



THE AUDIE MURPHY NATIONAL FAN CLUB
AUDIE MURPHY - HONORARY PRESIDENT



HONORARY MEMBERS

BILLIE MURPHY - MARIETTA, TX
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CLUB OFFICIALS

STAN SMITH - EDITOR
SUE GOSSETT - ASSISTANT EDITOR

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Dear club members,

Welcome to our fourth successful year of operation. Tragically, during our first three years, we lost several members to time and health. But, our club is growing in leaps and bounds and interest in Audie Murphy is expanding. The fan club also covers a range of ages. One of our youngest members is Amanda Jones of Plano, Texas who is 11 years old. It is important that the club attract other youngsters, like Jalynn Grieshaber (age 17) of Milan, Michigan, because it will be in their resolute hands that Audie's name will be carried on in the next millenium. Our only centenarian is Lois Lacy Lewis of Greenville, Texas. She turned a young 100 years this past summer and was cited by Willard Scott on the "Today" show.

The club has been graced with several benefactors who anonymously donated money to extend courtesies when necessary. To these generous members, I would like to say a personal "thank you".

**Two Fan Club Members Accidentally Meet at Audie's Grave on Veterans Day
November 11, 1997**

By club member Rita Richardson - Alexandria, Virginia

It was the empty cake pan that gave her away. Were it not for that, I would never have met Lisa Ann Carey, whom I had heard was a devoted fan and frequent visitor to Audie's grave at Arlington Cemetery. The official festivities were going on in the Amphitheater just across the road and I was busy snapping photos of the flags, floral tributes and the people who stopped by to pay their respects when I noticed a nicely dressed lady speaking to my 13 year old son who was standing at the headstone of Audie's "neighbor". From out of nowhere, I remembered Stan Smith mentioning that, on occasion, Lisa takes baked goods to the Honor Guards at the Tomb of the Unknowns. It had to be her! Who else would be walking around Arlington Cemetery on Veterans Day carrying an empty cake pan? At the risk of making a complete fool of myself, I just walked up to her, told her my name and asked, "Are you Lisa Carey?" We hugged each other, as would two old friends, for that is what we are through our common devotion to the memory of Audie Murphy. We chatted for several minutes and took each other's pictures.

During the hour or so that I spent at Audie's grave, I observed people of all ages stopping by to look, take pictures or leave a single flower. The grass around the grave was wearing thin from so much foot traffic. One young fellow crossed himself and whispered a prayer. An elderly gentleman slowly made his way through the rows of headstones, raised himself to full attention, rendered a smart salute, then slowly moved on. I could just sense Audie returning the salute from on high. I took photos of three WW2 veterans who had been in the Colmar Pocket engagement and were captured by the Germans around the time Audie earned his Medal of Honor. They eagerly related that while they never met him, he was quite well known in their division. A group of Japanese tourists laden with cameras recalled the high esteem their culture places on war heroes, regardless of what flag they'd fought under.

Several people wondered why Audie's headstone bears the rank of Major. Unless one has read the excellent biography by Harold Simpson, one would not know that Audie's military career did not end with the war, but that he maintained his reserve status until his death. Others wondered about the red roses with the card that simply read, "Love, Pamela, Terry and Skipper" not knowing that Audie was survived by his wife and children. It was a delight to set them straight.

Lisa was on her way to work and had to go, but I know we will meet again soon. On the long trek back to my car, through that endless "garden of stone," I thought of all the wonderful people I have come to know in person, by phone and over the Internet, through my association with the Fan Club. One day I hope all of Audie's admirers will all be able to get together in person to celebrate his extraordinary life.

AUDIE MURPHY CLASSICS

By club member Bob Larkins - New South Wales, Australia

#1: "No Name on the Bullet"

** Bob Larkins, a member of the original Audie Murphy Fan Club, is an Australian film critic and author of "The Films of Audie Murphy ", privately published in 1979. The following review is from a revised (1997) unpublished edition.*

CAST: Audie Murphy, Joan Evans, Charles Drake, R.G. Armstrong, Virginia Grey, Warren Stevens, Whit Bissell, Karl Swenson, Willis Bouchey, Edgar Stehli, Jerry Paris, Charles Watts, Simon Scott, John Alderson, Bob Steele, Guy Wilkerson, Russ Bender, Jim Hyland.

