



THE AUDIE MURPHY NATIONAL FAN CLUB
AUDIE MURPHY - HONORARY PRESIDENT



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CLUB OFFICIALS

STAN SMITH - EDITOR
SUE GOSSETT - ASSISTANT EDITOR

July, 1995

Dear Members,

Welcome to issue No. 3 of the Audie Murphy National Fan Club newsletter. This issue has special significance since everyone receiving a newsletter this time has paid their yearly dues. We hope you will agree that this and future issues will be worth the money spent and will show what was missed by those who chose not to become a participating member after many signed "yes" to the membership cards but did not pay their dues.

A large portion of this newsletter will deal with getting a TV movie biography or documentary done on Audie's life. As many of you might have seen on Friday, March 31, 1995, the American Movie Classics cable station had a 24-hour marathon of vintage 1950's Audie Murphy westerns. Not only were the films beautifully restored to their theatrical experience along with being commercial free, but the commentary given by Bob Dorian and Nick Clooney was fair, balanced and respectful of what Audie's real contribution to the western genre had been. It is so refreshing to know that, almost 25 years after his untimely death, the movie industry is finally recognizing his talents which were unique and natural for western films. For too long this topic has been consumed by John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, as if no one else had made westerns in the last 40 years except them. If any of you would like to write to AMC about showing Audie's films again, their address is on page 4 of this newsletter with the other network and cable listings.

Why a TV movie biography or documentary on Audie's life? The answer is twofold. First, for the past 15 years serious false statements and stories have been circulating about Col. Matt Urban of Holland, Michigan as being the most decorated combat soldier in US history. Unfortunately, the Army Personnel Command was partly responsible for the inaccurate information being given out to the news media. Of course, that is so easy since the news media doesn't care about checking out facts before they publish a story. When Col. Urban died on March 4, 1995 at the age of 75, many newspapers and TV stations around the country repeated the false statement that Urban was more heroic and more decorated than Audie. Second, I don't want to see Audie's place in history diminished by those who have their own agenda for him not getting his due. History is like sports, you remember the winners, the people who finished first, the top guns. Who remembers the losing teams in the Super Bowl? The silver or bronze medalists in the Olympics? The runners-up in the Miss America Pageant?

Audie Murphy paid a high price for the fame and glory bestowed on him. The Army used him, the movie industry used him, then when things began to go bad in his life, the Army and the movie industry were no where to be found. When he died he rated only 20 seconds on the national TV news to announce his death and nothing more after that. I'm not saying that Audie was a perfect person who doesn't deserve any criticism but he had as many good qualities as he did bad ones. For whatever dark side there might have been, there is no excuse for any manipulation of Audie's military accomplishments being slighted in favor of someone who led a more sedate, noncontroversial, non descript life, who had no "bad publicity" attached to him. Audie was more decorated and more highly decorated than Matt Urban or anyone else (except for various generals) and the fact that there is any controversy or question about that is why we must become more diligent in keeping Audie's name alive in our generation and future generations. We have to keep up pressure on the Postal Commission for a stamp honoring Audie, for his induction into the Cowboy Hall of Fame, for a TV movie or documentary to be done on his life so that we can keep his name alive before the public. The World War II generation is dying off and soon people who could talk about Audie with first hand knowledge will be gone.

I think it is incumbent on all of us to write to the networks and cable stations and tell of our interest in Audie and that we would like to see his "postwar" life memorialized on film the way his wartime experiences were. There is the "Biography" series on the A&E channel. Other cable stations that air original productions are Lifetime, USA, TBS, TNT, HBO, Showtime, Disney and of course the networks' NBC, ABC, CBS, and FOX. The following is an overview of Lou Reda Productions:

For over 25 years Lou Reda Productions, Inc. of Easton, Pennsylvania has been a leading innovative source of accurate American military history both in print and television. Reda's unique action-oriented program format provides an activating documentary which both entertains and informs while providing a realistic perspective from the homefront and the front lines. In the field of print production, Reda presents American history to both children and adult audiences through book publication and mass marketing consumer collectable historical postcards, posters and calendars.

The Reda archives include the largest private collection of historical film footage as well as photographs of American military conflicts dating from the Civil War to the present. Most unique to the Reda operation is a network of highly competent business, advertising, film and videotape production, publishing and entertainment professionals capable of bring a project concept from inception to successful completion in record time. Beyond project development, Reda is fully equipped to create broad consumer and media awareness through sophisticated public relations and promotional campaigns.

