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History of the NCO  
Final Paper

NCOs in the American Army (1925-1945)

Audie L. Murphy

## Outline

### I. Introduction

- A. The Audie L. Murphy Memorial website, Encyclopedia Wikipedia Website, A Biography of Audie Murphy titled: No Name on the Bullet by Don Graham
- B. Audie Murphy's actions are well documented as one of the best-known war heroes of all time.

### II. Body

- A. Audie Murphy, Birth to age 18
- B. Army years, 30 June 1942 – 21 Sep 1945
- C. Film years, October 1945 – 1969
- D. Post film years, 1969 – 07 June 1971

### III. Closing

- A. Audie L. Murphy most decorated person in WWII. He had a successful movie star career. He died a tragic death at the age of 46.
- B. Question and answer period
- C. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share the life of Audie Murphy.

## **Audie Leon Murphy**

Audie Leon Murphy was born on 20 June 1924 in a farmhouse. He was the son of a tenant cotton farmer or sharecropper. He grew up in Hunt County, near Kingston, Texas. He was named Audie after a neighbor, and his middle name "Leon" was given by his oldest sister, Corinne. Audie was the seventh child, and third son. His father was Emmett (Pat) Murphy and his mother was Josie Bell Murphy. Her maiden name was Killian. She gave birth to a total of twelve children, three died before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The family was poor and food was scarce. When Audie was 12 he left school and started to work in order to help provide for the family. In 1939, at the age of 15, Audie left home and lived hand to mouth. Early in 1940 Audie's father left home. Audie came back home and helped his mother until her death on 23 May 1941. Audie was sixteen with a fifth grade education when his mother died. After his mother's death, Audie was forced to place the three youngest siblings in an orphanage.

He tried desperately to join the military after the United States entered into World War II because he needed money to support his younger brothers and sisters. At seventeen with a height of 5' 5 1/2" and weighing 112 pounds, Audie was the average size of an American girl during that era which was 5' 5" and 120 pounds. He was underage and small for his age. He was turned down by the Marines, paratroopers, and the Army said come back when you're old enough.

On 20 June 1942 when Audie Murphy turned 18 years old, his sister, Corinne and the doctor that had delivered Audie went with him to the Army Recruiting office in Greenville, Texas. They provided the proper paperwork in order for Audie to enlist.

The Army accepted Audie in the infantry and on 30 June 1942 he got on a bus bound for the federal building in Dallas, Texas. Later that same day he took a physical and was sworn into the United States Army. He was then put on a bus for Camp Wolters, located southwest of Fort Worth and just under 100 miles from Hunt County, Texas. This is where he attended and completed basic training, which was 13 weeks in length. From there he went to Fort Meade, Maryland for his advanced infantry training. With Audie being smaller than average, his commanders suggested that he take a job such as a cook or an administrative clerk because they thought that he could not handle his current job. It wasn't that Audie couldn't or wouldn't perform his duties; it was that his superiors were concerned for his well being and more so concerned about how he would perform in combat. Would he be able to "pull his weight" with the other soldiers or would he become a distraction was their thoughts? In the end Audie convinced his superiors to let him stay in the infantry.

On 8 February 1943 he headed to North Africa. Audie was assigned to Bravo Company, 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, which was preparing to invade Sicily. Sicily is where he first saw combat and he proved himself as being proficient as a marksman and a well skilled soldier. He fought at Salerno in the Voltuno River Campaign and continued to Anzio and his unit fought its way to Rome. After Rome his unit was taken out of Italy to train for Operation Anvil-Dragoon, the invasion of Southern France.

He was promoted through the ranks quickly. From 30 June 1942 to 13 January 1944, he went from Private to Staff Sergeant. Audie Murphy was honorably discharged from the United States Army as a Staff Sergeant on 13 October 1944. He received a battlefield

commission on 14 October 1944 to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. Throughout the war his Noncommissioned Officers and Officers were getting wounded or killed. Due to his exceptional skills in combat, he earned these duly justified promotions. The soldiers under his command respected and were as concerned for his welfare as he was for theirs. This is a true leader.

