

## BEYOND ALLIED LINES, SOMEWHERE OVER EASTERN GERMANY

By Romney Wheeler (AP)

*April 15 - I am flying with the Word of Doom for Nazi Germany!*

*Ten minutes ago we crossed the West Front battle line beyond the River Salle. We have dropped bombs on our first target and are boring deeper into Hitler's last stronghold toward a second. To the north lay by-passed Leipzig. Beyond us lies the devastation that was Dreedon - and beyond that a Russian cyclone gathering force along the Oder and the Neisse.*

*Somewhere beneath us the spearheads of General Hodges are driving deeper into Germany's vitals. We know it because four miles below us all Germany is burning.*

*This is total war, as Germany never imagined it!*

*We literally are carrying the Word of Doom to Germany, for packed in the belly of this jet-black Liberator are a dozen bombs - loaded not with high explosives, but with leaflets telling Hitler's Wehrmacht and Hitler's civilians that this is the end...and leaflets calling for surrender.*

*Lieut. Bruce Edgerton, pilot, of Washington, D.C., lifts Midnight Mistress a bit higher as we swerve toward our next target. It is shortly after midnight, and moonless, but the stars are bright and there is only a light ground haze. We can see fires everywhere - most of them large ones, indicating destruction of entire towns.*

*"Three minutes to target" says the voice of our navigator, Lieut. John A. Alexander, of East Liverpool, Ohio.*

*Roger-dodger," replies our pilot.*

*This big plane of the Eighth Air Force, 406<sup>th</sup> Squadron is quiet except for the roar of its four engines as we bear down on our target. The destruction going on below us seems unreal. Can this be Hitler's inner fortress? Our maps and navigation tell us we are more than 300 miles inside Germany; scarcely 25 miles from the frontier of Czechoslovakia - and only 75 miles from the Russian lines.*

*Now we are bearing to the north, and off our left wing we can see flashes of heavy guns. Somewhere down there Hodges men are hitting Jerry where it hurts.*

*"One minute to target," says the navigator, and our bombardier, Lieut. Carlo Zuniga of Mira Loma, Calif., prepares to hit another one on the nose.*

*"If you got any flak," cautions our navigator, "turn left or you'll be right over Dresden."*

*"Rodger-dodger," is the reply.*

*Our co-pilot explains about flak. "In the daytime you can see bursts of brown smoke, but at night it is just a flash - and hard to judge distance," says Lieut. A.H. Franke, of Spokane, Wash.*

*"Sometimes it looks like stars."*

*"Yep," observes Staff Sgt. Emmerson Miller of Chrisney, Ind., tail-gunner, on the inter-com. "Stars that go out are flak."*

*"Target" says the navigator, quietly.*

*"Bombs away," answers Zuniga.*

*"One - two - three - four," counts Tech. Sgt. James K. Echols of Sardusky, Ohio, our radioman, as he checks the bombs dropping into the darkness.*

*We set a new course farther west. Now there are fewer fires and the gun-flashes are diminishing. We are beyond even the deepest spearheads.*

*This target is important.*

*Our waist gunners attend to the cargo - Staff Sgt. Larue Shipley of Caldwell, Idaho; and Staff Sgt. Charles W. Strain of Crete, Neb. A moment after "target" they report: "Cargo over".*

*We wheel sharply and take a compass heading for home. Some German field flak installations pick us up, but we are flying too high and too fast.*

*"Let's get the Hell out of here," says our pilot, stepping up the engine revolutions.*

*We are south of Leipzig again, and again the ground haze reddens with fires raging more than four miles below us. One massive conflagration obviously is an oil fire.*

*"Something down there is burning like Hell," says Staff Sgt. George W. Knott, of Chester, Penn, our ball gunner. "Look at those flames roll!"*

*We hold our altitude and roar westward toward England. We swing wide to avoid the Ruhr pocket, but we can see continuous flashes which tell us of massive artillery pounding to this doomed island of resistance. Inside the pocket there is an angry flare of many fires - fires consuming Nazi towns and villages.*

*Further west we see heavy artillery bombardment in Holland - the battle line where Montgomery's troops are pressing forward. Then we are over the North Sea.*

*Tech. Sgt. Ralph W. Wise of Nabb, Ind., our engineer, checks our fuel. We have been in the air nearly eight hours most of that time on oxygen, and the weather at our home field is closing in. By the time we reach the airdrome, an original 800-foot ceiling has disappeared. Even at 300 feet we cannot break out. Finally we head for an RAF field 80 miles away, where they think they can take us in.*

*It is almost dawn when Midnight Mistress drops down on the runway - nine hours in the air from take-off at dusk when we headed for Germany.*

The following information on the 406<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, (NLS) Night Leaflet Squadron - from October - 1944 to May 15, 1945. This time period covered our tour of duty. This was the Lt. Bruce Edgerton Flight crew.

