at the crash site.

After a brief introduction of the guests a deep sound was to be heard: the noise of four aircraft engines. A small surprise for an old Pilot: the fly-by of four aircraft and a pilot on the ground with a radio, so that Gail Halvorsen could talk to the pilots. His smile was getting wider and the engine noise must have been music in his ears.

After the inauguration he was enthusiastic about the "day in the German Forest" and he was stating: "With the Jeep in the forest – as in Utah at my Ranch – and then the fly-by! Joakim, that was the best thing ever!"

What a great compliment of such an outstanding person, that is since more than 72 years part of the German-American history and taking care of this long lasting friendship between two nations, that have been enemies before.

It was a great honor and pleasure for all USMVC members to supporter this memorial project of the Berlin Airlift Association. After the inauguration we had all together a dinner and shared some beers at a local brewery. What an extraordinary day to remember.

- Mission accomplished!

*By Joakim Steinweden, MVPA correspondent, Frankfurt (Germany)*

## **About the lost crew:**

### **1st Lt. George Bates Smith,**

born 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1918 in Los Angeles, California.

From Tuscaloosa, Alabama USAF. 7234 AF FOOD SV SO

Last Primary AFSC/MOS: M 1024-Pilot- Twin Engine

Last Unit: 1946-1948, M 1024, 7234th Ammunition Supply Squadron

Service Years: 1946 - 1948

Buried at National Cemetery, Mobile Alabama, Plot: 7, 2117

Married to Harriett Gibbons Smith (09.07.1920 – 19.06.2005)



### **1st Lt. Leland V. Williams,**

born 6<sup>th</sup> March 1920 in Tuscola, Texas.

From Abilene Texas USAF.

Buried at Elmwood Memorial Park, Abilene, Texas

Married to Jeanette Williams (1921 - 11.12.2010)

Williams was stationed at Erding Fliegerhorst and lived there with his wife Jeanette. Williams has been honored elsewhere: A housing area in Erding was given the name "Williamsville" in his memory. On June 5 1951 was a memorial placed at the Rotkreuzstrasse at Erding Williamsville to honor him. The memorial is not far from Erding Fliegerhorst. Here served up to 7,000 Airman.

Mrs. Williams was married a second time, to Lee Roy Friedrichs and returned 1998 to Erding, when the 50<sup>th</sup> Berlin Airlift anniversary took place. She passed away at the age of 89 in Dec. 2010.



## **Karl-Victor Hagen, Department of the Army**

**Born 4<sup>th</sup> October 1912 in Berlin**

**From New York City, civilian employee of the US Army (Department of the Army)**

**His ashes reside at Nassau Knolls Cemetery, Port Washington, New York and in a cemetery at Berlin, Germany.**



Karl Victor Hagen was an immigrant from a prominent German Jewish family that lived in Berlin and had a banking business (Bankhaus Hagen & Co.). The family has been in addition stockbrokers in New York for decades and was one of the Banks behind the BMW Company.

He was one of overall four children and was forced to emigrate under dramatic circumstances in 1938, after the Bank of his father Carl had been liquidated by the Nazi regime and his father had passed only weeks later away at the age of 81.

The first attempt via Switzerland failed and in the end he could Karl Victor save his life, finding a way out of the Reich via the Sowjet Union and China, before reaching finally the USA.

His brother Hermann was arrested by the Nazis and murdered at the KZ Sachsenhausen in 1942. Karl Victor met his later wife Yvonne in 1940 and she remembers him as "urbane and charming with a brilliant financial mind".

He was married to Yvonne and his first daughter was born only months before he was drafted.

So he was serving in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) until the war ended and he could return to New York and his family.

They were expecting their second child, Karen, when Mr. Hagen accepted an offer to go to Berlin in 1946 as a civilian financial adviser to the commander of the American occupation army and returned to his totally destroyed hometown Berlin. Here he became the head of the currency branch of the Finance Division of the U.S. Military Government and was involved in the organization of the "Währungsreform": the introduction of the D-Mark as the new currency for Western Germany.

