

# AUDIE MURPHY RESEARCH FOUNDATION

A NON-PROFIT PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION

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*Dear Friends:*

*Greenville, Texas will be holding their annual Audie Murphy Day Celebration on May 23rd this year. The program is even more impressive than usual and well worth attending.*

*Audie Murphy was born and raised a little northeast of Dallas, Texas in Hunt and Collin Counties. In addition to Greenville, Audie also lived in Farmersville, Celeste, Kingston, Floyd, Hooker Ridge and anywhere else he and his family could find work. As a result, there are many places of interest to visit in the area. The state of Texas and the communities of Greenville, Celeste and Farmersville have dedicated historical markers and educational displays honoring their favorite son. One of the most well known exhibits has been the Audie Murphy Room in the W.W. Harrison Library in Greenville, TX.*

*Interest in Audie Murphy has grown so much in recent years that Greenville decided to expand the size and scope of their Audie Murphy exhibit. Since the Harrison Library was not large enough to accommodate such an expansion, the American Cotton Museum, located at 600 Interstate 30 East, has taken over the responsibility of maintaining and improving the Audie Murphy exhibits.*

*The Audie Murphy Research Foundation has been working with Vince Leibowitz, Executive Director of the American Cotton Museum, to put these new displays in place. We wish to give special thanks to Stan Smith, Potomac, MD for his assistance, particularly with the military awards display, and to: David Willson, Auburn, WA; Wayne Cutshaw, Round Lake, IL; Sue Gossett, West Carrollton, OH; Eva Dano, La Puente, CA; Johnny Western, Wichita, KS; Jade Krug, Midland, TX; and Dieter Lack, Heide, Germany for donating movie posters, stills, programs and other movie memorabilia to the Foundation. Many of these items will be on permanent public display in the American Cotton Museum Audie Murphy Memorial Hunt County Veterans Exhibit which opens May 23rd — Audie Murphy Day.*

*This year's Greenville Audie Murphy Day program begins at 8:00 am at the American Cotton Museum with the raising of the flag by the Fort Sill, OK, Sergeant Audie Murphy Club. Grand Opening Ceremonies will take place at 9:00 am. Audie's sister Nadene will speak, as will U.S. Congressman Ralph Hall, a personal friend of Audie's. Awards for the Audie Murphy Essay Contest, coordinated by Brad Press, and for the Audie Murphy Stamp Cancellation contest, will be presented by the U.S. Post Office. Judge Joe Bobbitt and other local dignitaries will formally open the Audie Murphy Memorial Hunt County Veterans Exhibit. In addition to the items on display, the museum will also be playing clips from Audie's movies and public service announcements throughout the day.*

*Sue Gossett, the author of The Films and Career of Audie Murphy, will be on hand to autograph copies of the new second printing of her book. Sue, as the personal representative of the Audie Murphy Research Foundation, will be conducting interviews as part of the Foundation's historical preservation work. No appointment is necessary. Anyone who is in Greenville on the 23rd is invited to drop by the American Cotton Museum and share their*

*recollections with Sue and the Foundation.*

*At noon the Greenville Civic Center will open a special temporary exhibit of memorabilia relating to Audie Murphy. At 1:30 pm VFW Audie Murphy Post 1837 will post the colors opening the Civic Center Audie Murphy Ceremony. There will be guest speakers culminating with the presentation of a special State Highway Map showing the 51 miles of Highway 69 recently renamed the Audie Murphy Memorial Highway. A reception and dance sponsored by the American Legion will follow.*

*The Foundation gives special thanks to Diane Thomason and American Legion Post 17 for their years of hard work spearheading a nationwide effort to preserve Audie Murphy's memory.*

*For more information about Greenville's May 23rd Audie Murphy Day, please contact the American Cotton Museum (903) 450-4502 or 454-1990 or the Greenville Chamber of Commerce (903) 455-1510.*

*Sincerely,*

*Larryann Willis  
Executive Director*

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## **WE NEED YOUR HELP TO RECOVER AUDIE'S STOLEN WALLET**

The Foundation has just been contacted via the internet by an individual who illegally took Audie Murphy's partially burned wallet from the scene of the fatal plane crash and wants to sell it back to his widow and sons for a ridiculous amount of money. The thief has provided proof that he/she is indeed in possession of the wallet Audie Murphy was carrying when he was killed. However, this wallet does NOT belong to the individual trying to sell it. It is listed as stolen by the FBI and is still the legal property of Audie's family. Yet this unscrupulous individual has informed the family that he/she thinks Audie's wallet is worth \$1.5 million and that they intend to sell it to the highest bidder. The thief has refused to provide his/her name, address or phone number. If the family wants Audie's wallet back, they have been instructed to submit a bid via the internet. If the thief finds it acceptable, the family is supposed to meet this person at an undisclosed location and exchange cash for the wallet. This extortion attempt is a federal offense because the thief used the internet and US Mail to deliver his/her demands. The taking and selling of Audie Murphy's wallet also constitutes the crimes of theft, unlawful conversion and interference with a Federal NTSB investigation. Anyone who purchases Audie Murphy's wallet and/or any of its contents will be receiving stolen property.

The FBI, U.S. Attorney, and the NTSB are pursuing the case and attempting to recover the wallet for the Murphy family. If you have any information regarding the identity and/or whereabouts of this individual and/or Audie's wallet, please contact us. We would also appreciate your help in notifying auto-graph and memorabilia dealers, museums, libraries, etc. in your area, warning that they may be offered this stolen property (which includes Audie's drivers license) and asking them to contact us immediately if the wallet and/or contents should be offered to them.

Also missing from the crash site is a derringer that Audie was carrying. If you have any information on either the wallet or the derringer please call us toll free at 1-888-314-AMRF.

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*Audie Murphy and Denver Pyle in GUNPOINT, released by Universal Studios in 1966*

## INTERVIEW WITH DENVER PYLE

by Robert Nott

Actor Denver Pyle, perhaps best known as Uncle Jesse on "The Dukes of Hazzard," made four films with Audie Murphy: *RIDE CLEAR OF DIABLO* (1954); *TO HELL AND BACK* (1955); *CAST A LONG SHADOW* (1959); and *GUNPOINT* (1966). The Audie Murphy Research Foundation had been in contact with Mr. Pyle who, even though in ill health, wanted to share his personal recollections about Audie Murphy with us. Unfortunately, Mr. Pyle passed away December 27, 1997, before having the opportunity to do so. However, the following October 23, 1997 interview has been graciously provided to the Foundation by author Robert Nott.

