

= Audie Murphy =

Audie Leon Murphy ( 20 June 1925 ? 28 May 1971 ) was one of the most decorated American combat soldiers of World War II , receiving every military combat award for valor available from the U.S. Army , as well as French and Belgian awards for heroism . Murphy received the Medal of Honor for valor demonstrated at the age of 19 for single @-@ handedly holding off an entire company of German soldiers for an hour at the Colmar Pocket in France in January 1945 , then leading a successful counterattack while wounded and out of ammunition .

Murphy was born into a large sharecropper family in Hunt County , Texas . His father abandoned them , and his mother died when he was a teenager . Murphy left school in fifth grade to pick cotton and find other work to help support his family ; his skill with a hunting rifle was a necessity for putting food on the table . Murphy 's older sister helped him to falsify documentation about his birth date to meet the minimum @-@ age requirement for enlisting in the military , and after being turned down by the Navy and the Marine Corps he enlisted in the Army . He first saw action in the Allied invasion of Sicily and the Battle of Anzio , and in 1944 was part of the liberation of Rome and invasion of southern France . Murphy fought at Montélimar , and led his men on a successful assault at the L 'Omet quarry near Cleurie in northeastern France in October .

After the war , Murphy enjoyed a 21 @-@ year acting career . He played himself in the 1955 autobiographical To Hell and Back based on his 1949 memoirs of the same name , but most of his films were westerns . He made guest appearances on celebrity television shows and starred in the series Whispering Smith . Murphy was a fairly accomplished songwriter , and bred quarter horses in California and Arizona , becoming a regular participant in horse racing .

Suffering from what would today be termed posttraumatic stress disorder ( PTSD ) , he slept with a loaded handgun under his pillow and looked for solace in addictive sleeping pills . In the last few years of his life he was plagued by money problems , but refused offers to appear in alcohol and cigarette commercials because he did not want to set a bad example . Murphy died in a plane crash in Virginia in 1971 shortly before his 46th birthday , and was interred with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery .

= = Early life = =

Audie Leon Murphy was born the seventh of twelve children to Emmett Berry Murphy and his wife Josie Bell Killian in Kingston , Texas . The Murphys were sharecroppers of Irish descent .

As a child , Murphy was a loner with mood swings and an explosive temper . He grew up in Texas , around Farmersville , Greenville , and Celeste , where he attended elementary school . His father drifted in and out of the family 's life and eventually deserted them . Murphy dropped out of school in fifth grade and got a job picking cotton for a dollar a day to help support his family ; he also became skilled with a rifle , hunting small game to help feed them . After his mother died of endocarditis and pneumonia in 1941 , he worked at a radio repair shop and at a combination general store , garage and gas station in Greenville . Hunt County authorities placed his three youngest siblings in Boles Children 's Home , a Christian orphanage in Quinlan . After the war , he bought a house in Farmersville for his oldest sister Corinne and her husband Poland Burns . His other siblings briefly shared the home .

The loss of his mother stayed with Murphy throughout his life . He later stated :

She died when I was sixteen . She had the most beautiful hair I 've ever seen . It reached almost to the floor . She rarely talked ; and always seemed to be searching for something . What it was I don 't know . We didn 't discuss our feelings . But when she passed away , she took something of me with her . It seems I 've been searching for it ever since .

= = World War II service = =

Murphy had always wanted to be a soldier , and after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 , he tried to enlist , but the Army , Navy and Marine Corps all turned him down for

being underweight and underage . After his sister provided an affidavit falsifying his birth date by a year , he was accepted by the U.S. Army on 30 June 1942 . After basic training at Camp Wolters , he was sent to Fort Meade for advanced infantry training . During basic training he earned the Marksman Badge with Rifle Component Bar and Expert Badge with Bayonet Component Bar .

