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Luck of Irish Ran Out After Early Glory

By **BOB THOMAS**

Hollywood (AP) - He was Irish, and he came through fiery battles with his life, earning more medals than any other World War II soldier.

But in later years his Irish luck deluded Audie Murphy. That luck ran out last weekend when the 46-year-old war hero-actor died in a Virginia plane crash with five other persons.

It was a violent end for the soft-spoken, baby-faced Texan who was credited with killing 240 German soldiers and was awarded the Medal of Honor and 23 other U.S. decorations.

He was not proud of his wartime accomplishments. In 1950 he admitted that he had given all his medals to young relatives and others.

"I've been fed up with that 'most decorated' business for a long time," he said. "I have given away my medals because I felt they never belonged entirely to me."

"My whole unit earned them, but I didn't know how to give them to my whole unit."

He was weary of violence. But it seemed to follow him.

At one Hollywood party he wrangled with Actor Lawrence Tierney and said, "If somebody hadn't stopped me, I would have very happily have killed him."

In his last incursion into the news, Murphy was tried and acquitted on an assault

and battery charge after being accused of beating and firing a pistol at a Hollywood dog trainer.

Born June 20, 1924, to a Kingston, Texas sharecropper, he might have chopped cotton all his life. His father abandoned the nine Murphy children, then Audie's mother died when he was 16 and he had to leave school to support the family.

Rejected by the Marines and paratroopers for being underweight, he entered the Army and fought incredibly through Italy and France with the Third Infantry Division.

His handsome Irish face on Life magazine brought a film contract from James and William Cagney, then partners in a film company.

He took acting lessons for a year, then played a bit part in an Alan Ladd picture and was dropped.

He was about to return to Texas when another role turned up in a western called "The Kid From Texas" which led to a contract at Universal Studios.

He specialized in Westerns but his biggest success was "To Hell and Back," based on his autobiographical account of his war deeds.

Murphy's married life reflected to some extent the turmoil that he underwent after the war.

His 1949 marriage to actress Wanda Hendrix had the fan magazines aflutter. But they parted a year later.

In 1951 he married Pamela Archer, a former airline stewardess, and they had two sons, Terry, 18, and James (Skipper) 16. The marriage was marked by a number of separations.