Personal tragedy was to strike, however, when, during the Russian blockade of Berlin in 1948, Karl Hagen hitched a ride on a military C-47 plane that crashed at 23.30 h. into the Steinkopf Peak in the Taunus Mountains, killing all aboard.

Although seven months pregnant with their third child, she was informed that she would have to vacate her house in Berlin within a few days. Turning to friends such as the deputy military governor of Bavaria, she was able to navigate the minefields of bureaucracy and gave birth to a son, Anthony Forrest Hagen, at the 97th Army Hospital in Frankfurt (today the US Consulate Frankfurt).

Anthony Hagen, today 68, lives at Sag Harbor, New York and lived before in the 1970ies in Munich and in London and was married to his German wife 1969.

His father was the uncle of Nina Hagen, the well-known "Punk-Rock goddess" from former East Berlin.

Yvonne Hagen married a second time, the British painter Tony Stubbing and lived in France and the U.K. before returning to New York. She passed away in 2005 at the blessed age of 87.

Karl Victor Hagen's grave at Berlin is stating:

*"Karl-Victor Hagen geb. 4. Okt. 1912 in Berlin  
tödlich verunglückt 8 Juli 1948  
bei Königstein, Taunus  
im Dienste seines neuen Vaterlandes U.S.A."*



## About Colonel Halvorsen (source Wikipedia):

# Gail Halvorsen

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

### Gail Halvorsen



Halvorsen at an air force base in Germany, October 2005

<b>Birth name</b>	Gail Seymour Halvorsen
<b>Nickname(s)</b>	" <i>Rosinenbomber</i> " ("Rasin Bomber"), "Onkel Wackelflügel" ("Uncle Wiggly Wings"), "Der Schokoladenflieger" ("Chocolate Flier")
<b>Born</b>	October 10, 1920 (age 96) Salt Lake City, Utah, United States
<b>Allegiance</b>	 United States of America
<b>Service/branch</b>	 United States Army Air Forces
<b>Years of service</b>	1942–1974

<b>Rank</b>	 Colonel
<b>Battles/wars</b>	World War II Berlin airlift
<b>Awards</b>	Congressional Gold Medal Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	Alta Jolley (1949–99; her death) Lorraine Pace (2004–present)

**Colonel Gail Seymour "Hal" Halvorsen** (born October 10, 1920) is a retired officer and **command pilot** in the **United States Air Force**.<sup>[1]</sup> He is best known as the "Berlin Candy Bomber" who dropped candy to children during the **Berlin airlift** from 1948 to 1949.

Halvorsen grew up in rural Utah but always had a desire to fly. He earned his private pilot's license in 1941 and then joined the Civil Air Patrol.<sup>[2]</sup> He joined the **United States Army Air Forces** in 1942 and was assigned to Germany on July 10, 1948 to be a pilot for the Berlin Airlift.<sup>[3]</sup> Halvorsen piloted **C-47s** and **C-54s** during the **Berlin airlift** ("Operation Vittles"). During that time he founded "Operation Little Vittles", an effort to raise morale in Berlin by dropping candy via miniature parachute to the city's residents. Halvorsen began "Little Vittles" with no authorization from his superiors but over the next year became a national hero with support from all over the United States.<sup>[4]</sup> Halvorsen's operation dropped over 23 tons of candy to the residents of Berlin.<sup>[5]</sup> He became known as the "Berlin Candy Bomber", "Uncle Wiggly Wings", and "The Chocolate Flier".<sup>[6]</sup>

Halvorsen has received numerous awards for his role in "Operation Little Vittles", including the Congressional Gold Medal.<sup>[7]</sup> However, "Little Vittles" was not the end of Halvorsen's military and humanitarian career. Over the next 25 years Halvorsen advocated for and performed candy drops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Japan, Guam, and Iraq.<sup>[8]</sup> Halvorsen's professional career included various notable positions. He helped to develop reusable manned aircraft at the Directorate of Space and Technology and served as commander of the Templehof Airport.<sup>[9]</sup> He retired in August 1974 after logging over 8,000 flying hours.<sup>[9]</sup>