**Robert Nott is a freelance writer who is putting the finishing touches on a book covering the westerns of Randolph Scott, Joel McCrea and Audie Murphy. He interviewed Denver Pyle in October of last year, two months before the actor's death. During the course of the interview, Pyle reflected on his work and relationships with all three men, particularly with Audie.**

**Q:** This is a rather general question, but can

you compare Joel McCrea, Randolph Scott and Audie Murphy in terms of their screen personas?

**A:** All three of them were excellent at what they did. I think that Joel McCrea was probably the best actor of the three. And Randolph Scott was, as you know, he really got in on his handsomeness. And Audie, he was a pretty good actor. People didn't look on him as an actor as such, but...

**Q:** Do you think Murphy was underrated as

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an actor?

A: Yeah. I think he was very underrated and I think that's a matter of management. He needed...I think Audie needed better handling than he got. He was a tough little bugger. [Laughs]

Q: Did you get any sense of what he thought of himself, as a western star?

A: I always thought that he took his whole career with a grain of salt, you know what I'm saying? I don't think he thought it was any kind of achievement. I had a feeling that he didn't think it was a very manly thing to do...for somebody to be doing. [Laughs]

Q: Interesting. I get the feeling that he took himself the least seriously of the three men

we're discussing, playing the hero with fake guns instead of being a hero in real life. I also heard that he had a devilish sense of humor.

A: Oh, he does! [sic] And he'll go to great lengths to pull a gag on somebody. I worked with him in that war picture of his life, *TO HELL AND BACK* (1955). We were up shooting in Oregon, running tanks. Anyway, one night Audie says to me, he says, "Listen, I'm gonna go out and take one of those tanks for a drive. You wanna come?" I said, "Sure, but what if we get caught?" He said, "Well, we'll go to the brig." [Laughs] He goes, "We'll sneak out after dinner, and I'll go out first and wait for you, and then we'll go on over and get us a tank." I said, "Well, you got a key to it?" He said, "They don't need a key. You just turn it on and go!" So

we snuck over and got in a tank, and he revved it up and we ran it all over the field where they had 'em parked. We must have played out there until two o'clock in the morning. And we put it away and shut it down and got back in our cars, and went back to the hotel. Audie says, "Now don't you tell a soul about this. You know what we'd get if we get caught stealing one of these? This is government stuff! This is government!" So the next day everything was calm. Nothing, you know. I found out years later that it was all a setup. He had gotten permission to go get a tank and run it. He just told them what he was gonna do and they said, "Hell, yes." Hell, he had experience running the thing, but he had the crap scared out of me.

Q: One last question. Do you remember where you were when you heard of Murphy's death in the plane crash?

A: We all gathered over at Nudie's Western Wear. He used to dress Audie. And they were good friends. And we all just had a kind of wake over there, sat around, told a few jokes, drank a little booze.

Q: I get the sense that you liked Audie more than McCrea and Scott.

A: Well yeah! I could talk to Audie. And it helps when somebody accepts you. I almost got with Audie where...where he'd call me and say, "What are you doing?" and I'd say, "Oh, sitting around." He'd say, "Let's go over and see Nudie..." or, "I got a new horse, you want to see him?" And we'd drive out to the stables and look at horses. But we didn't do that all that much, you know, because he had to be really bored to call me! [Laughs]

Q: I think his experiences as a war hero really colored his work as an actor.

A: Audie...you could look him in the eye and know that he would think nothing about killing you. It's the look that people get or have. It's nothing threatening, but you just know that he'd kill you and think nothing of it. And he was the first person that I was ever around that had that look. And he used it — you can see it in his work.

Q: He didn't need any acting lessons.

A: Not for that. He was deadly. Deadly.



Courtesy of Eva Dano

John Dehner, Audie Murphy and Denver Pyle in *CAST A LONG SHADOW*. Audie was a producer on this film made by The Mirisch Company and released by United Artists in 1959.

## ***Less than a year after his best friend, Lattie Tipton, was killed and less than a month after he returned home, Audie wrote:***

*I told my men I was going to crawl ahead of the platoon and see what I could do about that Kraut installation.*

*"I'm going too," Pfc. Lattie Tipton, 33, of Erwin, Tenn., said.*

*Lattie and I had shared foxholes ever since the invasion of Sicily. He had turned down a sergeant's rating so he could stay with me as my runner. That day he had been shot through the left ear and was bleeding a lot. But when I ordered him back to the beach for medical treatment, he refused. I knew he wouldn't pay any attention if I told him to stay with the platoon now. I should have made him stay.*

*"OK Lattie," I said. "Let's go."*

*We crawled out of the ditch and inched our way 75 yards up the side of the hill. There we found another ditch, and set up the machine gun.*

*As we prepared to fire, the Krauts let up in their shooting, and we saw a white flag waving at the top of the ridge.*

*"This looks funny," Lattie said, "but I'm going up and get them. Keep me covered."*

