

AFEHRI File 19-5-2-5

Research Materials/Source Documents  
AWARDS & DECORATIONS

FILE TITLE: Sgt Maynard Harrison Smith, Medal of Honor Recipient - WW II

Reviewed by:

AFEHRI Representative G.R. Akin date 11 DEC 97

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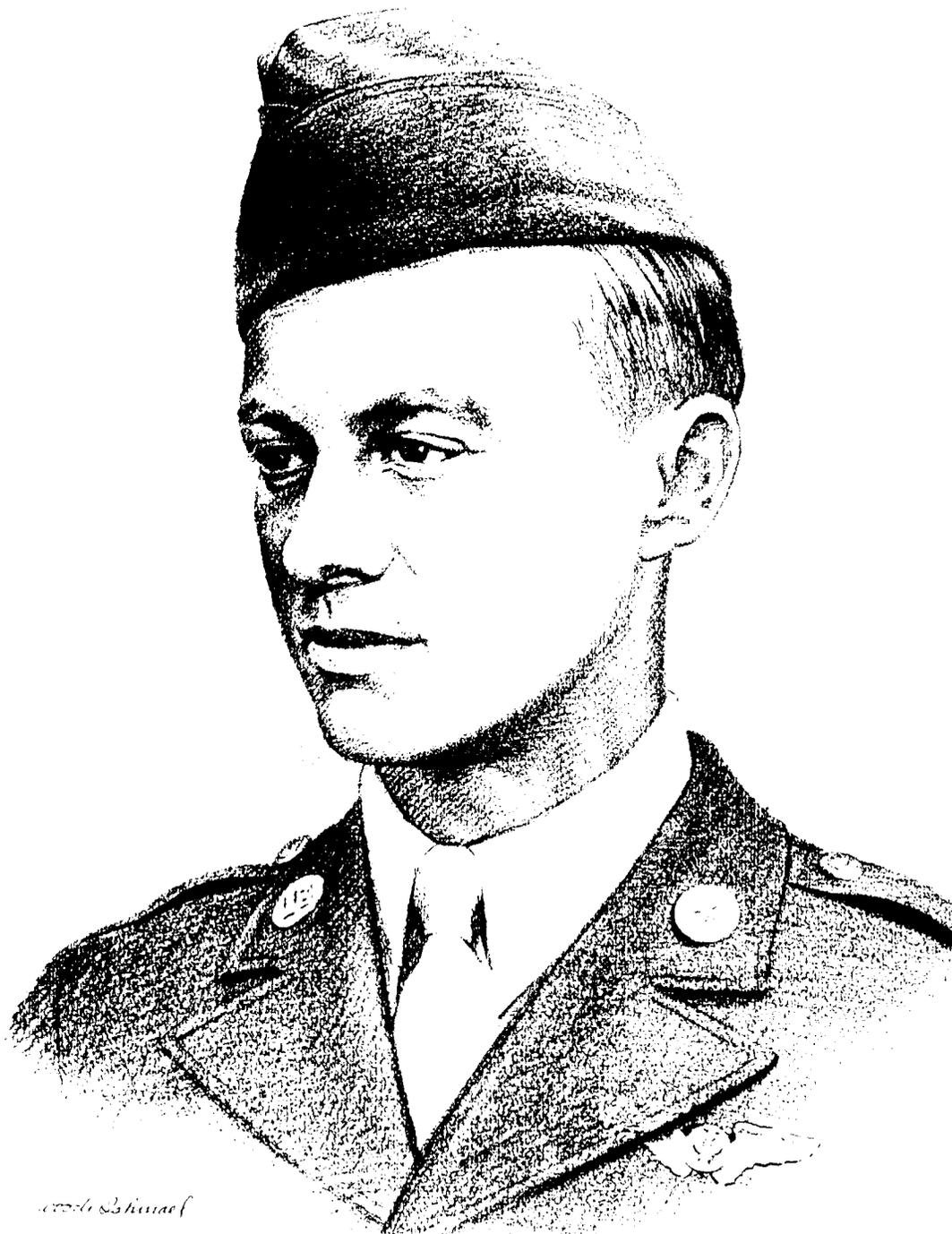
Scanner Operator Gary Akin date 27 Feb 98

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GARY R. AKIN, CMSgt, USAF

Director

Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute



### SERGEANT MAYNARD HARRISON SMITH

was a B-17 gunner on a mission to Brest, France, 1 May 1943, when his aircraft was badly damaged by antiaircraft fire and fighter plane attacks. Two crew members were seriously wounded and three others bailed out. Sergeant Smith, on his first combat mission, fought intense flames alone, administered first aid, and manned the waist guns. Ammunition began to explode, damaging the radio, gun mount and camera, and gutting the radio compartment. Sergeant Smith threw exploding ammunition overboard, continued to fight the fire and manned workable guns until enemy fighters withdrew. After further administering first aid, Sergeant Smith wrapped himself in protecting cloth and extinguished the fire by hand.

*Born Caro, Michigan, 19 May 1911.*

AAC

**Sgt Maynard H. Smith: First Enlisted Recipient of the Medal of Honor**

Sergeant Smith received his Medal of Honor for action over enemy-occupied Europe on 1 May 1943. When the aircraft on which he was a gunner was hit by enemy fire and set ablaze, the sergeant threw exploding ammunition overboard, manned workable guns until German fighters were driven off, administered first aid to a wounded comrad, and wrapping himself in protecting clothing, completely extinguished the fire by hand.

Probably no one in the history of aerial combat has ever flown quite so spectacular a first mission as Smith's. He was one of hundreds of replacements which had begun to filter in to the ranks of veteran combat organizations during mid-1943. In fact, he was the lone "rookie" among an otherwise veteran crew on this Saint-Nazaire mission.

Its veteran pilot, Lt Lewis Johnson, filed an affidavit after the mission citing Smith's contribution to the safety of the crew members who remained with the plane, and concluded with "...acts which, by the will of God only, did not cost him his life, performed in complete self-sacrifice and with the utmost efficiency, were soley responsible for the safe return of the airplane, the life of the tail gunner, and lives of everyone else aboard."

