

AUDIE MURPHY RESEARCH FOUNDATION

A NON-PROFIT PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION

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Dear Friends:

We are pleased to report that the response to the first newsletter far exceeded our expectations. Your generous contributions enabled us to research and produce this second expanded newsletter and send it out free of charge.

We are particularly pleased with the response we have received from schools and libraries. Interest is growing among the younger generation. We have heard from dozens of students who have used both the newsletter and the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Website (<http://www.audiemurphy.com/>) for their school projects.

One of the goals of the Foundation is to place resource materials in as many libraries as possible. After consulting with several libraries, we have come to the conclusion that the most effective way of making this information accessible to the public is via CD ROM.

The Foundation is fortunate to have the voluntary assistance of computer programmer Eva Dano, who has already put in hundreds of hours designing a CD ROM series which will provide a wealth of information about Audie Murphy's life. The CD collection will include movie memorabilia, photographs, newspaper clippings and magazine articles.

In addition to Eva Dano, we are indebted to Wayne Cutshaw, Stan Smith, David Willson, Sue Gossett, Dennis Stults, Patti Dey and many others for locating, collecting and lending material to the Foundation for copying and scanning. Even so, we are still lacking many significant items.

If you can help us locate anything that should be included in the Foundation collection, please contact us on our toll free telephone number 1-888-314-AMRF.

Through the efforts of many veterans organizations and private individuals we have located dozens of people who knew Audie Murphy and have agreed to be interviewed. Although these interviews are time consuming, and most involve travel, Terry and I have found these interviews to be invaluable.

We want you to know how much we appreciate your comments and suggestions. Unfortunately, because of the large amount of correspondence we receive, it has become impossible to send a personal reply to every letter. Nevertheless, we welcome your input.

Your support makes our work possible.

Sincerely,

Larryann Willis
Executive Director
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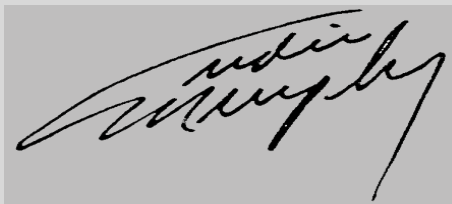
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VOLUME 2

SPRING 1997

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Audie Murphy on Apache Agent after winning the September 8, 1963 Owner-Trainer Race at Del Mar.

Courtesy of Jay Fishburn

TO HELL AND BACK was on TV the other night. I tried watching it and got all choked up. It's been a long time but I guess I never got over it. I never felt like that about anybody else in my whole life and I don't expect to ever again. I don't know if Audie felt that way about me, but we were good friends.

I met Audie in the mid '50s at the Centennial Race Track in Denver. I was a jockey and riding some horses for Walter Merrick and others. Audie had some horses there and was looking for a jockey. He hired me and I stayed with him for years. Dallas Clark was his main Quarter Horse trainer. Dallas was killed in a car wreck in the late '50s I think. After that, Audie had quite a few different trainers. I trained some of his Thoroughbreds in the '60s and so did Farrell Jones and Keith Stuckie.

When they were racing in Denver, Audie kept a stable of horses there. When the rodeo

was in town Casey Tibbs would be there too. Casey was World Champion Cowboy, you know. He did more for the rodeo business than anybody. We went to the races every day and the rodeo every night. The three of us became really good friends.

Audie had some good horses that made him a lot of money — Depth Charge, Quick Tide, Blen Hostess, Mackay Boy Audie's horses were in the black, but he had to bet eight races a day. He always bet to win and I can recall some elaborate parlays. Thousands and thousands of dollars. But money had no meaning to Audie; you couldn't believe how he could go through money.

Casey was quite a gambler himself. Why, Casey could start the morning with \$10,000 and that night not have a quarter. I remember one night at Hollywood Park he lost all his money and borrowed some from Audie. Audie took off and Casey comes back and says, "Hey, I let a guy take my car. You got enough money so we can go to dinner tonight?"

Audie enjoyed being around the race track people because nobody paid attention to him. Nobody particularly cared that he was an actor or anything else. He was just Murph. He liked that. Audie had a lot of free time when he wasn't working on a movie. He got bored. That's why he spent so much time around the track. His agent would come down to the track and talk to him and say, "Hey, you got a letter . . ." or this or that.

Audie liked to work the colts. He'd get right down there and ground drive them and get a big kick out of it. But he never would go to the winner's circle. Even if one of his horses won, he never would go.

One thing about Audie: He was the easiest person in the world to train a horse for. The trouble the average trainer has with owners is that they fall in love with their horses and first thing you know they don't want to drop him down to a cheaper claiming race because they're afraid they'll lose the horse. Audie didn't usually do that. But I remember

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one time we were in a restaurant and Audie'd lost a horse in a claiming race. Now this particular horse was a mare. Audie gave a lot of money for her and wanted to keep her for breeding. The trainer lost her without talking to Audie first. The trainer came in, saw Murph, and he was running around the tables one way, and Audie was running around the other way saying, "I want to talk to you!"

Audie liked to go down to the ranch [A M Farms in Perris, CA]. One time we were down there and went out to shoot rabbits. Audie was a really good shot. This particular time we were playing around. I was walking one way and Audie another. All of a sudden "boom, boom" and a couple of shots landed about four feet from me. I turned around and sent two shots right back "boom, boom" at him. Audie ran and dove for cover. I yelled, "What's the matter — you chicken?" He yelled back, "I don't think you can shoot as good as I can!"

We all used to play practical jokes on each other. But Audie never played a practical joke on anybody who might get hurt. It was always on one of the stunt guys like Jimmy Shepard. We'd all get a laugh out of it. I remember he and Jimmy — a kid who doubled him a lot — they liked to practice their stuntwork around the set. Boy, they'd get to skirmishing and people'd think they were killing each other. They were just having fun.

Audie loved animals. There was a groom working for the people next to me and they had this little, tiny, black dog that looked like a

miniature Doberman — a Chihuahua — they wanted to get rid of. Audie took it and that was his dog. It stayed with Audie in his room and he took it everywhere with him.

Audie liked horses and being around them. He rode good for an actor, but he didn't like to ride just to ride that much. He had to be doing something with a horse. He won the Owners and Trainers Race at Del Mar on a horse called Apache Agent, a Quarter Horse. To be eligible, the horse had to be used on the race track, ponying horses. Apache Agent was a AAA+ horse, but I sure ponied off him. Audie rode him in the Owners Race. They rode western saddles and just got in a line and broke off. It was a quarter of a mile. He loved that!

I remember somebody was selling a horse Audie wanted and quoted \$35,000. Audie really wanted that horse and asked me to look at it. It was a real nice horse — probably worth it — but \$35,000 was a lot of money. I said, "Audie, can we afford this horse?" He said, "Hell no, but we got 30 days to figure out where to get the money." He never worried about it. "Oh, I'll win that much," or "Something'll pop up." He bought the horse and somehow he paid for it.

I heard that toward the end, Audie got spread a little thin. But, you know, any time he borrowed from anybody he always figured on paying it all back. He always paid me every dime he owed me. And I've heard stories about Audie drinking. But I'll tell you what: Audie and I were real close for over 15 years and the only thing I ever saw him have in his

life was a glass of wine before dinner, maybe, in a restaurant. That is the only time I ever saw him have a drink and he didn't do that very often.

