AUDIE MURPHY RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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Audie Murphy was a war hero and a movie star. He was a poor kid from Texas who became the most decorated GI of WWII, cited time and again for heroism in battle, ultimately receiving this country's highest award for action above and beyond the call of duty: the Congressional Medal of Honor. After the war he went to Hollywood and starred in dozens of motion pictures and several television shows. He died in a plane crash in 1971 at the age of 46.

That's the short version. It does not begin to explain, however, the complex character of the man or the profound effect he had on those who knew him.

He was my father.

Audie Murphy remains a unique figure in modern America because of his significant presence in both our military history and our popular culture.

The Audie Murphy Research Foundation was established to examine the extraordinary life and preserve the memory of this fascinating man.

Terry Murphy

Courtesy of Arvo Ojala

AUDIE L. MURPHY

The Audie Murphy Research Foundation would like to thank webmaster and curator Richard L. Rodgers for his outstanding work creating and maintaining the

AUDIE L. MURPHY MEMORIAL WEB SITE

http://www.audiemurphy.com

The official web site of Audie Murphy

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INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES L. OWEN

Charles L. Owen was born in 1922 in Fort Worth, Texas. One of nine children, Mr. Owen helped his father in the family-owned blacksmith/machine shop through the depression years. In January, 1945 he joined the 3rd Platoon, B Company, 15th Infantry Regiment, Third Divsion.

In 1955, Owen, his brother and a friend organized Gearhart-Owen Industries, Inc., an oil well service company.

Since 1973 Owen has developed over 400 acres of industrial, office park and commercial properties. He has served on the board of trustees for three Christian universities and many civil and corporate boards. A former city councilman, he is a life member of the Chamber of Commerce and Society of the Third Divsion, Audie Murphy Outpost.

The following is a transcript of his December 15, 1996 interview with Larryann Willis and Terry Murphy.

Courtesy of Sue Gossett

Lieutenant Audie Murphy , Winter - 1945

Audie came to the replacement depot and asked for replacements for his 3rd platoon. That's when he first had his field commission. I think he'd been in the hospital and he'd just come back. January or somewhere along there. And I went over there in '44. Christmas of '44. We traveled by train in cattle cars from Port Le Havre up to the Belgian front. We traveled two or three days in rail cars. It was so cold that the bolts inside these cars would freeze snow white with frost. We got up there pretty close to where Company B and the Third Division was encamped. Murphy came up and wanted 18 men. He wanted `em all from Texas. And the sergeant sort of gave him a "go to hell" look. I think he was from Detroit or something (laughs). I never will forget that look.

Murphy was really young looking back then.

Yeah. He looked like he'd never shaved. Really young. Looked like a boy.

What was your impression when he was looking for Texans?

I figured, "Oh, oh. Here I go." (laughs) The old sergeant checks out his list and says, "Lieutenant, I only have 16 Texans in here." And he said, "OK, give me those 16 and give me two more." I think he asked for one from Tennessee and one from Oklahoma. Now the Oklahoma guy was an Indian. Murphy would always send this Indian back with prisoners. He knew they'd never get away from that Indian. But he took us down to the Company. I'd give anything if I'd have had a recording of the orientation he gave us when we lined up out in the street in snow and we were all out there shivering. Scared replacements. And you know most of us...now I was about the same age as Audie. I was born in '22. I believe he was born in '23 or....

Well...officially '24.

'24? Yeah, so he was even younger than I was. But most of those little recruits were in their teens. You know: 17, 18, 19. That was toward the end of the war when they were taking younger recruits. And some of them had come out of the Air Corps. I came out of the Anti-Aircraft. They were taking people out of the Air Corps and just giving them short infantry training and putting `em on the Queen Mary.

A lot of them got killed because they weren't adequately trained.

Yeah. That's right. That's what Audie had there towards the last six months of the war. Young fellas...real young. And so I learned to appreciate him because he was crazy about his men. He hand picked `em at the replacement depot and he took care of `em all the way through. He'd send me on a dangerous patrol you know, "Go down there and see how deep that river is. See if there's any Germans on the other side. And there might be some on this side." But he'd say, "Go across that snow covered field. Leave your rifle here and take two guys with you. And all of you leave your rifles here because if they catch you, it wouldn't do you any good. You wouldn't have a chance with a rifle. If you take `em we won't know if it's your guns or their guns, so just leave your rifles here. If we hear gunfire we'll come get you." Now he said, "If you don't want to go, well I'll go for you." You know. Here he was an officer and we were just PFCs and privates and corporals.

