

When There is More to a Picture Than What Is Seen

By Mike West

Comments? Comments are welcome. Just use the link below to our message board.
<https://www.audiemurphy.com/msgb/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=4761>

By Mike West
Hunter/Gatherer

I HAVE ALWAYS been fascinated by old pictures. Quite often when a photo is published or found in an album there is a printed caption or

maybe a sentence or two scribbled on the back which helps provide context. Even if this is so, the words of the description sometimes leave you

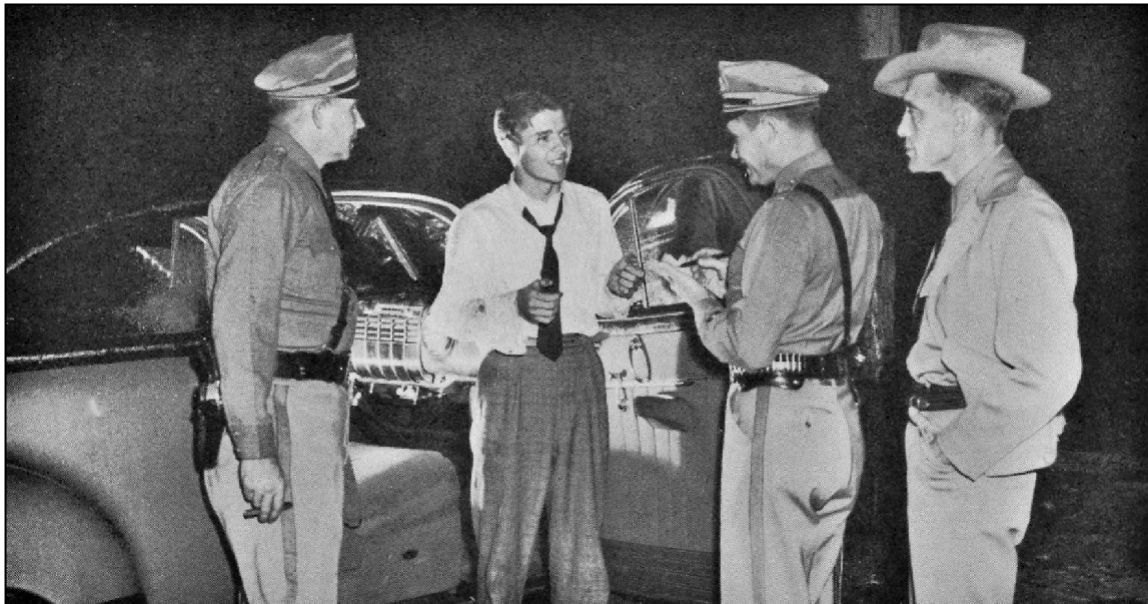


Figure 1. On December 11, 1946, Audie Murphy gives a report to Texas State Highway Patrolman Everett Brandon, while officers S.H. Denison (left) and N.K. Dixon (right) listen. Audie's clothes are spotted with blood after he finally knocked out a 190 pound, 6'2" tall would-be-car-thief in a ten-minute brawl. A much smaller Audie only weighed about 130 pounds. The photo was originally published by The Dallas Morning News and appears in Colonel Harold Simpson's *Audie Murphy, American Soldier*, pg. 328.

wondering: "Is there more to be learned? What am I missing? What am I not seeing?"

Such a picture appears at the top of page 328 in Colonel Harold Simpson's, "Audie Murphy, American Soldier."¹

To the student of Audie L. Murphy, the picture is quite familiar. This snapshot

in time captures the aftermath of a fight between Murphy and a hitchhiker just south of the Collin-Dallas County line (see figure 1).

While on an extended Thanksgiving-Christmas visit with family in 1946, Audie was returning to Farmersville from Dallas on a cold, rainy afternoon of Wednesday, December 11, 1946. He

SCORES KNOCKOUT IN 10 MINUTES

Audie Murphy, Bemedaled Soldier, Wins Another Battle, Whips 6-Footer

DALLAS, Dec. 11 (AP).—Audie Murphy, who was World War II's most decorated soldier, won another battle single-handed Wednesday afternoon when he subdued a 6-foot, 2-inch, 190-pounder who apparently attempted to steal his automobile.

The freckled kid from Farmersville said he knocked out the 25-year-old man in a rural filling station near here after a furious 10-minute battle.