Audie did a lot of good things for people. When we were down at Del Mar a guy called Audie up and said "Hey, there's a buddy of yours — a sergeant — who was in the Army with you. He's in pretty bad shape and he's down in some joint." So we went and got him. Audie told me, "This is Sergeant —" I can't recall his name right now. We found the guy in a bar about three sheets to the wind. Audie brought him home, bought him some new clothes, got him all cleaned up and tried to help him get straightened up. Audie kept him around for about a week, gave him some money and tried to get him back on his feet. One day the guy told me, "You know, if it hadn't been for Audie, I'd've been dead half a dozen times while we were in the Army. Guess he saved my life again."

Audie was certainly colorful. You just don't see guys like him today. Not many people did all the things he did. Audie was really the last American hero. Right after the war he could have been governor of Texas if he'd wanted to. But he didn't like to talk about the things that happened in the war.

Audie knew a lot of people, but he never got really close to anyone. Even with me, there was a wall you couldn't get behind. It's like he'd been somewhere nobody else had gone and you couldn't go with him.

Jay Fishburn - July 1997



July 20, 1957 -- Audie's stallion, Mackay Boy, ridden by Jay Fishburn, won the 350 yard race at Centennial Race Track. Left to right: Dallas Clark (trainer), unknown, Adolfo (AM Farms manager), unknown, Casey Tibbs, Jay Fishburn.

MEETS BUDDY HERE

The Gary stop turned out to be a pleasant reunion with a war buddy for Audie Murphy, one of the most decorated soldiers of World War II, who headed the film company on its trip here. For it was backstage of the home show tent in Gleason Park that Murphy met a Griffith veteran who was identified today only as Ditterline.

Murphy told a Post-Tribune reporter today that he recognized Ditterline immediately last night and the two spent several minutes talking over the war days together. They were together in the Colmar pocket in France with the 3rd Infantry Division.

POST-TRIBUNE
Gary, Indiana - 1951

EXCERPTS FROM JULY 1997 INTERVIEW WITH HOLLACE "RED" DITTERLINE

I saw Murph when he came to Gary promoting THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE. John Dierkes and two ladies were with him and Murph introduced me. I was tickled because Murph was my company commander and I got to talk to him once more. We visited for about a half an hour. I asked him if he'd seen any of the guys and he said he'd seen this one lieutenant in the hospital. Me and Louis [Luigi] DiGuisepe had found him in the woods. This lieutenant had lost his helmet and his gun, he was all nerves and had about lost his mind. We brought him back with us and Murph sent him to the hospital. Murph said he'd visited him in the hospital, but I don't think he was doing too good. He had post-traumatic stress disorder.

Years later I heard that Murph had PTSD too. I never stopped and thought that Murph might have it. But I think every one of us who was in that company had it. I still got it.

When we got home, people didn't understand about post-traumatic stress disorder. A lot of the guys would go to the tavern and try drinking their blues away. People would tease `em. Sombdy'd toss a firecracker and the guy'd fall off the stool and crawl around in the spit on the floor. Some people thought that was real funny.

My doctor says there's no cure for it. When I go to bed at night I don't know if I'm gonna

sleep in the bed or sleep on the floor. I kicked the wall and broke two toes here a while back. And my knuckles are black and blue where I beat the walls. I don't say this to brag, `cause I wish I didn't have it. Anyhow, a lot of guys have it a lot worse than me. I go to the VA Outpatient Center and I can just about tell looking into the guys' eyes if they have post-traumatic stress disorder. A lot of people say, "Well, my daddy had it and he won't talk about it." But talking about it is what helps it. You got to get it off your chest. You got to talk about it. People think you're lying a lot of times when you tell `em about things that happened. But it's nothing to lie about.

I joined Murphy's B Company in January of 1945. The 25th I think it was...right in the

middle of the Battle of the Colmar Pocket. I was a brand new recruit and that was my first battle. I saw Audie Murphy do what he done to win the Congressional Medal of Honor.

I got drafted. I was 27 years old and had a wife and baby with another on the way. I had a couple of deferments because I worked in a foundry as a molder. But I turned the next deferment down because I'd heard the Navy was looking for molders and paid good money. I tried to volunteer to join the Navy. But instead of the Navy, I got drafted into the Infantry. I told `em I'd do any job they had if they would just get me out of the Army. I knew the Infantry was not a happy place. You got bumped off pretty quick and I had a family to think about. But I was stuck. I did my basic at



Courtesy of Hollace Ditterline

PFC Hollace "Red" Ditterline - 1944. Decorations: Combat Infantryman's Badge, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, Two Battle Stars, Presidential Unit Citation and French Croix de Guerre with Palm.

Camp Robinson in Arkansas where I became very, very good friends with Roger Foster. Roger and me were together until we both got wounded during the attack on the Siegfried Line.

We left New York on the Queen Elizabeth. It took five days to get from New York to Greenock, Scotland. And another 20 days or something like that to get to the front lines. We rode in a freezing cold boxcar. They called `em "forty-and-eight," taken from WWI when they put forty men or eight horses in them. It was so cold we built a fire to try to stay warm and set that boxcar on fire. They'd have court-martialed us if they knew we did that. At one station we traded with a boy for a jug, I guess you'd call it a bottle...a funny looking bottle of...they call it schnapps over there. We traded him a carton of cigarettes for it. I remember as the train was pulling away, one of the guys hollered "Thank ya feller, thank ya." And when we got out of shouting distance we opened it up and it wasn't nothing but grape juice.

The train took us within 10 or 15 miles of the front. They had what we called "repple depples" where they sent us new recruits. We stayed in a hotel that had the sides bombed out. We were freezing. We found some diesel, put it in a gallon pickle jar and lit it. That kept us warm. The next morning we looked like black people we had so much soot on us, but it was better than freezing to death.

The officers would call or go down to the repple depple when they needed replacements. They gave our orders to a lieutenant who told us what to do. He told me and Roger and a



National Archive Photo
couple of other guys to get on a truck that didn't have no top. It was a cold and windy ride to the front.

When they dropped us off I was the first one off the truck. Murphy was standing there talking to somebody. The driver told him, "Here's a couple of guys for your outfit."



National Archive Photo

Murph told us to follow the path out in the woods and get in a foxhole the Germans had made. It had a cover on it so the aerial bursts wouldn't get us. I was scared to death. Murph was just a second lieutenant...and he WAS A LITTLE KID. I mean, actually. He was about 17 and I was 27. And I thought, "What are YOU doing telling ME what to do?" But I soon got the feeling that he was our company commander and God bless him. I'd do anything I could to help him.

So, the four of us followed the trail, like Murphy told us. We passed a dead kraut that was bloated and all swelled up. I seen that dead kraut all night long. Murph came up and told us to take turns standing guard. He told us to get in that covered foxhole and try to stay warm. He said, "Three of you can stay in there while one of you stands watch." I pulled the first guard duty. It was so dark you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. I think I'd have shot a dog if he'd went by us, I was so nervous. I don't know where Murph stayed that night, but I'll bet he didn't sleep much, there was so much shelling going on.

The next morning we had to attack the woods. It was freezing cold. In one place the snow was up to our crotch and we had to fight in that. We had to cross a field. We got out in the middle of it and a German with a machine gun cut down on us. Roger was a BAR man. A Browning Automatic Rifle is a big weapon. We finally got around this German machine gunner and Roger shot him and wounded him. And then he walked up to him—and I never will forget it—Roger pointed that BAR down and shot him two or three times in the head. And his head bounced off

the ground. But you don't feel sorry for `em `cause they're trying to kill you.