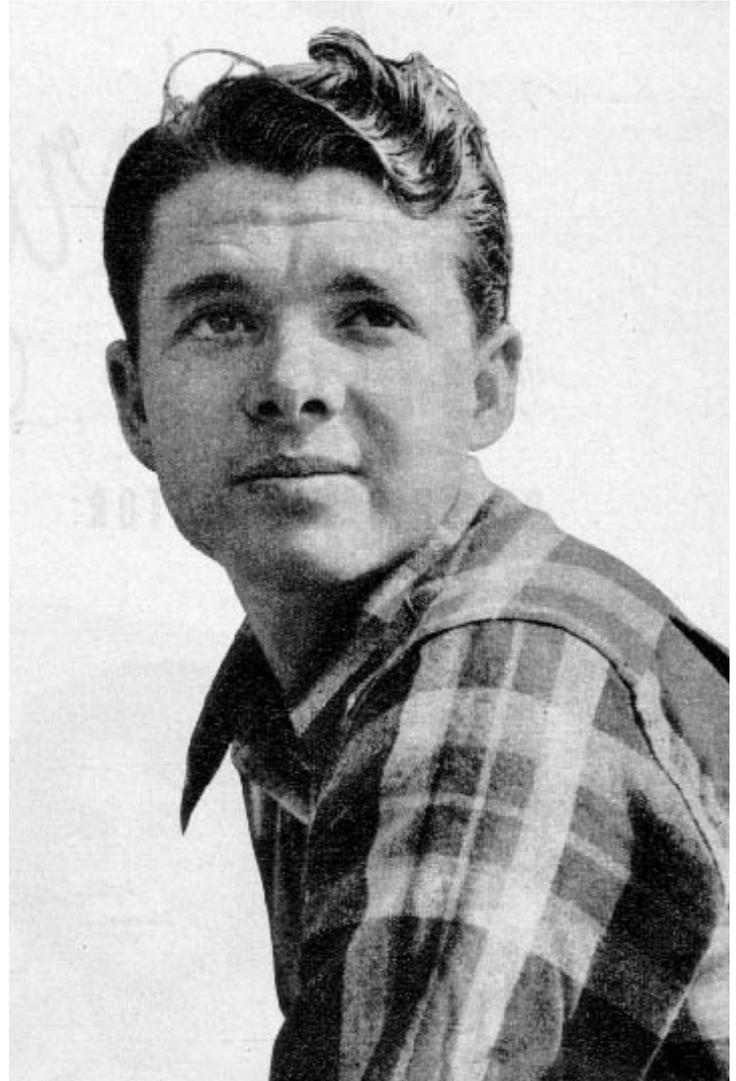
*He crawled out of the ditch and stood up. There was a burst of machine gun fire, and Lattie fell back in the ditch on top of me.*

*He was dead.*

*I must have gone crazy then. I don't remember much of what happened after that. I remember using a German machine pistol I picked up somewhere, maybe from the Kraut whose lower jaw had been shot to bits and every time he tried to scream a stream of blood spurted out. I wish I didn't remember that. . . .*

*After the hill was taken, I was tired and mad and sad. I couldn't forget Lattie's 12-year-old daughter. He had read me parts of nearly every letter he had received from her.*

*Audie Murphy  
July 17, 1945*



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## **HOW AUDIE MURPHY WON HIS MEDALS**

By David "Spec" McClure

### **PART III**

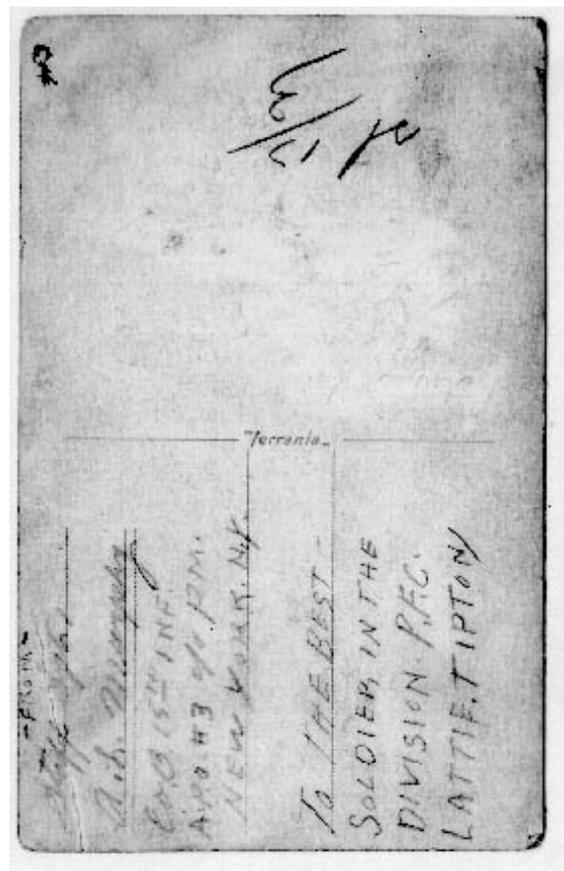
He had come ashore on Yellow Beach with the assault waves. "History says we took the area fast," says Murphy. I don't know. It seemed that forty minutes were required for Company B to capture a single coastal gun. As I remember it, our beach casualties were heavy."

Once ashore, units of the 3rd Division did not tarry long. They began to drive inland and within four hours they had reached the high ground three miles from the beach. A

cannon jutted from a rocky promontory. The French underground men, meeting the Americans, said that the cannon marked an enemy strongpoint. Audie's battalion was assigned to take it. The route to the objective would be uphill all the way. The slopes were thickly covered with brush, scrub oaks and pine trees which sharply reduced visibility and offered excellent concealment for snipers. The 1st Battalion decided to swing in from the coast and hit the point on the

enemy's right flank, hoping that it would be vulnerable.

The sweating, swearing men proceeded up the slope with great caution, advancing in a ragged skirmish line. They could expect sudden fire from three directions at any moment. But the Germans were strangely silent. Audie was bringing up the rear of his platoon when he heard all hell break loose. Ahead, an enemy machine gun had opened up; it was accompanied by a concentration



Courtesy of Claudean Tipton Carpenter

*Audie Murphy gave this postcard to his best friend, Lattie Tipton, June 1944. Lattie sent it to his daughter; Claudean, who was living with her grandparents in Erwin, Tennessee.*

of German rifle fire. Murphy was puzzled. He could not hear Company B returning the fire. Carrying a carbine and loaded down with hand grenades, he scuttled forward to see what was wrong.

The picture was very bad. As Audie emerged from the brush, he saw a vineyard leading up to a wooded slope that rose abruptly at an angle of about forty degrees. The vineyard was flanked on the right by a drainage ditch four feet deep. Above the ditch stood a tall, thick canebrake through which the Germans were shooting and over which they were lobbing grenades. One could scarcely penetrate the thicket visually. But that did not deter the Germans. They were sending a stream of bullets through it at an elevation that would pick off the Americans who got a portion of their bodies three feet from the ground. The cane leaves were falling thick and fast under the scythe of flying lead.