SCRIPTWRITER: Gene L. Coon, based on a story by Howard Amercker; **Producers:** Jack Arnold, Howard Christie; **Director:** Jack Arnold.

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In most critical assessments of Audie Murphy's film career, the majority of his films are dismissed, inaccurately, as B-westerns. Audie Murphy was no more a B-western star than Ronald Reagan, who was also unfairly labeled with this dismissive tag. Generally, only three of Audie's films are credited with having any degree of stature - *The Red Badge of Courage*, *To Hell and Back* and *The Unforgiven*, with *The Quiet American* sometimes included.

This meagre list should really be amended to include *No Name on the Bullet*, a film that has increased in stature with the passing years, and indeed is often included in lists of the best westerns of the 1950s by serious film writers.

It was, in fact, the closest Audie ever came to a classic western, and author Don Graham used its title for his controversial 1989 biography of Audie. It also frequently receives favourable comment in writings on science-fiction movies in relation to its director, Jack Arnold. Arnold was responsible for some of the most interesting and stylish sci-fi dramas in the boom years of the 1950s (*It Came from Outer Space*, *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*) and is now regarded as the foremost sci-fi director of that era. He also earned praise for his modern western *Pay the Devil* with Jeff Chandler and Orson Welles, and directed the best of Rory Calhoun's Universal westerns, *Red Sundown*. His ability to suggest dark forces lurking beneath a calm surface, and a skilful build-up of tension, were vital elements of his sci-fi movies, and he brought the same qualities to bear on *No Name on the Bullet*.

Originally titled "The Stranger from Nowhere", the film centres around John Gant, a feared hired assassin, who executes his victims without mercy, but only after legally goading them into a fight. When Gant arrives in the town of Lordsburg, his very appearance is enough to cause panic among all those hiding a guilty secret, although he resists all attempts to learn the name of his intended victim. Reinforcing the local sheriff's view that "Gant's like a disease they haven't found a cure for", his very presence sets off a chain of events which cause the town to be torn apart by gunfights, lynch law and suicide, and it is only after this chaos that Gant reveals his target. Ironically, he is thwarted when the would-be victim, a retired judge, dies of a heart attack while trying to shoot Gant. The town doctor, who has befriended the gunman, smashes Gant's "gunhand with a hammer, thus ending his career and making him an easy target for the inevitable challenger.

The film's closing lines are superb. "A lot of men would like to kill John Gant", says the gunman, painfully mounting his horse, "but it took a healer with a hammer to make it easy for them". When the doctor offers to look at the damaged arm, Gant refuses his help. "Don't worry about it physician," he says. "Everything comes to a finish". The words THE END, over a shot of Gant riding slowly away, thus takes on a powerful irony.

John Gant is one of the most intriguing and unusual leading characters ever to appear in a western - a man of intelligence and psychological insight, aware and unashamed of his calling, utterly without moral scruples in the achievement of his fatal ends. He acknowledges his function in society as a tool of evil, feels only contempt for his employers, but refuses to compromise his professional ethics. Until Clint Eastwood's "Man With No Name" in the late 1960s, only one other western 'hero' could stand comparison - Robert Preston as a murderous, amoral, dangerously charming gunfighter in a forgotten 1950 gem called *The Sundowners* (a.k.a. *Thunder in the Dust*).

In this surprising departure from his standard western hero roles, Audie brings a chilling credibility to the role, once again giving the lie to the frequent claims that he couldn't act. His intelligent performance clearly delineates the complexities of the character, illuminating the disturbing contrast between Gant's seeming affability and his deadly profession, and maintaining an air of frightening invincibility. Gant knows he scares people, and lets them know he knows, and Audie's bleak-eyed portrayal captures Gant's arrogance to perfection.

Of course, the success of his performance is due, in no short measure, to the intelligent script by Gene L. Coon, later a major contributor to the success of *Star Trek*, and to the direction of Jack Arnold, who must take credit for making full use of his star's complex personality and dramatic limitations in a role which is perfectly attuned to each. Audie was never a versatile actor, but within his own range he could be a fine one.