So devastating was the damage to the Fortress and so trying the mission that the flight surgeon grounded all survivors until he could determine the extent of personal fatigue suffered by each man. All the veteran members of the crew, which included everyone but Smith, were finally returned to the United States to fill instructor positions in the training of additional combat replacements. Smith was requested by another crew and, as this group had earned a 10-day vacation, he was allowed to accompany them to the rest area.

Within weeks he was backin the air to finish out his required tour. Early in July, the 1st Bombardment Wing commander received work that the recommendation for the Medal of Honor had been approved. The following day, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, on a tour of American bases in England, was scheduled to inspect the organization. He was contacted immediately and asked if he would present the Medal to Sergeant Smith. Without hesitation, Secretary Stimson indicated he would be more than honored.

**Sergeant Smith's Medal is worded as Provide Below:**

General Orders,  
No. 38 )

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Washington 25, D.C., 12 July 1943.

II--Award of Medal of Honor.--By direction of the Prsident, under the provisions of the act of Congress approved 9 July 1918 (Bull.43, WD, of Congress to the following-named enlisted man:

Sergeant Maynard H. Smith (Army serial No. 36523097), Air Corps, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty. The aircraft of which Sergeant Smith was a gunner was subjected to intense enemy antiaircraft fire and determined fighter airplane attacks while returning from a mission over enemy occupied continental Europe on 1 May 1943. The airplane was hit several times by antiaircraft fire and cannon shells of the fighter airplanes, two of the crew were seri-

ously wounded, the aircraft's oxygen system shot out, and several vital control cables severed when intense fires were ignited simultaneously in the radio compartment and waist sections. The situation became so acute that three of the crew bailed out into the comparative safety of the sea. Sergeant Smith, then on his first combat mission, elected to fight the fire by himself, administered first-aid to the wounded tail gunner, manned the waist guns, and fought the intense flames alternately. The escaping oxygen fanned the fire to such intense heat that the ammunition in the radio compartment began to explode, the radio, gun mount, and camera were melted, and the compartment completely gutted. Sergeant Smith threw the exploding ammunition overboard, fought the fire until all the fire-fighting aids were exhausted, manned the workable guns until the enemy fighters were driven away, further administered first-aid to his wounded comrade, and then by wrapping himself in protecting cloth, completely extinguished the fire by hand. This soldier's gallantry in action, undaunted bravery, and loyalty to his aircraft and fellow crew members, without regard for his own personal safety, is an inspiration to the the armed forces of the United States. Residence at enlistment: Caro, Michigan.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

G. C. MARSHALL,  
Chief of Staff

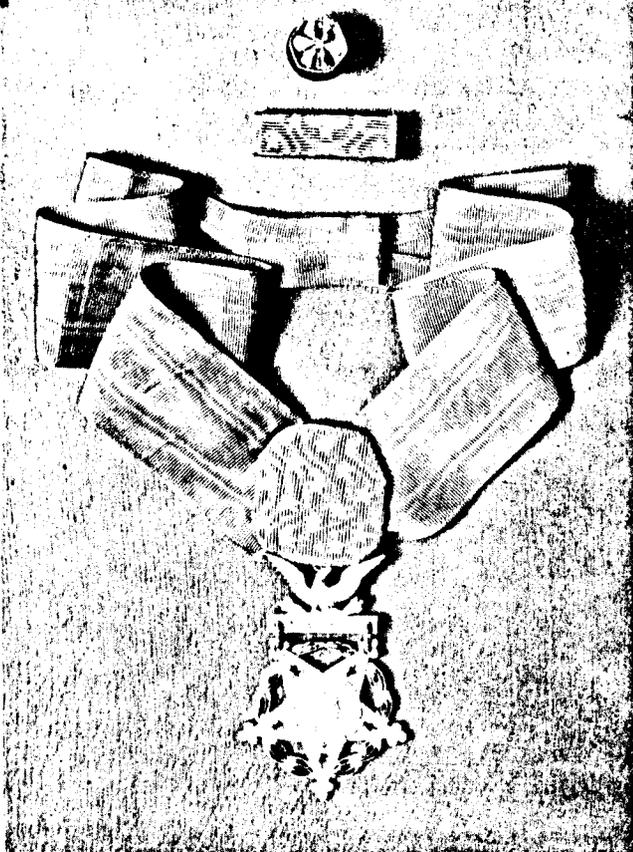
OFFICIAL:

J. A. ULIO,  
Major General,  
The Adjutant General

A TRUE EXTRACT COPY

W. FREDERICK

Maj, USAF



*In the Name of Congress*

NO. 10 IN A SERIES

111  
Smith,  
Maynard H.

## HINGES of HADES

*Raids against Germany's submarine strength were beginning to have a telling effect by spring, 1943, thanks to the determined efforts of the 8th Air Force.*

by SMSgt. Hal Bamford

ON May 4, 1943, Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, one-time commander of the Nazi U-boat fleet, summed up the Allied bombing effects on German submarine production briefly and forcibly in a meeting of the German Central Planning Office. He noted, "The Anglo-Saxons' attempt to strike down the submarine war was undertaken with all the means available to them. You know that the towns of Saint-Nazaire and Lorient (both on the northwest coast of occupied France) have been rubbed out as main submarine bases. No dog or cat is left in these towns. Nothing but the submarine shelters remain."

Late in September, 1942, 8th Air Force headquarters had been ordered to concentrate on the destruction of U-boat production. Doenitz's statement indicates this concentration was paying dividends.

Only six weeks earlier, the concentrated effort had resulted in the posthumous award of the Nation's 11th Medal of Honor to an Air Force member, Lt. Jack Mathis, while leading a raid on Vegesack, Germany, another of the Axis' struggling U-boat yards. On May 1, 1943, the mission leading to the 12th such award was flown. The recipient of this Medal was the first enlisted man in USAF history to be so decorated—Sgt. Maynard Harrison Smith of Caro, Mich.