Now the old Murphy brain began to click. He saw that the brake was not the main trouble for the men of his company. He knew that Company A was moving up on his right flank and should soon be hitting the Germans

on the opposite side of the cane patch. The drainage ditch, covered at the forward end by enemy guns, had been a trap. The men who had tried moving up through it were all dead. Avoiding the ditch, the remainder of Company B had attempted an attack straight through the vineyard.

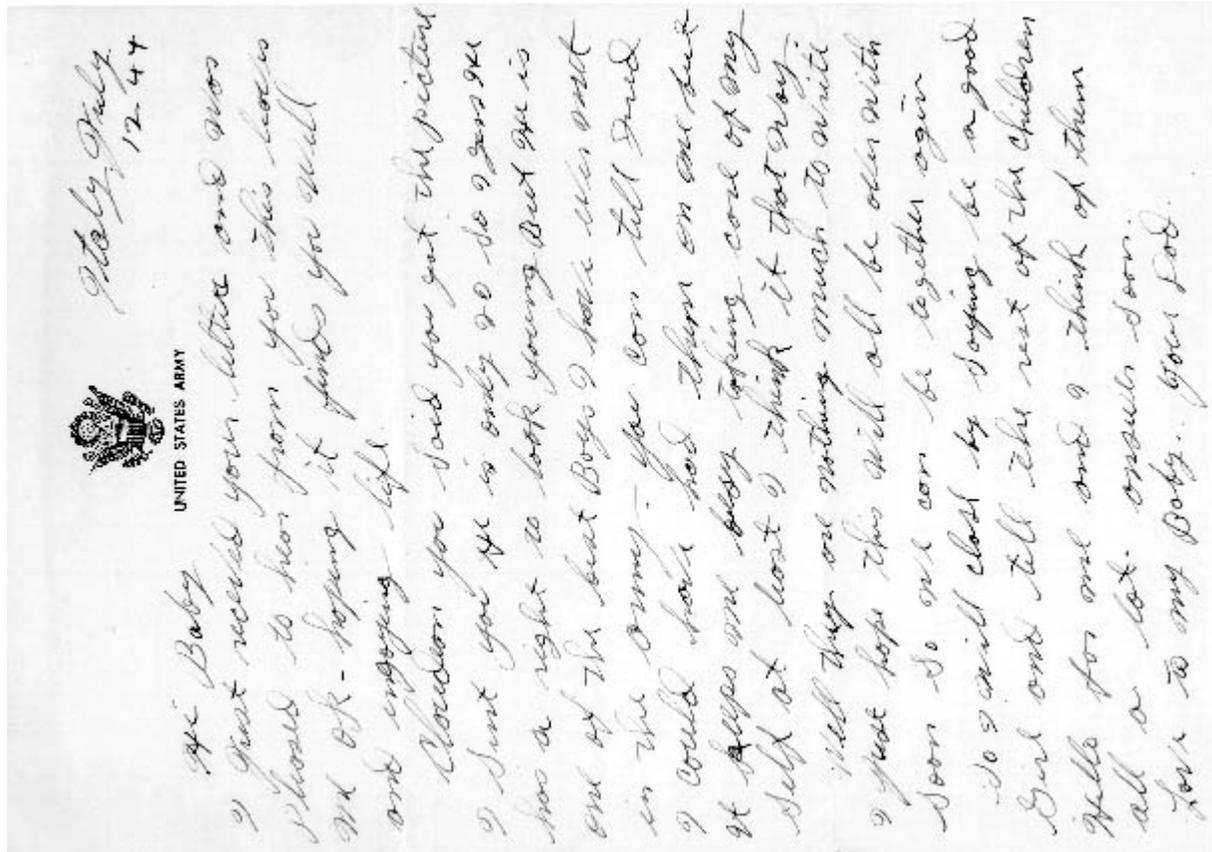
A German machine gun crew had waited in ambush until the Americans had reached open ground. Then, accompanied by enemy riflemen, it had suddenly gone into action. Now Audie understood why Company B had not been returning the fire. The enemy guns had split the unit. The men in the rear were on direct target and could not move. The forward element was in a less lethal position. The enemy machine gun was obviously firing from a slope and could not lower its angle of elevation to a point sufficient to kill Americans in front. But they were solidly pinned down, being unable to advance against the deadly fire or to pull back without great peril.

Now the young sergeant, who was as old as death in combat knowledge, realized why Company B had walked into the trap. The German riflemen were stationed in chest-

deep foxholes on the wooded slope directly ahead. Against the background they were almost invisible. The battle-wise men had known that the enemy might be in such a position, but they had taken a chance on storming the slope and lost.

With the complete picture in his mind now, Audie decided that the enemy machine gun had to be eliminated fast. Crawling, cursing, sweating, he moved under the fire to the forward section of the company. When he stopped, he saw a man with a Browning Automatic Rifle ten yards to his left. He was hovering over a dying comrade. Even as Murphy glanced at him, the BAR man raised up to study the slope with angry eyes. A sniper drilled him through the brain.

Murphy's own eyes snapped forward, taking in every detail of the terrain ahead. He saw the machine gun. It was located beneath a cork tree fifteen yards up the slope with a fire-path cut to allow the weapon to cover the entire vineyard. Two Germans with their helmets barely above the ground level of their foxhole were operating the gun. Three other members of the crew were



Courtesy of Claudean Tipton Carpenter

Claudean wrote her father commenting about how young Audie looked in the postcard. Lattie responded with the above letter.

sprawled flat on the earth, feeding ammunition belts to the gunners and slashing at the pinned Americans with rifle fire.

The enemy position was far out of the range of hand grenades, so Audie tried digging into it with carbine fire. But the distance, the angle of the slope, and the small target presented by the enemy soldiers determined a situation in which carbine fire was virtually useless. Murphy knew that he could not knock out the machine gun without more firepower. So he started back to the rear to get it. He had found a natural depression in the gently rolling ground of the vineyard and through it he crawled back with a curtain of enemy bullets snapping overhead.

