

AUDIE MURPHY - 1960 Biography

*(Footnotes added in January 2005 by
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For Audie Murphy, the co-starring assignment in Hect-Hill-Lancaster's "The Unforgiven" is an event.

It brings him under the direction of John Huston for a second time and provides him opportunity to share challenging dramatic scenes with such experts at histrionics as Burt Lancaster, Audrey Hepburn, John Saxon and Lillian Gish, to mention a few of the top-liners of Hollywood appearing in the dynamically exciting picturization of Alan LeMay's widely acclaimed adventure novel.

In "The Unforgiven," which James Hill produced for United Artists release, Murphy appears as Cash Zachary, Lancaster's hothead brother and Miss Gish's son, who, with his family, a pioneer group of the Panhandle, are involved in a bitter blood feud to the death with a Kiowa Indian tribe.

Murphy is truly thrilled to be directed once more by Huston and at the latter's particular request. Huston's astute directorial talents were responsible for a memorable performance from the taciturn young actor in "Red Badge of Courage." That was a highlight in the Murphy career.

He was born Audie Leon Murphy, the sixth of nine children, on a farm near Kingston, Texas. He is almost as Irish as his name, but he has a streak of Indian blood inherited from his mother, Josie. His father, Emmet Murphy, a cotton share-cropper, could scarcely provide for his large family and as soon as the children were old enough they were called on to work.

When Audie was still very young he started hunting. It was hardly sport for him, for whatever rabbits or squirrels were killed were badly needed for the family larder. He hunted with slingshot and rifle and remembers well that sometimes there was but one shell; so he learned to shoot swiftly and accurately; which later stood him in good stead while fighting with the army.

His father disappeared when Audie was twelve. He simply walked out of the family's lives and was never heard from again. The mother, with younger children moved into the home of a married sister, Mrs. Corrine Burns of Farmersville, Texas. To help support his mother and the younger children, Audie hired out as a farm hand, which forced him to quit school, and he boarded out with his employers in the rural districts. Following the farming season he worked as a clerk in a combination grocery store and filling station for \$12 a week.

When Audie was 16 years old his mother died from a lingering illness. The three younger children were placed in an orphanage, the older ones scattered, each going their separate ways. A brother joined the army, while Audie went to Greenville, Texas

where he secured a \$16 a week job in a radio repair shop. He was working there when the war broke out a year later.

WAR RECORD

The title of "The Most Decorated Soldier" was bestowed on Audie by Life Magazine, before the surrender of Japan. He is one of two men in the history of American warfare who has received every decoration for valor in combat that our nation awards. These together with awards from grateful allied nations, for deeds above and beyond the call of duty in actual combat, earned him the honor of such a title.

He was awarded our country's highest military decoration, the Congressional Medal of Honor and 23 other decorations. He was then and is today recognized as a GI's soldier.

Murphy is generally credited with killing, wounding or capturing 240 Germans. Nobody, least of all Audie, has the slightest idea of the actual figure. The arbitrary number was compiled by a friend who got his data from citations, newspaper accounts, letters and information from men in Murphy's outfit.

Audie tried first to enlist with the Marines, then with the Paratroops. Both branches of service turned him down cold. He was underweight. The infantry finally accepted him. He went to Farmersville to say goodbye to his sister, and she recalls that his parting words were, "I'll try to do my share of the fighting." His deeds on the battlefield are now legendary.

Audie joined the Army on his 18th birthday, June 20, 1942 and trained at camp Wolters, Texas and Fort Meade, Maryland. He arrived in Africa during February, 1943. Landing at Casablanca he was marched with a group of replacements to Fort Lyautey, French Morocco. He was moved to Tunisia and was put into Company B, First Battalion, 15th Regiment, Third Infantry Division as a replacement. He remained with the same company during his entire combat days, entering as a private and emerging as the commanding officer, with every promotion earned in the field. On October 14, 1944, he jumped from Staff Sergeant to Second Lieutenant, after having refused a field commission previously.

By the time the war was over in Europe, Audie had participated in seven¹ major battle campaigns: Tunisia, Sicily, Naples-Foggia, Rome-Arno, Southern France, the Rhineland and Central Europe.

Among his decorations are three Purple Hearts. Actually he was awarded these through medical record for he well could have claimed a dozen had he wanted to.