I (Carlo R. Zuniga) was the Bombardier/Navigator on this crew. The following facts, notes, pictures, official papers and other information is arranged in as logical a manner as possible. I have tried to include all the information received from the living crew members, to establish a continuity and a time line account of our tour of duty. Our Squadron was also known as one of the "CARPET BAGGERS". We were one of the 4 Squadrons stationed at Harrington in England.

### I. The Flight Crew

- a. Lt. Bruce Edgerton - Pilot
- b. Lt. Robert Hensley - Co-Pilot
- c. Lt. Martin Katz - Navigator
- d. Lt. Carlo Zuniga - Bombardier
- e. Sgt. Ralph Wise - Flight Engineer
- f. Sgt. James Echols - Radio Operator
- g. Sgt. George Knott - Ball Gunner
- h. Sgt. Emerson Miller - Tail Gunner
- i. Sgt. LaRue Shipley - Right Waist Gunner
- j. Sgt. Charles Strain - Left Waist Gunner

### II. Duty Assignment

(406<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, NLS - Night Leaflet Squadron)

Combat Station

- a. 8<sup>th</sup> Fighter Command - Station 113 - Cheddington, England— 10-30-44
- b. 8<sup>th</sup> Fighter Command - Station 113 - Cheddington, England— 3-14-45
- c. 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force - 1<sup>st</sup> Air Division - Station 179 - Harrington— 3-15-45
- d. 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force - 1<sup>st</sup> Air Division - Station 179 - Harrington— 4-10-45



*This photo was taken at Cheddington on 7 January 1945. The crew moved with the rest of the squadron to Harrington in mid-March of 1945, finishing their duty at Station 179. Their last Operational flight is recorded as the night of 15/16 April 1945, flying "42-50483", a B-24J named *Midnite Mistress*. Most of the crew had 40 missions by the time operational flights had ceased.*

- e. 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force - 1<sup>st</sup> Air Division - Station 179 - Harrington - (Completed Tour of Duty - 4-15-45)
- f. All sorties were single plane missions and flown at 30-32,000 ft. Altitude.

### III. Airplane - B-24-J Liberator

- a. Pilot named airplane *MIDNIGHT MISTRESS*
- b. Airplane was painted solid black
- c. Nose art was painted from a Vargas model
- d. Photo shown in Book - "THE MIGHTY EIGHTH" (Page 293) by Roger Freeman of the *Midnite Mistress*, was our original plane. The crew noted in the book was a new crew assigned to the *Midnite Mistress* after we finished our tour. We were the first crew to fly the *Midnite Mistress* into NLS combat
- e. The aluminum colored cowlings were also added when the new crew took charge

### IV. Tour and training events

- a. We had many hours of training before starting combat

**Standing, L-R:**  
Charles W. Strain, Gunner; James K. Echols, Radio Operator; Ralph W. Wise, Engineer; Emerson J. Miller, Gunner; LaRue M. Shipley, Gunner.

**Kneeling, L-R:**  
Carlo Zuniga, Bombardier; Bruce W.P. Edgerton, Pilot; Martin J. Katz, Navigator; Robert T. Hensley, Copilot

**Absent from Picture:**  
George W. Knott, Gunner

Safe conduct "Pass"



...OF THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE  
406<sup>TH</sup> NIGHT LEAFLET SQUADRON  
By: Carlo R. Zuniga



- b. We flew 40 combat sorties
- c. Started 10-21-44 - non-combat training
- d. Started 11-21-44 - combat
- e. Completed combat sorties - 4 - 14/15 - 45
- f. We landed at other fields due to weather or fog on at least 5-7 sorties
- g. We aborted 2-3 flights due to flame suppressor problems

## V. TARGETS - Lt. Edgerton Crew (NLS)

<b>1944</b>	Nov.21	(1) Zerikzee - Holland
	Dec. 4	(2) Lodenich - Germany
	Dec. 5	(3) Venlow - Germany
	Dec. 6	(4) Rouver - Germany
	Dec. 11	(5) Venlow - Germany
	Dec. 12	(6) Zulpich - Germany
	Dec. 18	(7) Merzig - Germany
	Dec. 23	(8) Aldenkerch - Germany
	Dec. 26	(9) Moorath - Germany
	Dec. 30/31	(10) Belgium
<b>1945</b>	Jan. 15	(11) Germany
	Jan. 19	(12) Belgium/Germany
	Jan. 22	(13) Karlsrube - Germany
	Jan. 28	(14) Bonn - Germany
	Jan. 29	(15) Prumm - Germany
	Feb. 1	(16) Colmar - France
	Feb. 10	(17) Mainz - Germany

