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Hero Comes Home To Cheering Town

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FARMERSVILLE, Texas, June 14.—Lt. Audie L. Murphy, a grinning, freckle-faced boy who hasn't changed a bit, came home to Farmersville Thursday night with every decoration his country can give a fighting man.

The little Collin County town of 2,206 residents gave him a real hero's welcome. He rode into town with Mayor R. B. Beaver behind a McKinney fire truck with all sirens screaming.

The parade of more than twenty cars met him at McKinney, swished him through that town then drove into Farmersville. Excited men and women and little boys and girls waved wildly and shouted above the honking horns as the parade looped the town's square. American flags decorated the narrow sidewalks.

But the best welcome of all was at a small white frame house six blocks from town. There Lieutenant Murphy met his family, three sisters and a little brother, for the first time in three years.

And through it all Lieutenant Murphy, appreciative but bewildered, grinned a little nervously, waved back and made his sly Irish-witted remarks that have stumped hero-hunters across the nation.

Wears Medal of Honor.

On his new khaki worsted uniform hung the Congressional Medal of Honor, highest award this country can give; the Distinguished Service Cross, a Silver Star and Cluster equivalent to two Silver Stars, three awards of the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star and the Legion of Merit.

But the thing that made his sister, Mrs. Corinne Burns happiest was that he hadn't changed a bit.

Lieutenant Murphy is the kind who wouldn't. The modest, serious-minded boy left school when he was in the eighth grade because he had to go to work.

Then and in the hard-fighting campaigns of the Seventh Army through Africa, Sicily, Italy and France he showed the stuff he was made of.

At Holtzwihr, France, Lieutenant Murphy ordered his company back, then stayed in a flaming tank destroyed to blast two advancing German companies to a halt. After he'd stalled the Nazi infantry, and his ammunition was gone, he limped back to his company. Seriously wounded, he refused treatment, reorganized his outfit and led an attack that routed the Germans.

Commissioned in Field.

That was only one of the times. But it was the sort of bravery that won for him a commission out of the ranks and a promotion to first lieutenant while in the fighting lines. He commanded the same company he has fought with overseas for about forty months.

Lieutenant Murphy was just glad to get out alive, he said.

"Sure the going's rough, but I guess it isn't as bad as we think when we're in the midst of it," he said.

Glory is something he doesn't quite understand, this boy who thinks straight and with experience-born realism.

Lieut. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, commander of the Seventh Army, presented him with the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Legion of Merit in Austria.

But the green-eyed, five-foot seven-inch young man was still surprised at the honors waiting for him at home. He arrived in San Antonio by plane from Paris, France, Wednesday with thirteen Generals and thirty-one other officers and enlisted men. The Alamo City gave a royal welcome then.

At Farmersville the official welcome is set for Friday at 2:30 p.m. in the town's public square. Col. James B. Anderson, Ashburn General Hospital, will give an address after a welcome from Mayor Beaver. The town's banker, W. H. Joutee, will speak.

H. H. Smith will read the citations which tell a story of heroism unexcelled. Repeatedly Lieutenant Murphy risked his own life to save the lives of his fellow fighting men.

Nervous as Hirohito's Dreams.

But about this ceremony Friday, Lieutenant Murphy said he was "as shaky at Hirohito's dreams."

At the Burns home in Farmersville on McKinney Street Lieutenant Murphy greeted sisters, brothers, cousins and neighbors. The thing that amazed him most was that his pretty sister, Nadine, was growing up.

"Who told you could wear lipstick?" was his first question after she'd kissed him. Nadine, dressed in a new red and green print dress, couldn't take her eyes, very much like his, off her brother.

Joe Preston, 10, fought for recognition.

He clung first to one uniformed leg, then another, until Lieutenant Murphy lifted him up to give him a good look at the ribbons. Then the young officer told the little boy that they'd have to have a long talk together, just the two of them.

Mrs. Burns, wearing a powder-blue gabardine dress and her hair freshly fixed for the homecoming, reminded her soldier brother that she was still boss. She hasn't forgotten that chocolate fudge cake is his favorite. But she didn't have a chance to cook supper at home Thursday night.

Can Forget K-Ration.

The family was guest of a Farmersville restaurant where Lieutenant Murphy got enough to eat to make him forget his K-ration diet for a long while.

Billie, another sister, 11, wore a navy-blue taffeta dress to please her big brother. She and Nadine have been saving clippings to put with those of Mrs. Burns for a family scrapbook.

Nadine, Billie and Joe Preston stay at the Bowles Orphans Home near Greenville. But they'll have their vacation now to be at home with their brother on his thirty-day furlough.

Another brother, Pvt. Richard Murphy is with the Army Medical Corps in Germany. Brothers Eugene and Charles live in West, McLennan County.

After supper the family wanted to see the suitcase filled with trophies which Lieutenant Murphy brought home. Brother-in-Law B. P. Burns has been promised a German rifle.

Then Lieutenant Murphy just wants to sleep.

Already this earnest young man is thinking seriously about the days past the excitement of celebrations. His 154 points for service in the Army and bravery have more than earned him entrance into civilian life.

He wants most to go to school to get the education he didn't have a chance at when he was younger. He's given some thought to following a military career. But all these things have to be thought through.

And Lt. Audie Murphy is a man who knows how to make decisions.

Born in Kingston, Hunt County, the lieutenant had lived in Farmersville only about two months before he entered the Army at Greenville, 1942.