= = = Mediterranean Theater = = =

Murphy was shipped to Casablanca in French Morocco on 20 February 1943 . He was assigned to Company B , 1st Battalion , 15th Infantry Regiment , 3rd Infantry Division , which trained under the command of Major General Lucian Truscott . He participated as a platoon messenger with his division at Arzew in Algeria in rigorous training for the Allied assault landings in Sicily , and was promoted to private first class on 7 May and corporal on 15 July .

When the 3rd Infantry landed at Licata , Sicily , on 10 July , Murphy was a division runner . On a scouting patrol , he killed two fleeing Italian officers near Canicattì . Sidelined with illness for a week when Company B arrived in Palermo on 20 July , he rejoined them when they were assigned to a hillside location protecting a machine @-@ gun emplacement , while the rest of the 3rd Infantry Division fought at San Fratello en route to the Allied capture of the transit port of Messina .

Murphy participated in the September 1943 mainland Salerno landing at Battipaglia . While on a scouting party along the Volturno River , he and two other soldiers were ambushed by German machine @-@ gun fire , which killed one of the Americans . Murphy and the other survivor responded by killing five German soldiers with hand grenades and machine @-@ gun fire . While taking part in the October Allied assault on the Volturno Line , near Mignano Monte Lungo Hill 193 , he and his company repelled an attack by seven German soldiers , killing three and taking four prisoner . Murphy was promoted to sergeant on 13 December .

In January 1944 , Murphy was promoted to staff sergeant . He was hospitalized in Naples with malaria on 21 January , and was unable to participate in the initial landing at the Anzio beachhead . He returned on 29 January and participated in the First Battle of Cisterna , and was made a platoon sergeant in Company B following the battle . He returned with the 3rd Division to Anzio , where they remained for months . Taking shelter from the weather in an abandoned farmhouse on 2 March , Murphy and his platoon killed the crew of a passing German tank . He then crawled out alone close enough to destroy the tank with rifle grenades , for which he received the Bronze Star with " V " Device . Murphy continued to make scouting patrols to take German prisoners before being hospitalized for a week on 13 March with a second bout of malaria . Sixty @-@ one infantry officers and enlisted men of Company B , 15th Infantry , including Murphy , were awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge on 8 May . Murphy was also awarded a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Bronze Star . American forces liberated Rome on 4 June , and Murphy remained bivouacked in Rome with his platoon throughout July .

= = = European Theater = = =

Murphy received the Distinguished Service Cross for action taken on 15 August 1944 , during the first wave of the Allied invasion of southern France . After landing on Yellow Beach near Ramatuelle , Murphy 's platoon was attacked by German soldiers while making their way through a vineyard . He retrieved a machine gun that had been detached from the squad and returned fire at the German soldiers , killing two and wounding one . Two Germans exited a house about 100 yards ( 91 m ) away and appeared to surrender ; when Murphy 's best friend responded , they shot and killed him . Murphy advanced alone on the house under direct fire . He killed six , wounded two and took eleven prisoner .

Murphy was with the 1st Battalion , 15th Infantry Regiment during the 27 ? 28 August offensive at Montélimar that secured the area from the Germans . Along with the other soldiers who took part in the action , he received the Presidential Unit Citation .

Murphy 's first Purple Heart was for a heel wound received in a mortar shell blast on 15 September 1944 in northeastern France . His first Silver Star came after he killed four and wounded three at a

German machine gun position on 2 October at L 'Omet quarry in the Cleurie river valley . Three days later , Murphy crawled alone towards the Germans at L 'Omet , carrying an SCR @-@ 536 radio and directing his men for an hour while the Germans fired directly at him . When his men finally took the hill , 15 Germans had been killed and 35 wounded . Murphy 's actions earned him a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Silver Star . He was awarded a battlefield commission to second lieutenant on 14 October , which elevated him to platoon leader . While en route to Brouvelieures on 26 October , the 3rd Platoon of Company B was attacked by a German sniper group . Murphy captured two before being shot in the hip by a sniper ; he returned fire and shot the sniper between the eyes . At the 3rd General Hospital at Aix @-@ en @-@ Provence , the removal of gangrene from the wound caused partial loss of his hip muscle and kept him out of combat until January . Murphy received his first Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Purple Heart for this injury .