Locating a heavy weapons platoon, he borrowed a .30 caliber machine gun and began dragging it forward over the murderous terrain. I asked why he had not taken the weapons platoon up with him. His eyes glinted with ironic humor. "The men swore they were pinned down," he said. "But, being very generous, they told me to help myself to the machine gun."

In his advance he used the same defiled route down which he had retreated, and he

hoped to God that the Germans had not been able to lower their angle of fire. Enemy lead was flying all around him. But, using every bit of his knowledge of terrain and fire angles, he eased forward. Passing the forward elements of Company B, he dragged the machine gun to a position seventy-five yards ahead of his own useless skirmish line.

Then he set up his weapon for action. With only one belt of ammunition, he had to be accurate. "I knew that it was going to be a duel to the death between me and the enemy machine gun crew. God! What a lonely feeling," he said.

Raking the top of the foxhole to keep the gunners down, he turned his fire upon the other crew members. Two of the Germans began to writhe, and Audie gave them another burst of fire. He was on target. Suddenly he realized that he was no longer alone. Five yards to his left and rear, a prone soldier was supporting him with a rifle.

Murphy recognized him and cursed. He wanted all the help he could get. But not from this man. He was Private Lattie Tipton, the closest friend Audie ever had in the Army. They had been sharing foxholes since

the long ago days in Sicily. Cool, brave, and reckless under fire, Tipton was an excellent soldier.

Tipton had a small daughter whose name was Claudean. Murphy seldom wrote or received letters during the war, so Lattie had shared his mail from Claudean. The little girl whom he had never seen had penetrated the cold defenses around his sentimental Irish heart. Murphy had made a secret vow that Tipton was going home to that daughter. Now in this dreadful spot, Audie saw that Lattie had a portion of his ear shot off. The wound was bleeding profusely. Murphy's reaction was a mixture of rage, admiration, relief, and frustration.

"Go back, Lattie," he shouted. "Get back and have that ear fixed."

"You go to hell," said Tipton lightly. He wiped the blood off his face, glinted over the sights of his Garand, and continued firing. Murphy emptied his belt of cartridges into the machine gun position. The weapon was temporarily silenced, but it was not out of commission. Audie would have to close in upon it. He saw that two Germans were retreating up the drainage ditch and assumed

that the enemy had taken the heat off it. Grabbing his carbine, he turned to Tipton.

"I'm going up, Lattie," he said. "Now I'm telling you again. Fall back and get that ear fixed." With that Murphy scuttled to the drainage ditch and rolled in. "I glanced around, and there was Lattie right behind me," he said.

The two started moving up, with Murphy a few yards in front. At the forward end of the ditch, he could see the source of trouble. German riflemen had dug in on a side of the canebrake. From that position they had been able to cover the length of the ditch with deadly fire while remaining in virtual concealment. Only two remained at the spot. Audie killed them both with two fast, accurate shots from his carbine.

Now using the ditch for cover, the two Americans maneuvered themselves into a position within twenty yards of the machine gun. Because of the trees and distance, their hand grenades were still useless. To take the enemy gun, Murphy and Tipton would have to rush it. There was another troublesome factor: The machine gun was covered by several foxholes with German riflemen.

Inserting fresh clips of ammunition in their weapons, Murphy and Tipton emerged from the ditch, and with their guns blazing a path and keeping German heads down, they dashed forward. In the foxhole the enemy gunners were crouching with bowed heads. The Americans killed them instantly and dived in on top of their bodies. For a few minutes they discussed their next move.

Tipton stood up to peer over the edge of the foxhole. He was a tall man, and standing on the dead Germans gave him more height. Murphy, still crouching, saw the danger and cried: "Goddamnit! Lattie, keep down."

"They want to surrender," said Tipton. "I'm going to get them."

"Keep down!" yelled Murphy. "Don't trust them."

The tall man cast an amused glance at his skeptical comrade. A rifle cracked. Tipton, choking out "Murph," slumped. His body fell across the still crouching young sergeant. "I never saw one drop of fresh blood on Lattie," Murphy says. "But I knew he was dead. The sniper bullet must have got him in the heart. He died so fast."

At this moment Audie had no time for sentiment; no time to curse Tipton for his recklessness; no time to remember Claudean. He was in a desperate spot and was aware of it. The Germans knew exactly where he was. He had to get out of that foxhole and move fast. Grabbing the enemy machine gun he swiftly checked it. The weapon fired 7.92 millimeter cartridges, and its barrel was supported by a bipod. The cartridges were fed from a metal belt which was not likely to jam if used like a BAR and fired from the hip.



*Courtesy of Claudean Tipton Carpenter*

***Pfc. LATTIE TIPTON — 1911 - 1944***

Murphy was ready to move. He lobbed a grenade into a foxhole some ten yards to his right. Hurling more grenades to keep the enemy down in his immediate vicinity, he climbed out of the foxhole and stood up. Directly uphill was another foxhole. Believing the two occupants had killed Tipton, he charged them with the machine gun. He did not ask them to surrender. Killing both, he whirled to the left. Before this audacious attack, five Germans had thrown away their weapons and stood up with raised hands. To his right, Audie saw the results of his machine-gun fire from the vineyard. Of the three crew members who had remained out of the foxhole, one was dead and another was dying. The third, a young soldier still in his teens, had a jaw ripped off. He tried to speak to Murphy, but blood, rather than words, gushed from his torn mouth. Death for him would be a mercy, but Audie could not force himself to finish off the boy. He continued to move over the hill, his machine gun boring into everything that moved.

Resistance soon ceased. Murphy walked to the edge of the forest and waved Company B forward. The men closed in on the cannon. It proved to be a dummy which the Germans had rigged to fool Allied reconnaissance.

With the strongpoint neutralized, Audie went back and dragged Tipton out of the foxhole. For the first time in the war, he was thoroughly unrealistic. He put a pack under Tipton's head for a pillow. He checked his personal effects, taking a last look at the photograph of Claudean. Then he sat down and cried like a child.

His action was to bring him the Distinguished Service Cross. The citation read in part: "His extraordinary heroism resulted in capture of a fiercely contested enemy-held hill and the annihilation or capture of the en-



*Courtesy of Claudean Tipton Carpenter*  
*This is the photo of Claudean that Lattie always carried with him and was among the personal effects returned to her.*

tire enemy garrison."

