



THE AUDIE MURPHY NATIONAL FAN CLUB
AUDIE MURPHY - HONORARY PRESIDENT



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CLUB OFFICIALS

STAN SMITH - EDITOR
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Corporations Can Help! As Stan Smith wrote in the January 1999 Fan Club newsletter, the Audie Murphy Research Foundation (AMRF) needs some financial help. The corporation I work for has a program that helps nonprofit, IRS tax exempt organizations with donations. I received \$300 from my company for the AMRF. I wonder how many others are out there? It doesn't hurt to ask. You may be surprised at the answer. You can contact Larryann Wills, Executive Director, at The Audie Murphy Research Foundation, 18008 Saratoga Way, Santa Clarita, CA 91351, with any questions. She can also be reached toll free at 1-888-314-AMRF or Email at AudieMurphy@altair.net. They'd love to hear from you. (Submitted by club member Richard Ryan, Las Vegas, Nevada)

Club member Rolla Mires from Findlay, Ohio has made a good suggestion. When our troops were engaged in Desert Storm, friends and family tied yellow ribbons around trees, car doors, car antennas etc to mark their commitment in waiting for their safe return. She suggests that our club members use a light blue ribbon, representing the color in the Medal of Honor, and display it accordingly until we succeed in getting a commemorative stamp for Audie. Thanks Rolla.

“AMC is stuck in a rut”!!!! In an undated article by Doug Nye, Knight Ridder Newspapers, he writes that AMC is stuck in a rut by continuously running Audie Murphy westerns. He suggests that AMC should bring back that “Saturday afternoon lineup of shorts, serials and matinee features. Anything to break the monotony of another airing of ‘Hello Dolly!’ and ‘To Hell and Back.’ ” Doug Nye must be viewing the world from the single eye at the end of his spine. I urge each and every single member to write him and express your concern for such unjustified bias. Make him realize that Audie Murphy is the last of the great American heroes. Please write to:

**Doug Nye
C/o Knight-Ridder Newspapers
1 Herald Plaza
Miami, Florida 33132-1693**

(Story submitted by club members Coy and Elaine Prather, Oklahoma City, OK)

NEWCOMER'S PERSPECTIVE by club member Rachel Ring – Holloman Air Force Base, NM

I am sorry to say that up until a year ago I had no knowledge about Audie Murphy, except to say that I thoroughly enjoyed watching his movies and thought he was a fine actor. It wasn't until I read an article about him that I realized that he was no ordinary actor, indeed he was no ordinary man. The article intrigued me so much that I decided to find out more about him. And what I discovered left me feeling very humble.

This was a man, who at a very young age encountered extreme poverty, the desertion of his father and the death of his beloved mother, and then had the strength and fortitude to take care of his younger siblings. Out of necessity he gave up his schooling, but I understand that he never stopped learning, and had a thirst for knowledge that could probably put most of us to shame. Indeed, a most intelligent and profound man who was way ahead of his time in his thinking. He had a determination to serve his country, with both his age and size counting against him. He did not take no for an answer and he never gave up. What strength of character he had with a determination and drive to survive and succeed.

During his war years, Audie Murphy showed his self-sacrifice and a tremendous amount of self-reliance and courage, for which he earned the respect and admiration of his troops and superiors, not to mention his fellow Americans at home. Without question he deserved the medals he received and on such young shoulders. As with all of the surviving troops who returned home, I cannot even begin to imagine the mixture of emotions that they felt. The relief and pleasure of returning safely, combined with the deep sorrow of the loss of their friends and comrades. Perhaps even some guilt that they returned where many did not.

A shy and overwhelmed Audie returned to the USA and embarked into the world of movies. I believe that the incidents and events of one's life is what makes a person who they are. And in my opinion in all of Audie's movies, he drew from the wealth of his past experiences which is why his characters are so well done. In such movies as "The Red Badge of Courage" his emotions are raw and honest. I don't think that Audie knew just how good an actor he really was; perhaps I am wrong? Personally I would have liked to have seen him in more comedic roles. There was just something about him, perhaps the twinkle in his eyes or his smile, that for me said mischief' or perhaps it was more a 'watch out'?

