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April, 1996

Dear Audie fans,

Welcome to our second newsletter of 1996. Because of the abundance of articles for this issue, I shall skip the normal formalities and go directly to the materials at hand.

Ten Films That Audie Murphy Never Made
By club member Bill Russo of Stoughton, Massachusetts

Actors often pass on movies, or find scheduling conflicts that prevent them from making important movies that might have changed the direction of their careers. In Audie Murphy's case the missed opportunities are particularly wrenching because Audie so desperately needed a first-class hit, especially late in his movie career.

Here is a list of the films that should be wonderful additions to the Audie Murphy pantheon, but now they must stand just as sad examples of what might have been.

* **BACK FROM HELL.** This was meant to be the sequel to his autobiography. With a focus on his later years in Hollywood and his post-trauma stress, production under Desi Arnaz suffered from decisions about whether Murphy could be presented as a victim. In one script version Murphy would help an alcoholic, stressed veteran to adjust to life after the War. Audie's friend threatened to sue if they filmed such a false story; Audie had always been unhappy with the unsanitized version of *To Hell and Back*. No one wanted to film a story about the real Audie Murphy and his difficult personal problems. Unable to settle on a focus, the idea for the movie languished for years, regularly reported by tabloids as a possibility, but it never happened.

* **THE ALAMO.** John Wayne's 1960 epic could have been improved with the addition of Audie in the cast. Duke Wayne however was extremely sensitive to the fact that Audie was a real war hero and Wayne merely a film hero. So, as producer and director of *The Alamo*, the Duke felt disinclined to allow Audie to upstage him. Though Audie expressed an interest as a Texan to play one of the state's defenders, the role was cast with Laurence Harvey, an Englishman, to play Travis, the military man who shoots off a cannon in response to the request for unconditional surrender. At the time many felt to omit Audie from the film was a mistake.

* **DIRTY HARRY.** Don Siegel, an early director of Audie westerns and a friend, wanted to pit Audie against Clint Eastwood in the first of the successful detective series. This could have been Audie's great comeback role, garnering him renewed fame and box-office clout. One of the most tragic aspects of Audie's death in 1971 was that he never had the chance to match himself against Clint Eastwood as the psychopathic punk who has been immortalized by the question, "Do you feel lucky today?"

* **WOODS COLT.** Audie optioned this low-rent Faulkner-style story by Thames Williamson about an Ozark boy who is hunted by a mob through the hills because he ran off with an underage girl. Audie felt some kinship to this hillbilly and wanted Natalie Wood to star opposite him. Unable to finance this project, he sold the rights, but later made *The Wild and the Innocent* with Sandra Dee, an inferior version of the minor classic novel. The Williamson story was never made into a movie with anyone else.

* **SKIN DIVER WITH A HEART.** Legal entanglements caused him to abandon this project. Having spent tens of thousands of dollars on equipment and investing much time in his skin diving hobby, he expected to do an undersea adventure story. Squabbles with the producer further damaged Audie's reputation in Hollywood, and another proposed film never found itself developed beyond the script treatment stage.

* **REFLECTIONS IN A GOLDEN EYE.** One of the biggest supporters of Audie was director John Huston. Every ten years or so, Huston seemed to offer Audie a grade-A film role. Their two previous collaborations were *The Red Badge of Courage* and *The Unforgiven*. Audie received some of his best critical notices with these roles. In 1967, with Huston's latest major project about to start, the star, Montgomery Cliff, died. The part of the Southern Army officer with a cheating wife and an obsession with becoming an enlisted man again was open: unfortunately, star Elizabeth Taylor insisted that Marlon Brando be cast in the part as her husband -- and Audie, who might have been rediscovered, never had the chance to work with John Huston again.

* **IMPULSE.** Press reports and interviews by Audie announced that he would play himself in a film wherein escaped Nazi war criminals would put out a contract on the hero. Audie would need to fight off snipers who pursued him. Allegedly this was based on a true incident in his life. Though he sounded excited by the project, he never made the picture. A revamped version came out several years later. Peter Bogdanovich's first film starred Boris Karloff cast as himself, battling a crazed fan who tried to assassinate him.

* **SAYONARA** Rumor has it that Audie Murphy was offered a part in Marlon Brando's post World War II story about interracial love in Japan. Less than a starring role, the role was offered to Audie was that of an enlisted man whose ill-fated romance with a Japanese girl results in their suicides. For whatever reason, Audie declined the role -- and Red Buttons went on to win an Oscar as Best Supporting Actor in 1957 for the part.