The Colmar Pocket , 850 square miles ( 2 @,@ 200 km2 ) in the Vosges Mountains , had been held by German troops since November 1944 . On 14 January 1945 , Murphy rejoined his platoon , which had been moved to the Colmar area in December . He moved with the 3rd Division on 24 January to the town of Holtzwihr , where they faced a strong German counterattack . He was wounded in both legs , for which he received a second Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Purple Heart . As the company awaited reinforcements on 26 January , he was made commander of Company B.

The Germans scored a direct hit on an M10 tank destroyer , setting it alight , forcing the crew to abandon it . Murphy ordered his men to retreat to positions in the woods , remaining alone at his post , shooting his M1 carbine and directing artillery fire via his field radio while the Germans aimed fire directly at his position . Murphy mounted the abandoned , burning tank destroyer and began firing its .50 caliber machine gun at the advancing Germans , killing a squad crawling through a ditch towards him . For an hour , Murphy stood on the flaming tank destroyer returning German fire from foot soldiers and advancing tanks , killing or wounding 50 Germans . He sustained a leg wound during his stand , and stopped only after he ran out of ammunition . Murphy rejoined his men , disregarding his own wound , and led them back to repel the Germans . He insisted on remaining with his men while his wounds were treated . For his actions that day , he was awarded the Medal of Honor . The 3rd Infantry Division was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for its actions at the Colmar Pocket , giving Murphy a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for the emblem .

On 16 February , Murphy was promoted to first lieutenant and was awarded the Legion of Merit for his service from 22 January 1944 to 18 February 1945 . He was moved from the front lines to Regimental Headquarters and made a liaison officer .

= = = Decorations = = =

The United States additionally honored Murphy 's war contributions with the American Campaign Medal , the European ? African ? Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with arrowhead device and campaign stars , the World War II Victory Medal , and the Army of Occupation Medal with Germany Clasp . France recognized his service with the French Legion of Honor ? Grade of Chevalier , the French Croix de guerre with Silver Star , the French Croix de guerre with Palm , the French Liberation Medal and the French Fourragère in Colors of the Croix de guerre , which was authorized for all members of the 3rd Infantry Division who fought in France during World War II . Belgium awarded Murphy the Belgian Croix de guerre with 1940 Palm .

Brigadier General Ralph B. Lovett and Lieutenant Colonel Hallet D. Edson recommended Murphy for the Medal of Honor . Near Salzburg , Austria on 2 June 1945 , Lieutenant General A.M. Patch presented Murphy with the Medal of Honor and Legion of Merit for his actions at Holtzwihr . When asked after the war why he had seized the machine gun and taken on an entire company of German infantry , he replied , " They were killing my friends . " Murphy received every U.S. military combat award for valor available from the U.S. Army for his World War II service .

= = = Postwar military service = = =

Inquiries were made through official channels about the prospect of Murphy attending West Point upon his return to the United States , but he never enrolled . Author Don Graham wrote that Murphy suggested the idea and then dropped it , possibly when he realized the extent of academic preparation needed to pass the entrance exam . Murphy was one of several military personnel who received orders on 8 June 1945 to report to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio , Texas , for temporary duty and reassignment . Upon arrival on 13 June , he was one of four assigned to Fort Sam Houston Army Ground & Services Redistribution Station and sent home for 30 days of recuperation , with permission to travel anywhere within the United States during that period . While on leave , Murphy was feted with parades , banquets , and speeches . He received a belated Good Conduct Medal on 21 August . He was discharged with the rank of first lieutenant at a 50 percent disability classification on 21 September and transferred to the Officers ' Reserve Corps .