Did you have white snow suits? Or did you have to go across standing out?

Finally we made us some snow suits out of mattress covers. And it finally got to where we were white, kind of like the Germans. The Germans had those snow suits a long time

before we did. So, anyhow, we'd go down on scout trips like that for Audie. But he was so compassionate with his men. You know, if one of us would get shot or injured or killed, he'd get mad. And he'd lose his temper. Then he'd take on the whole German Army. And that's just about what happened there when he got the Congressional Medal. He was trying to protect his men and he was already mad about some he'd already lost. And he had a temper. I don't know whether that's ever come out or not. OHHHH but he had SOME temper. And all of us guys knew that. He'd come from a battlefield commission and so he'd been a soldier and he knew what it was like to be a soldier. And I think that was one reason why he was so compassionate with his men.

What did he say at that orientation?

He just ...it was so down to earth and so compassionate...realistic to us. We were scared, you know. We'd ridden the Queen Mary and we'd ridden this crazy boxcar for three or four or five days...and we could hear gunfire. We could hear artillery fire in the distance. And so we were wondering what in the world was going to happen to us, you know. Fresh recruits from the States with...really inadequate training. So, he said, "Look, you're gonna join one of the best outfits in the United States Army." And he said, "You're gonna find that these are gonna be some of your closest friends." And he said, "Now there'll be times when you'll be scared to death. I'm always scared when we're up front. Don't be ashamed of it." And he said, "There'll be times you'll want to cry. There's nothing wrong with that." And he told us that we had some of the best weapons and we were fighting for the best cause that any army had ever fought for and he said, "Now, we're gonna have some more training . Before you see any hard action... we're gonna have some more training." And he said, "You're gonna learn to shoot a bazooka and submachine guns and learn how to carry TNT packs of explosives for knocking out bunkers and things like that."

Satchel charges?

Yeah. And so we did. We had this training. We went down to the company. And marching behind Murphy down to the company, we just felt like...it was an altogether different feeling. It felt like "This guy knows what he's doing! We're gonna stick with him!" (laughs) And he'd train us. During the training, I learned to shoot...handle a bazooka to knock out tanks. He was very thorough. He said, "Now it's a hard weapon because it's six feet long and hard to hide. When you're in a hole you can't get down. But , try to get it down in the hole and try to hide and let the tank come over....pass you. And then raise up and hit him in the rear, because that's where his radiator is. You'll knock him out that way. That's about the only way you're gonna knock him out. So you'll just have to lay down there in that hole and let him come over." And so it took a lot of nerve. Murphy told us that's

Courtesy of Bea "Billie" Murphy

1949 photo of Audie Murphy with sister Billie, who lived in the orphans' home while Audie was overseas, and nephew Weldon Burns.

what it took and we sure believed him. But I just think he was such a hero.

How did he compare with the other officers?

Oh, he was more friendly.

Didn't Murphy make a comment once that they never had enough clothes for the guys? They really didn't have adequate winter clothes for that low a temperature.

Yeah. We had those wrong-side-out combat boots. Reversed leather. And they would just soak water in like a blotter. And our feet would get frostbite. But I remember Murphy ...we were talking about how he was different from other officers. He'd sit in a foxhole with you or shell hole and just talk about personal things. You know, you'd never do that with any other officers. And we'd cover up with the same blanket. We'd put one or two blankets over all us guys... over our legs sitting in the foxhole or shell hole and sit there and talk. And Murphy'd have his radio. And we'd talk about things. He liked to talk about ...he was from Texas...his hometown, Farmersville and Greenville. And, of course, I was from Fort Worth. I think that was one reason he always picked Texans. He liked to talk about the States. He took the train at Mineral Wells, I remember.

So when you were up there on the front and people were trying to kill you, you didn't want to talk about the war. You wanted to get your mind back home.

Yeah. He'd talk about his family a lot. He mentioned the orphans' home. Some of his sisters and a brother were in an orphans' home. He was crazy about his mother. And, he'd almost come to tears talking about his mother. And how he missed home. And how he learned about firearms when he was a boy hunting squirrels in his hometown area.

We've been talking with his sisters and brother and they said they had it real rough growing up.

Yeah. I met a little old lady up there. Murphy hunted with her son. He came over to her house a lot. I said, "Did you know Audie had a hot temper?" "WHY NO! NO! He never showed that around our boys or around the house. I'd know."

Well she wasn't shooting at him either.