It was near the village of Holtzwihr in eastern France on 26 January 1945 where 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Audie Murphy was to become famous. He commanded Bravo Company, which was attacked by six tanks while being supported by infantry. He remained at his post giving fire direction to the artillery by telephone while his unit withdrew to positions in the woods. With the enemy steadily approaching his position, he climbed up on a burning tank destroyer and continued to repel the attack by using the .50 Caliber machine gun mounted on the tank destroyer. He held the enemy off for over an hour until he ran out of ammunition and received a leg wound. Making his way back to his company, he organized a counterattack that forced the Germans to withdraw. His action above and beyond the call of duty saved his company and denied the enemy their objective, which was to hold the woods where Bravo Company resided. For this action Audie L. Murphy was awarded the Medal of Honor.

He had served as Platoon Leader and Company Commander with the 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment of 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division before he was released from active duty. He was released from active duty on 21 September 1945. At the end of the war Audie Murphy was the most decorated United States soldier of World War II. He had received 28 medals, including 4 from France and 1 from Belgium. He received every decoration for valor that the United

States had to offer at that time. He was wounded three times during the war. When victory was finally declared in Europe on 8 May 1945, he was only 20 years old.

After returning to the United States as a hero with his picture appearing everywhere, actor James Cagney persuaded him to try acting. Audie went to Hollywood and started his acting career. His first part was in a movie called *Beyond Glory* in 1948. In 1949 he published his autobiography *To Hell and Back* which was later made into a movie in 1955 where he played himself. This movie held the record at Universal Studios as being the highest grossing picture until 1975 when the movie *Jaws* passed it.

In addition to his movie career he also wrote country music. As a songwriter he teamed up with talented artist and composers, which recorded and released many of his songs. Two of his biggest hits were *Shutters and Boards* and *When the Wind Blows in Chicago*.

In 1949 Audie was married to actress Wanda Hendrix. That marriage lasted until 1951, when they were divorced. They had never had children. In 1951 Audie married Pamela Archer and they had two children, Terry Michael who was born in 1952 and James Shannon born in 1954.

In 1955 Murphy was encouraged by a close friend to petition and join the Masonic Order in California. He went back to Texas and worked on his 32<sup>nd</sup> degree for the Masons and also to join the Shriners.

After the war, Audie had suffered from a condition known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This emotional disorder caused him to have insomnia and depression. He became dependent on a prescription sleeping pill called *Placidyl* in the mid 1960's. After recognizing that he had an addiction to this drug, Audie locked himself in a motel

room and went through withdrawal symptoms for a week. Realizing what had to be done, Audie began to talk to veterans about war related mental problems to help them cope and eventually overcome this disorder and not become dependent and addicted to prescription drugs. He asked the United States government to research and study this disorder that has an emotional impact on veterans returning from war. Due to his hard work and dedication PTSD is recognized as a valid problem in today's veterans. As a result, research and breakthroughs are being sought to overcome this ever-growing problem.

After nearly 20 years he retired from acting after making close to three million dollars from his movies. Audie had owned ranches in Texas, California, and Arizona. There he raised and bred Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse horses. The venture was unsuccessful, eventually forcing him into bankruptcy in 1968.

On 28 May 1971, Memorial Day weekend, while on a business trip, at the age of 46, he died in the crash of a private plane near Roanoke, VA. He usually flew the plane, but this time he didn't. Five other people lost their lives on that day with Audie.

Audie Murphy was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors on 7 June 1971, just across Memorial Drive from the Memorial Amphitheater. A special flagstone walkway has been constructed to accommodate the large number of people who stop to pay their respects to this hero. At the end of a row of graves, his tomb is marked by a simple, white, government-issue tombstone, which lists only a few of his many military decorations.

Works Cited

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