= = = Post @-@ traumatic stress = = =

Murphy had been plagued since his military service with insomnia and bouts of depression , and slept with a loaded pistol under his pillow . A post @-@ service medical examination on 17 June 1947 revealed symptoms of headaches , vomiting , and nightmares about war . His medical records indicated that he took sleeping pills to help prevent nightmares . During the mid @-@ 1960s , he recognized his dependence on Placidyl , and locked himself alone in a hotel room for a week to break the addiction successfully . Post @-@ traumatic stress levels exacerbated his innate moodiness , and surfaced in episodes that friends and professional colleagues found alarming . His first wife , Wanda Hendrix , stated that he once held her at gunpoint . She witnessed her husband being guilt @-@ ridden and tearful over newsreel footage of German war orphans . Murphy briefly found a creative stress outlet in writing poetry after his Army discharge . His poem " The Crosses Grow on Anzio " appeared in his book To Hell and Back , but was attributed to the fictitious character Kerrigan .

In an effort to draw attention to the problems of returning Korean War and Vietnam War veterans , Murphy spoke out candidly about his own problems with posttraumatic stress disorder . It was known during Murphy 's lifetime as " battle fatigue " and " shell shock " , terminology that dated back to World War I. He called on the government to give increased consideration and study to the emotional impact of combat experiences , and to extend health care benefits to war veterans . As a result of legislation introduced by U.S. Congressman Olin Teague five months after Murphy 's death in 1971 , the Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA Hospital in San Antonio , now a part of the South Texas Veterans Health Care System , was dedicated in 1973 .

= = Texas Army National Guard = =

At the end of World War II , the 36th Infantry Division reverted to state control as part of the Texas Army National Guard , and Murphy 's friends Major General H. Miller Ainsworth and Brigadier General Carl L. Phinney were the 36th 's commander and deputy commander respectively . After the 25 June 1950 commencement of the Korean War , Murphy began a second military career and was commissioned as a captain in the 36th Infantry Division of the Texas Army National Guard . During his service he drilled new recruits in the summer training camps , and granted the Guard permission to use his name and image in recruiting materials . Although he wanted to join the fighting and juggled training activities with his film career , the 36th Infantry Division was never sent to Korea . At his request , he transferred to inactive status on 1 October 1951 because of his film commitments with MGM Studios , and returned to active status in 1955 . Murphy was promoted to the rank of major by the Texas Army National Guard in 1956 and returned to inactive status in 1957 . In 1969 , his official separation from the Guard transferred him to the United States Army Reserve . He remained with the USAR until his transfer to the Retired Reserve in 1969 .

= = Film career = =

Throughout an acting career spanning from 1948 to 1969 , Murphy made more than 40 feature films and one television series . When actor and producer James Cagney saw 16 July 1945 issue of Life magazine depicting Murphy as the " most decorated soldier " , he brought him to Hollywood . Cagney and his brother William signed him as a contract player for their production company and gave him training in acting , voice and dance . They never cast Murphy in a movie and a personal disagreement ended the association in 1947 . Murphy later worked with acting coach Estelle Harman , and honed his diction by reciting dialogue from William Shakespeare and William Saroyan .

Murphy moved into Terry Hunt 's Athletic Club in Hollywood where he lived until 1948 . Hollywood writer David " Spec " McClure befriended Murphy , collaborating with him on Murphy 's 1949 book *To Hell and Back* . McClure used his connections to get Murphy a \$ 500 bit part in *Texas , Brooklyn and Heaven* . The agent of Wanda Hendrix , whom he had been dating since 1946 , got him a bit part in the 1948 Alan Ladd film *Beyond Glory* directed by John Farrow . His 1949 film *Bad Boy* gave him his first leading role . The film 's financial backers refused to bankroll the project unless Murphy was given the lead ; thus , Allied Artists put aside their reservations about using an inexperienced actor and gave him the starring role .