The superior work of the supporting cast is another vital element of the film's success. Charles Drake, in his fourth appearance with Audie, gives one of his best performances as the doctor who shares chess games and philosophical discussions with Gant, and there are incisive portrayals from R.G. Armstrong, Whit Bissell, Willis Bouchee, Warren Stevens, Karl Swenson and Simon Scott. Jerry Paris, who would go on to become a top TV director of the 1960s (most notably on *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, in which he also co-starred) plays a deputy sheriff, and one-time B-westerner Bob Steele can be briefly glimpsed in a small, unbilled role as a poker player.

In the final analysis, however, it is Audie who gives the film its special feeling of inevitable tragedy and simmering tension. When the sheriff (Willis Bouchee) challenges him, Gant wounds him with contemptuous ease. Humiliated, the lawman asks, "Why didn't you kill me?" "I wasn't paid to" is the gunman's cold and logical reply. When a lynch mob confronts Gant, he disperses them by naming the men he will kill before they kill him, and when a frightened store clerk (Warren Stevens) challenges him to draw, Gant calmly sips coffee, watching with a terrible, mocking smile as the man crumbles and runs. There is no compromise in John Gant, whether humiliating the sheriff or brutally ripping the blouse from Joan Evans to use as a way of forcing her father, the judge, to fight.

For most of the film, Audie does little but sit and talk. He is neat, courteous, softly spoken, but always there is that sense of danger. He is death wrapped in a soft voice and sardonic smile, and it is doubtful whether any other full-time western star of the day could have come close to making such a basically repellent character so fascinating and understandable - or would even have had the courage to try. Even when he is not on the screen, his presence is felt. It is, without question, the most mature and impressive performance of his entire career, even allowing for *The Red Badge of Courage*, *To Hell and Back*, *The Unforgiven* and *A Time for Dying*.

Nor is it too presumptuous to compare Audie's John Gant with Alan Ladd's *Shane* or with Clint Eastwood's "Man with No Name" - in each case the actor and the role were in total accord. If *No Name on the Bullet* misses out on the stature of the Ladd or Eastwood films, it is mainly due to the familiarity of the Universal backlot and the inevitable surface gloss, plus a degree of shallowness in the drawing of some of the minor characters.

From the point of view of "serious" moviegoers of the late 1950s, the original lack of regard for the film is understandable - it was released without fanfare as a support, and generally regarded as just another Audie Murphy western.

As history has shown, it is far more than that.

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**CLARIFICATION OF MY CLARIFICATION:** In Vol. 3, No. 2 (April - 1997) I referred to an article in the August 23, 1979 the Australian Post magazine which printed an unflattering article about Audie titled "The Kid who loved to Kill" and attributed it to Bob Larkins. This article was NOT Bob Larkin's. Bob has graciously clarified the story background. The magazine selected the sensationalized headline; Bob believes he had used something like "Real-Life Movie Hero." Also the magazine re-edited his copy to "highlight the negative aspects, and left out some of the more positive comments." Bob was disturbed by the title, which placed a negative slant on the story line causing readers to be biased before they even read it. Source: personal letter dated June 25, 1997 (*I apologize for the misinformation. One of the drawbacks in doing everything yourself is that you proof your own mistakes. It's good to have someone looking over my shoulder. Embarrassingly - Stan Smith*)

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## ONE MAN'S LIFE

By club member Charlotte Rose Gillam - Rutland, Vermont

A great part of writing this essay was trying to decide what to write about. Much has already been written about Audie Murphy's heroic deeds, his private life, and his movie career. My thoughts instead brought me to the realization of how his life influenced mine.

We never met, we never shared acquaintances, in fact, we did not even share a geographical location. I am from the Northeast (Vermont via New Jersey), and he was from the West (California via Texas). How then could his life impact mine?

As a young girl in grade school, I would get home every day around 3:30 in the afternoon. At 4:00 I usually watched a movie channel which broadcast from WPIX Channel 11 out of N.Y. This channel played the same movie each day for a week One week a film called *Bad Boy* was on. From that moment on I was in love, as only a young teenager could be. I did everything I possibly could to rack up the money I needed to buy movie magazines or to go to the movies to see my hero, Audie Murphy. At that point, I still did not realize what an actual hero he was. It was not until I read his book *To Hell and Back*, and later saw the film of the same name, that I understood the whole story.