Feb. 12	(18) Zulpich - Germany
Feb. 22/23	(19) Frankfurt - Germany
Feb. 24	(20) Trier - Germany
Feb. 25	(21) Cologne - Germany
Feb. 28	(22) Leerwarden - Holland
Mar. 1	(23) Duisberg - Germany
Mar. 2	(24) Essen - Germany
Mar. 3/4	(25) Dusseldorf - Germany
Mar. 6/7	(26) Koln - Germany
Mar. 7	(27) Mulheim - Germany
Mar. 8	(28) Bonn - Germany
Mar. 12/13	(29) Saarbrucken - Germany
Mar. 13/14	(30) Saarbrucken - Germany
Mar. 20/21	(31) Saar - Germany
Mar. 21/22	(32) Landau - Germany
Mar. 22/23	(33) Dortmund - Germany
Apr. 2/3	(34) Bremen - Germany
Apr. 5/6	(35) Bamberg - Germany
Apr. 10/11	(36) St. Nazaire - France
Apr. 11/12	(37) Bremen - Germany
Apr. 12/13	(38) Bamberg - Germany
Apr. 13/14	(39) St. Nazaire - France
Apr. 14/15	(40) Dresden - Germany

*NOTE: Most members on the crew flew more than 40 sorties. We were scheduled as alternates on other crews; therefore most of us flew approximately 42 sorties.*

## VI. NLS - LEAFLETS

- a. Leaflets were propaganda and informational in nature
- b. Sample leaflets are shown in this article

## VII. Decorations for M/M crew

- a. ETO decoration - *MIDNITE MISTRESS* ribbons - 3 bronze stars
- b. Air Medal - 5 oakleaf clusters
- c. Presidential Unit Citation
- d. Good Conduct Ribbon
- a. French Legation Commendation





## UNIT HISTORY

406TH NIGHT LEAFLET SQUADRON

When the 406th Squadron designation was turned back to 8th Air Force following the reorganization of 13 August 1944, it was given to a special squadron at Cheddington composed of B-24s and B-17s. Unlike the daylight bombers, who dropped their leaflets at high altitude, and the Carpetbaggers, who dropped their propaganda by hand, the 406th NLS flew at medium altitudes and dropped sophisticated leaflet "bombs" in cardboard cylinders which dispersed the leaflets over a wide area. Additionally, because they were involved later in the war, most of their propaganda was directed toward destroying the enemy's will to fight. On 15 March 1944, this unit was attached to the 492nd Bomb Group at Harrington and moved to Station 179 for the remainder of the war.

### VIII. Other events that happened during tour

- a. Saw *The Leading Lady*, crash on runway during our trying to land at Harrington. We were flagged off until runway was cleared, this happened on 3-14-45. We were in a process of moving to our new base at Harrington - Station 179, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, 1<sup>st</sup> Air Division.
- b. On 3-4-45 our radio operator picked up the news that Lt. Col. Aber had been shot down by friendly fire. His plane a B-17, *Tondalayo*, was destroyed.
- c. Major Gaddy took Lt. Co. Aber's place as Squadron Commanding Officer of the 406<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron.
- d. We received some plane damage to the *Midnite Mistress*. We were chased and shot at by Ju-88 night fighters at various times.
- e. We also suffered some flak damage.
- f. In the final days of combat an Me-262 made several passes at the *Midnite Mistress*.

### VIII. *Midnite Mistress* plane markings

- a. J6-1-painted on fuselage (Code number)
- b. "T" Identification on tail fin (Call letter)
- c. *Midnite Mistress*, All black color
- d. #42-50483 (Mfg. serial number)
- e. Nose art - Front of nose



*Stencils being applied to leaflet canister by ground personnel*



*Lt. Carlo R. Zuniga, Bombardier, being presented the Air Medal by Lt. Col. Aber.*

### **Carlo R. Zuniga**

406<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron  
(NLS) Night Leaflet Squadron  
8<sup>th</sup> Air Force



*Harrington Airfield, England—  
Home of the 406th Bomb Squadron.*