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Audie Stayed a Stranger

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HOLLYWOOD- "Audie did a lot of living in his 46 years. Most people have only one life; Audie had several."

This was a friend's summation of the colorful, sometimes violent life of Audie Murphy, who met death last weekend in a private plane crash in Virginia.

Sharecropper, soldier, movie star Audie Murphy was a real hero in a town of ersatz ones. Hence, he was not understood by the film community. He preferred it that way and kept his distance from the equally famous names in Hollywood.

Rock Hudson, who was a fellow star with Murphy for several years at Universal Studio, admitted Tuesday that he had met Murphy only a couple of times.

"Audie was a man who made friends very slowly, very carefully," said publicist Frank McFadden, who knew the actor for 24 years.

"I always felt that because of his background he distrusted most people. Yet if he discovered that people's motives were unselfish, he could become very good friends."

"I always felt Audie was insecure in the film business," said Herbert Coleman, who directed Murphy in "Posse From Hell" and "Battle at Bloody Beach."

"He never wanted to mix with picture people. The stunt men, doubles and crew members were his friends."

Actress Ann Blyth was also under contract to Universal at the same time with Murphy. They never costarred but they toured together on a couple of special appearances. Upon learning of his death, she commented,

"Audie Murphy was a complex man — not the usual type you find an actor. As a person he was innately good. In his quiet way, he helped many people."

Jess Hibbs directed Murphy in "Joe Butterfly," "World in My Corner," "Ride Clear of Diablo," "Walk the Proud Land," and the autobiographical "To Hell and Back" which was Murphy's biggest hit film. In it Murphy recreated his wartime feats of killing 240 German soldiers. Because of this, Hibbs said that Murphy had trouble with some of his scenes: "There were spots in the script pretty close to him, and he was upset because of memories of his lost buddies. But he went through it, and he gained a great deal of respect from the whole company."

"Audie was not a good actor," said Coleman, "but he was always prepared and he always tried to do his best. If you kept him away from dramatic scenes you could get a good performance out of him."