We are none of us perfect. And those people who find themselves in the public eye are targets for gossip and rumors. Audie was not the exception to the rule. Perhaps he, above everyone else, was put under the microscope. Yes, he made mistakes, who amongst us has not? After all, he was a human being. I have to say that my heart sank when I learned that Audie was no longer with us. I am so very sorry. I shall always remain an admirer. In many ways it is comforting to know that he once lived among us and he touched so many people's hearts. Truly a humble and generous man to a fault. His memory MUST continue on through the generations to come. I was only six at the time of his death, but I can honestly say that to me, he has become a hero and has my complete respect. Wherever you are, Audie, may God bless you and thank you for just being you.

I was truly fortunate to have known Audie. My dad, Lt.Gen. Carl Phinney, was the division commander of the Texas 36th Division. When Audie joined up, he would every now and then come to our house in Dallas for drinks (not alcohol) and supper. Needless to say, I was the hero of kids on our block. He did not like to talk about his heroism, but he did to me. I remember one evening when we were all sitting in our living room, and we heard a lot of whispering on the front porch. I looked out the window and saw every kid on the block standing there discussing whether or not they should ring the doorbell. I said, "Captain I think you have some very nervous fans outside". Without hesitation Audie said, "I can take care of this" without further ado he went to the front door, jerked it open and said, "What's this? Looks to me like you should knock on the door if you want something." He then proceeded to introduce himself and gave each kid an autograph (personalized). After that I achieved sainthood among my young friends. I have never forgotten his generosity or the dumbfounded expressions on those kids' faces. About 6 months later I got a package from him, and inside was a .22 cal. single action great western arms pistol, fully engraved. After that he sent me a Colt .45 commander, what high cotton I was in! The whole family was at his wedding to Pam at the Cox Chapel of the Highland Park Methodist Church. When his career began to wane, and Pam moved him to their guest house because of a burgeoning pill habit, it was my dad and a man named "Peanuts" Johnson (of Johnson Peanuts, of course) who backed him financially and with great love and friendship. My dad warned him against that fateful flight to Virginia, because he thought not only were those people using him for their future profit, but also that plane was not safe. Sadly, dad was right and we lost him. I remember a lot of stories of that fine man, and I have never forgotten the time he took to be a friend to a 12 year old me! He was tense a lot of the time, but when we went to Hollywood to visit he was all host. He still would carry a .38 snub nose pistol around the studio, but after what he had been through, who in the hell could blame him. I know in my heart where he is now, he's smilin', and at peace with himself. I hope I will see him again when my time comes, and something tells me I will. Source: Carl L. Phinney, Jr.

Club member Robert Nott of Astoria, New York interviewed actress Dianne Foster last year in preparation for his book The Last of the Cowboy Heroes: The Westerns of Randolph Scott, Joel McCrea and Audie Murphy. Robert's book will be available from McFarland Press in the spring of 2000. It covers the postwar westerns of these three greets, analyzing their western films, looking at their on-screen image as men of honor, and going behind the scenes to reveal the challenges inherent in the making of these films.

Dianne Foster is a Canadian-born actress who appeared in about 20 films, including several westerns ("Three Hours to Kill", "The Kentuckian", and "The Violent Men"). She played Charlotte ("Charlie") Drew, the girlfriend of Audie Murphy's Utica Kid, in the 1957 Universal Western "Night Passage", co-starring James Stewart and Dan Duryea.

Q: What are your general recollections of "Night Passage?"

A: It was a hard picture to do. It was a lot of work and we were far from home, shooting from late summer to fall and we had to get out by winter - the snow changes all the landscape around, so we were on a schedule. We were conscious of the time element. It was a big push trying to get as much done in as short of time as possible so we could get out of there (Durango). We were staying in a motel that wasn't that great, but the fun of the picture was working with Audie.