We were always short in our company. A company in the Infantry was about 200 men. But by the time we fought our way through those woods, I don't think we had—I'd have to be guessing—maybe 20 men left. And Murph was wounded. Then here comes the whole German Army. There wasn't enough of us to stop `em.

Murph told us to get back and wait. We didn't know what he was telling us to do that for. We didn't know that he was gonna take the bull by the horns and do it himself. He was the type of guy who'd give you an order and you were afraid not to do it. You know what I mean. He was a little fella but he might bust you real hard.

So Murph made us go back while he stayed out there by himself. I think he did that because he really cared about his men. He wouldn't have made us go back when he got up on that TD and used that .50 caliber machine gun on the krauts if he hadn't been that way. We would have tried to help him if he'd have let us. But I don't think we could have done any more than what he did by himself...and we all probably would've got killed. I don't like for to call in artillery on me! But he did! We thought he was crazy!

We retreated like he told us but we didn't go back very far. We were dug in watching him. He was wounded and on that TD. He could have missed doing that. I don't think anybody ever really asked him what he done it for. I think he done it to keep us from getting killed. He would have got killed himself to protect us. Five or six tanks and a couple of

companies of Germans is hard for one man to bat up against. I'd have got off and run, if it was me.

After the Colmar Pocket we fought up toward the Rhine River. We were pulled into a little town in France. We camped out upstairs over an old French couple. There were 10 of us in a room about 10 foot square. We'd been pulled back for re-grouping, you know, getting more guys in our outfit and to take a rest.

They put a sign up on the makeshift bulletin board: "Know Your Officers." Well, I knew my company commander, Murph, but I didn't know anybody else. This colonel decided to inspect the troops so Murph and this colonel came up to where we were. And, of course, we all had to stand at attention. This colonel asks me...I don't know why he picked on me...I guess because I had red hair...I'd've been glad to grey it for him. But anyhow, he said, "Soldier, what's your name?" So I gave him my name, rank and serial number. Then he said, "Who am I?" I said, "I don't know sir, I never seen you before." He didn't like that answer and he kind of chewed on Murph. I felt real bad about it, so, after it was all over with, I went to Murph and apologized. Murph said, "Don't pay no attention to him. Tomorrow he'll probably be dead and he won't remember."

The Germans had this radio show called "Axis Sally." They would broadcast things to demoralize us. Our officers would have passwords. For instance, one guy'd say "honey" and you were supposed to answer "bee." Well, Axis Sally would know the password before we did and tell us what it was. It would really get your mind. And she would tell about a guy in our outfit whose wife was stepping out on him at home. And the guy would check it out and find out it was true. And he'd get depressed and get himself killed. I know if I'd lost my wife, I don't think I'd have come back. It really affected morale.

They wanted to make me a sergeant, but I didn't want it. I said, "Give it to Roger because he's more educated than me." So they did. He got wounded real bad and years later it finally killed him.

Charlie Owen's nickname might have been "Tweed." Tweed was our bazooka man and I was the guy that carried the shells for the bazooka. I didn't like that job much because every time they had to do something like block a road or hit a pillbox, they'd call for a bazooka. That's why Murph sent me and a couple of other guys out to set up a roadblock while he and the rest of the company got into a fight taking a German barracks.

Murph sent me and Louis DiGuiseppe and Maurice Minton and a sergeant from the tank-

ers who had lost his tank out to block the road. Murph said to me, "Red, you're a bazooka man today. You go with `em." I wish he'd have said to me, "Go fly a kite." But he didn't and I would of done anything for him.

The road was a T-shape and they didn't want any German tanks coming down that road taking back the French town we'd just taken. We tried to dig in but the ground was too frozen and there were shells going off all around us. It was not a pleasant place to be.

Pretty soon Germans started coming out of the woods and surrendering. One group of five carrying a wounded German on a litter surrendered. Before long we had 21 prisoners.

DiGuiseppe was dug in on the other side of the road, I was guarding the prisoners. Minton and the tanker sergeant were facing the road when we saw three guys coming down the road from the direction Murph was. They were wearing snow suits and so were we.



National Archive Photo

I don't know if God talks to people, but I think he told me to tell Minton, "Don't trust `em." Minton said, "Oh, Murph's sending us three guys to help out." And I kept telling him, "I don't believe it." Minton told me, "You just guard those prisoners. We didn't have time to search `em real good and I don't like `em behind us." With all the shelling going on, there was a lot of noise. And Minton hollered to those three, "Are you Americans?" And we couldn't hear their answer and they probably couldn't hear Minton. They walked right up to Minton and were about three feet away when we realized they were Germans and they realized we were Americans.

Two of the Germans swung up their burp guns. The one across from Minton shot him and the one across from the tanker sergeant shot him. I knew the minute they hit Minton

that he was dead. When a guy's killed, he'll fall a certain way that is not natural. He'll fall with his arm crooked underneath him. And that's what Minton done. When your friends get killed, you get kind of angry, if you know what I mean. I shot all three of those Germans with my M-1. I killed the two with the burp guns and wounded the other one. I'd have finished him off too except my gun was empty.

DiGuiseppe hollered over, "Are you guys all right? Are you all right?" I hollered back, "Oh, yeah. We had burp guns shooting at us. We ARE NOT all right!" Minton was dead and the tanker sergeant had seven holes in his chest. The Third Infantry Division book doesn't show that Minton got killed, but he sure did, right there in front of me.

Then Roger Foster comes down the road with more prisoners. Roger was a sergeant by then and he told me and DiGuiseppe to march those 65 prisoners back to the battalion com-

mand post set up in the French town we'd just taken. We made the German prisoners dump out the wounded German on the litter and made `em carry the tanker sergeant with us to the first-aid station. I never did know that sergeant's name. He was hurt real bad and I don't think he lived.

Even though the company had been through the area, there were still German snipers in the woods. It was especially dangerous at night so DiGuiseppe and I decided not to get in a hurry getting back to that barracks fight Murph was in. So we went AWOL for the night. We found a room the Germans had left when they got run out of town. They left a bed and stew and bread. We spent the night and lived it up on German food.

By the time we got back with the company, they had taken the German barracks. Some of

our guys had been killed. I was glad I missed that fight. The company had taken over the barracks and got cleaned up. A sergeant saw us when we came in and said, "How come you and DiGuiseppe haven't taken a bath?" I said, "I didn't know we was `sposed to take a bath. I been dirty ever since I got here and I don't feel like taking a bath." The sergeant said, "Where you been?" And I said, "We been in that foxhole over there, all night." And he said, "Naw, you're too dirty to have been in that foxhole. You should have had a bath." He told us to take a bath and let it go. DiGuiseppe got killed a little while later.

Anyhow, Murph put us in for the Bronze Star...and 50 years later I received it. The people in our church got it together. We have a policeman in our congregation who knew a retired major named Ron Crosby. They got him to look into it and surprised me. They sure surprised me, `cause I cried.

Murph left our company soon after that. They said it was because G-2 wanted to find out what he knew about the Germans. I didn't see him after that. I was only with the company three months because I got wounded when we attacked the Siegfried Line.

You know, I got a little wound in the shoulder once and Roger said I should get a Purple Heart for it. He got one for a little wound. But I said I didn't want it because there was a superstition on the front that if you aren't wounded very bad and get a Purple Heart for it, the next time you get wounded it's REAL bad. That's what happened to Roger.