After I read his book I started reading everything I possibly could on World War II. (By the way, I'm still reading everything I can on World War II)! Thus began for me a new passion, history. This passion grew to such an extent that it became my chosen profession. I am a history teacher currently working on my Masters in History My thesis involves Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt and their use or abuse of war powers.

Certainly, as a young teenager, Audie Murphy affected my life. What began as teenage love and hero worship changed, in time, to love and respect and a sense of his role in our history. A role which should not be forgotten.

One man's life can make a difference; certainly Audie Murphy's life impacted many. Without a doubt it impacted mine.

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**"LOST FILMS OF THE FIFTIES" by Douglas Brode**  
A review by club member Sandy Jackson - Princeton Junction, NJ

The film Brode deals with here is "Destry" and he has some flattering comments about Audie's role and ability. "Universal International decided to haul out the tale 15 years later (after Jimmy Stewart's earlier version) as a vehicle for war hero turned B movie actor Audie Murphy. While the result may not quite be a cinematic diamond on the order of the Stewart-Dietrich version, this is at the very least an unheralded gemstone, easily the best B western of the decade."

Brode goes on to describe the plot. Then says "In fact, 'Destry' might have provided a nifty TV vehicle for Murphy, and considering the success of his film version, it's surprising no one thought of turning it into a series for him. As a rediscovered film, 'Destry' serves as a fine showcase for Murphy's genial screen personality. Though he had been written off as one more newsworthy celebrity who used his notoriety to break into movies, and often openly stated that he believed he had no talent at all, such comments seem an unfair understatement of his worth. If his Texas twang mostly confined him to B westerns, Murphy was at the very least as legitimate a star of the déclassé genre as, say, Roy Rogers or Gene Autry. Besides, Murphy attracted some serious attention those perennial drugstore cowboys did not, winning leads in John Huston's prestigious 'The Red Badge of Courage' (1951) and 'The Unforgiven' (1960), in both cases delivering fine performances. Likewise, he held his own against James Stewart in the A western 'Night Passage' (1957) and was strong in the Joe Mankiewicz adaptation of Graham Greene's 'The Quiet American' (1958), the first major film about CIA involvement in Vietnam."

**"An underrated movie performer whose natural grace allowed him a 20-year screen career (celebrity notoriety in and of itself usually leads to two or three films at most), in retrospect it seems safe to say had Murphy gone to Hollywood without his record as a war hero, his career would have been pretty much the same. In that case, the only picture he would not have done would have been 'To Hell and Back' (1955), in which Audie Murphy played Audie Murphy!"**

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## **"It's a small world"**

**By club member Feller Goff - Houston, Texas**

**I was at a Circle K Market one day when a stranger approached me with a story and a gas can asking for money to purchase gas. Thinking nothing of it, I gave him \$2.00 for gas and we went our on separate ways.**

**Eight weeks later, at the same market, a guy approached me with nearly the identical story. In fact, he even looked like the same person from the first encounter. I said, "Say, didn't I give you \$2.00 for gas the other day? What is this, some kind of scam?" ---- He said, "No sir, I live in Beaumont and I need gas to get home on." I said, "Oh yeah, do you have any I.D.?" He replied, "Yes sir, a Texas driver's license." "Ok," I exclaimed, "let me see the license." The name practically jumped off his driver's license and hit me in the face like a ton of bricks: "Audie Murphy Crawford!" I then inquired, "Where did you get a name like that?" He replied, "That Audie Murphy was his mother's favorite cowboy movie star and that when he was born, she named him after Audie." Still in a state of shock and disbelief I returned his license back to him and uttered, "How much did you ask me for?" He said, "Two dollars." I said, "Here take FIVE!"**

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## **AUDIE L. MURPHY MEMORIAL SITE - BRUSH MOUNTAIN, VA.**

**Submitted by club member Sue Gossett - West Carrollton, Ohio**

**3100 feet in Jefferson National Forest: it is a winding, two-lane road approximately 20 miles from Blacksburg, Virginia that takes you to the site of Audie Murphy's death. On both sides of the road are neat little houses, some of which have cows lazily, munching on grass. There are neat rolls of hay bundled, waiting in open fields. The day is sunny with the blue sky practically cloudless. As you drive along, you see a road marker reading: Audie Murphy Monument with an arrow pointing to the left, which is Brush Mountain Road. Turning onto a narrow gravel road that is only one car wide; there are another three miles before reaching the site. Honking around the turns leading upward to the site is a good idea because you can't see around the sharp curves ahead.**

At the end of the ride, there is a small area enough to park several cars. From this point on, it's travel by foot. No automobiles are allowed beyond the gate, which stops all vehicles. The trek ahead is 0.7 miles. The ruts in the dirt makes a path on which to walk which is somewhat easy, a little uphill at times but then there's always downhill on the way back. Eventually the ruts disappear and the path turns into grass with lots of little rocks strewn around. Wild daisies are abundant.