Q: What are your recollections of him, as a person?

A: Audie was just such a special person. He had a great sense of humor; the little boy in him was constantly visible. He was very accessible as an actor and a person. He wanted very much to have his career. He wanted to be good at it. He didn't fool around when he was working - he just worked. He was always prepared, always professional, he never messed up. He went in there to do the job to the best of his ability. He was charming, warm, gracious. I can't say enough lovely things about him. I wasn't quite expecting the person that he was. I was impressed with this fantastic war hero and thought I'd be in awe of him. He wasn't what I thought he'd be at all. He was very gentle and had a great sense of humor. He liked people. He liked working in show business. I liked doing my scenes with him. He was always fun in between, kidding around. I must say I never heard a war story, though maybe he told the guys.

Q: Did you get a sense of how Audie worked with Jimmy Stewart?

A: He seemed to work well with Stewart. I was always in awe of Stewart. I thought he was the great movie idol: romantic and warm and genuine, but in working with him at this time, he tended to keep more to himself. I don't mean that he was unpleasant in any way - he was not - but he isolated himself a little more from the cast and crew, whereas Audie just bounced right in there and just flowed. He played cards with the workmen on the set. He was a lot more accessible. I think Jimmy had more of the production crew around him, and I always felt that he wasn't that happy.

Q: Did you ever get any insight into the "war hero" side of him?

A: One thing did give me insight into what Audie must have been like in the war. He had his own horse, a big, beautiful animal that was beautifully trained. And they brought the horse out for Audie and the horse wasn't doing his job. And Audie was getting fed up and maybe he was just having a bad day. And he got off that horse - a big horse - and he just grabbed the reins and he just socked that horse in the face as hard as he could. And that horse didn't even flinch, it didn't blink. And the trainer came over and took the reins and Audie said "Get him out of here." But Audie just didn't think. He could have broken his hand. If he had hurt himself, the shoot would have been halted. He just did it - he reacted. This instantaneous reaction, this rage, you saw that he had it in him. It was controlled while he was working, but it was always there. He didn't think of consequences at all - he just did it. That's the only time where I saw that side of him, the war hero, who didn't think about what he was doing but just did it.

Q: "Night Passage" was, overall, a difficult shoot. I understand that aside from the weather problems, the altitude and other problems caused delays, correct?

A: Yes. We were shooting in Durango at a very high altitude in the mountains. We had trucks with oxygen masks and cots, all set up like a mini-hospital. We would do a sequence and get so winded and exhausted and then we'd have to go lay down and rest, get some oxygen and then go act some more. It was tiring. And the shoot stretched from weeks into months - four months, I think. It was a difficult location. We had to get up early in the morning, especially the women, just to get ready. Then we'd load up and go to location, and it was 90 minutes out. Those were long days and everybody was tired. There wasn't much socializing at night. We were just too tired. We just had time to get back, have a meal and learn the new lines for the next day. And they were always changing the script. Of course that happened a lot back then.

Q. And what about Audie as an actor?

A: I think Audie was a limited actor. He was good, and what he did was good. He was believable because he had honesty to him and he projected that honesty and that moment on the screen. He had a personality that was quite winning. And the accent and the voice were great. I think in the movies that I saw him in, he was pretty much always Audie, but believable in that scene because he was honest. (Source: undated personal letter)

MEMORIES OF MY HERO! MY BROTHER AUDIE L. MURPHY

By Nadene Murphy

My first memory of my brother Audie was about the year 1936. We lived in Celeste, Texas next door to Mr. and Mrs. John Cawthon. These were good people and friends. They became our second parents. He was always John but we called her "Mom".

I would wait in front of our house every evening when I knew Audie would be coming in from work. First I would hear him whistling, then he would come past some shrubbery. He would have his hands in his pockets and walk jauntily like he owned the world. He was my hero even then!

In the spring, summer, and early fall there was usually work for share croppers and their families. We set out onions in early spring. Corn was planted in March. Cotton in April. We did a lot of hoeing until fall, when the cotton was ready to pick.