Murphy weighs 130 pounds and stands five feet, seven inches tall. State Highway Patrolmen Everett Brandon and F. H. Jensen said they arrested the man and lodged him in the McKinney jail. No complaint was filed immediately.

The 20-year-old Texas hero who won the Congressional Medal of Honor and every other U. S. combat medal given in World War II, related he was driving alone when

he saw a large man limping along the highway.

"It was raining like the devil and I thought I would do the fellow a favor," Audie related. "I picked him up and we drove about a mile.

"Suddenly this guy jammed something into my ribs, slapped me across the mouth and said:

"I'm the boss now. If you won't talk, this 45 will. I can use this car."

"I admitted that he was pretty much the boss at that point and we drove about four more miles. He told me to pull into a roadside gasoline station and stop. I did and he took the keys and instructed me to slide along the seat and get out on his side of the car."

Audie said the man's left hand, hidden under an old Army blouse, was still jammed into his ribs when he decided to make a fight for it. He grabbed the man's hand, discovered he had no gun after all, struck him a blow that tumbled him from the car and onto the filling station drive.

Murphy jumped squarely on the erstwhile tough guy and started swinging.

"We fought all over the place for about 10 minutes," Audie said. "He was a pretty big fellow, all right. I finally got him, though."

J. M. Peters, owner of the gasoline station, ran into the drive and ordered both men off the premises before he knew the background, Brandon added.

Audie rushed to another gasoline station a mile north to telephone the state police and upon his return found that his attacker had recovered and gone to the home of Mrs. Park Grissom, a few hundred yards distant.

The man was scuffling with Mrs. Grissom and demanding fresh clothing to replace his bloody and torn garments when Murphy and the patrolmen overpowered him again.



Check Itching
First Application

Agonizing itching or ugly Eczema, Rash, Itch, Ringworm, Pimples, Scabies, Toe Itch is checked in ONE APPLICATION of BLUE STAR OINTMENT. Repeat as needed as nature helps heal. Money back if FIRST jar fails to satisfy. Try it today.

Figure 2: A published account of Audie's ten-minute fight with a would-be car hijacker.
Source: Associated Press and Fort Worth Star Telegram, December 12, 1946.

¹ *Audie Murphy, American Soldier*, by Harold B. Simpson, 1975, pp. 315–316. Editor's note: Simpson miscaptioned the date as 12/10/1946 when in fact the fight occurred on 12/11/1946.

offered a ride to a man wearing an old army jacket as he walked beside U.S. Highway 75 near Vickery, Texas (see figure 2). The picture appears to have been taken after dark even though the altercation took place between 2:00 and 2:30 in the afternoon of December 11². The caption gives a brief synopsis of what happened. Simpson also gives additional information concerning the identification of those pictured. Beyond this, we know little.

Clearly in the center of the picture is Audie Murphy – but what of the other three men. Is there more to these men than simply their names and that they are officers? The answer is “yes” and it is more interesting than you might imagine.

Simpson identifies them as State Highway Patrolman Everett Brandon who is taking Murphy’s statement concerning the incident from earlier in the afternoon. The other officers are identified as S.H. Denison on the left and N.K. Dixon on the right (figure 1). Here, the old adage, “A picture is worth a thousand words” comes up a little short. In my opinion, this picture sure could use a liberal infusion of some of

those words. Let me see if I can supply them.

Let us start with the brief description given by Simpson by going first to Everett Brandon. Patrolman Brandon was in fact Department of Public Safety (DPS) officer Everett Nelson Brandon, Lamar County, Texas native. Prior to serving as a DPS officer, Brandon had served in a coastal artillery unit posted in the Panama Canal Zone in the early 1930s³. He had been a DPS officer many years before he met Murphy in June 1945. The first meeting came about as the result of Brandon having been assigned to escort Murphy to Greenville, Texas on June 27, 1945 to attend that city’s celebration of Audie’s homecoming⁴.

Instead of riding in the car provided by the city of Greenville, Audie jumped into the front seat of Brandon’s patrol car. It was during this ride that a lifelong friendship developed between Brandon and Murphy. Over the next 26 years, Murphy would visit the Brandons many times and they him. In fact, Audie was to visit the Brandons in Sherman, Texas on his return from his ill-fated trip to Virginia in May 1971⁵.