Yeah. So, we'd get under these one or two blankets. All the guys.

You'd stay warm that way.

Yeah. And then it would snow or sleet and our body temperature would melt the snow and then along about daylight that thing would freeze and we'd be just as stiff as the blanket. And our rifles would be laying up there kind of on the edge of the hole. And they would freeze. The sleet and snow would fall on them and then they'd freeze and we'd have to knock the ice off to open the chamber you know. Boy it was cold. But, they were one of the best weapons had ever been made. And I guess the Germans had just old bolt action rifles and we had the semiautomatics and boy they didn't like that. The Germans were afraid of that gun.

There are a lot of stories about Murphy going on midnight forays behind enemy lines. You ever see him do any of that?

Yeah, I know he would do that a lot. But he

was bad about sitting in foxholes and he'd hear a tank crank up, you know.

A German tank?

Yeah. So, he'd call for artillery to knock that tank out. `Cause we were sitting there with this old cold bazooka. Only thing we had. And I think it started in the Battle of the Colmar, we lost nearly all of our tank destroyers and our tanks. You know, they got knocked out or run off in those canals and sunk. So Murphy would start calling on the radio for artillery. And sometimes the sucker'd be right on top of us and Murphy'd call in the artillery. He was bad about that. And they'd ...the artillery guy on the other end would tell Murphy, "Too close." And Murphy'd say, "They're coming. They're coming in." And the artillery guys would say, "They're too close to you guys." And Murph would say, "Fire damn it! I can see the whites of their eyes." (laughs) And a lot of times I heard him say, " Well, hell, if you just wait a few minutes I'll let ya talk to `em." He'd be talking to some old artillery captain, "Just wait a few minutes, by God, and you can talk to `em." And he'd call artillery in on himself. Boy, he was something else. Now, I stayed with him from, I guess it was about the middle of January when I got assigned to the Company and he came up and picked us up at the depot. I stayed with him until the war ended and we were down in Austria. And I was there when he got his CMH. I was there in Austria.

Murphy had great hopes for me and that bazooka. (laughs) Finally he said, "Private Owen" he said, "You take that bazooka and you get the ammo bearer," He'd assign some guy to carry the ammunition for it, and he said, "You guys bring up the tail of the column. And when we see a tank we'll call you forward." He said, "We don't want you up there in front with that bazooka flashing around. That long thing giving our position up. So you guys bring up the rear and when we see tanks we'll say, 'Bazooka up front' and you come running up here." And, BOY, I don't know how many times I heard that "Bazooka up front!" And one time Murphy hollered, "Bazooka up front!" We ran up there and here it is a big old tank sitting right over there and we fired to knock it out and it was a wooden tank...it was a decoy. The Germans got so that there toward the end they'd put up decoys to try to scare you off, keep you from coming on in. I blew that thing all to pieces. (laughs) I don't think Murphy knew it but a time or two we shot bank vaults. We'd capture a town, and they'd have a great big old bank standing there. And I'd say, "I wonder if that bugger's got any money in it?" Boom. We'd shoot a big hole in the wall. One of `em we did find some German marks, but it was the old marks and the day the war ended they declared `em no good. We started lighting cigars with `em.

Let me tell you this one story. I don't know if it's in any of your background history or that you'd ever heard about the fact that they tried to...at least one time...they tried to court martial Audie Murphy.

How was that?

When this particular thing happened, we were going up to take this German village and our own artillery was firing over our heads into this village. They were gonna soften it up for us and then we'd just walk in and take the village. And one or two of the shells fell short...right into he middle our column. BOY! And just slaughtered our guys. And I've already told you how he felt about his men. And you talk about something that caused Murphy to lose his temper...that was one. Our own artillery killing our own guys...especially his hand-picked men. And so we were up there scurrying around, trying to put on tourniquets and bandages. Murphy was helping treat some of the guys and we had all our medics busy. And the radio crackled out and Murphy hears, "Never mind your problem up there, Lieutenant. You know what your objective is. You go on and take that village." And he said, "You son-of-a-bitch! The hell with you!" He said, "I'm not moving a damned inch until you get some aide up here for these wounded men!" And BOY he meant it too. The old man could tell he meant it.

Wasn't this a situation where they could take that town in another hour or so. It wasn't like they were in the middle of a fight.

Yeah, that's right. So, after the battle and we went into quarters between battles, they come around and said, "Well, you guys were witnesses to this." And they filed the charges you know.

Refusing a direct order?