In the early years of our friendship, Audie could scarcely mention this blood fight without growing moody and angry. He was certain that the Germans had tricked Tipton into exposing himself by waving a white flag and then shot him. But time mellowed Murphy. "In retrospect," he said, "we can afford to be benevolent. Those Germans on the left may have wanted to surrender. There was a roll in the terrain between them and krauts uphill. So it's just possible that the latter did not see the white flag and assumed that the fight was still on. That may be, possibly, why they shot Tipton.

"But I will never understand what happened. Lattie was the bravest man I ever knew. And he was not a fool. He had too much combat experience not to study the entire terrain before him, no matter what

was taking place on the left."

Because of his extreme fondness for Tipton and the apparent treachery involved in his death, I believe that the incident drastically changed Murphy's battle psychology. Up to that point he had been an outstanding soldier. But after Lattie's death, he became a fantastic combat man, laying his life on the line time after time.

"No," said Audie. "You're wrong. Each time you move into combat, you know that somebody is doing to die, even yourself. Everybody is vulnerable. So you expect death as an inevitability, which does not make you a damned bit less concerned with your own skin.

"When Lattie was killed, perhaps the war became more personal, more real to me. But that was all. The more you stick with war, the deeper do you get involved with it. Finally it takes over your whole being. This was the way my psychology worked. It is the only war psychology worth a damn. You can throw away all the books. Actual combat experience is the only teacher. You never come out of a skirmish without having picked up a couple of new tricks — without having learned more about your enemy. Perhaps I was a willing student. But total involvement with the war was the only thing that kept me alive and pushing. I also had plenty of luck."

The spasm of grief over Tipton was short. Murphy dried his tears and got to his feet. "Once again I saw the war as it was," he says. "It was an endless series of lethal problems, some big, some small, that involved the blood and guts of men. Lattie was dead, and I was alive. It was as simple as that. The dead would lie where they had fallen; the living would move on and keep fighting. There was nothing else to do."

*David "Spec" McClure — 1971*

TO  
 PRIVATE JOE SIEJA,  
 KILLED IN ACTION ON THE ANZIO BEACHHEAD, January, 1944  
 AND  
 PRIVATE LATTIE TIPTON,  
 KILLED IN ACTION NEAR RAMATUELLE, FRANCE, August, 1944

*If there be any glory in war,  
 let it rest on men like these.*

Audie Murphy — 1949  
 Dedication of *To Hell and Back*



*History of the Third Infantry Division in WWII*

*1944 photo of then Lieutenant Colonel Walter E. Tardy, CO, 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion.*

## **From an interview with Colonel Walter E. Tardy, USA (Ret) February 20, 1997**

*Did you know Audie?*

Just briefly. I didn't know him until Hal Edson, who commanded the 15th Infantry, put him in for the Medal of Honor. Then to keep him from being in danger Colonel Edson kept him around regimental headquarters — sort of a liaison officer. I went in and out of regimental headquarters every day to see Hal Edson and the other people there, so I saw Audie from time to time and just spoke to him. That's all.

*We've heard that he kept trying to sneak back to the front. Is that right?*

Yeah. [Laughs] He didn't seem very happy sitting in that regimental headquarters. [Laughs] He was in a lot of places he wasn't supposed to be. He was an outstanding chap.

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### **EXCERPTS FROM JULY 1997 INTERVIEW WITH GENE PALUMBO**

*You talked about seeing Audie being escorted to the rear.*

That's right. Yeah, they took him back to the rear. The captain wouldn't leave him on the front lines anymore. They were scared he'd get knocked over. That's the truth.

I was with the 756th Tank Battalion, B Company. We were the tanks for Murphy's company...part of the package. Our B Company went with B Company and our A Company went with A Company... that's the way they did it. Artillery was the same. B Company artillery was with us and with Murphy's B Company and right down the line, so they knew A was here and B was there. Sometimes they'd pull us away from the 3rd Division and put us with the 45th and the 36th. Like in Italy, I was stuck at Cassino when Audie's Company went into Anzio. I think A Company and C Company went in with `em. I'm not sure. But we had to stay at Cassino because the English didn't have any tanks. We were 49 days at Cassino and we didn't take a half a mile or even a quarter of a mile. I think Murphy had 24 months on the front and I had 22. It was a lot. And the last place we took... Audie must have been with us... was Berchtesgaden, where Hitler used to have his big war affairs, you know, up on the hill. Company B got wiped out a lot and we got wiped out with `em so many times. They were the longest on the front without a relief, fighting day and night. Murphy was with `em.

We got trapped in the Pocket with Murphy. That Colmar



*Courtesy of Gene Palumbo*

*Gene Palumbo - 1943 - T/5 756th Tank Battalion, B Company*

Pocket was one helluva battle, you know. We had GI bodies stacked up like cordwood. It was so cold, I could never really say they were all dead thrown in that pile...our guys...some of `em...because.... It was a bugger, you know. There were so many guys got hit. That's where Audie got his Congressional Medal of Honor. Those tanks were ours. We were B Company, and we were the tanks supporting them.

In that battle there, the Germans were trying to break through. We fought about a two day battle there that they figured the Germans were coming through. And the reason that I know this is that I was reconnaissance jeep.

I was assigned to reconnaissance because I got knocked out in Italy. We were 49 days on the front lines blowing up Germans and they were blowing us up. I got a shell through my tank and got blown out. When I came back from the hospital they said, "Don't put this guy back in tanks. He's had enough." I said, "Why?" They said, "You're not going back in tanks, because you'll freeze up." So they put me in reconnaissance. I didn't mind that. I was out there like Audie Murphy. I was floating all over the front. [Laughs] I was getting trapped here and there and taking pillboxes and everything else.

*Audie loved being a liaison officer because he could just zip all over the place.*

THAT'S RIGHT! And that's what I was doing. I'd go from tank to tank and make sure they were all right and if the infantry, like say Audie or somebody, needed a tank because the Germans had two machine guns that had the infantry bogged down, I'd say "OK." And I'd go tell the tank commander, "Go ahead with this infantry and they'll place you so you can wipe out these machine guns." This is what we'd do, we'd follow `em up and we'd knock out the guns and then we'd hold the position until some infantry needed us.

