

AUDIE MURPHY'S OLDEST SON MAKES FIRST GREENVILLE VISIT

*By Matt Shrum, Editor
Printed by Greenville Herald Banner*

The first time visitor to the Audie Murphy Room at the Greenville's Walworth Harrison Library was obviously moved by what he saw as he entered the area. And as Terry Murphy, oldest son of World War II's most decorated hero, reminisced about the different photographs, he would stop and answer questions from a group of area residents about himself and his famous father who was born in Kingston.

At one point he stopped to sign a petition asking the U.S. Postal Service to honor his father with a stamp. He took a closer look at the medals encased in the center of the room.

Other times, the West Hills, Calif., resident would stop on his own to react to a photograph. "This is me - me again," Murphy, 44, said. Can you remember the name of the dog, he was asked as he paused at a picture with himself and his father and a dog. "The dog was named Eric ... I am wearing custom cowboy clothes ... this was at a ranch in California. We had 800 acres there ... That was at a corral where dad trained his horses. Les Hilton was one of the trainers. He was the guy who trained Mr. Ed. "We would go there and do some riding," Murphy said pointing to a photograph of himself and his father. "I have some other photos from that day with me riding and my hat falling off ... that was quite a day," Murphy added.

Another photo Murphy stopped at

showed Audie and his two sons, Terry and James, at a birthday party. Terry was asked whose birthday it was. "My birthday is on March 14 and my brother's is March 23. It looks like that is for both of us," Murphy said.

Murphy was making his first visit ever to Greenville and his first visit to Texas in 23 years. He is the president of the Audie Murphy Research Foundation and is in Texas doing research along with Larryann C. Willis, secretary/treasurer of the foundation.

Audie L. Murphy, son of a Texas sharecropper, was born in Kingston, just north of Greenville, and enlisted in the U.S. Army at the old Greenville Post Office.

After returning from the war, Audie went on to star in movies, including "To Hell and Back," which is based on his life story and to write country music. He died in a plane crash on Memorial Day in 1971 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va.

The Audie Murphy Research Foundation is a non-profit, public benefit corporation established for the purpose of collecting, preserving and making available to the public historical information concerning Audie Murphy. The foundation is attempting to locate and interview people who knew Audie along with copying photographs, letters, home movies, news reel clips, radio

shows and other documents or memorabilia.

Prior to making his first visit to Greenville, Terry had stopped in Dallas to talk with a few old friends of his father. Willis said there were so many people in the Greenville area that they could not stop and meet with all of them one at a time.

"There are so many people who were important to Audie in Greenville that we were not able to get to everyone's house," Willis said. Instead, there was a request for individuals who knew Audie and wanted to talk to representatives of the foundation to meet at the Greenville library. Even though there was no announcement that Audie's oldest son would be making the trip the turnout was much bigger than anticipated, Willis said.

The loss or destruction of a great deal of material relating to Audie Murphy has added significance to the work of the foundation. "Universal Pictures has given the foundation blanket approval to copy and reproduce any movie stills anywhere," Willis said. "Universal Studios unfortunately destroyed all of their negatives and there are only about 50 pictures of Audie left out of 2,000 to 3,000 they had."

Other privately-held material has been destroyed in fires, floods and an earthquake. "We have been making copies of everything we can and then storing the copies in more than one place. The (Greenville) library is one of those places. We also are working with the Texas Collection in Waco, the Hillsboro Library and the Cowboy Hall of Fame has called and wants to help. We do have several locations that are going to

be there forever," Willis said.

She noted the latest technology makes it easy to make copies of pictures without a negative. "It is very easy now to make a copy. Also, don't assume we have anything. The only way for us to find some of this information is through networking so we are asking for your help," Willis said.

His work in the foundation already has had a side bonus for Terry Murphy who noted the recent resurgence in interest about his father. "My brother lives about 40 miles away but we had gotten out of touch. This has gotten us back together," Murphy said. "It's nice to have a brother again."

The address of the Audie Murphy Research Foundation is 18008 Saratoga Way, Suite 516; Santa Clarita, Ca. 91351. The phone number is (805) 252-0780 and fax number is (805) 251-8432. The e-mail address is audiemurphy@altair.net.