We had a colonel — I never knew his name — that took us up over a hill that didn't have a tree on it. The krauts had us zeroed in and we lost 16 men up on top of that hill. Roger Foster got hit bad in the gut. I sat and talked



Courtesy of Dennis Stults & Universal Studios

Bazooka team from TO HELL AND BACK

with him while we were waiting for the medics. It was what they called a colostomy wound. He had to live with it for years and it finally killed him.

That day they made me a bazooka man, so there were two of us: Tweed and me. I had a guy that carried the shells, a loader they called him, and he got killed. I had a spoon in my pocket. I wish I could show it to you, where a piece of shrapnel hit it. We got down in the valley. Somebody said we was close to the Siegfried Line. That's when a shell come in and got 14 of us. We got hit close to the Siegfried Line, by just one shell and I often

wondered if it was what we used to call a "short round," an American shell that just fell short `cause there wasn't enough powder to boost it any farther. We had 30 casualties that day before we fired a shot...and one of `em was me.

They sent me to a hospital in France and this doctor said to me, "If that had been an eighth of an inch closer to bone, it'd blown your leg off." I said, "I wish it had've." And he said, "Are you crazy?" And I said, "You go up on the frontline, sir, one time and you'll find out what I'm talking about." A "million dollar wound" they called it. I had a wife and kid and another on the way and I was glad they sent me home.

The guys told me that after I got hit, Murph turned up with the company on the Siegfried Line. He stole a jeep and come up to be with `em. That may be blunt, but that's what they told me he done.

When I tell people Audie Murphy was my company commander, they say, "Aahhhhh you're drunk or been drinking." And I haven't been drinking in 37 years. And I say, "No, really, he WAS." That don't make ME somebody big, but he sure was somebody big.

If Audie Murphy would have told me to jump off a mountain, I'd have jumped off, `cause I thought that much of him. And when Murph died I bawled like a baby. It was like losing my own brother.



Courtesy of Hollace Ditterline

April 1995 Presentation of the Bronze Star to Hollace Ditterline. Left to Right: Pastor Michael C. Poole, State Senator Sue Landske, Hollace Ditterline, Major Ron Crosby (Ret.)

*Hollace "Red" Ditterline
July 1997 Interview*



Dragon Teeth of the Siegfried Line - 1945

National Archive Photo

[M]y job is to serve as contact man between the units of the division. When we begin the attack, I have a jeep, a driver an interpreter — and a violent distrust of anything German. My duties should not take me to the front, but I have learned to prepare for the worst.

In battle, lines often change swiftly. And those in the immediate rear are suddenly at the immediate front. To the .50 caliber machine gun mounted on the jeep, I add a few rifles, two German machine guns, and a case of grenades. . . .

At regimental headquarters, where I wait for orders, the phones jangle constantly. Staff officers grab messages, anxiously scan them, and turn to their maps. Soon we all know that part of the division has met major resistance at a point considerably east of the Siegfried Line. . . .

At headquarters, I learn of Captain Hogan's death. He was in a captured pillbox when a mortar shell got one of his men. Badly wounded, the man tried dragging himself back to cover. The captain crawled out to give him a hand. Another shell landed, sending a piece of steel into the captain. A lieutenant went after him. The third shell landed with pin-point accuracy; and the three men died together.

The remainder of the company reached a deserted enemy fire trench at the edge of the Siegfried Line. From the security of concrete pillboxes, the Germans zeroed-in the trench with rapid firing mortar guns. The company was pinned. Anyone attempting to leave the trench lived but a few seconds.

For two days I brooded over the news while running official errands in the rear. But finally I could take it no longer. I had been with the company since North Africa; and it had become a part of my life's blood. Its lot was my lot; and to hell with regulations.

At headquarters I casually check on the position, fixing the location firmly in mind. There can be no mistake, but I must not arouse suspicion. Officially I am going up toward the front to check a telephone line.

My communications sergeant drives the jeep; and he guesses my intention.

"If you don't come back," he says glumly, "what kind of a spot will it put me in?"

"I'll be back."

"But if you don't make it, lieutenant?"

"You were acting under orders, my orders. Nobody can do anything to you."

"Okay. But I still don't like it."

"Just consider it none of your business; and don't act like you're driving a hearse. You're not going to be in any danger."

"I'm not afraid. I was thinking about you."

"Why? I'm asking for it."

"Okay. So you ask for it."

"Don't you ever break any rules?"

"I've broken about every rule in the book."

"So have I. One more won't matter."

On reaching a point from which we can see the famed "dragon teeth," I halt the jeep and crawl out. The terrain ahead is composed of barren, rolling hills and offers little cover. . . .

Able to see for hundreds of yards, I walk upright and in the open. If krauts are in the area, I want to draw their fire from a distance. The odds are in favor of their missing the first time.

But nothing happens. I may as well be strolling through a desert. No sign of life appears about the zigzagged trench or the pillboxes beyond. Then my heart seems to jump from my chest as the idea strikes me. What if the entire company has been captured or wiped out? Dear God, no. I stumble forward.

They do not see me as I stand above them. Bearded, filthy, and listless, they sprawl on the bottom of the trench, looking like warmed-over death. The sunlight glistens on a red thatch of hair.

"Bergman, what the hell are you doing down there?"

He casts a blank glance upward.

"Come on. Let's get out of there."

"For Christ's sweet sake, how did you get up there?"

"I just walked up. Come on now. Let's quit playing ground hog."

A shell screams overhead and crashes into one of the pillboxes.

The men cower.

"Nothing to be afraid of. It's one of our own tanks."

"We got no tanks."

"We got plenty of stuff left. Now off those fat fannies. Let's move across Germany."

I walk on down the trench.

"All right, Rusty. What's the matter?"

"Dey done battered hell out of us, lieutenant."

"Well, let's batter them back."

. . . I continue along the edge of the trench, insulting and pleading. Of the officers, only a second lieutenant remains. He is very young; and his eyes are staring and haunted. I can see that he is in as bad shape as his men.

"We've got to get out of here while the gettin's good," I say.

"To the rear?"

"No. You've got to go forward."

"I don't know whether the men can take any more."

"They can take it. Can you?"

"I can take it."

We coax the sergeants out of the trenches; and one by one the men follow. I have never seen a more thorough psychological beating. They glance anxiously about the terrain; and their movements are shaky and uncertain. It looks like a mass collapse of nerves. I would like to pull them back for a rest, but I cannot. They have to move forward.

*Audie Murphy -
1949*

To Hell and Back

Charles L. Owen 1922-1997

In the first issue of our newsletter I wrote a short introduction for the interview with Charles L. Owen. I described some of his achievements in military and civilian life. It saddens me that I must now write of Charlie's death. He passed away June 15, 1997. He was 75.

Charles Owen received two Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star and other military honors in the US Army's 3rd Infantry Division. After the war he returned to Texas and founded, along with his brother, Harold Owen, and Marvin Gearhart, Gearhart-Owen Industries, Inc.

Throughout his career Charlie was a dynamic force in every aspect of his community. While noting his many accomplishments, the local newspapers, without exception, emphasized his volunteerism and generosity. Even in our brief association, these qualities were evident.

I will always be grateful for the time he spent answering our questions and encouraging our efforts.

I feel fortunate to have met and gotten to know Charlie Owen. All of us at the Audie Murphy Research Foundation will miss him.

Terry Murphy



Courtesy of Fort Worth Star-Telegram

1990 photograph of Charles Owen during his successful campaign to have Audie Murphy's name reinstated in the Texas Almanac.