* **NIGHT RIDERS.** Audie wanted badly to work with Robert Mitchum. His studio put the kibosh on the opportunity, and instead of a partnership as proposed by Audie for several films with Mitchum, he played in *Night Passage* with James Stewart. As far as is known, *Night Riders* never made it to the screen with any replacement for Audie.

* **A HORSE FOR MR. BARNUM.** Scheduled to begin filming in the summer of 1971, this was another film that Audie was to produce and star in for Budd Boetticher. They had just completed Audie's reprisal as Jesse James in "*A Time For Dying.*" Boetticher didn't make another film after Audie's death until the summer of 1995 when this project went before the cameras with character actor Henry Silva cast in the role originally slated for Audie twenty-five years earlier.

MOVIE REVIEW

KANSAS RAIDERS - Audie takes on this Western, set in the 1860's, portraying a young Jesse James. He and his brother Frank become new members of Quantrill's Raiders, who consider themselves Confederate sympathizers, but are best known for the bloody attack and looting of Lawrence, Kansas. In the film, the Raiders include other famous outlaw gang members, Cole Younger and two Dalton brothers. Although Jesse James joins to help the Confederate cause, he soon realizes that others in the group are simply bandits and killers out to line their own pockets.

Jesse is drawn to the strong leadership of Quantrill but is bothered by the often senseless killings. He considers quitting the Raiders, but stays because of Quantrill's beliefs. Also, Jesse feels increasingly emotional towards Quantrill's girl friend, Kate.

Eventually, Quantrill is tracked down by Union troops. He decides to fight and sacrifice his life so Jesse, Kate and the others can escape. Kate and Jesse are in love but she considers herself too old for the young fighter. She rides away alone as the young desperado hastens to rejoin his small band of followers.

This picture was filmed between May 22, 1950 and June 24, 1950 in the Idyllwild, California area. The running time was 80 minutes and it was released in November of 1950.

In this, the third Universal western, Audie played a real-life Wild West badman for the second time. The film claimed to be an account of Jesse James' career as a member of the notorious guerrilla gang led by Colonel Quantrill in post-Civil War Kansas. It traces his recruitment, hero-worship of Quantrill, romance with Quantrill's girlfriend, Kate and ultimate disillusionment after the infamous massacre in Lawrence, Kansas.

Other members of the cast included Brian Donlevy as Quantrill, Marguerite Chapman as Kate, Tony Curtis as Kit Dalton, Richard Long as Frank James, James Best as Cole Younger and Dewey Martin as Jim Younger.

This movie proved that Murphy had greatly improved as an actor. Critics said that "Audie delivers strongly as Jesse James" and that his performance was "topnotch." Incidentally, this was the movie in which Audie had his first on screen kiss.

As usual, Audie showed to advantage in the action scenes, handling gun and horse like a veteran and even took part in a savage knife-fight, something not too many western stars would have done because of the risk of damaging their straight-shooting hero image. But the knife scene was vital to the film, as an indication of the brutal level on which Quantrill and his guerrillas operated, and the entire film was notable for the uncompromising realism of its action scenes. (Submitted by Sue Gossett)

My Trip to Texas

By club member Bob Swanson, St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin

On September 28, 1995, I traveled to Texas to see Audie Murphy's childhood places. My first stop was in Sherman, Texas where I found Mrs. Vivian Brandon. She is the widow of State Trooper Everett Brandon who passed away about 17 years ago. Mrs. Brandon has continued to live in the same house for the past 35 years. She mentioned that Audie use to stop by frequently when in Texas.

My next stop was Greenville where I located the gas station where Audie once worked. One can still see where the pumps were mounted in the cement. About a block down the street is the vacant lot where Bowen's Radio Shop stood. The post office and the courthouse are unchanged.

I then traveled down highway 69 to Celeste. The town is all boarded up. Mrs. John Cawthon died about 7 years ago and her house remains unchanged. The next stop was Floyd to see Audie's school. It is also unchanged and in excellent condition.

On to Farmersville and what a treat! The monument in the town square is most impressive. I located the Greer Barber Shop and it is still a barber shop but with a different owner who remodeled it in the seventies. He still had the mirror which was pictured in the July 16, 1945 LIFE Magazine. I purchased this mirror and brought it home. The building where Audie's 21st birthday party was held was the Old Mercantile and Exchange Building. This is where the picture of Audie showing his captured German sniper rifle to Nadene was taken. The library in Farmersville was nice. They even had pieces of the ill fated plane on which Audie died. Everyone in Farmersville was very helpful, even the police who took me around to find some of the numerous sites mentioned in Colonel Simpson's book.