Yeah, refusing a direct order and, I believe it was actions unbecoming an officer.

Who was it that filed the charges?

It was the regimental commander...a colonel...and BOY! Murphy'd got him told! And the old Adjutant Generals Office come by and says "We're looking for people who heard Lieutenant Murphy say so and so. Did you hear him say that?" "NOOOOOOO" (laughs) "Somebody's all messed up. He didn't say anything like that." They couldn't get a thing out of anybody. (laughs) So they dropped it. And I think that happened at least another time, but I'm not familiar with the other time.

I know there was another time that he blew up at a doctor.

What was that about?

He sent some men back with trenchfoot and the doctor gave them some foot powder and sent `em back up to the front. That happened earlier. And he might have been denied a promotion because of it. He was a noncommissioned officer then.

Some kind of punishment probably.

And there was another time. They were in the rear for a rest and they wanted him to put his exhausted men through close order drills. He refused to do that and got busted for it.

You know we'd be walking through the woods and it'd be quiet. Everything'd be real quiet. You'd hear a twig snap over here on the right. And he'd have his carbine up and three or four shots off before we could even look that way. Lord. He was just like a leopard. FAST!

When you were talking about his fast reactions: Most people, when they get shot, wouldn't keep going after the guy.

Yeah, that's right.

I mean, when he got hit in the hip....

He just kept fighting.

Yeah. He rolled over and looked at the guy and killed him.

He was mad.

Yeah, but when he got mad, he didn't get so mad that he completely lost control. He knew what he was doing.

NO, NO....he was just determined. "I'm going to get the bastards." And didn't lose his ability to think. A lot of people get mad and just can't think. He could still operate pretty good when he was mad. (laughs) All us guys knew that.

When he got mad, he got real serious and got over being afraid.

Yeah. Murphy was saying after he got that

battlefield commission, he was trying to act like an officer. It was hard for him. You could tell he still wanted to be one of the men. And he would be out in the field where there were no other officers. We'd just be the old bunch of us, you know.

Well, they had to force him to take it. My understanding is he didn't want to be an officer.

That's right. So, back toward the end of the war, he began to act a little more like an officer. Up to the end of the war, I was a corporal. And then after the war I got promoted into a different office situation. I had a high school diploma and could type 35 or 40 words per minute. So they put me in as a noncommissioned officer and I came out a staff sergeant. But I was only a corporal during Murphy's time.

Well, with Murphy I don't think it would have made any difference if they had transferred him around. I just think he had empathy for people.

Yeah. It's just that back then, it was different, I guess, from the way it is now. An officer was an officer and an enlisted man was an enlisted man.... Until you got with Murphy up in the battlefield. Then he was just one of the guys. "If you don't want to go, I'll go for you." (laughs)

When you got across the border into Germany, what did you guys do with the German civilians? Did you just go on by and leave `em at home, or did they....

Some of `em would just stay in their houses, you know, until the war was over. One night another guy and I set up this machine gun nest...had the bazooka laying there... and heard this thing coming... sounded like a tank...big old engine...and here we're trying to capture Germans trying to escape out of the town, you know, catch `em . We kept looking and looking ...and around the curve...just about daylight... here comes this old farmer on a tractor. And he was going to plow...and it was right in the middle of the battle, you know. He was going to plow.

That would kind of blow your mind.

"Murphy, what do you want to do with that guy?" He said, "Well, tell the SOB to go home and wait `til the war's over." (laughs) But, OHHHHH Murphy hated those SS troops. MAN! They had that little black insignia sticking out on their lapels. And he tried to give them an extra boot in the rear every time we caught one.

We captured a German barracks one time. Young soldiers. Some of `em 15 and 16...some of those Hitler youths that they were training. And so, I was running around the corner and here was one of `em standing there. And I hollered at him. He raised one hand and had

Courtesy of Bea "Billie" Murphy Tindol
Audie Murphy, France - 1945

his rifle in the other hand. You know. He didn't know what to do. "Drop the piece!" And he dropped that rifle. And I got that and Murphy let me send it home. Brand new. And never had fired anything except wooden bullets. He had a clip of wooden bullets in it. I think I've still got that clip. They were using `em in training. We caught `em by surprise, you know. And they didn't even have time to put regular ammunition in their guns. But I sent that rifle home and a gunsmith made a deer rifle out of it...put a scope on it and all... and cut it down and made it lighter. But I never have fired it. I never really did like to go deer hunting since the war.