About 50 yards from the monument are two small-engraved wooden markers on either side of the path letting the visitor know that they are getting close. The site is slightly uphill and in a small clearing stands a large granite monument. At the base of the monument are red, white and blue artificial flowers placed there by visitors. Among the flowers was a single red rose placed directly in the center. Also along the base were some large stones that had been placed to show that people had stopped by. On the top of the monument were piles of smaller stones, about 75-100 lined up and neatly stacked. The whole place is quiet, serene. Birds are chirping and insects buzzing around but there is a sense of tranquility about this place. It is a shrine, a memorial to a man who was loved and admired by many who wanted to remember Audie Leon Murphy, war hero, movie star, citizen, American. [This site was visited July 8, 1997 by Sue Gossett]

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**TO HELL & BACK reprint:** Several club members has expressed difficulty in obtaining the new printing of "To Hell & Back" from Barnes & Noble etc. I am advised that it can also be ordered from the following firm:

Edward R. Hamilton  
Falls Village, CT 06031-5000

Item number 029262 @ \$7.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling. They DO NOT accept credit cards nor do they bill. All sales are limited to the continental United States. Shipments are made normally within 24 hours. I am sorry, but I was not provided with a phone number.

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**PEN PALS WANTED!** I wish to establish pen pals with other devoted Audie Murphy admirers, especially in the New Jersey area. FRAN ZIMMERMAN - 20 Blenheim Road - Englishtown, NJ 07726

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**PEN PALS WANTED!** New member would like to correspond with other fans. WENDY TUNNESSEN - Post Office Box 21 - Randlett, Oklahoma 73562

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**NEW BOOK QUOTES MURPHY:** Club member Sandy Jackson of Princeton Junction, New Jersey has advise me that the following publication has many quotes from "To Hell and Back" and is quite interesting reading.

**"The World Within War - America's Combat Experience in World War II" by Gerald F. Linderman. Published by: The Free Press - a division of Simon & Schuster Inc. - 1230 Avenues of the America's, New York, NY 10020 ISBN: 0-684-82797-2**

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## **UNIQUE BOOK ON MURPHY ANCESTRY!**

"JOHN BERRY & HIS CHILDREN" by Judge Jack Pope. This hard covered 7 x 9-1/2" book represents comprehensive research on John Berry, his three wives and the resulting 18 children and 110 grandchildren. This easy to read genealogy of 904 pages goes into great detail on the entire MURPHY'S, including Audie. This book is the ultimate authority and reference family book on this subject and a must for serious devotes of Audie Murphy. They may be ordered from:

**John Berry Association  
Post Office Box 473  
Georgetown, Texas 78627**

This privately printed book released in 1988 initially sold for \$35.00. The association inventory is rapidly dwindling but as a special courtesy to the fan club, this collector's item is **being offered for only \$20.00!** (Sorry they cannot accept any credit cards or COD's) This *price covers all sales tax and shipping*. Personally speaking you will not be disappointed by this bargain. With the renewed interest in Audie, their small remaining inventory of less than 300 copies will be rapidly consumed, especially at this price. This book would also make excellent birthday and anniversary gifts. I urge you ***not to pass up this offer***. One day soon, they will be as elusive as Colonel Harold Simpson's book, now being sold for \$100.00, if you locate one. The few used copies can also command the same outrages tag. This magnificent book belongs in every Texas library on the same shelf, as Colonel Harold Simpson's commendable encyclopedia. Judge Pope's book is truly a labor of love. **SEND YOUR CHECK TO THE ADDRESS ABOVE & NOT TO THE FAN CLUB**. Don't pass this opportunity by. (Submitted by Stan Smith)

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