The citation which accompanied Sergeant Smith's award, while brief, graphically illustrates the immensity of his accomplishment.

*For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action*

*above and beyond the call of duty. The aircraft of which Sergeant Smith was a gunner was subjected to intense enemy anti-aircraft fire and determined fighter airplane attacks while returning from a mission over enemy-occupied continental Europe on 1 May 1943. The airplane was hit several times by anti-aircraft fire and cannon shells of the fighter airplanes, two of the crew were seriously wounded, the aircraft's oxygen system was shot out, and several vital control cables severed when intense fires were ignited simultaneously in the radio compartment and waist sections. The situation became so acute that three of the crew bailed out into the comparative safety of the sea. Sergeant Smith, then on his first combat mission, elected to fight the fire by himself, administered first aid to the tail gunner, manned the waist guns, and fought the intense flames alternately. The escaping oxygen fanned the fire to such intense heat that the ammunition in the radio compartment began to explode, the radio, gun mounts, and camera were melted, and the compartment completely gutted. Sergeant Smith threw the exploding ammunition overboard, fought the fire until all the fire-fighting aids were exhausted, manned the workable guns until the enemy fighters were driven away, further administered first aid to his wounded comrade, and then by wrapping himself in protecting cloth, completely extinguished the fire by hand. This soldier's gallantry in action, undaunted bravery, and loyalty to his aircraft and fellow crew members, without regard for his own*



*Secretary of War  
Henry L. Stimson presents  
Nation's highest award  
to SSgt. Maynard Smith.*

*personal safety, is an inspiration to the armed forces of the United States.*

A maintenance description of the wounded Boeing B-17F *Flying Fortress* after its return gives ample indication of the extent of the damage. The radio compartment and tail-wheel section were gutted; control cables and oxygen system shot out; one propeller hit; number four nacelle shot off; interphone and ball-turret controls out of action; top-turret gun out; tail-wheel gear damaged; flaps ruptured by cannon shell; radio system completely destroyed; gas tank in left wing burned out; nose shattered by flak; nine holes from 20 mm. cannon shells in waist section; and the entire ship riddled by .30 calibre bullets.

Probably no one in the history of aerial combat has ever flown quite so spectacular a first mission as Smith's. He was one of hundreds of replacements which had begun to filter in to the ranks of veteran combat organizations during mid-1943. In fact, he was the lone "rookie" among an otherwise veteran crew on this Saint-Nazaire mission.

Its veteran pilot, Lt. Lewis Johnson, filed an affidavit after the mission citing Smith's contribution to the safety of the crew members who remained with the plane, and concluded with "... acts which, by the will of God only, did not cost him his life, performed in complete self-sacrifice and with the utmost efficiency, were solely responsible for the safe return of the airplane, the life of the tail gunner, and lives of everyone

else aboard."

So devastating was the damage to the *Fortress* and so trying the mission that the flight surgeon grounded all survivors until he could determine the extent of personal fatigue suffered by each man. All the veteran members of the crew, which included everyone but Smith, were finally returned to the United States to fill instructor positions in the training of additional combat replacements. Smith was requested by another crew and, as this group had earned a 10-day vacation, he was allowed to accompany them to the rest area.

In reality, Sergeant Smith was a rarity among crewmen. Far above the average age of combat fliers, he had already passed his 32d birthday. In his hometown of Caro, Mich., the 130-pound terror of the skies had been an accountant, a far-cry from aerial gunnery, and little in his background would suggest combat success on a scale which would gain him this Nation's highest honor.

Within weeks he was back in the air to finish out his required tour. Early in July, the 1st Bombardment Wing commander received word that the recommendation for the Medal of Honor had been approved. The following day, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, on a tour of American bases in England, was scheduled to inspect the organization. He was contacted immediately and asked if he would present the Medal to Sergeant Smith. Without hesitation, Secretary Stimson indicated he would be more than honored.

## MAYNARD H. SMITH, JR. “SNUFFY”

One of the greatest disappointments in “Snuffy” Smith’s life was that his father did not live long enough to know that his son became the first enlisted man in the U.S. Army Air Corps in World War II to receive the Medal of Honor. Staff Sergeant Smith was born in Caro, Michigan, on May 19, 1911. His father was half Irish and half American Indian. Maynard H. Smith, Sr. became a very successful criminal lawyer and was a personal consultant to Henry Ford and also to the General Motors Corporation in Detroit. “Snuffy” Smith remembers one of the favorite quotations of his father—“A man should be so rich he could go fishing all the time or so poor he had to.” Mrs. Smith, “Snuffy’s” mother, was of German extraction and taught all eight grades of a country school.

Maynard H. Smith, Jr., is now 69 years old, is five feet, six inches in height and weighs 135 pounds. This is the same weight he carried when he was 18. In his own words, “my skin and muscle tone together with eyesight and coordination are about the same as when I was 30.

His great, great grandfather, Henry Harrison Smith, was a Major in the Northern Army during the Civil War. He was a prisoner of war in the South and starved to death in a Confederate PW camp. To this day, Maynard has the silver sheathed sword which Major Henry Harrison Smith wore during the Civil War.

As a child, “Snuffy” Smith was of the Methodist faith.



When he was six years old, his father "got into a political hassle with the Methodist minister. That ended religion for me," confides Maynard H. Smith, Jr. "Since that time I have been pretty much on the agnostic side. Man's inhumanity to man, to animals and to the environment just does not fit in with any religion," he feels.

"Snuffy" Smith is highly educated in several disciplines including psychology, English, chemistry, salesmanship, ancient and modern history, criminal evidence and procedure and in the field of accounting. He married an English girl he met during World War II. They were divorced fifteen years ago. He has four children ranging in age from twenty-eight to thirty-six, three boys and one girl.

Staff Sergeant Maynard H. "Snuffy" Smith was a member of the 8th Air Force's 306th Bomb Group as a B-17 Flying fortress ball turret gunner. In an article which appeared in the February, 1979 issue of *Sergeants* he describes his first combat mission, flying out of England to bomb the German submarine pens at St. Nazaire, France.