I remember that Murphy was there when we captured that barracks. He stayed right with us. One time the Old Man says, "Murphy take Company B..." And that was the one bad thing about being in Company B: They knew Murphy could get it done. It was, "Murphy, you take your boys and go over there and capture the Siegfried Line," you know. And so Murphy says, "Private Owen get your bazooka and let's go up there and hammer on that Siegfried Line." They couldn't get tanks in because of these big old dragon's teeth. And these bunkers were four stories down in the ground. And on the top story, it had 88 artillery in there on a turret that could swing around 360 degrees. You know the French built the Maginot Line where they couldn't swing the gun back. And then they had about three series of zigzag trenches out in front. And so we had to fight our way through those zigzag trenches to get up to that first bunker. And we got up there and there are steps leading down to the bunker. The main entrance to the bunker was around behind and down to the second level. And it had a big iron door on it. Murphy says, "Private Owen, shoot that door with that bazooka." So, I get up there in that hallway and shoot down at the head of the stairs. And there's a big old concussion, you know. And that smoke. And it blows me back. And Murphy picks me up and says, "Shoot it again. They're still in there!" (laughs) And it just makes a little bright spot on that door. That door must have been tool steel or something. Shot it twice. And then all of a sudden, they start banging on the door. "Comrade, Comrade!!!" They wanted to give up. And so they opened the door. They thought we were using gas. The old bazooka was making so much smoke, they thought we were gassing them. And they got scared and gave up. And we said, "Murphy, what do you want to do with these prisoners?" He says, "Hell, send `em out there where we come from. Run `em off." One of `em picks up a rifle that was laying there and blows his brains out. And Murphy says, "Who shot that son-of-a-bitch?" right here on the steps. Oh Lord! And we got inside that thing and about every 45 seconds they'd shoot it with another 88. You know they had bunkers on each side. We had the privilege of having the only one under American control. And they started shooting at us in intervals trying to knock out their own bunker.

So were you shooting back?

No, man. We were down inside that thing and had that iron door shut. Murphy sent a detail up there. He might have went with it, but anyway they went up there and checked that 88 and found it wasn't practical to stay up there and take the shelling. That thing was being shelled about every 45 seconds or a minute. So that was a hot spot to be. Of course, it could already have been disabled by the Germans.

And what was hard on Murphy that time... we had some of our wounded guys. We pulled `em in there for safety. And we couldn't get `em out. You know we couldn't get out. They just kept firing, using that thing over two days. And we were clear down to the bottom...the

all the way. So my job was to guard these iron doors with another guy.

Was it dark? Was there electricity?

Candles. And they had some of these carbide lights. And we put some of those to work. We were about to suffocate. The thing had some kind of electric exhaust system. And four stories down, you can't get any air. So the only air we'd get...there was an old blacksmith blower in the corner. And we had to take turns running that blacksmith blower. It would bring in fresh air and blow out the stale air. Two days.

Did you hook it up to a vent or what?

Evidently it was hooked up to a vent. All you had to do was turn it. That was an emergency thing for when their power went off, see. So, we took advantage of that.

I was guarding these doors down below and all of a sudden my feet got wet. I looked around and water was flooding under those doors. They were going to flood us out. So we kept coming up the steps, you know. It filled the ground floor and then started on the next floor up. Started in the next floor and somebody hollered, "Gas, gas, gas!!!" I took a sniff of it and it was acetylene gas. That's what they used in these little lamps. Acetylene gas lights like miners use. I was raised in a blacksmith shop, in a welding shop. I smelled that odor and right way I said, "There must be a sack of carbide up there." The water ran in the pantry and started wetting this sack of supply carbide and making acetylene gas. And so we go up and grab that carbide and take it upstairs and open that door for the first time and throw it out up on top.

If they'd have smoked you out, you would have been sitting ducks going up the stairs.

Ohhhhh yes. And the water took the second floor and it was getting pretty close to the third when Patton broke that line in a different place. Coming around to get an end tackle. And all of a sudden it was just a desolate vacated battlefield. Nothing. Nobody at all. A few old crazy people running around...shell-shocked Germans and things like that.

How was Murphy with the wounded? Did some of them die while you were in there?

Yeah. One of `em, at least, died. And the other guy, we tried to...we had our medic in there...and he would shoot `em with morphine and doctor `em, but one of `em died. That was hard for Murphy to take.

Did he kind of hang around with them a little bit?

