

**THE TRUE STORY OF THE MEN WHO FLEW THE DEADLIEST MISSIONS OF
WORLD WAR II, AND AN UNLIKELY HERO WHO RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR
IN THE MIDST OF THE BLOODIEST MILITARY CAMPAIGN IN AVIATION HISTORY**

There's no higher accolade in the U.S. military than the Medal of Honor, and 472 people received it for their actions during World War II. But only one was demoted right after: Maynard Harrison Smith.

Smith is one of the most unlikely heroes of the war, where he served in B-17s during the early days of the bombing of France and Germany from England. From his juvenile delinquent past in Michigan, through the war and during the decades after, Smith's life seemed to be a series of very public missteps. The other airmen took to calling the five-foot, five-inch airman "Snuffy," after an unappealing cartoon and movie character.

This is also the man who, on a tragically mishandled mission over France on May 1, 1943, single-handedly saved the surviving crew of his stricken B-17. With every other gunner injured or bailed out, Smith stood alone in the fuselage of a shattered, nameless bomber and battled fires, treated wounded crew, and fought off fighters. His ordeal is part of a forgotten mission that aircrews came to call the May Day Massacre. The skies over Europe in 1943 were a charnel house for U.S. pilots, who were being led by tacticians surprised by the brutal effectiveness of German defenses. By May 1943, the combat losses among bomber crews were a staggering 40 to 50 percent.

Smith's story intersects with some of the luminaries of aviation history, including Curtis LeMay, Ira Eaker, and Henry "Hap" Arnold, during critical times of their storied careers. *Inferno* also examines Smith's life in a new, comprehensive light, through the use of exclusive interviews of those who knew him as well as public and archival records. This is both a thrilling and horrifying story of the air war over Europe during World War II and a fascinating look at one of America's forgotten heroes.

JOE PAPPALARDO is the author of the critically acclaimed books *Sunflowers: The Secret History* and *Spaceport Earth: The Reinvention of Spaceflight*. Pappalardo is a writer and former associate editor of *Air & Space Smithsonian* magazine and a former senior editor and current contributing editor at *Popular Mechanics*.

READ BY MATT GODFREY



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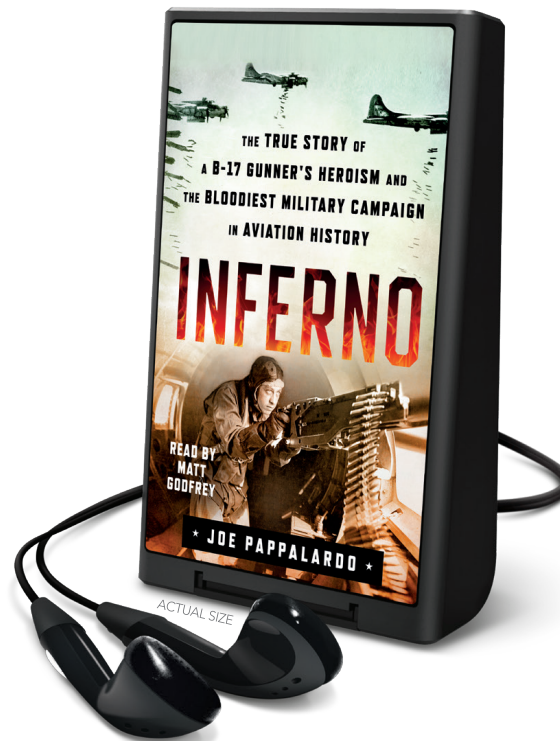
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INFERNO

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