In all he has twenty-four decorations: The Medal of Honor; the Distinguished Service Cross; the Silver Star with an Oak Leaf Cluster; the Legion of Merit; the Bronze

Star¹; the EAMA campaign ribbon with seven battle stars²; a Presidential Unit Citation ribbon³; the Expert Infantryman's Badge; the French Legion of Honor Chevalier; the French Croix de Guerre with Silver Star; the French Fourragere; the Belgium Croix de Guerre with Palm and a Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters⁴.

A battlefield commission promoted Audie Murphy to First Lieutenant before the war ended in Europe. He chose to return home, with thoughts of the Pacific campaign in mind, rather than remain with the occupation forces in Europe, with the rank of Captain.

Audie was still not old enough to vote, when he returned to the United States arriving in San Antonio, Texas on June 14, 1945. He was sent home on a plane that also carried thirteen Generals. He was unaware of being the "Most Decorated Combat Soldier" and unintentionally slept through the banquet where the announcement was to be made and at which he was to be the surprise guest of honor.

After his homecoming, Audie's picture appeared on the cover of Life Magazine (July 5, 1945). It was to change the course of his whole life. Among the millions of interested readers was Jimmy Cagney, who was intrigued by the freckled face kid from Texas, and asked him to come to Hollywood. Several weeks passed before friends were able to persuade him to accept Cagney's offer to visit Hollywood.

The stories that followed could fill a book. Hollywood was a strange land to this unsophisticated, tired boy. He doubted both his own ability or liking for a screen career. However, after several months, in which he shuttled back and forth to Texas, he finally appeared in a picture "Beyond Glory" for Paramount Studio.

Roles were few and far between; people and studios sought him for publicity but not for acting. The illusion was created he was working regularly, but stubborn pride kept him from telling anyone about his situation. It was at this period that Audie slept in a gymnasium owned by a pal, Terry Hunt, hanging on until a break finally came.

In 1949 he married actress Wanda Hendrix. This marriage lasted only a little more than one year, before they were divorced.

Through Texas friends he was starred in "Bad Boy," a story sponsored and based on the favorite charity of the Variety Clubs of America. He then was starred in

1 This should read: Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device and First Oak Leaf Cluster.

2 This should read: European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal (Not EAMA campaign ribbon) with one Silver Star, four Bronze Service Stars (representing nine Campaigns) for the following engagements: Tunisia, Sicily Naples-Foggia, Anzio, Rome-Arno, Southern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe and one Bronze Arrowhead (representing assault landing at Sicily and Southern France).

3 This should read: Distinguished Unit Emblem with First Oak Leaf Cluster.

4 Also, several other awards were omitted: Good Conduct Medal; American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Army of Occupation Medal with Germany Clasp; Armed Forces Reserve Medal and Medal of Liberated France.

"The Kid From Texas," made at Universal-International Studio, who then put him under a long term contract, which started his fortunes to their present height.

Having established himself in pictures, on April 24, 1951 he married the superintendent of hostesses for Braniff Airlines, Pamela Archer. They moved into the San Fernando Valley, which struck their fancy as the perfect place to raise a family. They now have two sons, Terry Michael, born on March 14, 1952 and James Shannon, born on March 23, 1954. Both boys were named after two of Audie's closest friends. James Shannon, Dallas theater executive and physical culturist, Terry Hunt.

In 1955 the young actor was named by the exhibitors of the country as the year's most popular Western Star in motion pictures. He was named the top Western Star of England for the year 1957.

Audie starred in a picturization of his autobiography taken from his bestselling novel, "To Hell and Back." This picture set an unparalleled mark of achievement in Hollywood, by the fact that an actor portrayed himself. It also proved to be one of the industry's top grossing movies.

Although western pictures are his favorite films to make, he has broadened his career by doing a variety of roles. In "Joe Butterfly" he had a light comedy lead, and then switched characters completely to portray the heavy in "Night Passage" with Jimmy Stewart. In one of his most serious acting roles to date, Audie appeared in the title role of "The Quiet American," a picture written and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. The filming of this picture took Audie completely around the world.

He owns a large ranch in Arizona, is in the quarter horse breeding and racing business, owns a home in Toluca Lake and has a 60-foot motor boat. His latest hobby is flying, which will enable him to more easily supervise his other businesses.