"It was my first trip out. In those days the saying went 'the first time out, you were due back, the second time out you're not coming back.' Why? Well, we were running about 50 percent losses then. It was May 1, 1943 and our mission was to bomb St. Nazaire, France. Thirty-six B-17's went out. This was a major effort at the time.

"We were hit by FW-190's prior to target. Eighty-eight-mm flak hit our left wing. It cut the wing tank off. Gasoline poured into the airplane and caught fire. I was in the ball turret. At this point I had lost my electrical controls and I knew something was wrong.

"I manually cranked the thing around, opened the armored hatch and got back in the airplane when I saw it was on fire. The radioman became excited and jumped out the window without a parachute. At this point we dropped our bombs. It

was minus 50 degrees outside.

"After we made the drop, the pilot took the plane down real fast. They shot down probably eight or nine of our planes on the first attack. We lost our formation.

"We got down to 2,000 feet when one of the waist gunners panicked and tried to bail out but got caught on a .50 calibre gun. I unhooked him so he could jump. He jumped high, the stabilizer hit him and he must have broken into a dozen pieces.

"I took my oxygen mask off as the system was knocked out. All the radio equipment was on fire, wires were burning everywhere. I proceeded to put the fire out with fire extinguishers and water bottles. I did the best I could while being shot at. They were coming in at us from both sides. While not fighting the fire, I manned the workable waist guns.

"Everytime they would make a swoop one or more planes would go down. Eventually the fighters ran out of gas. In those days pursuit planes were limited to something like 25 minutes. We wound up with four B-17's.

"The tailgunner came crawling out of the back. He was all shot up real bad. Blood was coming out of his mouth. He had been shot real bad on the left side of the back. I remember very distinctly from my classes how to handle a situation like this. I laid him down, gave him a couple shots of morphine which put him to sleep immediately. By doing this, he lived. I am very thankful for that.

"In the meantime, the plane started to go down and up. I went forward to find the pilot and co-pilot pretty well shot up. I put some tourniquets on them so they could maintain control of the plane. I then went back to put the control cables together as we had no tail control. I think I remember I repaired the six wires. I then threw all the ammunition out.

"We got the plane back."\*

\*"IT WAS MY FIRST TRIP OUT" by Edwin J. Kosier, *Sergeants*, February, 1979, Pg. 10.

Maynard H. Smith's citation for the Medal of Honor states the following:

SMITH, MAYNARD H.

Rank and organization: Sergeant, U.S. Army Air Corps, 423d Bombardment Squadron, 306th Bomber Group. Place and date: Over Europe, 1 May 1943. Entered service at: Cairo, Mich. Born: 1911, Cairo, Mich. G.O. No.: 38, 12 July 1943. Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty. The aircraft of which Sgt. Smith was a gunner was subjected to intense enemy antiaircraft fire and determined fighter airplane attacks while returning from a mission over enemy-occupied continental Europe on 1 May 1943. The airplane was hit several times by antiaircraft fire and cannon shells of the fighter airplanes. 2 of the crew were seriously wounded, the aircraft's oxygen system shot out, and several vital control cables severed when intense fires were ignited simultaneously in the radio compartment and waist sections. The situation became so acute that 3 of the crew bailed out into the comparative safety of the sea. Sgt. Smith, then on his first combat mission, elected to fight the fire by himself, administered first aid to the wounded tail gunner, manned the waist guns, and fought the intense flames alternately. The escaping oxygen fanned the fire to such intense heat that the ammunition in the radio compartment began to explode, the radio, gun mount, and camera were melted, and the compartment completely gutted. Sgt. Smith threw the exploding ammunition overboard, fought the fire until the enemy fighters were driven away, further administered first aid to his wounded comrade, and then by wrapping himself in protecting cloth, completely extinguished the fire by hand. This soldier's gallantry in action, undaunted bravery, and loyalty to his aircraft and fellow crewmembers, without regard for his own personal safety, is an inspiration to the U.S. Armed Forces.

"Snuffy" Smith flew a total of 13 air combat missions from

England with the 8th Air Force before he was reassigned to ground operations. President Roosevelt sent Secretary of War Stimson to England to present Staff Sergeant Maynard H. Smith, Jr. with The Medal of Honor on July 15, 1943. Ranking Generals from all combat areas were present. In "Snuffy" Smith's words, "to me it was a dream. I had just done what I had been trained to do. I didn't know what the hell it was all about. I wasn't there to get a medal. Like millions of others, I just wanted to get it over with and get home."

After the war was over "Snuffy" Smith owned and published THE POLICE OFFICERS JOURNAL in New York. He is now semi-retired, living in St. Petersburg, Florida. However, he is active in many areas of endeavor. In his words, "I don't need anything to reaffirm my belief in America. With all our trials, troubles and tribulations, the USA is still the greatest in the world, bar none.

"Being an American means freedom of speech, of choice, unlimited opportunity and the protection of my person and property.

"My advice to American youth: Get your hair cut, look like a human being instead of some kind of animal. Get off the pills, the pot and the hippie scene. Go to work or join some branch of military service. And get over the idea your country owes you a living."



Secretary of War Henry Stimson presents Medal of Honor to "Snuffy" Smith.

## First Mission

by George E. Hicks

May Day, 1943. "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday," the radio call heard most frequently that same afternoon.

By the first of May 1943, the Allies were struggling in the air war against the mighty German Air Force, the Luftwaffe. Barely half of the aircraft in the Eighth Air Force were operational due to maintenance and supply problems of one kind or another.

On the first of May 1943, SSgt. Maynard H. Smith was assigned to fly his first combat mission. The target was the German sub pens at Saint Nazaire, France. That area was known throughout the Eighth Air Force as "Flak City."

In stature, Maynard Smith was a little guy. His compact size and "cock of the walk" attitude had earned for him the nickname "Snuffy." Yet, at 32 years of age, he was the old man of the crew, senior by some 10 years. And, on that first mission, not one member of the crew knew what to expect from the new gunner.