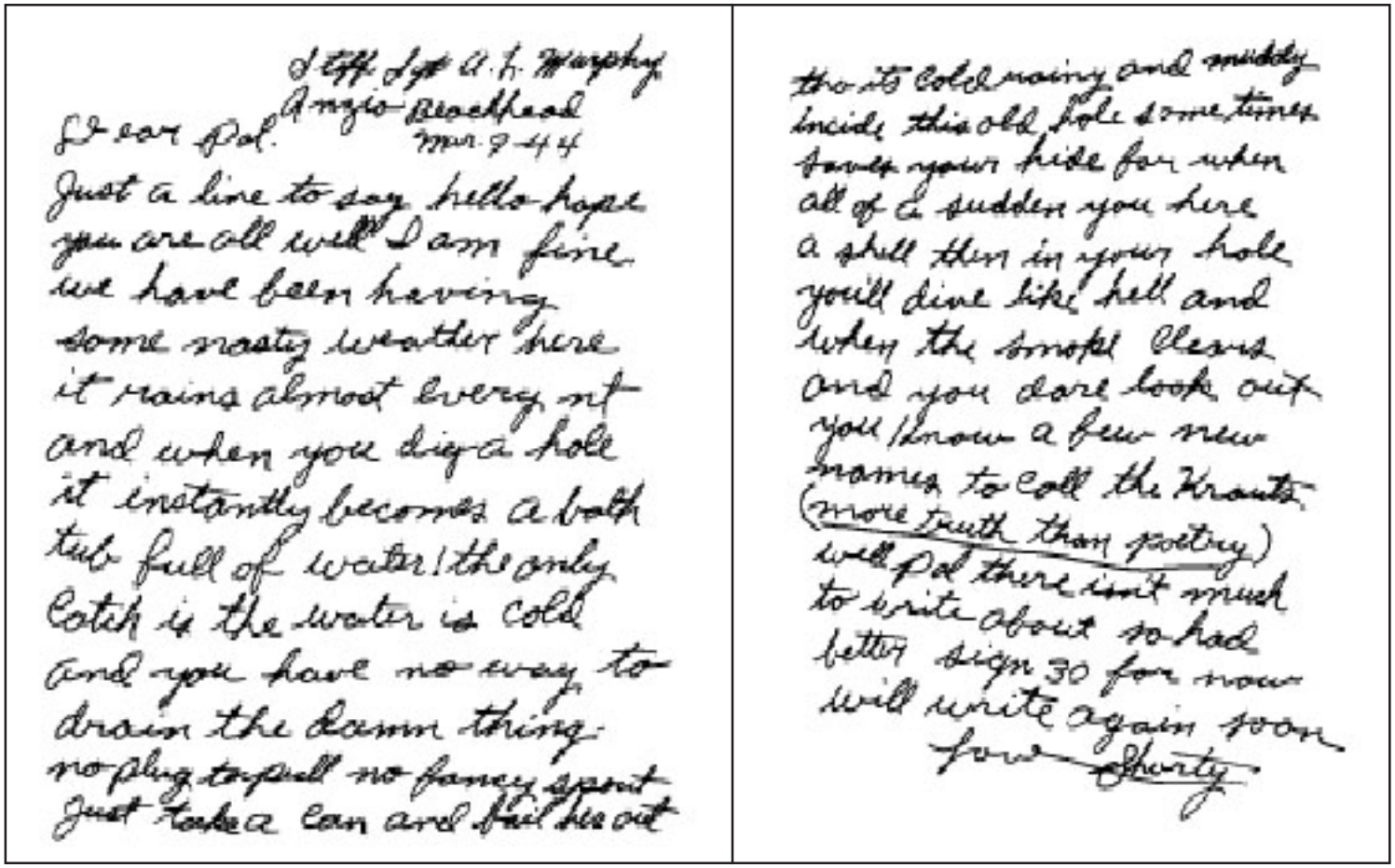
Yeah. He would talk to `em. Very compassionate guy. But, I don't know. I never heard of that event anywhere else in the Third Division history anywhere. We captured one of the first bunkers in that whole area of that Siegfried Line. Murphy and his boys. We'd get orders like "Murphy, take your boys and go liberate 'I' Company."

Sombody'd get pinned down and they'd send you out?

Yeah. The old battalion commander and the regimental commander thought Murphy could do anything.

So tell me, did you boys think he could do anything, too?

(Laughs) Pretty much. You got Murphy? Don't take us in there.



Sgt. Sgt A. L. Murphy
Anzio Beachhead
Mar. 9 44

Dear Pal.