We moved southwest of Celeste and lived in a boxcar. Back then people used big iron cookstoves that burned wood. One day it was storming out. Audie was leaning by a window and had one foot resting on one of the stoves iron legs. Lightning struck and hit the stove. It shocked Audie, but he laughed. He wasn't afraid of anyone or anything. In the cold winter we went to bed hungry a lot. Audie would make up stories to tell us younger kids. It would make us forget our empty stomachs and soon we would fall asleep. It didn't surprise me in later years that he wrote poems and songs.

He was an excellent hunter. He could take a slingshot and kill rabbits, squirrels, and birds on the move. I can see him now coming across a field or down a road carrying several rabbits, birds, or squirrels he had killed. If it hadn't been for him, we would have starved.

Audie worshipped our mother. He was so good to her and his voice was so gentle when he talked to her. He always had a sweet, soothing voice.

When we lived in Floyd, Texas I recall one warm spring day it began to get cloudy and the wind started blowing. Mama looked to the east and saw a cyclone. She called us kids together and told us to start running up to our neighbor's storm cellar. Mama couldn't walk very fast, so she had us run on ahead. Audie stayed with Mama to help her. He wouldn't leave her for any reason. Once when Audie and the other boys were out hunting, he brought in two beautiful dinner plates. He found them along the railroad tracks. One had bluebonnets on it. Mama treasured those plates until she died.

Audie was working for a farmer who lived between Greenville and Farmersville when Mama died. There was no way we could get a message to him in time for him to be with her at the end. He wanted her to live so badly, so he could be grown, work, and buy her pretty things to make life easier for her.

He had a good sense of humor and liked to tease the rest of us. One day I was picking cotton beside Audie. Honey bees were swarming around some wild flowers blooming in the cotton. I thought they were pretty, so Audie told me to grab one of them and I did. Of course a bee stung me and my hand swelled so bad, I had to go home. I told him that night he was mean. He laughed and said, "I did you a favor; you got out of picking cotton, didn't you?"

We were picking cotton down in the bottom land one day. It was real hot. I sat down on my cotton sack to rest a minute. A cotton spider crawled onto my hand. It scared me and I started hollering and crying. Audie was on the row next to me and he said, "You're gonna die." I left the field and ran to the nearest house. When the lady of the house came to the door, I told her a spider had bitten me. Seeing I was so scared she poured some coal oil in a pan and I sat there the rest of the evening soaking my finger. When everyone started home I finally knew I wasn't going to die. I told Audie that night again that he was mean. He said again, "You got out of picking cotton the rest of the day, didn't you?" I never thought of that.

One day the cotton we were picking was close to our house. Mama called us in for dinner about noon. Back then we used to go into the woods and pick wild grapes called possum grapes. Mama would make jam and jelly out of them. Then she would make homemade wine. This day there was a big crock churn full of grape wine. I noticed when I had been in the field for awhile, it was awfully quiet. Most of the time we would be talking, hollering, or singing. I looked around and couldn't see my three brothers. It scared me and I ran back to the house and got Mama. She went back to the field with me and we found the boys. They had gotten into the grape wine, then gone back out in the hot sun and had all passed out. Audie hated picking cotton.

After Mama died, us three smallest kids were put in an orphanage. I remember there would be what they called blackouts. No lights could show from the windows. I was afraid. I knew there was an awful war going on. I prayed a lot because I knew I had a brother fighting in that war.

Some songstress named Francis Langford sang a song "When The Lights Go On Again, All Over The World." I still love that song. When Audie came home to Farmersville, we were driven there to be with him. When we stopped in front of my Aunt Jessie Webb's house, I saw this handsome young soldier standing proud and tall in the yard. I jumped out of the car and ran to him and threw my arms around him. Thank God he was home! We went to luncheons, parades, lots of functions with him. He was soft spoken and a polite gentleman all the time.

He bought a big two story house, so us smaller kids could leave the orphanage and have a real home. When he came to get us at the orphanage, the teenage girls had a fit over him because he was so handsome. I was so proud of him.