Briefing, pre-flight, and takeoff were routine that spring morning. Over the target, the cloud cover was at 70 percent when they began their final approach. Then, with the target only moments away, the flak began with a vengeance. The pilot and navigator, working together as one, fought to keep the B-17F on a steady course at constant speed for the bombing run. It was no easy

task as the explosions of the 88 millimeter shells burst through the formations of heavy bombers.

Immediately after the call "bombs away," the aircraft turned and headed for home. With bomb bay doors closing, the crew was kept busy fending off attacks by German Folke-Wulf 190s as the pilot sought a safe hiding place in the clouds. Within minutes, the hostile fire ceased. One by one, the crewmen checked in with the pilot. Damage reports were negligible, only a few small holes in the right wing. These men were presumably safe in the overcast skies.

As the formation sought sanctuary in the clouds, the lead navigator apparently became disoriented. Enroute toward the United Kingdom, the clouds began to scatter. Reacting to what the navigator thought was the English coast, the formation began its descent. In actuality, the land mass below was the heavily defended Brest peninsula of German-occupied France.

Suddenly, all hell broke loose. German anti-aircraft guns began their murderous barrage, scoring hits on many of the descending B-17s. Then, the tail gunner on Smith's crew yelled through the intercom: "Fighters at six o'clock." Within seconds, the deadly guns of the Luftwaffe's Folke-Wulf 190s raked the formation of stricken aircraft in pass after pass. One by one, the flying fortresses fell.

From his vantage point, Smith was an angry witness as first one wing man and then the other fell victim to the German fighters. With his intercom knocked out, he had no real idea of the severity of his own situation. Shrapnel from bursting flak had literally shredded the aircraft. A ruptured fuel line sent gallons of gasoline into the interior of the ship and erupted into a fierce fire. The oxygen system was also riddled by flak and it further intensified the fires burning within the aircraft.

"I was in the ball turret. At this point, I had lost my electric controls and I knew something was wrong. I manually cranked

the turret around, opened the armored hatch and got back in the airplane when I saw it was on fire."

With the aircraft down to 2,000 feet and without any means to communicate to the flight deck, several crew members panicked. The radioman is said to have jumped free of the burning aircraft without his parachute. One of the waist gunners jumped high and away from the aircraft "... the stabilizer hit him, and he must have broken into a dozen pieces." The second waist gunner bailed out soon after.

Smith then ripped off his oxygen mask and proceeded to fight the flames that were burning and melting the aircraft. One by one, he depleted the fire extinguishers and the water bottles. Then from the rear of the aircraft, the tail gunner began to crawl from his position, leaving a trail of blood from the 20mm wound in his back. Smith quickly dragged the man to relative safety, applied a hasty bandage, and gave him two doses of morphine that ultimately saved the man's life. Then, with each pass by enemy fighters, the 32-year-old gunner moved from waist guns to inferno, alternately combatting the Luftwaffe and the hungry flames.

Even as the fighters withdrew, the situation became more perilous. The ravaging fire literally melted the radio, the camera and the gun mount. With all fire extinguishers depleted, Smith began to try to smother the fire. Wrapping his face in a sweater, he attacked the fire for 90 minutes, using his gloved hands and flight clothing in an effort to blot out the flames. Then, as the live ammunition began to explode, he paused long enough to throw the crates of live shells through the huge holes that had been burned in the fuselage of the aircraft.

With the fires snuffed out, Smith went forward to the flight deck to check on the crew in the cockpit. Everyone was severely wounded — which accounted for the er-

atic pitch and yaw of the badly damaged flying fortress. After ministering to the wounded pilot and co-pilot, Smith returned to the rear of the plane and began to repair critical control cables that were essential to their safe emergency landing at Predannack, England.

That "Mayday," 56 heavy bombers from the Eighth Air Force flew against the odds, the weather, the Luftwaffe and devastating flak. Of the 36 B-17s that flew in formation for the 423rd Bomb Squadron of the 306th Bomb Group, only four were said to have returned. The aircraft that Snuffy Smith fought so valiantly to save never flew again. The fuselage was said to have been riddled with more than 3,500 holes. Indeed, there was little more than the four main beams linking battered nose to tattered tail section.

Six weeks after the fateful return flight over Brest, France, the United States Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, flew to England to present the nation's highest award for gallantry in action to SSgt. Maynard H. "Snuffy" Smith. He was the first enlisted airman ever to receive his nation's Medal of Honor.

### Deserved Recognition

A trophy named in honor of World War II gunner Maynard H. "Snuffy" Smith, the first Air Force enlisted member to receive the Medal of Honor, was presented at Strategic Air Command's 1989 Proud Shield Bombing and Navigation Competition at Barksdale AFB, La.

The award became a reality for modern day gunners because of the efforts of AFSA, the Air Force and the individual efforts of MSgt. Don Morse, 9th Bomb Squadron, Carswell AFB, Tex.

The first Maynard H. Smith B-52 Gunner Trophy was presented to the 379th Bomb Wing, Wurtsmith, Mich., on November 6, 1989. The trophy goes to the B-52 unit with the most points for gunner/fighter activity, dearming exercise and unit fireouts.

Eleven bomb wings competed for the Smith Trophy. The top five finishers were the 379th BMW, 42nd BMW, Loring AFB, Maine; 2nd BMW, Barksdale AFB; 93rd BMW, Castle AFB, Calif.; and 5th BMW, Minot AFB, N.D.

This was the first time the skill of the gunners had been recognized.

## VALOR

# First of the Few

On his first combat mission, Sgt. Maynard Smith earned a unique place in the Air Force heritage of valor.

BY JOHN L. FRISBEE

**E**IGHTH Air Force bombers and fighters began arriving in England during the spring of 1942. The first heavy bomber mission against targets in Occupied Europe was flown on August 17, 1942. Maj. Gen. Ira Eaker, head of VIII Bomber Command and soon to lead the Eighth Air Force, had high hopes of sending massive formations against the Luftwaffe and Germany's war-supporting industry before the end of the year. That was not to be.