Just a line to say hello hope you are all well I am fine we have been having some nasty weather here it rains almost every nt and when you dig a hole it instantly becomes a bath tub full of water! the only Catch is the water is cold and you have no way to drain the damn thing no plug to pull no fancy spout just take a can and bail her out tho its cold rainy and muddy inside this old hole sometimes I wish I had your hide for when all of a sudden you here a shell then in your hole you'll dive like hell and when the smoke clears and you dare look out you know a few new names to call the Krauts (more truth than poetry) well Pal there isn't much to write about so had better sign 30 for now will write again soon

Love Shorty

Courtesy of Nelda Patton Slaughter

One of many letters Audie Murphy wrote to his friend Beatrice "Pete" Springfield.

HOW AUDIE MURPHY WON HIS MEDALS

By David "Spec" McClure

Spec McClure passed away in 1986, but he left behind this fine tribute to his close friend which will be reproduced in its entirety over the next several issues.

"How Audie Murphy Won His Medals" was started in 1969; but the rough draft was not completed until 1971. I gave Audie this rough draft for corrections in April, 1971. He brought it back to me in May, 1971 - the last time I saw him. I presume he went over it. The article is perhaps the most accurate thing ever written about Murphy and his medals. I got the material from 24 years of talking to Audie and friends who knew him in combat.

Spec McClure
1971

Courtesy of Stan Smith

Audie Murphy and Spec McClure revisit the battlefield at Ramatuelle, France - 1948.

PART I

On the morning of December 7, 1941, Audie Murphy was walking along a muddy country road near Greenville, Texas. He was sixteen years old and had never been more than a hundred miles from his birth-place -- a farm near Kingston, Texas. A rural mailman happened by and told him that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Audie had no notion of where Pearl Harbor was; nor did he immediately grasp the significance of the Japanese attack. But nurtured on stories of World War I, he had since childhood wanted to become a soldier.

As America began a frenzied mobilization for World War II, Murphy became frantic. He thought the war might be over before he would have a chance to take part in it. The country doctor who had delivered most of the nine Murphy children kept few records. He then induced his eldest sister, Corrine, to corroborate his birth date.

On his "eighteenth" birthday, June 20, 1942, the youth tried to join both the Paratroopers and the Marines. "I was looking for trouble in those days," he says. "I was too naive to know that trouble had a way of looking me up." Both the Marines and Paratroopers turned him down because, at 112 pounds, he was underweight. On the advice of a sergeant who was recruiting for the Army, Audie loaded up with bananas and milk before weighing in for the Infantry. This time he made the grade. "And so," he later wrote, "with my head full of dreams, my pockets full of holes, and an ignorance beyond my years, I went off to war."

He was sent to Camp Wolters, Texas, for basic training. Here he fainted during an early session of close-order drill and acquired the nickname of "Baby" because of his small stature. Before he emerged from the Army he would have put on 26 pounds and grown four inches in height. But his commanding officer, seeing only the extremely youthful appearance, tried to send Murphy to a cook and bakers school to keep him out of combat. Audie swore that he would take the guardhouse first. The commanding officer allowed him to continue training as a rifleman.

Murphy soon distinguished himself by showing an extraordinary facility with all types of firearms. He also exhibited fantastic reflexes and an ability to make instant decisions. The older men soon learned to respect him for his skill in cleaning them out in poker games. "The first time I saw Audie," says and ex-soldier, "he was raking in a pile of money. He looked like a kid. But he had just broken a tent-full of men at poker." His luck, as well as his ability to bluff, was fabulous. Both factors paid off in combat.

At Fort Meade, Maryland, Murphy worked in the post exchange while awaiting shipment overseas. He again startled the older men with an ability to get girls in a spot where the odds were about a thousand to one against him. At Fort Meade, Audie was offered a permanent position with the cadre. His commanding officers, still trying to spare him combat, urged him to take it. Murphy instantly declined the opportunity to spend the war safely in America. On the ship taking him to North Africa, he was made an acting sergeant; but he spent most of the voyage suffering from seasickness. Landing at Casablanca in February, 1943, he was marched with a group of replacements to Port Lyautey. With the rank of private, he was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment of the famed 3rd Infantry Division. He was to remain with Company B through most of his combat days. The war in Africa was in the mopping-up phase when Murphy arrived. He saw no battle action until the D-Day landing in Sicily on July 10, 1943. Murphy came ashore before dawn; and his heart sank. In his immediate section, bodies were strewn all over the beach. "I thought that some outfit had been massacred," he says. "But the men were only taking a break before moving inland." Audie ended his first day of combat with a stomachache. He had eaten too many green melons and tomatoes found in the fields of Sicily.