I'll tell ya right now, what Audie has done and what I have done and what a lot of guys like us have done will never be in the records. I tell stories that they say, "This was impossible." But nobody was with me to prove this stuff, if you know what I mean.

You know it was so cold and we'd be out there...and the infantry was with us... a battalion, or a company, or a scout outfit. We'd be outside of a little town, maybe a half a mile, you know. We'd say, "OK, you want



*Courtesy of Gene Palumbo*  
*Left to right: T/5 Gene Palumbo, T/5 Clinton E. Campbell, Cpl. Paul P. Tirpak*

to sleep out in this snow tonight or do you want to take that town?" We had no officers to tell us to take it or not. The infantry'd say, "You guys willing to go?" We'd say, "Yes, let's go." We'd all start firing our guns and, with the tanks, into town we'd go. We'd push the Germans the hell out and we'd go in the houses and put a guard out for the night. That's the way we'd do it. We weren't about to sleep out there that night.

One day we were going down to no man's land with the tanks and I see a big hole up on a hill and I tell the gunner, "Put a couple shells up there in that hole in that hill." So he put `em up there. And all of a sudden three Germans come out. They got their hands in the air. Well one of `em had one hand behind his back. So I told this kid, Tirpak I think it was, I said, "Watch this guy with the hand behind him. I don't think it's wounded. Keep an eye on him." Well they get close enough to us and he threw a grenade at us— what we called a potato masher. I said, "Hit the dirt!" And we hit the dirt. It went off. And I'll be a son-of-a-gun, I get up and I pull out the tommy gun from the jeep. I'm ready to blast him and Tirpak says, "Palumbo, don't do it, don't do it." I says, "What the hell do you mean, don't do it. He tried to blow us apart." He says, "I'll take care of him." Well this Tirpak was a semi-pro football player. He was a big kid. We always carried our trench knives in our boots and he pulled his trench knife out. I had the tommy gun on the other two Germans and I

told `em, "Sit down. Sit down." The other one started to run and Tirpak chased him. We're like a football team. We say, "Get him, Tirpak! Get him!" He wasn't going no place because we would have blown him apart if we had to use the 75. Tirpak jumped and he tackled this kid. He brought him down and took his trench knife and he cut his guts out. I mean, he just ripped. The other two guys were just shaking so bad. They thought for sure I was going to blast `em there. And I would have blasted them, you know.

You get kill crazy. The captain pulled me off the front. I protested and said, "I don't want to go to the rear." He said, "You're getting your ass off this front line. You're kill crazy." Him and a sergeant grabbed me and sent me back for a change of clothes. I had to stay there 48 hours or something and I come back up again. They wouldn't let me stay on the front.

I went patrolling one night looking for the tanks. I had the first sergeant with me. His name was Nusz. It was dark but the moon was out. And I see these two bodies across a dirt road. And I say, "I'm stopping." Nusz says, "Why?" I said, "You see those two Germans on the road up there, laying down? I don't know if they're dead or not, but we ain't taking no chances because they're great for playing games. I'm gonna get out here with a tommy gun." I said, "You crawl up slow and get close to `em and see if they're moving." I put the gun on `em





*Courtesy of Robert H. Steele*

*This photo of a German 88 crew was taken from a German POW. The barrel is positioned horizontally as it would be when setting up a “bowling alley.”*

den I'd pull off and wait. And I'd hear it go down the road and I'd take off again. We used to time the shell, but if they'd have put one in the middle, we'd have got it.

*So they were shooting down there in the dark, just periodically, to take out anything coming down the road.*

Yeah, that's just what they did. They did the same thing with their machine guns. If Audie was around he could tell ya a lot of that stuff. If they were covering a road with a machine gun and thought the infantry was coming down or any trucks were moving, every so often they'd make a blast with a machine gun.

This captain came up as a replacement. They moved him up and he told us, “All right. I'm taking over this company.” And we go, “OK, you're taking over the company. You're the captain.” And he says, “Where's my tank?” I said, “Right over there. There's your tank. You got a crew waiting.” And he

jumped in the tank, and I said, “Where you going?” He said, “Well, I'm going around the corner and down the road.” I said, “You are like hell.” I said, “There's an 88 down there letting shells loose every time you go around that corner. It's like a bowling alley.” I said, “They're dropping an 88 right down the road every so many minutes.” He wouldn't listen to me and the sad part about it is that crew was with us a year or so. They'd been in combat a year. In tanks that's a long time. He jumped in the tank and he was gung ho. “All right, let's go. Move it out.” They just about got around the corner and — WHAM! — he got it. He wasn't with us a half hour. That was the end of him. And the sad part about it was that the crew got it too.

I got to know Murphy because I was recon and I'd get trapped up front with the infantry guys a lot. I'd get up there to push a tank over to a different side where we're gonna make an attack and whatnot, and all

of a sudden the artillery and the infantry would start pushing in on us and I'd be trapped right with 'em. I'd end up quitting my jeep and fighting with them for a while.

We took a pillbox one night. I don't know if Murphy was with us or not — but it was B Company. The infantry called me up and I was right there with my machine gun on the ground. They crawled up and laid the TNT against the door and they blew it to hell. They threw two grenades inside of it. We finally get in and it was dark. And it was cold. We figured we'd stop for the night because that was the end of that battle. So I go in and I'm tripping over some guys and I says, “Move over for Chrissake, I want to lay down and go to sleep.” So I laid down and I'm in between these two, I figured GI's, and I go to sleep and I wake up and I look up and I see one dead German on this side of me and another one on this side of me. And I said, “Oh, what the hell. They kept me warm anyway.” But that's what a crazy

war it was.

Anyhow, after I got blown out of my tank and went back to the front they put me in recon. That's how I met Murphy.