PART II - December 15, 1996 Interview with Charles L. Owen

... I've never heard any account of that [incident in the German bunker] in all of the history of the 3rd Division.

Well, you know, it was hard for Murphy. He really didn't want to write To Hell and Back because he didn't want to glorify himself. He used to say, "They gave me all these decorations and all they got was a wooden cross and nobody remembers their names." Spec convinced him that writing the book was a way to make sure his friends weren't forgotten.

That shows another part of his compassion. He kept saying the bravest soldiers are still over there. They didn't come back.

Right. It was hard for Spec to get him to

talk about a lot of things, so there are many things that happened that are not in To Hell and Back.

Yeah. I remember when we captured that bunker. We had to fight our way through these zigzag trenches. We'd clear one trench and then we'd jump out and run to the next one. The hardest thing I ever did was...a couple of our guys had got killed right in one of those trenches. And they were lying there. Evidently they were getting ready to go to the next trench when they got killed. They were kind of stacked up there, one on top of the other. And I had to step on top of them to get out of the trench and go to the next one. And that was hard...to step on their backs, you know, to get out. And they were already dead. I

think of those two guys every time I think of the ones we left behind over there.

I was there when the Division was awarded the Croix De Guerre. We stood out there on the parade ground at attention 'til they played the French National Anthem and the American National Anthem and had a big presentation. Murphy was there.

It's our understanding that it came to the Army's attention that a lot of their Congressional Medal of Honor recipients were getting killed: the awards were mostly posthumous.

That's right.

So they pulled Murphy off the front be

cause they were afraid he'd get killed and he didn't like that. Do you remember that?

They pulled him off for a little while...or tried to...and he kept coming back. (laughs) They made him a liaison officer or something like that. I don't know how he arranged it but we'd say, "Well, old Murphy's gone." And then in a few days, he'd show back up. (laughs) Boy, he was something.

Murphy told a story about the Siegfried Line in the book. Were you guys on the Siegfried Line more than once?

Just that one time.

The story Murphy told was that he'd been reassigned as a liaison officer. He heard that Company B had taken quite a beating, was pinned down and not moving forward. He sneaked back when he found out that the officer in charge had been killed. He just sort of took his old job back.

Yeah.

He didn't talk about being in the bunker for two or three days. He just said he went through the Siegfried Line with Company B.

He lead Company B right up through that line. And we were in that bunker for TWO OR MAYBE THREE DAYS! I forget how many nights and days. It's hard to tell when you can't see daylight.

He did talk about a pillbox that Company B assaulted but he didn't go into detail. He was supposed to be doing liaison work and he got some sergeant to drive him up and dump him off.

Yeah. I wouldn't be surprised. The men in the company didn't know whether he was supposed to be there or not. (laughs) We were just glad to see him. "That's Murphy. We're going with him!" You know. "He's our man!" And we'd go.

Maybe he didn't say anything about the bunker because he wasn't supposed to be there.

Yeah, I know. (laughs) But I know for a

fact that I spent two or three days in that bunker with him. I KNOW THAT! Part of the time I was guarding the bottom deal and part of the time I was hauling out carbide and part of the time I was turning that thing keeping air...there were 15 or 20 of us in there. I don't remember the exact count. Plus the wounded.



Courtesy of Linda Owen

Charlie Owen - 1945

Do you go to the reunions?

I'm on the committee for the 3rd Division reunion. The one they're having here in Fort Worth. I'm a member of the 3rd Division Society. I'm in that Audie Murphy Outpost. Headquartered down toward Houston. And I go to all those meetings. But I'm kind of disappointed because some of the oldtimers who were in WWII show up, but it's now mostly Korean guys and Vietnam guys and they act like they don't know too much about Audie Murphy.

Well, they probably don't.

They probably don't. You know there was a fellow, one of the replacements that came in maybe the last month before the Germans surrendered, named Walter Adams. Walter had a camera and he took pictures of all us guys, including Murphy. He took 'em around Austria. Walter and I made arrangements to get these big old show horses, you know, the...

The Lipizzans?

Yeah, the white ones that perform. And then we'd watch them perform, too. Anyway, we were able to borrow some horses and ride on weekends. One time Walter and me were going down opposite sides of a hedgerow and every so often the hedgerow would break and I'd holler "Hey, Walter, how you doing!" "Well, fine. How are you doing?" "Good." And all of a sudden Walter hollered, "Charlie, come over here! Come over here!" I cut through a break in the hedgerow and looked over there and NO HORSE. His horse fell in a well. Right down in that well. And so I said, "Well, Walter let me go get the ordnance. We got to get that horse out." All you could see was the horse's nose. So I get the ordnance and a big old wrecker and they couldn't get the horse out. Finally some guy from Texas said, "Hey, here's what you need to do — you need to put some ropes around that horse and make a sling. Then that wrecker can pull him out. So, sure enough, we did that and that horse come right out. Didn't even hurt him. (laughs) I sure remember Walter hollering, "Look Charlie — NO HORSE!"

What was it? A well that was covered that just caved in?

Yeah. It had an old wooden cover. The horse stepped on it and it caved in.

Is Walter still around?

Yeah, but we've gotten kinda out of touch. You know this might be a reason to get with Walter. I could say, "Hey Walter, you got some pictures I need." (laughs)

Maybe Walter'd like to get together with us since he was over there with Murphy too.

Yeah. He wasn't as long as I was with the company, but he really took pictures of him and all. There are some other little stories that'd be interesting. I can write some up so you can put them in the newsletter. There were some real comical things about Audie.

He did have a bit of a temper. That's part of what made him what he was.

That was one of my main theories. That was one of the reasons he got so decorated. He was a guy who could lose his temper and keep his head.

Do you know Colonel Tominac's story about Murphy? [See page 11.]

Oh yeah! Stan Smith sent that to me in one of his newsletters. It reminded me....We were getting ready to cross the Rhine River. We had collected at one of those big palatial German places on the Rhine River. We were gonna cross the Rhine the next morning, so in the meantime we were gonna get a good night's sleep in one big old palatial mansion. It had a grand piano sitting up on the mezzanine. And these big stately bedrooms and ballrooms. We were lying there in bed and somebody said, "Who's gonna turn the light off?" And about that time, BANG, BANG...

Murphy, huh?

Yeah. (laughs) Shot the damn light out. And some other guy says, "Well, hell, it's getting stuffy in here." And about that time: BANG, BANG — shot the window out. (laughs) And you know, I firmly believe the damn Germans heard us do that and they started shelling that house. Oh Lordy! Murphy said, "You bastards get in the basement!" So we all slide down these steps to the basement. About the time I got down, the grand piano come right down behind me, right down to the bottom of the basement. We didn't get a scratch out of that, but we got a hell of a scare. It really interrupted our good night's sleep. (laughs) I believe they got mad at us, the Germans, for shooting up the house. (laughs) And then there was another thing that made the Germans mad. When we were crossing the Rhine, we'd be fish hungry...you know, wanting fish. So we'd take a hand grenade and we'd tie a quarter pound of TNT onto it with a wire.

Onto the hand grenade?

Yeah, onto the hand grenade. And then we'd pull the pin and throw it in the river...BANG!!! Turned that river wrong side out. These big old fish would just float to the surface. It would stun 'em.



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So you had a little barbecue.

Yeah. We'd go down there and catch them big old fish. And the Germans on the other side watching us, you know. Then they see us shooting the chandeliers out...shooting the windows out. They finally got enough of it I guess. That's when they started shelling the castle.

Well, you weren't the best house guests in the world.