Universal Studios signed Murphy to a seven @-@ year studio contract at \$ 2 @,@ 500 a week . His first film for them was as Billy the Kid in *The Kid from Texas* in 1950 . He wrapped up that year making *Sierra* starring Wanda Hendrix , who by that time had become his wife , and *Kansas Raiders* as outlaw Jesse James . Universal lent him to MGM in 1951 at a salary of \$ 25 @,@ 000 to play the lead of *The Youth in The Red Badge of Courage* , directed by John Huston . Murphy and Huston worked together again in the 1960 film *The Unforgiven* .

The only film Murphy made in 1952 was *The Duel at Silver Creek* with director Don Siegel . Murphy worked with Siegel one more time in 1958 for *The Gun Runners* . In 1953 , he starred in Frederick de Cordova 's *Column South* , and played Jim Harvey in Nathan Juran 's *Tumbleweed* , an adaptation of the Kenneth Perkins novel *Three Were Renegades* . Director Nathan Juran also directed *Gunsmoke* and *Drums Across the River* . George Marshall directed Murphy in the 1954 *Destry* , a remake of *Destry Rides Again* , based on a character created by author Max Brand .

Although Murphy was initially reluctant to appear as himself in *To Hell and Back* , the 1955 adaptation of his book directed by Jesse Hibbs , he eventually agreed ; it became the biggest hit in the history of Universal Studios at the time . To help publicize the release of the film , he made guest appearances on television shows such as *What 's My Line ?* , *Toast of the Town* , and *Colgate Comedy Hour* . The Hibbs @-@ Murphy team proved so successful in *To Hell and Back* that the two worked together on five subsequent films . The partnership resulted in the 1956 western *Walk the Proud Land* , and the non @-@ westerns *Joe Butterfly* and *World in My Corner* . They worked together for the last time in the 1958 western *Ride a Crooked Trail* .

Joseph L. Mankiewicz hired Murphy to play the titular role in the 1958 film *The Quiet American* . Murphy formed a partnership with Harry Joe Brown to make three films , starting with *The Guns of Fort Petticoat* ( 1957 ) . The partnership fell into disagreement over the remaining two projects , and Brown filed suit against Murphy . Murphy featured in three westerns in 1959 : he starred opposite Sandra Dee in *The Wild and the Innocent* , collaborated as an uncredited co @-@ producer with Walter Mirisch on the black and white *Cast a Long Shadow* , and performed as a hired killer in *No Name on the Bullet* , a film that was well received by critics . Thelma Ritter was his costar in the 1960 Startime television episode " *The Man* " .

During the early 1960s , Murphy donated his time and otherwise lent his name and image for three episodes of *The Big Picture* television series produced by the United States Army . He received the 1960 Outstanding Civilian Service Medal for his cooperation in the episode *Broken Bridge* , which featured his visits to military installations in Germany , Italy , Turkey and the U.S. state of New Mexico to showcase the military 's latest weaponry .

Writer Clair Huffaker wrote the 1961 screenplays for Murphy 's films *Seven Ways from Sundown* and *Posse from Hell* . Willard W. Willingham and his wife Mary Willingham befriended Murphy in his early days in Hollywood and worked with him on a number of projects .

Willard was a producer on Murphy 's 1961 television series *Whispering Smith*. and co @-@ wrote

the screenplay for Battle at Bloody Beach that year . He collaborated on Bullet for a Badman in 1964 and Arizona Raiders in 1965 . The Willinghams as a team wrote the screenplay for Gunpoint as well the script for Murphy 's last starring lead in the western 40 Guns to Apache Pass in 1967 . Murphy made Trunk to Cairo in Israel in 1966 .

He first met director Budd Boetticher when Murphy requested to be his boxing partner at Terry Hunt 's Athletic Club . He subsequently appeared in the 1951 title role of Boetticher 's first western The Cimarron Kid . Boetticher wrote the script in 1969 for Murphy 's last film A Time for Dying . Two other projects that Murphy and Boetticher planned to collaborate on ? A Horse for Mr Barnum and When There 's Sumpthin ' to Do ? never came to fruition .