The buildup of men and planes was slower than anticipated. Half of Eaker's force was sent to North Africa in late 1942 and early '43, and what was left in England was frequently diverted in a fruitless campaign against German submarine pens along the Bay of Biscay on the west coast of France. The pens, with their eleven-foot-thick reinforced concrete roofs, were impervious to any bombs the AAF had at that time, and were heavily defended by antiaircraft guns and fighters.

On May 1, 1943, Sgt. Maynard Smith, a B-17 ball-turret gunner known to his friends as "Snuffy," participated in a memorable strike against the pens at Saint-Nazaire, familiar to bomber crews as Flak City. He was assigned to the 423d Squadron of the 306th Bombardment Group, one of the Eighth's battle-tested outfits, based at Thurleigh. Smith enjoyed two distinctions: As a replacement, he was on his first combat mission, and at age thirty-two he was ten years older than most of the rest of the crew.

Shortly after bombs-away, Smith's B-17 was hit repeatedly by

flak and cannon fire from FW-190s. The oxygen system and intercom were shot out, and intense fires broke out in the radio compartment and waist section. The situation became so critical that the waist gunners and radio operator bailed out into the sea. The tail gunner had been hit in the chest by shell fragments and was in serious condition.

Smith decided to stay with the plane, tend to the tail gunner as best he could, and fight the fire. He was isolated from the crew up front and at first did not know whether they

had bailed out or been killed, but since the B-17 seemed to be holding formation, he assumed that the pilot, at least, was alive and at the controls.

As long as the fighter attacks continued, Smith alternated between manning the waist guns, fighting the fire, and helping the tail gunner. When heat in the radio compartment began to detonate machine-gun ammunition, he threw exploding .50-caliber belts out through a hole burned in the side of the fuselage.

The attacks by fighters finally stopped, and Smith concentrated on the fire. When all extinguishers were empty, he wrapped himself in protective clothing and put out the fire with his hands. Then, fearing that the heat had weakened the B-17's fuselage, the short, slight Smith threw out everything in the rear of the plane that wasn't too hot, too heavy, or bolted down. With a heroic assist from Snuffy Smith, the battle-scarred Fortress made it across the Channel to a landing near Land's End, the extreme southwest tip of England. That B-17 had flown its last mission.

Six weeks later, Sgt. Maynard H. Smith was awarded the Medal of Honor, the first enlisted airman ever to win the nation's highest decoration. He is one of only five enlisted airmen—four in World War II and one in Vietnam—to be so honored.

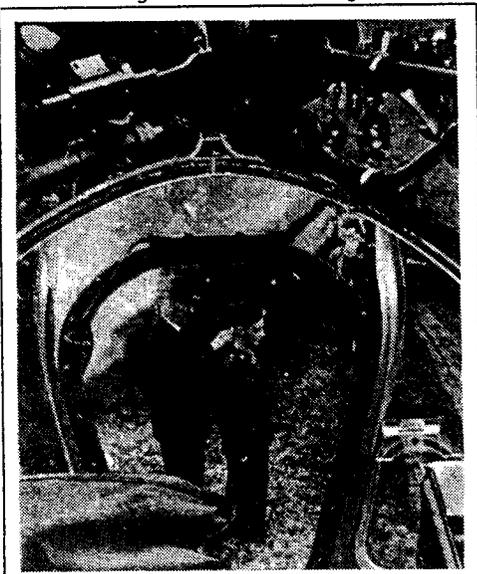
After the Saint-Nazaire strike, Sergeant Smith flew five more missions before being grounded. By that time, the submarine menace had faded, some of the pens had been blown up by rudimentary guided glide bombs, and the Air Force acknowledged that further attacks would be a waste of effort.

Those superhardened, heavily defended targets had tested the skill and bravery of many airmen, among them a small but courageous sergeant who was first of the few among his peers to wear the Medal of Honor. ■

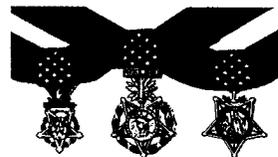


On July 15, Maynard "Snuffy" Smith, by then a staff sergeant, received the Medal of Honor from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson.

306th Bomb Group (H)  
8th AIR FORCE, Station 111, U.S. Army  
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England



July 15, 1943, Somewhere in England: Dwarfed by the giant Fortress that towered above him, little S/Sgt. Maynard H. "Snuffy" Smith, from Caro, Mich., stands at attention while Secretary of War Stimson hangs the ribbon of the Congressional Medal of Honor around his neck. "Snuffy" is the first enlisted man of the 8th Air Force to win the nation's highest decoration.



USA 20c

Medal of Honor

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

*My original of [unclear] LHM*

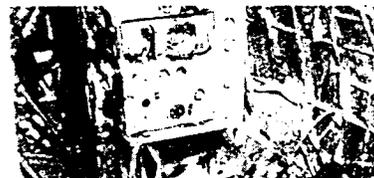
CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY

"FIRST DAY COVER" Number 1302  
First Day Of Issue Mailing not to exceed 2,000.  
The signature of MAYNARD H. "SNUFFY" SMITH is an original.

**AUG 13 1983** *Sharon A. Myers*

Notary Public of Florida at Large  
My Commission Expires Jan. 20, 1985

B 17F No. 42-29649  
 423rd BOMB SQUADRON, 306th BOMB GROUP  
 1 May, 1943



Lt. BOB McCALLUM (Picture lower left) looks at the outside damage before surveying what the inside looks like (3 pictures on right).