**Lou Reda Productions, Inc.
44 North Second Street
Easton, Pennsylvania 18042
Contact: Mr. Lou Reda - President
(215) 258-2957**

One of Mr. Reda's better known projects was the 8-hour 1986 CBS miniseries, "The Blue and the Gray" starring Gregory Peck, Stacy Keach, and John Hammond. Mr. Reda was interested in doing Audie's story for the "Biography" series on the A & E network. This project was put on the back burner because of a "lack of interest." This is the attitude we must strive to change. We have to show there is an interest in Audie Murphy. If there wasn't, I can't imagine the AMC channel having a 24 hour marathon of Audie's films when their existence is due to fan interest and financial contributions. I feel Lou Reda Productions would be a good company to tell Audie's story but we must convey this to Mr. Reda and those in charge of the decisions on what they will pay for and air on their stations. With the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II (also the same anniversary of Audie's picture on the cover of LIFE Magazine, July 16, 1945) the time has never been more right to pursue this as individuals who admire Audie Murphy and as a club. There is power in numbers! As I said in the first newsletter, the goals of this club are to inform and educate and that is what we must do with the public to make sure Audie Murphy is not forgotten and does not become a blip in history. I told Stan Smith one evening in a phone conversation that in the 24th century when Mr. Data is looking in historical records in the computer on the Starship ENTERPRISE and he is in the 20th century records and comes to World War II, Audie Murphy's name better come up before Matt Urban's or anyone else's!

I hope you will become a part of this effort on Audie's behalf. If you want to, write to me and let me know your feelings on this subject. I cannot respond personally to all the letters, but would like feedback if you are inclined to give it. Thank you for your attention in this matter. I know we all want what is best for the memory of Audie Murphy.

Finally, on August 19, 1995, Sue Gossett and I will be involved in a war's end celebration at the Dayton VA Hospital where we will have a display on Audie. We will be showing pictures, articles, books, possibly a video to depict Audie's life and to talk with and discuss him with the people attending. We certainly appreciate Melissa Smith and her committee for allowing us space for Audie Murphy at their celebration. Anyone from the club is invited and encouraged to attend. The Dayton VA Hospital is at 4200 West Third Street, Dayton, Ohio 45428. On August 19, 1995 we'll do our best to be good representatives of Audie and of the Audie Murphy National Fan Club.

**Sharon Young
Editor**

Network & Cable Addresses

ABC: 77 West 66th Street, New York, New York 10023

CBS: 51 West 52nd Street, New York, New York 10019

FOX Broadcasting Company: Post Office Box 900, Beverly Hills, California 90213

NBC: 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, New York 10112

PBS: 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-1698

American Movie Classics: 150 Crossways Park West, Woodbury, New York 11797

A & E Network: 235 East 45th Street, New York, New York 10017

TBS Superstation or Turner Network Television:

One CNN Center, Post Office Box 105366, Atlanta, Georgia 30348

Cinemax or HBO: 1100 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10036

CNBC: 2200 Fletcher Avenue, Fort Lee, New Jersey 07024

The Discovery Channel: 7700 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland 20814-3522

The Disney Channel: 3800 West Alameda Avenue, Burbank, California 91505

Encore: 5445 DTC Parkway, Suite 600, Englewood, Colorado 80111

The Family Channel: 2877 Guardian Lane, PO Box 2050, Virginia Beach, VA 23450

Lifetime: 309 West 49th Street, New York, New York 10019

Showtime or The Movie Channel: 1633 Broadway, New York, New York 10019

USA Network: 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10020

WGN: One Technology Plaza, 7140 South Lewis Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74136-5422

WWOR: 112 Northern Concourse, Post Office Box 4872, Syracuse, New York 13221

MOVIE REVIEW

With two forgettable bit parts under his belt, and a growing frustration with the powers-that-be in Hollywood, Audie Murphy let it be known that he would not accept another part in any more movies unless he had a starring role.

While some veterans of the movie industry probably found his attitude and resolve unacceptable, this was post World War II America and Audie Murphy, the war's most famous fighting soldier, looked good in front of a camera. Good attitude or bad, Audie was a potential box office draw, which was something Hollywood couldn't pass up. Allied Artists offered Audie the lead in **BAD BOY** resulting in the real beginning of his movie career.

BAD BOY bridges a chronological and cinematic theme between the release of “Boys’ Town” and a more realistic look at dysfunctional youths of the 1950s, as shown in James Dean’s “Rebel Without A Cause.”

Except for several months in a Hollywood drama school and small parts in previous movies, Audie had no acting experience when he took over the title role in BAD BOY. Even though he did it with so much confidence, Paul Short, the producer, surrounded Audie with veteran players who could cover for his inexperience. This policy was followed by other producers. Audie fast learned anything in which he had a particular interest. He learned to act by actually starring in motion pictures and he was on his way.