No, we weren't. (laughs) We had a guy in our company named Speedy Airheart. Speedy carried an 03 rifle, the old WWI American Rifle. We'd say, "Speedy, why are you carrying that thing?" And he'd say, "Oh, Murphy wants this to launch grenades." It was a grenade launching son-of-a-gun. And also, he said, it's a better sniper rifle than the M-1. He said, "I carry some armor-piercing shells for that." Then Hitler got a bad idea that he was going to load up some little midget tanks with explosives and control 'em with a telephone wire out the back, a little reel, and send them over from their lines to ours and then push a button that would blow them up. They were these little bitty miniature tanks. And they had a compartment about this big, square, up in the front full of TNT. Every time they would try to send one over

to our lines, Murphy'd tell old Speedy Airheart, "You're the one with the armor-piercing shells, Speedy." (laughs) And he had a scope on that old rifle. He'd shoot it right while it was in the German lines. And it would blow up. You could see boogie wheels and tracks flying in the air.

And kill the Germans.

Yeah, it would blow them up.

One of the wonder weapons.

(laughs) Yeah that was a secret weapon. They finally gave it up. But anyhow, we went on and captured the town next to that site. And there was a flatcar load of 'em on the rails. We captured the whole train full of 'em. Those little old tanks.

Were they gas powered?

Gasoline.

With a wire remote?

Yeah. Had a little reel on the back and had a little button at the end of that reel.

The Germans were really inventive.

Yeah, they were something else. It's a good

thing we whipped `em when we did. They were getting smart. But anyhow, they finally gave up sending `em over. We captured the whole trainload and built a ramp so we could get `em down. And every guy in the company had him a tank. (laughs) They'd write letters on `em...give `em names, you know.

Were you able to drive them and ride in them?

Yeah. We'd take `em all over town. Murphy'd say, "You got all that goddamn TNT out of there didn't you?" We'd say, "Oh yeah, Murphy. These are infertile." We'd drive `em all round...and then all of a sudden they'd just wear out. They were made for just one trip. And the boogie didn't have any bearings in them and we'd



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burn that high test gasoline in `em, hotter than the Germans had. But we had fun

with `em for awhile. And I went to the tactical air force — the artillery spotters — and I took one of `em. It was brand new. We'd just got it off the flatcar. I said, "Hey, you know if you guys would take our beer up and cool it down, I'd trade it for one of these to pull your airplanes around." And so they made a little tow bar to fit behind that little old tank and they used it. They'd take our beer up to where it's cool temperature, 30-40 minutes to cool that beer down. So we traded beer-cooling services for one of those tanks.

Did you ever see Audie drink over there?

I seen him one time when I thought he was drunk, but I never did see him drink...so he might not have been drunk that time...he might have been mad. (laughs) But, I don't

RECOLLECTIONS By Colonel John J. Tominac, USA (Ret.)



Courtesy of Col. John J. Tominac

Lt. John J. Tominac Congratulating Audie at the June 2, 1945 Medal of Honor Ceremony.

Colonel Tominac, also a 3rd Division Medal of Honor recipient, was present on 2 June 1945 at Audie's Medal of Honor ceremony in Salzburg, Austria. Col. Tominac wrote this article which was printed in the Audie Murphy National Fan Club newsletter.

The Foundation thanks Col. Tominac for granting permission to reprint. We also thank Stan Smith for supplying it.

On 7 May our division headquarters — 3rd Infantry Division — was established on the outskirts of Salzburg, Austria in a palatial estate that the Nazis used to entertain foreign diplomats and dignitaries. As a liaison officer for the 15th Infantry Regiment, one of my duties was to periodically update the status and whereabouts of all 15th Infantry units for the War Room of Division Headquarters. So, on 8 May, VE Day, I set out to contact the 15th Infantry Regimental Headquarters which I learned was located on Himmler's estate in Salzburg.

On arrival at the HQ, I noticed that a few soldiers were putting up communications wire outside of the building and doing other chores usually required for setting up a new HQ. I did not notice any activity inside the building, which gave me the opportunity to browse around. After browsing a few moments on the second floor I had the urge to use a bathroom. I found a bathroom quickly and proceeded to use the toilet after first hanging my Thompson sub-machine gun on the inside door knob. I was about to finish my need of the toilet when a loud gun shot rang in the building. Instinctively, I lunged for my "Tommy Gun," slipped the safety catch off, and pulled back the bolt to be ready to fire while still sitting there. In a split second, two stupid thoughts coursed through my mind: one, that I was about to encounter one or more S.S. fanatics bent on dying for the Nazi cause; and two, the prospects that the toilet I was using was booby-trapped. After chasing the Germans through two continents and several countries, I decided that I was not about to meet such an ignoble end, particularly since the war in Europe officially ended on that very day. It took only a few seconds to secure my trousers, conduct a cursory inspection of the toilet, flush it, and with "Tommy Gun" at the ready, I cautiously ventured out into the hallway. While I was engaged in the foregoing two or three more loud gun shots were fired.

I proceeded cautiously around each corner as I worked my way toward the stairway. After some tense moments I came upon a large room that apparently was used for meetings and conferences. A beautiful mahogany table about 25 to 30 feet long with 15 to 20 chairs surrounding it caught my eye. Seated near the center of the table was a young, boyish looking U.S. 2nd Lt. leaning back in his chair with his feet propped on the table. In his right hand he held a .45 caliber pistol which he was using to take pot shots at a large portrait of Adolph Hitler that was hanging on the opposite wall. Needless to say, I breathed a sigh of relief and was happy to meet for the first time 2nd Lt. Audie Murphy of Company B, 15th Infantry. This seemed to be Audie's unique way of celebrating VE Day.

Audie was one of the most highly decorated soldiers of World War II and went on to become a successful movie actor during the post World War II years. Unfortunately, his life was cut short in an airplane crash about 20 years ago.

believe he drank. Maybe after he war...

No, after the war he didn't drink. But he would sometimes have a glass of something in front of him so that people wouldn't bother him.

Make it look like he was drinking. That sounds like something Audie'd do. Right there after the war we wound up in Salzburg for awhile. And we tried to get these musicians to get the symphony back together. And we stole some sugar from the quartermaster. And got the Coke Company going. They had a Coca-Cola Company. We'd steal sugar and supply Cokes for the NCO and Officer's Club, so we could have rum and Coca-Cola. That was a big drink over there.

Did you get the Germans to run it?

Yeah. They were very cooperative. Some of 'em could really sing — Pavarottis, you know. Real singers. We'd get them and have these symphonies going. Old Mozart's home town. They could make music there.

Did you ever go down into the salt mines?

Yeah, later on. I was assigned to a chemical warfare colonel as his aide. And I'd drive him around and they had a lot of chemicals stored in those salt mines. We'd go down in 'em and inspect 'em. It's big old salt domes, underneath the ground. No moisture. You could store stuff down in there and it would last.

Weren't they storing precious items: art and things?

We never did find anything like art or gold. I think they were getting help from the Swiss on the gold storage. That's beginning to come out now. When we crossed the Rhine, Murphy said, "Is that outboard motor gonna start?" We were in these boats with outboard motors and the engineers were manning the boat. We said to Murphy, "Well, what if that damned outboard motor doesn't start?" You know, we'd all had experience with outboard motors. They don't run. And he said, "Well, just lay down low and in a few minutes we'll be down there in Switzerland, and they won't let you



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fight anymore." We said, "Oh hell, we'd rather stay with the company." You never did like to be away from the company very long because you couldn't get your mail. Your friends were all in the company. You get lonely away from the company — hospitals and places like that.

