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Little Town Shows Big Stuff For 20 -Year Old Quiet Hero

By Lois Sager

FARMERSVILLE' Texas, June 15 - Lt. Audie Murphy, the nicest boy you ever saw, was lavished with all the honors little Farmersville could afford Friday afternoon for the meanest fighting the Germans ever had to take.

Blackland farmers from all over North Texas had come to this Colin County town to pay their hero tribute. The 20-year old officer, solemn and a little nervous, sat on a crowd platform the flags of Texas and the nation.

The 200-yd square that stretched before him was packed with men, women and children, some in overalls and simple cotton dresses. They stood raptly under a clear blue sky in 98 -degree heat for an hour and a half. They hung out the windows of the few two - story buildings and stood on the roofs of others that lined the flag-bordered square.

Lieutenant Murphy, who has won every decoration his country can give, is the kind of boy that would win your heart, too.

His freckled face, clear green eyes, ready smile and slight build, make him look like the typical American boy.

But the Germans know him as a fighting Irishman. For his deeds of heroism he has won the Congressional Medal of Honor, America's highest award; the Distinguished Service Cross; the Silver Star and Cluster, equivalent to two Silver Stars; three awards of the Purple Heart; the Bronze Star and the Legion of Merit.

Farmersville wanted him to know that they appreciate the things he did for them in Africa' Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany. Residents of this rural community put up money to buy him \$1,725 worth of War Bonds.

Modest Lieutenant Murphy, his freckles shining on his handsome boyish features sat with his hair hanging over his forehead while School Supt. H.H. Smith read the citation for his bravery.

While people in the square cheered, he stepped nervously forward on the platform to give his response.

"About the best way I can express gratitude is not to say too much," he said. "I know you people don't want to stand in this hot sun any longer and just look at me. What I want to say is that you can all be proud of your sons and sweethearts who fought over there. I have seen them all and I know they're doing a wonderful job for you."

Mayor R. B. Beaver welcomed the visitors for the program. Col. James B. Anderson, commanding officer of Ashburn General Hospital, McKinney, said that his country is proud of the heroism exhibited by Lieutenant Murphy. Town banker W. H. Jouett presented the young officer with the bonds from the community.

"Yesterday very few people had ever heard of Farmersville but today it is on the map," Jouett said. "Even Mayor Beaver is known. Yesterday Audie, a lad of 17, was making his own way as best he could, but today he is known as the country's greatest hero."

Town Closes Up

Farmersville closed all its stores for two hours for this biggest of ceremonies since the town's founding in 1853. Postmaster M.B. Smith even closed the United States Post Office in a sort of local national holiday.

And not only Farmersville wanted to do something for him. A woman in Fort Worth sent him \$200 in War Bonds. And an East Texas man mailed him a \$50 check.

Take a look at Lieutenant Murphy, 5 feet 7 inches tall, weighing only 130 pounds, modest, quiet, and unassuming. He's the kind of fellow who won't say a thing about himself. He can't understand the fuss that is being made over him. And he said he'd rather have faced a machine gun than to have made that little speech.

It's hard to imagine him on top of a blazing tank destroyer at Holtzwihr, France. But there he was blasting away at two advancing German companies of 250 men and six heavy armored tanks. And he stayed there for an hour in the midst of enemy fire until he'd halted those Nazis. Then he brought his company from covered positions, and led an attack that wiped out that enemy outfit.

That action, in which he was seriously wounded brought him the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Watch him on the platform his eyes first wide with astonishment then dropped down with embarrassment, his feet in their new shoes shuffling back and forth over the rough platform boards.

Silences German Gun

It's hard to picture him at the landing near Ramatuelle in the first wave of the assault infantry Aug. 15. There he left his men in covered positions, dashed forty yards through withering German fire, then back toward the beaches. He found a light machine gun, carried it to a rocky hill 75 yards in advance of his platoon.