The filming dates of the movie were from mid-October 1948 to November 8, 1948 and released on February 22, 1949. It was filmed at Monogram Studios in Hollywood and at the Janns Ranch at Conejo, California. The movie ran 86 minutes and also starred Lloyd Nolan, Jane Wyatt, and James Gleason.

Danny Lester (Audie’s character) is definitely a young man somewhat out of control. At first, his violent and criminal behavior seems to occur for no reason. Gradually, we become aware of Danny’s deep psychological problems, which stem from arguments with his step-father, and the death of his mother.

Captured during a robbery attempt, Danny is brought before a juvenile court and finally released to Mr. Brown’s custody (played by Lloyd Nolan). Although the court is skeptical that Danny can stop being a delinquent youth, Brown feels the ranch environment may help Danny’s attitude. Perhaps he can find out what is troubling Danny.

At first, Danny appears to adjust to ranch life, doing chores willingly. Soon, however, he is sneaking out to commit another burglary, breaking into a local jewelry store. There are further confrontations at the ranch. In the meantime, Brown manages to trace Danny’s family history, and eventually discovers why Danny is so violent at times, particularly when anyone addresses him as “son”.

Five years before, Danny was working for a local pharmacist, and had brought home sleeping pills for his sick mother. He gets into a violent argument with his step-father, (played by Rhys Williams) who does not take his wife’s illness seriously. The step-father attempts to assert his parental authority over Danny, referring to him as “son”. Danny resents this and says so. Afterwards, he gives the pills to his mother but the next day she is dead and is accused by his step-father as being the murderer. Danny explodes, beats him up and runs away.

Brown talks to the doctor who treated Danny's mother. It seems as though she died of natural causes and that the pills did not cause her death. Before Brown can get back to the ranch, the police discover that Danny has committed another robbery in a gun shop. They confront him. He manages to get away briefly, but the car he is driving crashes. He is injured and surrounded by the police but refuses to surrender. Brown arrives on the scene to tell him about his mother and convince Danny he did not cause her death.

Eventually, Danny recovers from his injuries and gets another chance to live at the ranch. At the end of the film, Danny has enrolled as an engineering student at Texas A&M.

A critic wrote about Audie's performance as "surprisingly effective in his role of a teenage, trigger-happy, baby-faced thug who resists every attempt to reshape him into a solid and respectable citizen."

Another wrote: "Audie Murphy wants to be a good actor and gives a good promise of achieving his aim."

Audie remarked about how difficult it was to do a fight scene. "Unless you have been in fights in which you're not supposed to hurt a guy, you have no idea what fighting for the scene is really like," he complained. "It's a tough job."

Many theater exhibitors belong to the Variety Clubs International and because of this factor, it was almost certain to get wide circulation and Class-A treatment. This would most certainly be a boost to a promising new actor. This was a gamble which Murphy took and it paid off. It led to starring roles in forty future movies.

One humorous note related to this film involves a now famous quip from Audie. He apparently had some difficulty getting through a certain scene and consequently several retakes had to be made. Finally the director, Kurt Newmann, became agitated and complained about the delay of getting through the scene. Audie answered him saying, "You must remember that I am working under a great handicap." "What handicap?" asked Newmann. "No talent." replied Audie with a smile. [Audie Murphy, American Soldier] (Submitted by Sue Gossett)

During this anniversary year of the end of World War II, the Dayton VA Medical Center is planning a party called “Operation Homecoming Plus 50” on August 19. It will be the second homecoming for the veterans and those that love them. A celebration will probably include a parade on the grounds of the center and a special ceremony from a main stage at one point during the day, including a fly-over.

I have checked with the reunion committee and asked if it would be all right to include a display for Audie and I was told it would be a great idea. Sharon Young, my husband, and myself will be on hand to exhibit this wonderful display for Audie and give him the respect he truly deserves.

We plan on displaying many items including, the LIFE magazine, stills from “To HELL & BACK” along with a movie poster I have, several copies of his book, pictures of his medals, Audie’s three surviving poems, the patches he wore, plus many more items relating to his war years. We will also display the newsletter and fliers so that hopefully we may obtain some new members for the fan club. I feel this will be a glorious tribute to a man who has done so much for his country and asked nothing in return. (Submitted by Sue Gossett)

One of the club’s members is Ralph W. Widener, Jr., of Dallas, Texas, himself a World War II veteran. For more than twenty years, he in his own way has kept alive the valor of 2LT Audie Leon Murphy.

In the fall of 1974, Ralph gave the first of more than fifty talks on the life of Audie Leon Murphy, stressing in particular his World War II valor on the battlefield. His most recent speech on Audie Murphy was given at the “Dining Out” of the 3rd Brigade, 49th Armored Division, Texas Army National Guard, on 4 February 1995 at the University of Dallas.

