Audie Leon Murphy died in a plane crash on May 28, 1971 in Craig County, Virginia. It would have been his mother’s 80th birthday.

On May 23, 1941, Josie Bell Killian died in a small house on Neathery Street in Farmersville, Texas. The street was named for a very prominent family – the Neatherys.

The Neathery family of Farmersville, Texas gave us doctors, lawyers, merchants, and – dare I mention – politicians. Harriett, or simply “Miss Hattie”, was a daughter of Dr. Allen Hill Neathery and she was equally prominent in social work and various charities. Even being the pillar of philanthropy that she was, she was always known as “Miss Hattie.”

In the July 16th, 1945 Life Magazine spread featuring Audie Murphy, there appears a picture of Audie and Miss Hattie sitting on her front porch having a “chat”. According to the caption, we learn that Audie delivered newspapers to Miss Hattie.

Is there more here than simply a friendly visit?

Now the rest of the story.

Miss Hattie Neathery had family not only in Texas but in Louisiana where she had second cousins. (This is not a bad affliction – we all have them.)

1 The third observation of three presented by the author in a speech during the summer 2016 Audie Murphy Days at the Audie Murphy/American Cotton Museum in Greenville, Texas.

For more information visit the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Website at [www.audiemurphy.com](http://www.audiemurphy.com)
One of her second cousins was Mary Susan “Mollie” Neathery. Mary Susan, a daughter of Tillman S. Neathery (see figure 2), would marry William Fletcher Lambert, December 1896, in Catahoula Parish, Louisiana and from that marriage would be born six children. One of their daughters was Eula Thelma Lambert (see figure 3).

Several years later, Eula married Marcus Brown Butler, December 24, in Caldwell Parish, Louisiana and she too had a family. There were at least four children, two daughters, and two sons. One son was named Herman. Herman’s middle name was Lavelle. Herman’s last name was Butler (see figure 4).

You see, Miss Hattie’s - Hattie Neathery’s second cousin twice removed – was Herman Lavelle Butler, the pilot of the airplane in which Audie Murphy was killed on May 28, 1971 (figure 5 and 6).

It is a small world after all.

Figure 2: 1880 Federal Census and Neathery family details. Tillman Neathery (line 26) was the first cousin Dr. William Allen Neathery. Dr. Neathery’s daughter, Miss Hattie’s Neathery, was first cousin to Susan Neathery (line 35). Susan would later marry William Fletcher Lambert in Louisiana. Susan’s daughter, Eula Thelma Lambert, would later marry and have a son named Herman Lavell Butler.

Source: National Archives and Records Administration

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Figure 3: 1910 Federal Census and Lambert family details. William Fletcher Lambert (line 72) was married to Mary Susan “Mollie” Neathery (line 73). Dr. Neathery’s daughter, Miss Hattie’s Neathery, was first cousin to Susan Neathery (line 35). Susan’s daughter, Uula (sic), or Eula Thelma Lambert (line 78), would later marry and have a son named Herman Lavell Butler.

Source: National Archives and Records Administration

Figure 4: Obituary of Eula Butler. This article establishes that Eula Lambert was married to Marcus Brown Butler and their children’s names.


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Figure 5: Death Certificate. The death certificate of Herman Lavelle Butler which includes lineage and family details.

Source: Department of Health – Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics, Commonwealth of Virginia

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Figure 6: Grave of Herman Lavelle Butler. Herman Butler was the pilot of the twin-engine Aero Commander 680E, N601JJ that crashed on Brush Mountain, Virginia on May 28, 1971 taking the lives of all six people on board including Audie Leon Murphy. In a strange twist of fate, Butler was also related to Miss Hattie Neathery, Farmersville, Texas resident who was photographed 26 years earlier with Audie Murphy in the Life Magazine article, July 16, 1945.

Photo Source: Karen Klemm Pinckard, www.findagrave.com
Plane Accident details: www.thisdayinaviation.com/tag/heman-lavelle-butler/

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