Still trying to spare him frontline combat, the commanding officer of Company B, Captain Paul Harris, made Murphy a runner. But he slipped off on so many patrols that the captain finally gave up. He promoted Audie to corporal and sent him to the front lines. He was to stay in the thick of the fighting for almost two years. In Sicily he learned the realities of war; also of mosquitoes. He was knocked out by an attack of malaria.

David "Spec" McClure, 1971

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COMPANY "B" 15th INFANTRY
A.P.O. #3 U.S. ARMY

COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE RENDERED

I am AUDIE L. MURPHY, 0-1692509, Infantry, First Lieutenant, Commanding Officer, Company "B", 15th Infantry. At the time of the following action, I was a Staff Sergeant, Company "B", in which capacity I was present and an eyewitness:

At approximately 1300 hours on 24 May 1944, the second day of the offensive which broke from the ANZIO BEACHHEAD to ROME, Company "B", 15th Infantry was in the attack to cut the railroad near CISTERNA DI LITTORIA, ITALY, and capture commanding terrain on the far side.

The First Platoon crossed the railroad bed without encountering enemy fire. It appeared that the Germans had fled. As the lead scouts of the Second Platoon were about to follow across the railroad tracks, a hail of enemy machine gun, machine pistol and rifle fire burst on them without warning from a KRAUT strongpoint about 200 yards to our right front. The German plan was evident: to bar the advance of the Second Platoon; to isolate, seal off and destroy the First Platoon, which had already crossed the railroad.

Sergeant SYLVESTER ANTELOK, 35035020, a Squad Leader of the Second Platoon, saw through the enemy's attempted strategem and decided to attack the strongpoint immediately. Ordering a base of fire set up, Sergeant ANTELOK called on his men to follow him and charged the German position. He was fully 30 yards ahead of his squad. As he moved forward in short rushes across bare, flat, coverless terrain, Sergeant ANTELOK became the primary target of the enemy's concentrated fire.

After advancing a few dozen yards, he was hit by automatic weapons fire and knocked to the ground. I saw Sergeant ANTELOK jump to his feet and make another short rush through the enemy fire. His shoulder gashed and bleeding, Sergeant ANTELOK kept on going and the rest of the men followed. He was hit and knocked off his feet a second time, but again he picked himself up and resumed the assault. The 200 yard interval was narrowing; the Germans were firing their machine gun, their "spit" pistols and rifles about as fas as they could squeeze their triggers. They must have sensed that Sergeant ANTELOK was sparking the charge and that he was the man they had to knock out.

When he was only 50 yards from the KRAUT strongpoint, Sergeant ANTELOK got hit a third time. The machine pistol bullets spun him around and knocked him to the ground. When he staggered to his feet, I saw that his right arm had been mangled by the enemy fire and was dangling useless.

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Statement of 1st Lt Murphy, page 2.

Sergeant ANTELOK wedged his Thompson sub-machine gun into his left armpit and continued his implacable advance. The Germans must have seen that this man couldn't be stopped.

Fifteen yards from the KRAUT foxholes, Sergeant ANTELOK opened fire. From a standing position, he shot down into the machine gun emplacement, killing both the gunner and his assistant with a long burst of fire. Before the rest of the squad could catch up with Sergeant ANTELOK, ten KRAUTS had surrendered to him.

The strongpoint was completely wiped out, but instantly a new threat developed. Eight German riflemen, about 100 yards further to the right opened fire. Although he was critically wounded, with his shoulder gashed open and his right arm shattered, Sergeant ANTELOK refused to stop for medical attention.

Again he led his men in an assault on the enemy. He charged 60 yards forward into concentrated German rifle fire. The KRAUTS had their sights trained on him. Their rifle bullets hit him in the body, wounding him mortally. He staggered grimly forward for another ten yards, then fell dead 30 yards short of his objective. His men rushed forward pas him to overwhelm the German position, capturing eight Germans and wiping out the last remaining pocket of resistance in the sector.

/----Original Signed----/

AUDIE L. MURPHY
1st Lt., 15th Infantry
Commanding

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Courtesy of National Military Personnel Records

Audie Murphy frequently said, "The real heroes never came home." Staff Sergeant Antelok was one who didn't. Audie Murphy provided this eyewitness account for the posthumous presentation of the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant Sylvester Antelok.

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