He silenced an enemy machine gun that had been picking off his men, knocked off two advancing Germans. Then he dashed up the draw alone through bullets and hand grenades. He killed two more Germans, wounded two others and forced the remaining five to surrender.

Then he led his men to capture an enemy held hill and an entire enemy garrison. For that he was given the Distinguished Service Cross.

But when you get to know Lieutenant Murphy you can understand how it happened. You know that he's the kind who'd risk his own life to save his men. From a hospital in France, after one of his three wounds, he wrote his sister not to worry if anything happened to him.

He'd seen "better men than myself get killed," and it was all right with him if he had to get it, too." When he was fighting he was just "tired and mad and disgusted." And he knew that every time he killed a German, maybe one less American boy would be shot. That's what he wrote home.

Lieutenant Murphy has been a scrapper from the start. He was born on a farm at Kingston. Hunt County, one of a family of seven. He had to leave school when he was in the eighth grade to go to work. He's lived in Celeste, Hunt County, in Greenville, in Sherman and in Farmersville. He worked on farms, delivered The News in Farmersville, and worked in radio shops.

Enlisted in Army at 17

Then he enlisted in the Army in 1942 at Greenville when he was just 17, Avery Dowdy, 23, a former Sulphur Springs farm boy who now lives at 5433, Dallas, was with him at the time. He recalled that in the first of heavy drill Murphy bell but out and had to be carried to the hospital, "He was the smallest guy in the bunch," Dowdy said.

That's the same boy who later was commissioned from the ranks and promoted to first lieutenant while in the fighting lines.

But Murphy knew how to take care of himself. The soldiers used to try to pick a fight with him. He took one of the big ones on, Dowdy smiled. Nobody bothered him after that.

After they'd gone to Fort Meade three months later, the men used to go to a shooting gallery in a nearby town. A long-standing \$25 offer was up for the man who could knock down the long row of tiny red pins with a 22 rifle. Murphy did it first try, Dowdy beamed.

He Got the \$25

The stand didn't want to pay off. Murphy did it a second time. They still wouldn't pay. A note from his commanding officer handed by a stern-faced young soldier finally brought the \$25. But the private didn't get to shoot anymore at that gallery.

Then, at a bivouac near Casablanca while the soldiers were waiting to move up, Murphy was idly chucking clods of dirt at the side of a tent, while talking to Dowdy and some of the other men. A sergeant twice his size came out and cursing like only a sergeant can, told him to stop.

But, the young Irishman could speak his language, he really dressed him down, Dowdy laughed. And that big fellow just walked away.

Lieutenant Murphy, who doesn't drink or smoke, is watching his language closely since he got home. "That sort of talk just doesn't belong in a man's conversation back here." He said.

Mrs. Corinne Burns, his oldest sister, who lives in a small white-framed house in Farmersville has been mother to the family. His sisters Nadine, a pretty 13 year-old brunette, Billie a brown-eyed 11 year-old and a brother, Joe Preston, 10, live at Boles Home at Quinlan, Hunt County.

Glad to Get a Rest

Lieutenant Murphy stopped and talked to every person in Friday's ceremony crowd who came up to say a word of appreciation. But he was glad to get back home and just stretch out in the bed. There's still so much he wants to do that thirty days aren't going to be enough.

But he's found time to go to see his grandmother, 83, and he's planning to go to a farm to see an elderly relative who couldn't make the trip to Farmersville. He's counting on a trip to Ashburn Hospital where he may find some of the men from his division of the Seventh Army. Lieutenant Murphy, in the hospital three times himself, knows they'd like to hear some news from the men they fought with.

Right now Murphy would like a car just to ride around in and see the country, he's been missing for three years. He finally admitted that he had a girl in Commerce that he'd like to see, too.

After this is all over Lieutenant Murphy wants to go to school to get the education he had to miss earlier. He's interested in studying radio. And Lieutenant Murphy is the kind who'll succeed at whatever he knows he should do.