Were you up there when Audie was actually on the tank destroyer? Did you see that?

Yeah.

Someone said that they literally had to pull him off the tank. He wouldn't get off. Is that right?

Yeah. He was wounded. The night before Audie got the Medal of Honor we had a hell of a fight. He and I both got hit. I was standing there searching some German prisoners when a shell hit the tree above. A tree burst. It kind of raised me up and threw me down on a big old wall, lying there in the forest. I fractured my hip and had a severe sprain to the groin. I was having a hard time walking. Murphy said, "What's the matter, Owen? Get you tree popped?" I said, "Oh goddamn it, I can't hardly walk." He says, "You better go back to that aid station. It's in the crossroads back there. Get on that road and go back down there." So I got on that road to go back to the aid station that was in some kind of old farm-

house that had the wall blown out by a shell. I stayed there a little while and I felt my feet begin to freeze, and I figured, "I'm gonna get up and walk on my feet." So I walked back to the company. Now the morning report for that day showed me being on sick call...for that day that Murphy got the MOH. But I got tired of waiting in there and walked crippled back up to the company. I was there when Murphy said, "You guys dig in. I'm gonna take care of this SOB myself." And jumped up there on that tank destroyer. So the morning report will show that I was on sick call that same day. But I waited in that place until my feet were about to freeze. So I just hobbled back up there, where the company position was.

So did you actually see any of what he was doing, or were you a little too far away?

Yeah, I could see him on the TD. The guys said, "Charlie, come on dig in. He told us to dig in." So we watched him up there on that tank destroyer. He had ordered us to get back and dig in. But we were watching him all that time. And then he and I went to the hospital the same day...finally. Boy, he was effective on that .50 caliber! I don't know whether he'd ever had .50 caliber training or not. But the Germans were deathly afraid of .50 calibers. They had armor-piercing capabilities.

He said later that the burning TD was the last place they'd expect the shooting to be coming from. You know, hide in plain sight.

Yeah. It was a miracle. He turned that infantry back that was following the tanks. Then when the tanks got stopped and turned around, the infantry didn't want to go and vice versa. When he knocked the infantry out, the tanks didn't want to go, 'cause they were afraid that without the infantry somebody'd sneak up behind 'em [and shoot out their radiators]. But Boy oh Boy! What a fight that was!

So what was going through your mind when he was sitting up there?

"That guy's crazy. He's lost his temper again." (laughs)

Keeping his head but losing his temper again.

Boy, I'll say. But he saved OUR lives. Eighteen guys that were recruits that came from that replacement depot. We were all sitting there watching him. And if he hadn't done that, those Germans would have annihilated us. We were already beat down pretty bad and about out of ammunition.

And you probably couldn't even run away from there with your injured hip.

Yeah, we all had our feet frozen, some wounded, all scared to death while he was doing that. So he really saved our lives.

*Charles Owen
December 1996*



Courtesy of Universal Studios

HOW AUDIE MURPHY WON HIS MEDALS

PART II

The Salerno beachhead had already been secured when the 15th Infantry Regiment landed. But as the outfit drove up the Italian boot, it encountered fierce enemy resistance. Murph so distinguished himself in the fighting that he was promoted to sergeant and given his own squad. In one confused action, he and his men ran right into a group of Germans at dusk and shot their way out of a near ambush. Taking refuge in a rock quarry, the men waited until morning. The enemy sent a combat patrol of seven soldiers to seek them out. Before they could reach the quarry, Audie ordered his machine gunner, an Indian named Jim Fife, to stop them.

Three of the Germans fell with fatal wounds. The remainder were taken prisoner. Audie, who had ordered the shooting, now took off his own coat and placed it over a dying enemy soldier to shield him against the driving rain. The act was typical. Although ruthless



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in combat, he could not kill men who had no chance to defend themselves. On one occasion, he sneaked up on a group of Germans who, thinking themselves in a safe area, were relaxing. "I could have easily got them with grenades," he says, "but I could not bring myself to do it. Laughing and joking, they seemed too much like our own men."

Audie always made decisions to spare enemy lives with gravity. "I always knew that they might wind up killing some of our soldiers," he says. "But at times when I got them lined up in my gun sights, I simply could not pull the trigger. This happened especially when Hitler threw fifteen-year-old boys into combat. I was young enough, but these were children. I couldn't shoot them."

While training for the invasion of Anzio, Murphy was hospitalized with another severe attack of malaria. He missed the D-Day landing, but rejoined Company B on January 27,

1944 in time to engage in three murderous days of assault intended to extend the beachhead. During a battle, he and another soldier were crawling down a ditch in search of a sniper. A big shell came in. Murphy was knocked briefly unconscious by the concussion which killed the other soldier just a few yards away. Murphy's incredible luck was still with him.

When the Allies failed to crack the iron German ring that hemmed in the beachhead, the soldiers were ordered to dig in and hold at all costs. "It was the only time during the war that I felt we were all doomed," says Murphy. "I cannot explain it. But doom seemed to be everywhere I turned: in the rain that filled our foxholes; in the mud that sucked at our feet; in the howling wind; in the eyes of the men; and in the very light of day."

The entire beachhead was in range of the enemy guns, but the Germans could muster no major attack because the rains had turned the land into bogs that would not support armor. Audie remained at the front, volunteering for reconnaissance patrol, fighting off probing attacks by the enemy, and enduring nightly shelling until he passed out from a third bout with malaria. Two of his men carried him to an aid station on an old door. He was transferred to a hospital, but he was back at the front within ten days.

The exhausted men of Company B were finally pulled out of the lines for a brief rest. But they were ordered to do close-order drill before settling down. Murphy refused to put his platoon through the drill. For this act he was dressed down publicly and denied a promotion to tech sergeant, for which he had been recommended. But before the breakout from Anzio, he was offered a field commission as a second lieutenant. He turned it down. The Army has a theory that enlisted men will not respect an officer who comes from their immediate ranks. He must be transferred to another outfit. Audie preferred remaining with Company B to receiving a commission.

Men and materials had been pouring into the beachhead. But the allies would attempt no all-out assault against the encircling Germans until May 22nd. Meanwhile, the spring winds were drying the muddy fields. Near Audie's small bit of the front was a narrow road leading to the enemy lines. It was flanked by bogs. Murphy, constantly studying weather and terrain, knew that an armor spearhead could attack only on the solid route. So he mined the road.

His strategy proved to be correct. The

German armor did attempt an attack down the road; but the lead tank, put out of action by the mines, blocked the way to the armor behind. The Germans retreated. But Murphy was sure that they would be back.

That night, March 2, 1944, Audie volunteered to lead a seven man patrol in an attempt to further wreck the enemy tank. He was completely aware that the Germans would likely be on guard. Leaving his men under cover, he moved 100 yards up to the vicinity of the tank. Two molotov cocktails that he hurled failed to ignite. He threw a hand grenade through the tank hatch. The explosion did not even extinguish a light that had been left burning inside. The Germans discovered Murphy and started firing. With bullets whipping around him, he hastily set up a launcher and blasted the treads off one side of the tank with rifle grenades. He then escaped unscathed in a hail of enemy fire. The tank

been well known before his post-combat publicity. "Lord, yes!" he said. "I don't suppose there was a real veteran in the whole division who was not aware of him. If Murphy was in the front lines, we in the rear area went to sleep. But if we got word that he was falling back, we prepared to get the hell out of there. When Murphy started retreating, it was time to clear out and fast."