= = Personal life = =

Murphy married actress Wanda Hendrix on 8 January 1949 , and their divorce became final on 19 April 1951 . Four days later he married former airline stewardess Pamela Archer . He had two sons with Archer : Terry Michael Murphy , born on 14 March 1952 , and James Shannon " Skipper " Murphy , born in 1954 .

Murphy bred quarter horses at the Audie Murphy Ranch in what is now Menifee , California , and the Murphy Ranch in Pima County , Arizona . His horses raced at the Del Mar Racetrack and he invested large sums of money in the hobby . Murphy had a gambling habit that left his finances in a poor state . In 1968 , he stated that he lost \$ 260 @, @ 000 in an Algerian oil deal and was dealing with the Internal Revenue Service over unpaid taxes . In spite of his financial difficulties , Murphy refused to appear in commercials for alcohol and cigarettes , mindful of the influence he would have on the youth market .

= = Death and commemorations = =

On 28 May 1971 , Murphy was killed when the private plane in which he was a passenger crashed into Brush Mountain , near Catawba , Virginia , 20 miles ( 32 km ) west of Roanoke in conditions of rain , clouds , fog and zero visibility . The pilot and four other passengers were also killed . The aircraft was a twin @-@ engine Aero Commander 680 flown by a pilot who had a private @-@ pilot license and a reported 8 @, @ 000 hours of flying time , but who held no instrument rating . The aircraft was recovered on 31 May . After her husband died , Pamela Murphy moved into a small apartment and got a clerk position at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Los Angeles , where she remained employed for 35 years . In 1975 , a court awarded Murphy 's widow and two children \$ 2 @. @ 5 million in damages because of the accident .

On 7 June 1971 , Murphy was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery . In attendance were Ambassador to the U.N. George H.W. Bush , Army Chief of Staff William Westmoreland , and many of the 3rd Infantry Division . Murphy 's grave site is in Section 46 , headstone number 46 @-@ 366 @-@ 11 , located across Memorial Drive from the Amphitheater . A special flagstone walkway was later constructed to accommodate the large number of people who visit to pay their respects . It is the cemetery 's second most @-@ visited grave site , after that of President John F. Kennedy .

The headstones of Medal of Honor recipients buried at Arlington National Cemetery are normally decorated in gold leaf . Murphy previously requested that his stone remain plain and inconspicuous , like that of an ordinary soldier . The headstone contains the birth year 1924 , based upon purportedly falsified materials among his military records . In 1974 , a large granite marker was erected just off the Appalachian Trail at 37 @. @ 364554 ° N 80 @. @ 225748 ° W ? / 37 @. @ 364554 ; -80.225748 ? ( Audie Murphy monument ) at 3 @, @ 100 ? elevation , near the crash site .

Civilian honors were bestowed on Murphy during his lifetime and posthumously , including a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame . In 2013 , Murphy was honored by his home state with the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor .

Swedish power metal band Sabaton wrote a song on their 2014 studio album , Heroes , also named " To Hell and Back " , commemorating and recognizing Audie Murphy as one of the most

decorated American veterans of World War II .

= = Song writing = =

David " Spec " McClure , his collaborator on the book *To Hell and Back* , discovered Murphy 's talent for poetry during their work on the memoir when he found discarded verses in Murphy 's Hollywood apartment . One of those poems , " The Crosses Grow on Anzio " , appears in *To Hell and Back* attributed to a soldier named Kerrigan . Only two others survived , " Alone and Far Removed " and " Freedom Flies in Your Heart Like an Eagle " . The latter was part of a speech Murphy had written at a 1968 dedication of the Alabama War Memorial in Montgomery , and later set to music by Scott Turner under the title " Dusty Old Helmet " .

Murphy was a fan of country music , in particular Bob Wills and Chet Atkins , but was not a singer or musician himself . Through his friend Guy Mitchell , Murphy was introduced to songwriter Scott Turner in 1961 . The two of them collaborated on numerous songs between 1962 and 1970 , the most successful of which was " Shutters and Boards " and " When the Wind Blows in Chicago " .