Ralph created the Audie L. Murphy Infantry award in the Fall of 1986 at Fort Benning, Georgia. He had gone there in mid-May of that year to spend a thirteen-week cycle with a company of new Army Infantry enlistees. He did the training for a book he was writing about training received by infantry soldiers in 1986 compared with training received by infantry soldiers during World War II, to see if there were any changes. “The only way I could tell if there were differences,” Ralph said, “was to do the training myself and compare it with the training I received in 1942.” That book, published in December of 1986, became This We Will Defend, which is the motto of the Drill Sergeants.

When he arrived at Fort Benning in 1986, Ralph was assigned to Delta Company, 6th battalion, 1st Infantry Training Brigade. Since then, the company has become a part of the 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry Regiment; 3rd Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment; and its current designation of Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment.

Ralph lived in the barracks with the new infantry enlistees of Delta Company, ate all of his meals with them, did all of the training with them, and graduated with them, receiving a plaque from the Battalion Commander for being “the oldest initial entry Soldier who ever met the Standard.”

Before the cycle of training was over, Ralph got the idea for an award that only the new enlistees in each of the four platoons of the company would vote on. As set up, and approved, this is the way it is handled:

Early in the cycle of training, the Company Commander, the Company Executive Officer, or the donor of the award, will talk to the soldiers about (a) the life of Audie Leon Murphy, and especially his military experiences, (b) the award itself, and (c) the process by which the best soldier in each platoon is selected.

The soldiers in each platoon, in selecting the best soldier in their platoon, should select that man who works the hardest to do what is expected of him during every phase of his training, and who they would be most comfortable having at their side if they were ever going into a combat situation.

Before the end of the week-long Field Training Exercise (FTX), the three men mentioned above, will visit each platoon separately, where (a) each soldier will be given a slip of paper and instructed to write on it the name of that soldier in their platoon who should receive the award; (b) each soldier will fold his ballot, and place it in an envelope the person taking the vote has with him; (c) after collecting the votes from all four platoons, the person taking the vote will take them to the Battalion Executive Officer who will count them (by platoons), writing down the name of the soldier from each platoon who is to receive the award; (d) the Battalion XO will call the people at NAMES AND FRAMES and give him the following information (i) the name and rank of each soldier in each platoon who is to receive the award, and (ii) the date the award is to be presented; (e) the presentation of the four awards will be done by one of the three men whose names have been mentioned previously.

Ralph Widener has returned at the start of each of the thirty-four cycles where he has talked to the soldiers about Audie Murphy and the award created in his honor. And he has returned at the end of each cycle (a) to do the road march with the soldiers in Delta Company (anywhere from eighteen to twenty-three miles), and (b) to present the awards to them the next day.

The award consists of (a) a properly engraved statue of an infantry soldier at the position of “ready”, (b) a copy of Murphy’s book, To Hell and Back, and (c) a \$50.00 United States Savings Bond.

While many of you were delighted to learn about all the videos out on Audie, several still inquired about the availability of “This is Your Life.” As you may not know this Ralph Edwards Production was aired via radio on March 7, 1949. This dramatization was never video taped or filmed. Consequently on a few black & white photos exist and they are the property of Ralph Edwards Productions. These prints are not available to the general public. Certainly a video record would have been a treasured memento of Audie with Wanda Hendrix, Claudine Tipton, Monroe Hackney, Walter Weispfenning, Martin Kelley, and James Fife. (Submitted by Stan Smith)

-----CLASSIFIED-----

FOR SALE - 1948 Black & White photo of Audie Murphy, Tom Keene, Conrad Brooks and an unidentified friend. You can have it for the cost of postage & print. Bill Cameron 1914-112 Street. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6J 5P8

WANTED TO BORROW: Movie stills from “Texas, Brooklyn and Heaven” and “A Time For Dying.” If anyone has these, I will copy them and return them to you. Sue Gossett, Post Office Box 192, West Carrollton, Ohio 45449

WANTED - I wish to *borrow* original or 1st generation copies of magazine stories on Audie. I’m compiling a chronological bibliography which now exceeds FIFTY computerized pages! Send me a list of what have, including the date, name of the magazine & title of the article. I will be exceptionally *GENEROUS* for any assistance from my extensive inventory! Stan Smith - 8313 Snug Hill Lane - Potomac, MD 20854

-----PERSONAL-----

Audie Murphy Pen Friends Welcome! Bill Cameron, 1914-112 Street. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6J 5P8

“The real heroes of the war are those who never came home”