Soon James Cagney saw him on the cover of Life Magazine and sent for him to come out to Hollywood. We missed him. He made every day life a lot of fun for all of us. When he would come to Farmersville to visit, I would be so excited. Not because he was a movie star but because he was my brother and I loved him. We had lots of fun. He would strum a guitar and I would sing. His favorite song was "The Convict and The Rose." He would play cowboys and Indians with my two young nephews and our baby brother Joe. What a time they had!

The last time I saw Audie was in 1968, when our baby brother Joe was killed in a car wreck. Body guards flanked Audie. No one could get near him. He was still handsome and still walked like he owned the world. Sometimes at night when I can't sleep, I think back over our lives. I see a young man lean his hoe against a fence, pick up a rifle, and go off to war to fight for his country.

To go through the hell of war, live through it, and return home the most decorated soldier of World War II is why my brother, Audie L. Murphy, is still my hero. (Source: personal letter dated Feb. 10, 1999)

TRIVIA: On March 25, 1999, actor Burt Reynolds participated in a wreath laying at Arlington Cemetery. He was there for the filming of a documentary series he is narrating on Medal of Honor recipients. Reynolds can't tell you about Arlington Cemetery without crying. He said, "It's hallowed ground, and a great privilege for me to be here." After the wreath laying, Reynolds was given a tour of the Tomb quarters. Later in the day, he and the production crew shot footage at the grave of Medal of Honor recipient Audie Murphy. The documentary, from Rock Entertainment, is being marketed toward different medias, including cable. It is not certain when or where it will air. (Source: The Pentagram newspaper, April 2, 1999)

AUDIE MURPHY DAYS - Greenville, Texas – April 9-11, 1999

A gathering of at least 200 of the "faithful" came to Greenville, Texas to honor and celebrate the DIAMOND JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY of the official birth year of AUDIE LEON MURPHY. They came from New Mexico to Maryland, from Florida to Michigan and many in between, and from all corners of Texas. At least 17 different states were represented. Young and old, it made no difference. We had come to honor a great man.

And what a celebration it was! Vince Leibowitz, Executive Director of the American Cotton Museum and his committee put together a fantastic weekend, jammed to the hilt with places to go and things to do and see. Some of us arrived Friday evening to join in the hospitality room put on

by the American Legion Hall members, but most arrived Saturday morning. By doing so they missed a very impressive flag raising ceremony at the Audie Murphy Historic Marker Roadside Park in Celeste. Which by the way, is beautifully maintained by Charles "Curly" Combs a local resident and fan of Audie. We appreciate his untiring efforts to keep this little park looking so nice with manicured lawn and lovely flowers.

The invocation was given by Cloral Lovell, formerly a POW of WW II and now Chaplain of the Greenville VFW and American Legion. The American and Texas flags were raised on the three flag poles in the middle of the park by the color guard from Fort Sill, Oklahoma. I cannot say enough about these young men who came to honor Audie and perform several solemn duties involving the flag and wreath laying. They are all members of the elite Sergeant Audie Murphy Club and wear their medallions with great pride. They dressed in vintage uniforms from WW I, II and Vietnam, and their leader Sgt. Keck, was dressed in camouflage. I was delighted to see the blue and white insignia of the 3rd Division on the helmet and shirt of the WW II uniform. It almost seemed as if Audie was with us. We all repeated the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and those who knew the Texas pledge repeated it. It was followed by the National Anthem sung by a young lady, a senior from Celeste High School. The day started out overcast, but that only lent to the solemnity of the ceremony and by the time we left the sun was peeking through, promising us a beautiful day.

Off we went to the Museum to view the memorabilia, take pictures and impose on Nadene Murphy and Billie Tindol for autographs, chat with friends and make new acquaintances. Next came the unveiling of the Western Heritage Wrangler Award. A statue of Audie on horseback, presented to the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma when Audie was inducted in 1996. They graciously loaned it to the museum for this occasion.

