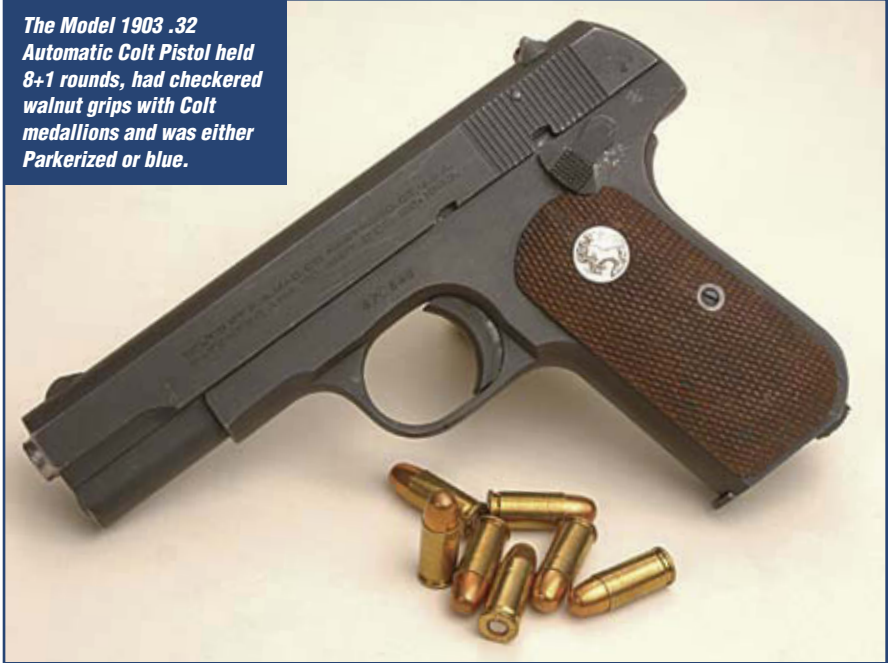


supposed to be his last combat mission. He was slated to move on to higher command responsibilities. In the last seconds of his group's bomb-run over a factory producing ME109 fighter planes in Weiner Neustadt, Austria, Col. Smart's B-17 took a direct hit from a heavy caliber anti-aircraft gun. As with most B-17 pilots and crewmen Col. Smart, as a rule, did not wear his parachute continuously. However, in his reminisces he writes the first volley from those anti-aircraft guns had burst so close he thought it wise to take his 'chute from under his seat and clip it onto his harness.

Bare moments later his B-17 received that direct hit. Witnesses in other B-17s in the formation said in their after-action reports Col. Smart's plane was blown into pieces and it was very doubtful if anyone could have survived. Three men did. Col. Smart and his co-pilot Maj. Homer Hill were blown clear of the airplane by the explosion. Col. Smart regained his senses as he was free falling from more than 20,000'. He was wounded and dazed but finally managed to get his parachute deployed. Likewise with Maj. Hill. Also, miraculously the tail gunner, Sgt. Alvey J. Carter rode the falling tail section of the B-17 down for several thousand feet before he too took to his parachute. All three men ended in German captivity. The other seven B-17 crewmen perished in the explosion.

Col. Smart spent about two months

The Model 1903 .32 Automatic Colt Pistol held 8+1 rounds, had checkered walnut grips with Colt medallions and was either Parkerized or blue.



in Austrian and German hospitals being treated for his many wounds. He was interrogated by both German military officers and Gestapo agents, but never tortured or given drugs. For that he was grateful because as a former member of Gen. Arnold's staff, he knew the exact date and location of the D-Day landings scheduled for less than a month after he was shot down. After recovering from his wounds, Col. Smart was incarcerated

in a German POW camp until freed by American forces on April 29, 1945.

Because all the survivors of Col. Smart's B-17 were not able to deploy their parachutes until having fallen to lower altitudes, witnesses in other planes felt no one survived the explosion. Therefore, his family and the USAAF's hierarchy had no knowledge he was alive until notified by the International Red Cross a few months later.

The following is an excerpt from a letter by Gen. Arnold dated May 17, 1944 to Gen. Jacob L. Devers, Deputy Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. "It was a terrible tragedy when Colonel Smart was lost. He was an outstanding man. I had brought him to Washington a couple of years ago, put him on my personal staff, and I agreed very reluctantly to his going for duty with a combat unit. I never saw anyone so pleased as he was when that decision was made. His loss is one of the tragedies that we must face in war. Unfortunately the Air Forces has so many such men—one after another. Fortunately some of them have later turned up in German prison camps. I have such hopes for Jake Smart, but I must admit they are rather faint hopes."

Jacob E. Smart stayed in the military after WWII, was promoted to Brigadier General (one star) in 1950 and gained his fourth general's star on Aug. 1, 1963. He served in high US Air Force command positions around the world, retiring in 1966. He passed away in 2006 at age 97.

I feel honored and privileged to have read these many documents by him and about him, and even to have fired Gen. Smart's personal Colt pistol.

GUNS



Gen. Smart wearing his Colt Model 1903 .32 in a shoulder holster during the war in Korea (1950-1953).