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**Murphy Had Extra Points But No Home to Go to**

**By UDO V. NOWAK**  
**Of The Advertiser Staff**

The most decorated U.S. soldier in World War II is a relatively small man. Five feet five inches in height, Audie Murphy sat in a local hotel suite this weekend, answering questions with ease. His voice was not too loud and still retained a small trace of a Texas accent.

Born on June 20, 1924, in Kingston, Hunt County, Tex., the second oldest of seven children, Murphy was orphaned at 16. He worked at odd jobs, including pumping gas at a filling station and, in his own words "being a flunky in a radio repair shop."

At 16, he tried to join the armed forces, but was turned down because he was too young. He waited. On his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, he went down to the Marine Corps recruiting office, but was turned down because he was too small. Next, he tried the paratroopers. Again, he met with failure.

Finally, he tried the Army and was accepted.

The rest is history. He entered as a private and was discharged a captain, having won a battlefield commission in Europe. During his wartime service, Audie Murphy won every decoration for heroism possible for an infantryman. The decorations range from the Medal of Honor to the Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters to denote two additional awards. In between these two, he also won the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star with an Oak Leaf Cluster, the Legion of

Merit and the Bronze Star. He was also awarded decorations from Belgium and France.

Asked where he kept his decorations, Murphy said quietly that they were currently on display at HemisFair '68 in San Antonio, Tex. "Otherwise they are in the attic with some other souvenirs," he added.

Playing with a packet of book matches with one hand, Murphy said that adjusting to civilian life after the war was hard. "It was just 'Thank you fellas' when you got out," he said.

"They trained you for a job—to be effective. You became judge, jury and executioner. There wasn't time for thinking. You had to decide on the spot what to do and then you did it," Murphy said. "In war, the process of law is eliminated. And that is bad."

After the war, Murphy wanted to enter West Point. He could not do so because of war wounds. Nor could he make the Army a career for the same reason.

The fame of the war years got him into the movies. Murphy said that he was grateful to Hollywood. He said that he fully realized it was his war record which helped him become an actor.

Murphy has made about 40 movies, most of them Westerns or war stories. He admits that

acting has its limitations. Nor was he awed by acting. "It beats picking cotton," he once said of it, "but not much."

Of the many Westerns he has made, Murphy said that he felt he had made the same movie with different horses about 20 times. "And sometimes, they were even the same horses," Murphy added with a slight grin. "They rent them from the same place all the time."

A bellboy comes up with a tray of soft drinks, ice and water glasses. Murphy pours, then once again gets comfortable in the chair. He picks up the match book again and begins working on it.

From his wartime experiences, Murphy wrote "To Hell and Back." He said the events were all real, only the names were fictitious.

Asked about the dedication of "To Hell and Back," Murphy explained that Pvt. Joe Sieja, killed in action on the Anzio beachhead, was Mike Novak in the book and Pvt. Lattie Tipton, killed in action near Ramatuelle, France, was Brandon in the book.

Murphy said that "To Hell and Back" was not so much his story as it was the story of an infantry company in the Third Division. "I've written a sequel, one that is more my story," Murphy said. He said it was written with making a movie in mind. The movie was never made and the option reverted to him. "It may never be made," he said.

Speaking of the movie version of "To Hell and Back," Murphy said, "The people wanted it. The timing was right."

Sitting far back in the chair, one leg crossed over the other, Murphy continued: "Universal (Studio) wanted to make it in black and white; then they changed it to color. But they were trying to save money. The special effects fund ran out. That's why some of the scenes that should have been in the show weren't. There wasn't enough money left."

The scene Murphy mentioned was the one in which he holds off six German tanks and 250 German infantrymen from atop a burning tank destroyer. It was for this action that Murphy was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Murphy said there were some strange moments during the filming of the book. He said there were some things which brought back not so fond memories.

The packet of matches had taken on a new appearance. All the matches were spread apart, like little men peering over the top of a small rise. "The studio said it cost \$1.2 million to make "To Hell and Back," Murphy said, "but I think it cost less." The picture has grossed, at least accounting, Murphy added, over \$13 million.

Murphy is quite nonchalant about his 24 decorations. He did not mention them at all in his book. He said, "I feel that the awards belong to the unit, not a single individual. Some people feel they belong to them, but I don't."

There was a silence for a moment. Then Murphy's soft voice continued: "On the medals . . . they were supposed to give you five points each toward a total for going home. I had 100 points more than necessary, but no home to go to."

After the death of his mother when Murphy was 16, the family scattered. The three youngest children were placed in an orphanage.

While not too enthusiastic about acting Murphy said that he would like to direct some. He said that he feels it is this media that there is some room to create. Questioned about John Wayne's efforts at directing, Murphy said quickly: "John Wayne can't direct traffic!"

He said that he had not seen "The Green Berets." He continued by saying that Wayne had won all the wars the U.S. had fought. Murphy added, "He (Wayne) took the Pacific single-handedly."

Although his work in movies and TV has been somewhat slack in the last few years, Murphy said he is considering a TV series based on the actions of U.S. soldiers who have won the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross and the Silver Star, the three highest U.S. decorations for valor. He said there is not that much difference in the medals. Murphy said he might act in three or four episodes. He would be the narrator for the entire series, he said.

Murphy was silent – thoughtful – when asked about the Vietnam War. "I think about it a lot," he said. "Maybe too much. It is a 'no win' war; it is a war of frustration. We have lost sight of the objective, we're there to fight communism"

On other current subject, Murphy said he thinks it strange that Germany is now the best ally the U.S. has in Europe. He said he

respected the Germans, having fought them. He said he thinks the cries of neo-Nazism are being blown out of proportion by the news media. "They have crackpots over there, just as we have them here," he said. He does not think that Germany will follow anyone wearing "armbands" again.

On the subject of President Charles de Gaulle of France, Murphy said sharply: "I detest him." He added that he believes only de Gaulle could have pulled France out as he had done. He said he feels unwelcome in France. Getting back to de Gaulle, Murphy said there is one consolation in the matter of Charles de Gaulle. "The one battle De Gaulle won't win is the one with old age."

The cold drink in the water glass was gone; the ice had begun to melt and discolored it. The match book was discarded on the table.

A member of the American Legion walked in, asked Murphy if there was anything he needed. The soft voice answered, "No. But I've got to get ready for the banquet."