The 3rd Division, in a massive attack, finally breached a portion of the German ring around the Anzio Beachhead on May 23rd. Fighting was extremely fierce. On the first day, the Division suffered 995 battle casualties. This is believed to be a record for World War II. Twenty years later, a man wrote Audie: "At the start of the attack, I was talking to you. I turned around for a minute. And when I looked again, you were not there. What happened to you?"

Murphy was fighting all of the way. He

was almost killed when his trench shovel caught on a rock and hung him up on a railway bank. An enemy machine gunner spotted him and started zeroing in. The bullets were hitting so close that Audie could smell the rock dust they kicked up. Managing to free himself, he got across the railroad track in time to see Sergeant Sylvester Antolak, of Company B, charging a German strongpoint

single-handedly. Although shot down twice, Antolak continued the charge until resistance ceased and he dropped dead. Murphy had been unable to help him; but his eye-witness testimony was instrumental in getting the sergeant a Medal of Honor posthumously.

The 3rd Division fought its way to Rome, rested briefly, and went into amphibious training. Allied forces, having broken out of the Normandy Beachhead, were driving across central France toward Paris. The 3rd Division was to hit Southern France, establish a beachhead by cutting off a small peninsula, and proceed up the Rhone Valley. The landing took place on August 15, 1944. Resistance was relatively light, and the assault was later considered the most successful the 3rd Division had undertaken in the Mediterranean Theatre. History usually considers the overall picture. On D-Day in Southern France, Audie was to engage in some of his most ferocious fighting of the war. He was also to have his saddest event.

David "Spec" McClure
1971

The crosses grow on Anzio, where hell is six feet deep.

Audie Murphy
1946



National Archive Photo

was never retrieved by the Germans. For putting it permanently out of commission, Audie received his first medal, the Bronze Star.

"If I discovered one valuable thing during my early combat days," he says, "it was audacity, which is often mistaken for courage or foolishness. It is neither. Audacity is a tactical weapon. Nine times out of ten it will throw the enemy off-balance and confuse him. However much one sees of audacious deeds, nobody really expects them. They are not in the rule books. I found that retreating was the most dangerous maneuver possible. It was also demoralizing, because you knew, even as you fell back, that you would have to re-take every foot of ground that you yielded.

"An organized retreat is difficult. The Germans were aware of all this. So they hit you all the harder. If pinned down, it was better to try holding your position rather than move backwards. If you could advance, then advance. This is simple combat wisdom. If you have no defense, attack. This strategy turns battle psychology in your favor."

Audacity was keynote to the Murphy strategy throughout the war. I asked a former artilleryman with the 3rd Division if Audie had

Italy Dec 30 43
 Dear Pat,
 just a few lines to let
 you know I am OK. hope
 you are the same. hope you
 had a nice Xmas. Pete you
 asked me about the fighting
 in Sicily I am not sure just
 what I can write about it
 but I will tell you what
 sectors I fought in they
 are Licata, Palermo, Messina
 I can't tell you any thing
 about Italy yet except
 that its much harder than
 Sicily and slower. also I am
 not in the 1st Div as you
 thought but in the 3rd Div
 you can tell by the APO #3
 well I did not have such a
 had Xmas although I wasn't
 so damn Merry I must
 say. next

but guess I can't complain
 because if I spent Xmas in
 a fox hole just think of
 the damn Jerry's that did
 to. Pete how is your
 mother hope she is well I
 often think of her remember
 when I used to help her
 do the dishes tell her I will
 help her do the dishes next
 Xmas for sure.
 Pete I received the Xmas
 pkg also 14 papers all at
 once thanks a million
 well guess I had better sign
 30 for now so give everyone
 my regards and write
 to me often.
 Love

Sgt. A. L. Murphy

Courtesy of Nelda Patton Slaughter
 Letter written by Audie Murphy to his friend Beatrice "Pete" Springfield from the Pozzuoli area of Italy (Northwest of Naples).

Audie didn't make it home *next* Christmas. He spent Christmas of 1944 in the 3rd General Hospital near Aix-en-Provence, just north of Marseille, France where he was recovering from a serious hip wound inflicted by a German sniper. But Audie did make it home to help Mrs. Springfield with the dishes the winter of 1945-46.



Courtesy of Nelda Patton Slaughter and Bill Bowen
 Audie with Pete's mother, Lula Springfield at their home near
 Van Alstyne, Texas. Winter 1945-46.

WAR HERO HANDY WITH HIS FISTS, HIJACKER DISCOVERS

December 11, 1946 — DALLAS, TEXAS — Associated Press

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

130-Pound Hero Falls 190-Pound Holdup Suspect

DALLAS (Tex.) Dec. 11. (AP) — Little Audie Murphy, who is World War II's most decorated soldier, won another battle singlehanded this afternoon when he subdued a 6-foot 2-inch, 190-pounder who apparently attempted to steal his automobile.

The freckled kid from Farmersville, Tex., told the Dallas Morning News he knocked out the 25-year-old man in a rural filling station near here after a furious 10-minute battle.

Murphy weighs 130 pounds and stands 5 feet 7 inches tall.

State Highway Patrolmen Everett Brandon and F. H. Jensen, who talked with the News by telephone, said they arrested the man and lodged him in the McKinney Jail. No complaint was filed immediately.

Tells of Holdup

The 20-year-old Texas hero, who won the Congressional Medal of Honor and every other U.S. combat medal in World War II, related he was driving alone when he saw a large man limping along the highway.

"It was raining like the devil and I thought I would do the fellow a favor," Audie related. "I picked him up and we drove about a mile.

"Suddenly this guy jammed something into my ribs, slapped me across the mouth and said:

"I'm the boss now. If you won't talk, this .45 will. I can use this car."

"I admitted that he was pretty much the boss at that point and we drove about four more miles. He told me to pull into a roadside gasoline station and stop. I did and he took the keys and instructed me to slide along the seat and get out on his side of the car."

Decides on Fight

Audie said the man's left hand, hidden under an old army blouse, was still jammed into his ribs when he decided to make a fight for it. He grabbed the man's hand, discovered he had no gun after all, struck him a blow that tumbled him from the car and on to the filling station drive.

Murphy jumped squarely on the erstwhile tough guy and started swinging.

"We fought all over the place for about 10 minutes," Audie said. "He was a pretty big fellow, all right. I finally got him, though."

J. M. Peters, owner of the gasoline station,



Courtesy of Mrs. Everett Brandon

Police Photo — Left to right: suspect John Thomas Daniels, Texas State Highway Patrolman Everett Brandon and Audie Murphy.

ran into the drive and ordered both men off the premises before he knew the background, Patrolman Brandon added.

Calls in Police

Audie rushed to another gasoline station a mile north to telephone the State police and upon his return found that his attacker had recovered and gone to the home of Mrs. Park Grissom, a few hundred yards distant.

The man was scuffling with Mrs. Grissom and demanding fresh clothing to replace his bloody and torn garments when Murphy and the patrolmen overpowered him again.

Courtesy of the Dallas Morning News and Associated Press

AUDIE MURPHY RESEARCH FOUNDATION

A NON-PROFIT PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION

President

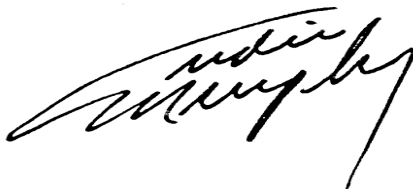
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