Traveling south I stopped at Hill Junior College and visited the Simpson Library. They have many nice things but I was most impressed with a beautiful German shotgun which Audie bought home from Europe and gave to his friend, Ray Woods. His children later donated it to the library.

From here I traveled to Princeton on the slim chance of finding Audie's sister, Nadene. Upon stopping at a gas station I was told that she lived only a block away! Driving down the street I spotted a lady who waved at me and inquired if I needed help. It turned out that she was Nadene's best friend! I had a lovely visit with Nadene who graciously signed my Life photo. It was a real honor to meet Audie Murphy's sister!

The main impetuous for this Texas trip centered on the German sniper rifle which is pictured in the famous July 16, 1945 Life Magazine. Being an avid collector of German sniper rifles, I had to see first hand the one displayed at the V.A. Hospital in San Antonio, Texas. The rifle at the V.A. is without a doubt the identical one pictured in Life. The rifle is a model 98K, bolt action, caliber 8mm, serial number 38485D and is in mint condition. The serial number indicates that it was manufactured in April, 1944 at the German arms plant, "Mauser Werke Ag." As the story goes, after Audie captured the rifle in October, 1944, it was stored in the Company "B" kitchen. The rifle, minus the High Turret Scope, was subsequently shipped to Poland Burns in Farmersville in March 1945. Audie personally brought the scope assembly home in June, 1945 perhaps fearing theft or damage had it been shipped with the rifle. I will always remember my exciting visit to this section of Texas and the wonderful people I meet.

Dear Fellow Audie Fans,

I am overjoyed to be able to announce to all club members that our beloved Audie Murphy was inducted into the *NATIONAL COWBOY HALL OF FAME* “HALL OF GREAT WESTERN PERFORMERS” at the 35th Annual Western Heritage Awards held on Saturday, March 16, 1996 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma!

As you may remember when we began the Audie Murphy National Fan Club newsletter in January, 1995, this was one of our three main priorities to accomplish. The first was the Biography on A & E which has become a reality and now our second goal of getting Audie into the Cowboy Hall of Fame has come to fruition. This recognition has been very long in coming. I remember in 1985 talking to Spec McClure about this and he had told me he had tried to push Audie’s nomination into the Hall of Fame but it had fallen on deaf ears. I’m sure that Audie and Spec are both smiling down on us.

Please accept my sincerest thanks to all of you in the club who wrote letters to the Cowboy Hall of Fame and especially to Coy Prather, our member in Oklahoma City for your relentless pursuit of this honor for Audie.

I’m hoping that our third goal of a U.S. postage stamp for Audie will be boosted by all this positive exposure and that it will be the beginning of new interest in Audie’s life and career both military and movie for this generation and those in the future. Sue Gossett will have more to say on her upcoming contributions on the life and legacy of our beloved Audie.

Thanks again to you all and congratulations to Audie’s family and all the fans who also love him.

Sharon Young

(PS) The hosts for the 1996 Awards included Jane Russell, Jack Elam and Richard Farnsworth.

NEW PUBLICATION? Update! The February issue of *World War II Magazine* contained an exciting advertisement for “Audie Murphy - Illustrated Biography” - only \$6.00! I subsequently wrote Casselberry Books and was advised, in a form letter, “the printer that we were set up with went out of business, and we are having to look for another, at an affordable rate.” I had also inquired as to the number of pages and the physical size of the book, but these questions were ignored. Whether the book costs \$6.00 or \$10.00, it should be well worth the small expense. I think it would be to our advantage if we all wrote and asked to be placed on their waiting list:

**Casselberry Books
Post Office Box 2882
San Bernardino, California 92406**

If enough people express an active interest, it may motivate them to pursue the printing with more enthusiasm. Do not send any money as it will be returned. Request only that you be placed on the waiting list for this publication. (Submitted by Stan Smith)

ANOTHER NEW PUBLICATION! *Military Trader* - August, 1995 contained an advertisement for “Gun to Hell” by Basil Creighton, available this April in soft cover for \$10.95 plus 3.00 shipping and handling. This effort explains the problems behind the scenes in Vietnam where Audie went in 1957 to film *The Quiet American*. For further information on the soft cover book contact:

**Northwest Publishing Company
6906 South 300 West
Salt Lake City, Utah 84047
(800) 398-2102**

For those interested in the diskette format of the book, please contact:

**Atlantic Disk Publishers
1465 Shiloh Road
Kennesaw, Georgia 30144
(404) 425-9624**

(Submitted by club member Kent Sweasy of Plymouth, Minnesota)

“THE FILMS OF AUDIE MURPHY” a new book by Sue Gossett

In February, 1995, I began a comprehensive book on Audie’s films. After doing some preliminary research to ascertain if a filmography of Audie had been published, I found out that none had. Therefore, I decided, that it was time that one should be done. After obtaining the films from the wonderful fans and supporters, this project started to become a reality. Now, a year later, the book is finally completed. In early January, I faxed three chapters to Empire Publishing. On that same day, the publisher called me to tell me that he liked it. A week later, a second call from the publisher advised me that the book is indeed being evaluated in a positive light, especially with the California set. He gave me some additional information and advice and told me that they are looking forward to publishing my book.