*Because you got trapped up front with Company B?*

That's right. That's what happened. I got trapped pretty often. The day they were bringing him back with four infantry soldiers around him, we'd just got through a battle up ahead, and I'm sitting down aside of the road, probably eating a C ration, I guess. I'm

up on a little knoll looking down and I think "What the hell?" There's four infantry guys and there's a guy in the middle there with four rifle guys around him. And I think, "Jesus, that looks like Murphy. That looks like Murph!" And I yelled, "Murph, what the hell did you do?" I figured, "Oh Jesus, he must of did something. They got him under arrest. They're gonna take him back." And he yells up at me, "Ah, that goddamn captain's scared I'm gonna get killed. He won't let me stay up here." They were marching him back. [Laughs] So I says, "Well, good luck to you." And he says,

"Good luck to YOU." And that was it.

Anyhow, that was how I met Murphy. But everybody knew him.

*Before the Colmar Pocket?*

Oh yeah. He had quite a reputation long before that.

*Gene Palumbo  
July 1997*



*Courtesy of Wayne Cutshaw and Universal Studios*

*Anzio scene from TO HELL AND BACK released by Universal Studios in 1955. Denver Pyle, standing foreground; Marshall Thompson, sitting left; Jack Kelly, sitting second from left; Audie Murphy sitting on stairs; Charles Drake, standing right background; Art Aragon, sitting far right.*

## FUNDING PROBLEMS DELAYED NEWSLETTER

We know how much people like to receive new information about Audie Murphy and wish we could have sent this newsletter sooner. Unfortunately, contributions were especially slow after the holiday season and we had difficulty raising the \$3,000 needed to cover the cost of printing and postage. On the positive side, interest in Audie Murphy has been growing rapidly. So rapidly, in fact, that a shortfall has occurred because contributions have not kept pace with the hundreds of new newsletter requests we receive each month. When Audie's old friend Hal Weygandt learned of the problem, he generously donated the balance we needed to be able to send you this newsletter.

1997 was the Foundation's first full year of operation and we are proud of how much we were able to accomplish. The generosity of our supporters enabled us to send out more than 10,000 free newsletters. We have filled requests from Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, England, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Scotland, Singapore, Slovenia, Sweden, and the West Indies. Perhaps most encouraging is the number of students who request information. We often hear from young people like Brian Clarke, who wrote: "I want to thank you for giving me so much info on Audie L. Murphy. I have a GREAT grade on my report so far and, well, I just wanted to thank you! Audie Murphy is now one of my heroes. P.S. Mr. Murphy: I think your dad is amazing."

Houston educator Ann Joiner wrote: "I teach at a night high school for dropouts. I saw early on that these young people have no 'guidance system' to live by. They also have learning difficulties, especially when it comes to seeing relationships and making connections. . . I began including Audie Murphy's story after seeing the A&E biography. I ordered a copy and began using it. Our classes are structured in 90 minute blocks. We start with the biography, then I spend the rest of the period reading aloud to them from *To Hell and Back*. It takes a lot to get these young people involved in anything, but on the night I do this, they stay rapt the whole time period. Many of them now watch the movies on AMC. A few of them have even checked out the one copy of the book we have in our library. And these are young people who just don't read!"

It is feedback like this that makes us realize just how important this work is. But we need your help to be able to continue.

I am pleased to report that contributions received in 1997 totaled just under \$20,000. This is particularly impressive because almost all of it came in the form of small contributions from private individuals.

All work is done on a voluntary basis. The Foundation pays no salaries. Our office overhead (office and mailing supplies, long distance and incoming 800 phone calls, internet fees, postage, photocopying, computer expenses, etc.) is running approximately \$1,000 per month. This does not include the cost of acquiring, preserving and duplicating posters, photos, newspaper articles, court records and other items of historical significance. Nor does it include the costs of travel to conduct interviews and search archives. At the current level, each newsletter costs a little over \$3,000. We will need to raise an additional \$12,000 to reach our goal of sending out four newsletters in 1998. How many newsletters we can produce and how much preservation work we can do is entirely dependent on the amount of private contributions we receive. We hope you can continue to help.

*One of our biggest problems is covering day-to-day office expenses. We are in need of 50 monthly sponsors who would be willing to underwrite the Foundation by pledging a regular monthly donation of \$20 or more which the Foundation can automatically bill to their Visa or MasterCard.*

Thank you for helping make 1997 such a success.

### ***Special Thanks To:***

**WAL-MART STORES for donating photographic services and especially to the staff in the photo department of the Valencia Wal-Mart for their help in preserving rare historical photographs.**

**- and -**

**DASHLINK, INC. of Killeen, TX for sponsoring the new internet address dedicated exclusively to the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Website**

**[www.audiemurphy.com](http://www.audiemurphy.com)**



**AUDIE MURPHY and FELLER GOFF**

This photo was taken by Audie's horse trainer, Dallas Clark, on September 21, 1957 while Audie and Feller were at the races at California's Pomona Fairgrounds. Feller Goff has been one of the Foundation's most dedicated supporters. He has spent hours interviewing people as well as doing research for the Foundation at the Academy of Motion Pictures, UCLA and USC Film Libraries. He has represented the Murphy family as a guest speaker at schools, Sergeant Audie Murphy Club induction ceremonies and other events around the country. Feller was a strong advocate of Judge Joe A. Bobbitt's and the Hunt County Commissioners' decision to rename the Hunt County portion of Texas Highway 69 the Audie Murphy Memorial Highway. Since this highway dedication in 1996, Feller has been lobbying Governor Bush and the Texas State Legislature to rename the entire highway the Audie Murphy Memorial Highway. The Audie Murphy Research Foundation thanks Feller Goff for everything he has done to help keep the memory of his friend, Audie Murphy, alive.

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We need people who would be willing to print and mail copies of the new newsletter to at least one person who does not have Internet access. If you can help please indicate on the sign-up sheet.

If you do not have someone who can print out the newsletters for you or access to a public library or a Kinkos with Internet capability please fill out this form and mail it back to us at the above address. We will work to match you up with a volunteer who can print and mail a copy of the newsletter to you.

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We hope that this less expensive way of delivering the newsletter will enable us to reach more people and send out more frequent newsletters.

But even if we are successful at reducing mailing expenses, we still need your continued financial support to help cover the costs of interviewing people and collecting and preserving photos, newspaper and magazine articles and artifacts — as well as maintaining the website and making educational materials available to schools.

We hope you can continue to help. We appreciate your gift of:

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