### **About the Berlin Airlift Association:**

The Berlin Airlift Association („Luftbrücke Frankfurt-Berlin 1948-1949 e.V."), that is taking care since 2009 of the Berlin Airlift Operation memorial at Frankfurt Rhein-Main Airport (former Rhine-Main Air Base). Link: <http://www.luftbrueckechapter.de>

## **About the US Military Vehicle Club (USMVC):**

The The USMVC is one of the oldest US Military vehicle collectors Clubs in Germany and taking care of the MV heritage of the US Army in Germany since more than 30 years.

The Club was founded back in 1983 by Mr. Frank Gilbert Sulek (†) and a group of Jeep enthusiasts at Assmannshausen (near Rüdeshheim) as a local ADAC Motor Sports Club.

The Club has a legal status as a registred association “eingetragener Verein“ (e.V.).

Today the USMVC has 20 members and about 25-30 historical MV.

About 50 % of the MV are from WW2, the other 50 % are from the Vietnam conflict period or younger.

The USMVC is organizing 3 annual MV Events, two of them with a weekend Camp.

Link: [www.usmvc.eu](http://www.usmvc.eu)

## **Press release by Dr. John Provan:**

**Berlin Airlift memorial stone inauguration and commemoration,  
26.11.2016, Steinkopf im Taunus, Germany**

Beginning on June 26, 1948, the Berlin blockade and the ensuing airlift of food and supplies to the city created a major operation for which the Allied forces were totally unprepared. Brig. Gen. Joseph Smith, who had been placed in charge, had no experience in organizing and maintaining a long-term major airlift operation and this lack of background would cause several accidents. Crews, pilots and soldiers did all they could, to make things work. However, existing manuals and operating procedures failed to cover the entire scope of such a major task.

The loadmaster and crew at Wiesbaden Air Base naturally wanted to fill each plane with as much food and supplies as possible. The old C-47 "Gooney Bird" aircraft, built in 1944, had proven its worth as a dependable and airworthy aircraft capable of transporting between 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 tons, over a distance of 1,000 miles. This particular plane was simply overloaded when it took off on July 8, 1948, shortly before 11 p.m. from Wiesbaden Air Base in route to Berlin.

The pilots were unable to gain altitude or over-estimated their elevation. Near Königstein (30 km away), is the top of a small mountain — Steinkopf — reaching only 570 meters above sea level. At 11:30 p.m., the Forest Meister, who lived nearby, recalled standing at his bedroom window looking toward the Steinkopf Peak, when suddenly an explosion could be seen. It was the first fatal accident of the Berlin Airlift.

All rescue attempts were of no avail, as remains of the aircraft were spread over the hillside and the burning fuselage had killed all on board. 1st Lt. George B. Smith (AO-794711), 1st Lt. Leland V. Williams (AO-686293), and Department of the Army civilian Karl Victor Hagen had died while fulfilling their duty, to save a city.



Although their names appear on the Berlin Airlift Memorial along the Frankfurt-Darmstadt autobahn, only Williams has been honored elsewhere. A housing area in Erding was given the name "Williamsville" in his memory and a memorial stone was placed at the Rotkreuzstrasse at Erding, close to Williams homebase Erding Fliegerhorst in 1951.

The Berlin Airlift Association (Verein Luftbrücke Frankfurt-Berlin 1948-1949 e.V.) would like to bring back this "lost place" to the public memory and to honor the victims of the crash with this new memorial stone and its inauguration 48 years after the accident took place.

**Organization/Contact:**

Verein Luftbrücke Frankfurt-Berlin 1948-1949 e.V.

Contact: Dr. John Provan, Vice President , Email: [johnprovan@gmx.net](mailto:johnprovan@gmx.net)

Homepage: [www.luftbrueckechapter.de](http://www.luftbrueckechapter.de)

Support: US Military Vehicle Club e.V. (USMVC)

Homepage: [www.usmvc.eu](http://www.usmvc.eu)