My book will synopsise *all* of Audie’s films as well as his made for TV movies and the one Whispering Smith episode that has surfaced. I have numerous people contributing to this book which will make it even more unique. You already have been reading these synopses in the MOVIE REVIEW of your newsletters so you have an idea of what the format of the book will be like with the exception of the abundant movie stills that will go along with each film and the credits. I am very excited about what is happening and confident the publisher will do an excellent job. This book will sell for \$12.95 and will contain over 100 photos many of them unique and rare!

The publication date is this July with a planned book signing July 11-13 at The Hilton at University (I-95 at Harris Boulevard) in Charlotte, North Carolina! The book signing will take place during the Western Film Fair & Western Stuntmen Convention at The Hilton. Those of you who wish to attend should contact Mr. Wayne Short (704) 365-2368. To order your copy of my book, please contact the publisher directly as follows:

**Empire Publishing Company, Inc.
Post Office Box 717
Madison, North Carolina 27025-0717
Attention: Mr. Donald R. Key
(919) 427-5850 FAX (919) 427-7372**

My heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed their time, energy, support and movies to this very worthwhile endeavor. (Submitted by Sue Gossett)

NATIONAL COWBOY HALL OF FAME - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: On Friday March 15th, there was a Western Heritage Welcome Reception that included cocktails and hors d' oeuvres. About 400 people were in attendance including most of the hosts for the awards banquet on Saturday evening. Among the celebrities were James Garner, Jack Elam, Wilford Brimley, Jane Russell, and Richard Farnsworth. Billie Murphy, Nadene Murphy and I had the privilege of meeting all with the exception of Ms. Russell who was busy signing autographs. Pictures were then taken with several celebrities. James Garner and Jack Elam were the two I had the honor of speaking and also being photographed with. As I spoke with Mr. Elam, I told him I represented the Audie Murphy National Fan Club. He is a very gracious man and remarked what a great guy Audie was. He said that anyone who was a fan of Audie's was a friend of his for life.

Since I was wearing a button with Audie's face on it and a fan club badge, people came up to me and began talking about Audie. Naturally, I told them about the club, that I was representing it and mentioned also the book that's coming out in July on Audie's films. Many people were indeed interested and I hope to have the book sold in the Cowboy Hall of Fame gift shop along with other books that depict western heritage and culture. Many people remarked how Audie was long overdue to be inducted and they were glad that he was being honored.

On Saturday evening, the black-tie banquet began with a cocktail reception and book/tape signing for the literary and music winners. Then between 7:00 - 8:00, the awards banquet was held and from 8:00 - 10:30 the 35th Annual Western Heritage Awards commenced with Robert Ulrich as Master of Ceremonies. After all the honorees had been presented, the last on the program, awards for the Great Western Performers were given. The presentation began with film clips and stills of the recipient. During the showing of Audie being presented his Congressional Medal of Honor in 1945, the people gave Audie the applause that he so richly deserved. Jack Elam and Jane Russell presented the award to Nadene and Billie Murphy. Nadene gave a wonderful speech and was the hit of the whole evening. Audie would have been proud of his sister and being a recipient of this very prestigious "WRANGLER" award. This is considered the equivalent of the Oscars in Hollywood, and is the highest honor for this event. The "WRANGLER" award is a bronze statue, weighing about 14 pounds. It is a sculpture of a wrangler on horseback with a lasso in his hand and is mounted on a wooden base with the inscription that reads:

**Western Heritage Wrangler Award
National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center
AUDIE MURPHY
Hall of Great Western Performers
National Cowboy Hall of Fame 1996**

**After Audie's recognition, came Ernest Borgnine who mentioned what a privilege and honor it was to be sharing this award with Audie. He was visibly moved and choked up when he spoke Audie's name. This was a beautiful ceremony and well befitting a wonderful human being. Here's to you Murphy! Congratulations for a job well done!! We love you!!!
(Submitted and attended by Sue Gossett)**