

## Major Audie Murphy, U.S. Army

**Second Lieutenant Audie Murphy** received his Medal of Honor citation for World War II in 1945: "Second Lt. Murphy commanded Company B, which was attacked by six tanks and waves of infantry. Second Lt. Murphy ordered his men to withdraw to prepared positions in a woods, while he remained forward at his command post and continued to give fire directions to the artillery by telephone. Behind him, to his right, one of our tank destroyers received a direct hit and began to burn. Its crew withdrew to the woods. Second Lt. Murphy continued to direct artillery fire which killed large numbers of the advancing enemy infantry. With the enemy tanks abreast of his position, 2d Lt. Murphy climbed on the burning tank destroyer, which was in danger of blowing up at any moment, and employed its .50-caliber machine gun against the enemy. He was alone and exposed to German fire from three sides, but his deadly fire killed dozens of Germans and caused their infantry attack to waver. The enemy tanks, losing infantry support, began to fall back. For an hour the Germans tried every available weapon to eliminate 2d Lt. Murphy, but he continued to hold his position and wiped out a squad which was trying to creep up unnoticed on his right flank. Germans reached as close as 10 yards, only to be mowed down by his fire. He received a leg wound, but ignored it and continued the singlehanded fight until his ammunition was exhausted. He then made his way to his company, refused medical attention, and organized the company in a counterattack which forced the Germans to withdraw. His directing of artillery fire wiped out many of the enemy; he killed or wounded about 50. Second Lt. Murphy's indomitable courage and his refusal to give an inch of ground saved his company from possible encirclement and destruction, and enabled it to hold the woods which had been the enemy's objective."

**Biography:** Murphy was born on 20 June 1925 in Hunt County, Texas. His father abandoned them, and his mother died when he was a teenager. Murphy left school in fifth grade to pick cotton and find other work to help support his family; his skill with a hunting rifle was a necessity for putting food on the table.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Murphy's older sister helped falsify documentation about his birthdate to meet the minimum-age requirement for enlisting. Turned down by the Navy and the Marine Corps, he enlisted in the Army. He first saw action in the Allied invasion of Sicily and the Battle of Anzio, and in 1944 participated in the liberation of Rome and invasion of southern France. Murphy fought at Montélimar, and led his men on a successful assault at the L'Omet quarry near Cleurie in northeastern France in October. Audie Murphy became most decorated U.S. soldier of World War II. He returned home a hero and became an actor, starring in his own story, "To Hell and Back." Over the course of World War II, Murphy witnessed the deaths of hundreds of fellow and enemy soldiers.

**Later Years:** In June 1945, Murphy returned home from Europe a hero and was greeted with parades and elaborate banquets. *LIFE* magazine honored the brave, baby-faced soldier by putting him on the cover of its July 16, 1945 issue. That photograph inspired actor James Cagney to call Murphy and invite him to Hollywood to begin an acting career. Despite his celebrity, however, Murphy struggled to gain recognition. In 1949, Murphy published his autobiography, *To Hell and Back*. The book quickly became a national bestseller, and in 1955, after much inner debate, he decided to portray himself in the film version of his book. The movie was a hit and held Universal Studio's record as its highest-grossing motion

picture until 1975. Murphy would go on to make 44 feature films in all. In addition to acting, he became a successful country music songwriter, and many of his songs were recorded by well-known artists, including Dean Martin, Jerry Wallace, and Harry Nilsson.

During his rise to fame, Murphy met and married 21-year old actress Wanda Hendrix in 1949. Their marriage appeared rocky from the start, and they announced their plans to divorce in 1950. In 1951, he married Pamela Archer, with whom he had two children. Plagued by insomnia and nightmares, later known as post-traumatic stress disorder, Murphy suffered from a powerful addiction to sleeping pills.

In his later years, Audie Murphy squandered his fortune on gambling and bad investments, and was in financial ruin when he died in a plane crash on 28 May 1971. Murphy was buried at Arlington National Cemetery on 7 June 1971, and was given full military honors.

**Military Awards:** Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star (2 with V device), Purple Heart, Army Good Conduct Medal, Distinguished Unit Citation (2), American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal (9 campaigns, arrowhead device), World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal with Germany clasp, French Legion of Honour (grade of Chevalier), French Croix de Guerre with silver star, French Croix de Guerre with palm (3), Belgian Croix de Guerre with palm, French fouragere in colors of the Croix de Guerre, Combat Infantryman Badge, Marksman Badge with Rifle Component Bar, Expert Badge with Bayonet Component Bar, Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, Texas Legislative Medal of Honor

**Masonic History:** Audie Murphy was initiated on 14 February 1955, passed on 4 April 1955, and raised on 27 Jun 1955, all in North Hollywood, CA Lodge No. 5421 F & AM. He became a dual member of Heritage Lodge No. 764 in North Hollywood, CA in 1956.

He returned to Texas to conduct his Scottish Rite 32° work in Dallas, TX, on 11-14 November 1957 and was elected vice president of the Thomas B. Hunter Memorial Class. Brother Murphy became a Shriner in Hella Temple in Dallas, TX on 15 November 1957. Brother Murphy remained active in various Masonic events and was a member of good standing at the time of his death. Brother Murphy was decorated a Knight Commander of the Court of Honor on 11 December 1965. Brother Murphy affiliated with the Long Beach Scottish Rite on 2 April 1971. On 19 March 1971, Shriner Murphy affiliated with the Al Malaikah Temple in Los Angeles.

Mrs. Murphy received Audie's Honorary 33rd Degree Cap shortly after his death. The Long Beach Scottish Rite honored him by naming the 111th Scottish Rite Class the "Audie Murphy Memorial Class." The class, which graduated on 19 November 1971, had 124 members. One of the "graduation day" highlights was a special showing of the film "To Hell and Back." The film took the place of the 31° and gave the candidates a better understanding of the character and background of this distinguished Mason.

In 2000, during the November Ladies Night Dinner of the Valley of Long Beach, Audie Murphy was recognized when local Scottish Rite members presented to his widow, Mrs. Pamela Murphy, a 33° cap in honor of the posthumous election of her husband to that degree at an earlier Biennial Session of the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite.