

Subject: PTSD GOES WAY BACK...Even Audie Murphy (American Hero) had it!

Audie Leon Murphy, son of poor Texas sharecroppers, rose to national fame as the most decorated U.S. combat soldier of World War II. Among his 33 awards and decorations was the Medal of Honor, the highest military award for bravery that can be given to any individual in the United States of America, for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty." He also received every decoration for valor that his country had to offer, some of them more than once, including 5 decorations by France and Belgium. Credited with killing over 240 of the enemy while wounding and capturing many others, he became a legend within the 3rd Infantry Division. Beginning his service as an Army Private, Audie quickly rose to the enlisted rank of Staff Sergeant, was given a "battle field" commission as 2nd Lieutenant, was wounded three times, fought in 9 major campaigns across the European Theater, and survived the war.

During Murphy's 3 years active service as a combat soldier in World War II, Audie became one of the best fighting combat soldiers of this or any other century. What Audie accomplished during this period is most significant and probably will never be repeated by another soldier, given today's high-tech type of warfare. The U.S. Army has always declared that there will never be another Audie Murphy.

On 21 September, 1945, Audie was released from the Army as an active member and reassigned to inactive status. During this same time, actor James Cagney invited Murphy to Hollywood in September 1945, when he saw Murphy's photo on the cover of Life Magazine. The next couple of years in California were hard times for Audie Murphy. Struggling and becoming disillusioned from lack of work while sleeping in a local gymnasium, he finally received token acting parts in his first two films.

His first starring role came in a 1949 released film by Allied Artists called, Bad Boy. In 1950 Murphy eventually got a contract with Universal-International (later called Universal) where he starred in 26 films, 23 of them westerns over the next 15 years. His 1949 autobiography To Hell And Back was a best seller. Murphy starred as himself in a film biography released by Universal-International in 1955 with the same title. The movie, To Hell and Back, held the record as Universal's highest grossing picture until 1975 when it was finally surpassed by the movie Jaws. In the mid-60s the studios switched from contract players to hiring actors on a picture-by-picture basis. Consequently, when his contract expired in 1965 Universal did not renew. This gave him the opportunity to work with other studios and independent film producers. In the 25 years that Audie spent in Hollywood, he made a total of 44 feature films.

Despite his success in Hollywood, Audie never forgot his rural Texas roots. He returned frequently to the Dallas area where he owned a small ranch for a while. He also had ranches in Perris, California and near Tucson, Arizona. He was a successful Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racehorse owner and breeder, having interests in such great horses as "Depth Charge." His films earned him close to 3 million dollars in 23 years as an actor. Audie loved to gamble, and he bet on horses and different sporting events. He was also a great poker player. In his role as a prodigious gambler, he won and lost fortunes.

Audie Murphy wrote some poetry and was quite successful as a songwriter. He usually teamed up with talented artists and composers such as Guy Mitchell, Jimmy Bryant, Scott Turner, Coy Ziegler, or Terri Eddleman. Dozens of Audie Murphy's songs were recorded and released by such great performers as Dean Martin, Eddy Arnold, Charley Pride, Jimmy Bryant, Porter Waggoner, Jerry Wallace, Roy Clark, Harry Nilsson and many, many others. His two biggest hits were Shutters and Boards and When the Wind Blows in Chicago. Eddy Arnold recorded When the Wind Blows in Chicago for his 1993 album Last of the Love Song Singers which is currently in release by RCA.

Audie suffered from what is now known as Post Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD) and was plagued by insomnia and depression. During the mid-60's he became dependent for a time on doctor prescribed sleeping pills called Placidyl. When he recognized that he had become addicted to this prescription drug, he locked himself in a motel room, stopped taking the sleeping pills and went through withdrawal symptoms for a week. Always an advocate for the needs of veterans, he broke the taboo about discussing war related mental problems after this experience. In a effort to draw attention to the problems of returning Korean and Vietnam War veterans, Audie Murphy spoke-out candidly about his personal problems with PTSD, then known as "Battle Fatigue". He publicly called for United States government to give more consideration and study to the emotional impact war has on veterans and to extend health care benefits to address PTSD and other mental health problems of returning war vets.