Off to lunch at the Oak Creek Country Club. Lunch was catered by Sally's, Especially for You and served to us by the volunteers from the American Legion. Turkey Tetrazinni, salad, vegetable, with Mexican wedding cake for dessert. The guest speaker was the Honorable Ralph Hall, US Congressman. He said, "Murphy was a great American hero who never forgot his roots or his family and was always down to earth. More than anything else Audie Murphy was a man who understood the word 'duty'. We must never let history change or water down what Audie Murphy has meant to America". We, of course, all agreed. He praised the participants of the AM Days for their efforts to preserve history. As we left the luncheon we were each given an untitled poem written by Audie in 1948, suitable for framing.

The Stamp cancellation was next on the agenda, so we all moved over to the Civic Center where the collections of Larry Winters and Wayne Cutshaw were on display which we could view before the ceremony started. There must have been over 200 lobby posters and pictures of Audie's movies. I was overwhelmed with so much to look at. In the same room the movie "Bad Boy" was showing on a TV in the corner, but who had time to take it all in? Thank you Larry and Wayne for sharing your collections.

The Stamp ceremony started with the posting of the flag, the pledge of allegiance and the National Anthem sung by Adrien Witkofsky, the manager of the museum gift shop. A job well done. Letters were read from the Mayor of Greenville and the State Senator's office with a proclamation honoring Audie on this commemorative occasion.

The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry, as was the case for the guest speaker, Mr. George Petri. Unfortunately, he took sick and was hospitalized and could not attend. But, true to the motto of the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club, "Lead from the Front", Staff Sgt. George Keck stepped in and gave a very inspiring speech about the Club. He told us that the requirements even to appear before the Board for possible admission was very stringent and quite an honor. But, to be admitted into this prestigious club was the highest honor they could receive. These men are the leaders in their ranks and we should be very proud of them. Sgt. Keck was assigned the duty of starting the first Audie Murphy Club at Fort Sill and was its first president. This organization is nationwide for all sergeants that qualify.

Nadene Murphy then talked a little about her brother saying, "He was a man of valor and never let fear stop him from doing what he knew he had to do." She also let us know that the stamp petition drive has sent in over 71,800 signatures and that 17 foreign countries have supported this drive. We all wanted to know, what is wrong with our country? The cancellation stamp was then revealed. Another creation by Don Moore, which showed Audie's face superimposed on the map of Texas with a 75 stamped in the middle of the Lone Star. Don was there and we all gave him a rousing round of applause. We were sorry that James and Diane Thomason could not be there, but we were glad to hear James is recovering nicely from his heart surgery.

By this time I felt that I was in sensory overload. Three of us went out to dinner and then went over to the Wreath Laying Ceremony in front of the Court House. The color guard placed the wreath at the top of the Court House steps and we all went inside to view all the names of the men and women who have served our country from the Hunt County area. Though there was another hospitality table over at the museum, we were just too tired to take in any more. So, Ann Joiner, Teri Edge and I retired to our separate rooms and watched The Wild and the Innocent which happened to be on TV that night. A wonderful way to end a wonderful day.

It was great to meet so many fans and put faces with the names we have corresponded with, and also meet the "VIP's" of the fan club, such as Stan, Sue, Don Moore and the author of our great web site, Richard Rodgers and his wife Marie. And then too, meeting Nadene and Billie who were so very gracious to us all.

A special BIG THANKS to Vince Leibowitz who looked like he was about to collapse at the end of the day, yet was up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed Sunday morning to give us a tour of Audie Murphy Land. Space does not permit me to tell you all the places we went to, but it might give you some incentive to come next year, as I hope my description of this year's event has done.

Another THANK YOU goes to the Audie Murphy Fan Club, The Research Foundation, The American Cotton Museum, The American Legion Post #17 and Auxiliary, the Greenville Chamber of Commerce and the Hunt County Historical Commission for sponsoring this event.

Hope to see all of you next year.

Submitted by club member, Sharon Lovell of Port Orange, Florida