#### FLIGHT CREW

Pilot: 1st Lt. LEWIS P. JOHNSON  
 Copilot: 2nd Lt. ROBERT McCALLUM  
 Navigator: 1st Lt. STANLEY M. KISSEBERTH\*\*  
 Nose Gunner: S/Sgt. J.C. MELAUN  
 Top Turret: T/Sgt. WILLIAM W. FAHRENHOLD  
 Radio Operator: T/Sgt. HENRY R. BEAN\*  
 Ball Turret: Sgt. MAYNARD H. SMITH  
 Waist Gunner: S/Sgt. JOSEPH S. BUKACEK\*  
 Waist Gunner: S/Sgt. ROBERT V. FOLLIARD\*  
 Tail Gunner: Sgt. ROY H. GIBSON\*\*

\* Bailed out over English Channel, presumed dead  
 \*\* Wounded

#### Citation

Rank and organization: Sergeant, U.S. Army Air Corps, Bombardment Squadron, 306th Bomber Group. Place of Action: Over Europe, 1 May 1943. Entered service at: Cairo, Mich. 1911, Cairo, Mich. G.O. No.: 38, 12 July 1943. Citation: conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty. The aircraft of which Sgt. Smith was a gunner was subjected to intense enemy antiaircraft fire and determined airplane attacks while returning from a mission over occupied continental Europe on 1 May 1943. The airplane was hit several times by antiaircraft fire and cannon shells of the enemy. Two of the crew were seriously wounded, the oxygen system shot out, and several vital control cables were severed when intense fires were ignited simultaneously in the radio compartment and waist sections. The situation became so desperate that 3 of the crew bailed out into the comparative safety of the sea. Sgt. Smith, then on his first combat mission, elected to fight on by himself, administered first aid to the wounded tail gunner, fought the waist guns, and fought the intense flames alternatingly. Escaping oxygen fanned the fire to such intense heat that ammunition in the radio compartment began to explode. The gun mount, and camera were melted, and the compartment was completely gutted. Sgt. Smith threw the exploding ammunition overboard, fought the fire until the enemy fighters were driven away, further administered first aid to his wounded comrades, and then by wrapping himself in protecting cloth, completely extinguished the fire by hand. This soldier's gallantry, undaunted bravery, and loyalty to his aircraft and fellow crew members, without regard for his own personal safety, is an inspiration to the U.S. Armed Forces.

*The Medal of Honor, sometimes called the Congressional Medal of Honor, is created in the name of the Congress of the United States of America during the War of 1861-1865 to be awarded to members of our Armed Forces for distinguished courage and conspicuous gallantry at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in action with an enemy of the United States. It is the highest honor our country can bestow on its greatest heroes.*

General Orders,) *All Smith*  
 No. 38 ) *Maynard H.*

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
 Washington 25, D. C., 12 July 1943. *16-7-1-1*  
*X16C-8*

II--Award of Medal of Honor.—By direction of the President, under the provisions of the act of Congress approved 9 July 1918 (Bull. 43, WD, 1918), a Medal of Honor was awarded by the War Department in the name of Congress to the following-named enlisted man:

Sergeant Maynard H. Smith (Army serial No. 36523097), Air Corps, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty. The aircraft of which Sergeant Smith was a gunner was subjected to intense enemy anti-aircraft fire and determined fighter airplane attacks while returning from a mission over enemy occupied continental Europe on 1 May 1943. The airplane was hit several times by anti-aircraft fire and cannon shells of the fighter airplanes, two of the crew were seriously wounded, the aircraft's oxygen system shot out, and several vital control cables severed when intense fires were ignited simultaneously in the radio compartment and waist sections. The situation became so acute that three of the crew bailed out into the comparative safety of the sea. Sergeant Smith, then on his first combat mission, elected to fight the fire by himself, administered first-aid to the wounded tail gunner, manned the waist guns, and fought the intense flames alternately. The escaping oxygen fanned the fire to such intense heat that the ammunition in the radio compartment began to explode, the radio, gun mount, and camera were melted, and the compartment completely gutted. Sergeant Smith threw the exploding ammunition overboard, fought the fire until all the fire-fighting aids were exhausted, manned the workable guns until the enemy fighters were driven away, further administered first-aid to his wounded comrade, and then by wrapping himself in protecting cloth, completely extinguished the fire by hand. This soldier's gallantry in action, undaunted bravery, and loyalty to his aircraft and fellow crew members, without regard for his own personal safety, is an inspiration to the armed forces of the United States. Residence at enlistment: Caro, Michigan.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

G. C. MARSHALL,  
 Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

J. A. ULIO,  
 Major General,  
 The Adjutant General.

A TRUE EXTRACT COPY

*W. Frederick*  
 W. FREDERICK

Maj, USAF

PROPERTY OF  
 AIR FORCE MUSEUM  
 Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, O.



Air Force Photo

Standing before a picture of World War II hero Sgt. Maynard H. "Snuffy" Smith, which hangs in a Chanute AFB, Ill., building that was recently named after him, are (from left) Chanute Technical Training Center commander Gen. William Grove Jr.; Smith's granddaughter, Summer Christine Smith, 9; his daughter, Christine Smith Pincince; and her husband, SSgt. Robert E. Pincince.

## WWII Hero 'Snuffy' Smith Honored by Chanute AFB

CHANUTE AFB, Ill. — The "tough little sergeant" who battled a blaze and enemy attacks on his B-17 as it limped home across the English Channel now is memorialized at Chanute AFB with a building named after him.

Sgt. Maynard H. "Snuffy" Smith became the first Air Force enlisted member to be awarded the Medal of Honor. And the aerospace ground equipment/egress building at the Chanute Technical Training Center has been renamed Smith Hall.

Smith earned the medal for his actions May 1, 1943, a day of heavy losses for the 8th Air Force's 423rd Bomb Squadron, 306th Bomb Group.

Smith, the son of a circuit judge in Caro, Mich., was a belly-turret gunner on his first mission over enemy territory. He had arrived in England just a month earlier.

Smith's B-17 was returning to England after a bombing mission over Saint-Nazaire, France, in which the aircraft had suffered only one flak puncture, in the left wing.

As the plane began its descent into what the navigator thought was home territory, the plane found itself under heavy fire from German Focke-Wulf FW-190s over what was actually occupied France.

Two B-17s in the group went down immediately in the attack. The pilot of Smith's plane, in an effort to elude the Germans, moved out over the channel and descended to just above the wave tops.

But 20mm shells from the German pursuers tore through the fuselage, destroying the intercom, oxygen systems and some control lines and setting off intense fires in the radio compartment and waist-gunner sections.