While on a business trip on May 28, 1971, (Memorial Day Weekend) he was killed at the age of 46. A private plane flying in fog and rain crashed in the side of a mountain near Roanoke, Virginia. Five others including the pilot were also killed. Although Audie owned and flew his own plane earlier in his career at Hollywood, he was among the passengers that tragic day.

On June 7th, Audie Murphy was buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery. His gravesite, near the Amphitheater, is second most visited gravesite year round. President Kennedy's grave is the most visited. In 1996 the Texas Legislature officially designated his birthday, June 20th, as Audie Murphy Day. On June 9, 1999 Governor George W. Bush, Texas made a similar proclamation declaring June 20th to officially be Audie Murphy Day in the state of Texas.

Medal of Honor citation

The official U.S. Army citation for Audie Murphy's Medal of Honor reads:

Rank and organization:' Second Lieutenant, U.S. Army, Company B 15th Infantry, 3rd Infantry Division.

Place and date: Near Holtzwihr France, 26 January, 1945.

Entered service at: Dallas, Texas. Birth: Hunt County, near Kingston, Texas, G.O. No. 65, 9 August 1944.

Citation: Second Lt. Murphy commanded Company B, which was attacked by six tanks and waves of infantry. Lt. Murphy ordered his men to withdraw to prepared positions in a woods, while he remained forward at his command post and continued to give fire directions to the artillery by telephone. Behind him, to his right, one of our tank destroyers received a direct hit and began to burn. Its crew withdrew to the woods. Lt. Murphy continued to direct artillery fire, which killed large numbers of the advancing enemy infantry. With the enemy tanks abreast of his position, Lt. Murphy climbed on the burning tank destroyer, which was in danger of blowing up at any moment, and employed its .50 caliber machine gun against the enemy. He was alone and exposed to German fire from three sides, but his deadly fire killed dozens of Germans and caused their infantry attack to waver. The enemy tanks, losing infantry support, began to fall back. For an hour the Germans tried every available weapon to eliminate Lt. Murphy, but he continued to hold his position and wiped out a squad which was trying to creep up unnoticed on his right flank. Germans reached as close as 10 yards, only to be mowed down by his fire. He received a leg wound, but ignored it and continued his single-handed fight until his ammunition was exhausted. He then made his way back to his company, refused medical attention, and organized the company in a counterattack which forced the Germans to withdraw. His directing of artillery fire wiped out many of the enemy; he killed or wounded about 50. Lt. Murphy's indomitable courage and his refusal to give an inch of ground saved his company from possible encirclement and destruction, and enabled it to hold the woods which had been the enemy's objective.

Military awards

***Medal of Honor
Distinguished Service Cross
Silver Star with First Oak Leaf Cluster
Legion of Merit
Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device and First Oak Leaf Cluster
Purple Heart with Second Oak Leaf Cluster***

U.S. Army Outstanding Civilian Service Medal
Good Conduct Medal
Presidential Unit Citation (US) with First Oak Leaf Cluster
European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with One Silver Star, Four
Bronze Service Stars (representing nine campaigns) and one Bronze Arrowhead
(representing assault landings at Sicily and Southern France)
American Campaign Medal
World War II Victory Medal
Army of Occupation Medal with Germany Clasp
Armed Forces Reserve Medal
Combat Infantryman Badge
Expert Badge with Bayonet Bar
Marksman Badge with Rifle Bar
French Fourragère in Colors of the Croix de guerre
French Legion of Honor
French Croix de guerre with Silver Star
French Croix de guerre with Palm
French Liberation Medal
Belgian Croix de guerre with Palm
Badge of the 159th French Alpine Infantry Regiment (Honorary award for Heroic
Action in the Colmar Campaign)