Here is how Smith retold the story a few days later:

After a particularly hard hit, "I hand-cranked myself up and crawled out of my turret into the ship. The first thing I saw was a sheet of flame coming out of the radio room and another fire by the tail-wheel section."

The radio operator immediately

dived out of the plane, followed by the right and left waist gunners.

"The smoke and gas were really thick," Smith said. "I wrapped a sweater around my face so I could breathe, grabbed a fire extinguisher and attacked the fire in the radio room."

"Glancing over my shoulder at the tail fire, I thought I saw something moving and ran back. It was the tail gunner, painfully crawling back, obviously wounded. He had blood all over him."

Smith gave the injured man a shot of morphine and returned to fighting the fire.

"I just got started on this when that FW came diving in again. I jumped for the waist gun and fired at him and as he swept under us I turned to the other waist gun and let him have it from the other side...."

"I took off my chute so I could move easier. I'm glad I didn't take it off sooner, because afterwards I found it had stopped a .30-caliber bullet. Another quick burst with the guns and back to the radio fire. Then back again to the wounded gunner to comfort him. When he asked, 'Are we almost home yet?' I lied and told him we were...."

"By now, it was so hot that the ammunition was exploding all over the place and making a terrific racket. I didn't dare throw all of it out because I had to keep some for the visits of the FW."

Finally winning his battle with the flames, Smith saw that the plane was at last approaching the coast of England.

"I could tell that the ship was acting tail-heavy, so I tossed overboard everything I could: guns, ammunition, clothes, everything. I really had a time with the ammunition cans — they weighed 98 pounds and I weigh 130 — but I managed to get them out...."

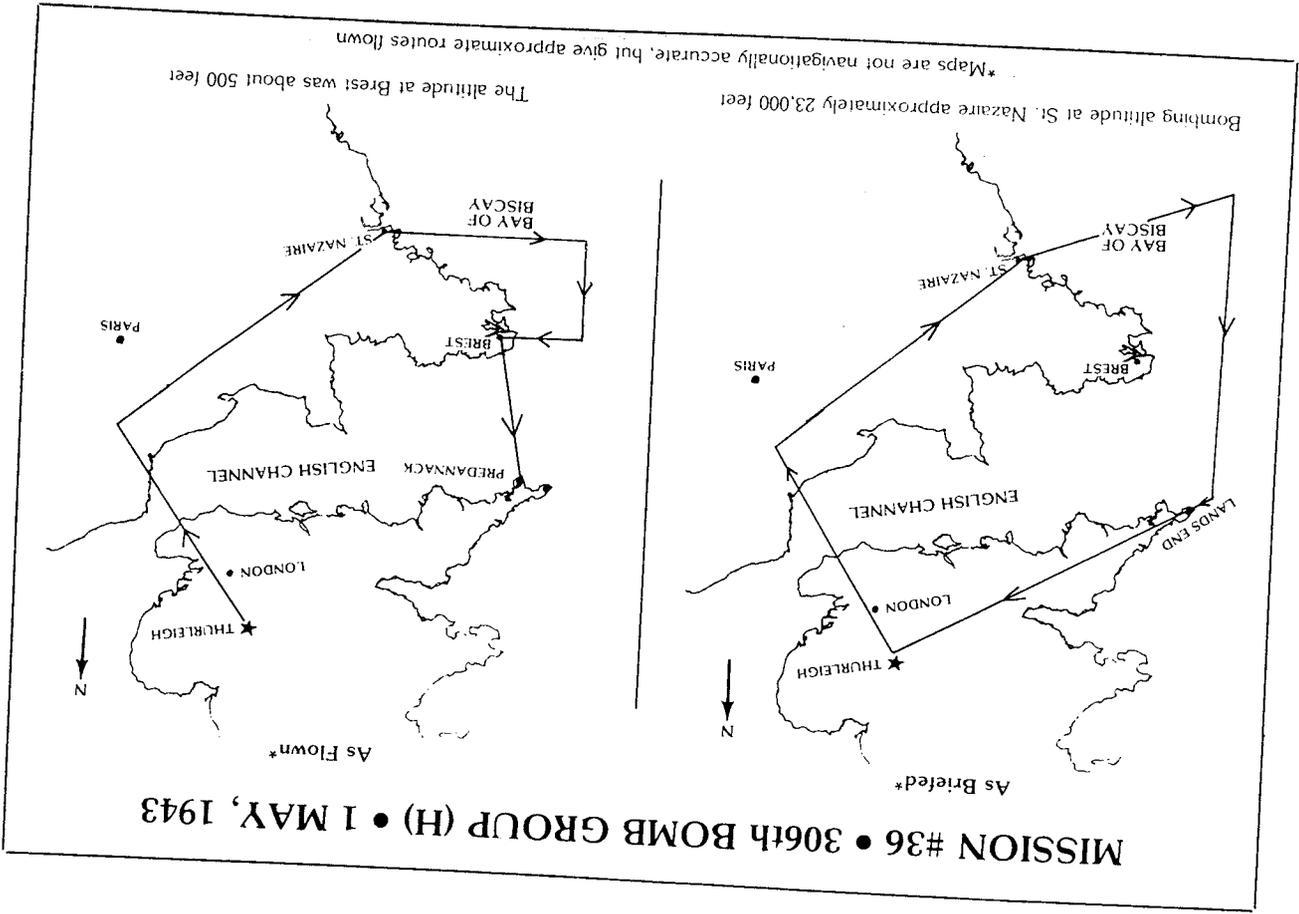
Miraculously, the badly damaged plane held together and landed in one piece.

The Medal of Honor was presented to Smith by Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson. Ironically, at the time the award was made Smith was serving KP duty "for some mis-

demeanor or another," wrote Edward Jablonski in his book, *Flying Fortress*.

Smith completed four more combat missions before returning Stateside and being discharged after the war.

In addition to the Medal of Honor, he earned a number of other awards and decorations. He died May 11, 1984, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



# Medal of Honor



Thurleigh, Bedfordshire Eng.  
15 July, 1943



Clearwater, Florida  
July 15, 1983

**Maynard H. Smith**