² There are 3 known sources referencing the fight having occurred in the afternoon:

- (1) Courier Gazette (McKinney, Texas), December 12, 1946
- (2) The Galveston News (Galveston, Texas), December 17, 1946
- (3) Tyler Morning Telegraph (Tyler, Texas), December 17, 1946

³ Fifteenth U.S. Census, 1930, Population: Panama Canal Zone, Enumeration District No. 46, Sheet 6A, line 37, dated April 12, 1930 (see Figure at the end of this article).

⁴ *Audie Murphy, American Soldier*, by Harold B. Simpson, 1975, pp. 226

⁵ *Audie Murphy, American Soldier*, by Harold B. Simpson, 1975, pp. 226 (bottom)

There is another story found here in this friendship. The story has its origin in Audie's wartime experiences as told in his autobiography, "To Hell and Back". I suspect many people have never heard of Private Lattie Tipton. Tipton, a Tennessean, was Murphy's closest friend in the 3rd platoon, Company B. On August 15, 1944, during the invasion of southern France, Tipton was killed during an effort by Murphy and Tipton to attack a hill not far from the invasion beaches. Those familiar with the story know that Private Tipton was killed when he sought to take prisoners Germans who were only pretending to give up. As a result of Tipton's deceitful death, Audie would attack remaining German positions single handedly using a captured German machine gun. For this heroic action, he would be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor.

True, many people may have never heard of Lattie Tipton but when reading, "To Hell and Back", they will learn the name Brandon. For you see, DPS Patrolman Everett Nelson Brandon became the namesake for Private Lattie Tipton.

As Simpson reveals, the officer on the left is S.H. Denison. He is in fact DPS Patrolman, Selwyn Hogan Denson. During the great Depression, Denson tried his hand at many jobs but started his career in 1937 in the DPS. With the outbreak of World War II, he resigned to serve in the Navy for the duration of the war. At the end of the war, Denson resumed his service as a Texas Highway Patrolman and was assigned to the Collin County, Texas area ⁶.

Officer Denson would continue to serve until 1947 when he became a Texas Ranger. He would conclude his service as a ranger in 1974 after a distinguished career. Having been in the Navy, it is interesting to note that Denson would carry a card with him that read, "Selwyn Denson, Admiral, Texas Navy." The card bearing the title "Admiral" was issued by Texas Governor, Bill Clements ⁷.

As a side note, Denson's younger brother, Corporal Harold Denson, was killed in action during a bombing raid over the Japanese held island of Kishka, Alaska early in the war in 1942 ⁸.

Finally, it is time to discuss the officer on the right who is perhaps the most intriguing. At first glance, he might be mistaken for a local constable showing

⁶ Nieman, Robert. "20th Century Shining Star: Selwyn Denson 'Admiral of the Texas Navy.'" (<https://www.texasranger.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BIO-Selwyn-Denson.pdf>)

⁷ Nieman, Robert. "20th Century Shining Star: Selwyn Denson 'Admiral of the Texas Navy.'" ⁸

⁸ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/3653918/harold-denson>

Norman Kemp Dixon

Norman Kemp Dixon, 84, of Austin died Wednesday, September 2, 1992.

Mr. Dixon was with the Texas Department of Public Safety for 35 years serving as a Texas Ranger and chief of the Internal Security Division.

Graveside services will be held at 11:00 AM Friday at Cook-Walden/Capital Parks Cemetery.

Mr. Dixon is survived by his wife, Leona Dixon of Austin; two sons, Kemp Dixon and wife, Lea Ann, of Austin, and Ken Dixon and wife, Judy, of Temple; brother, Ronald F. Dixon of New Jersey; five grandchildren, Jennifer, Jeff, Jana, Lance and Todd; and one great-grandchild, Zachary.

Arrangements by Cook-Walden Funeral Home, Lamar location.

Figure 3: Obituary, Norman Kemp Dixon.
Source: Austin American Statesman, (Austin, Texas), Thursday, September 3, 1992

up for the photo opt but that would be a mistake. He was “no-Johnny-come-lately-to-law-enforcement” and was Norman Kemp Dixon, Texas Ranger. Not a Texan at all, Dixon was a native of Vermont. Serving for 35 years, first as a Texas Ranger from 1937 until the early 1950’s⁹ when he became the Chief of the Internal Security Division for the Department of Public Safety (see figure 3) until his retirement in the early 1980’s. Dixon served with honor and distinction and would be the subject of a biography titled, “Chasing Thugs, Nazis, and Reds”.

⁹ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/108009122/norman-kemp-dixon>

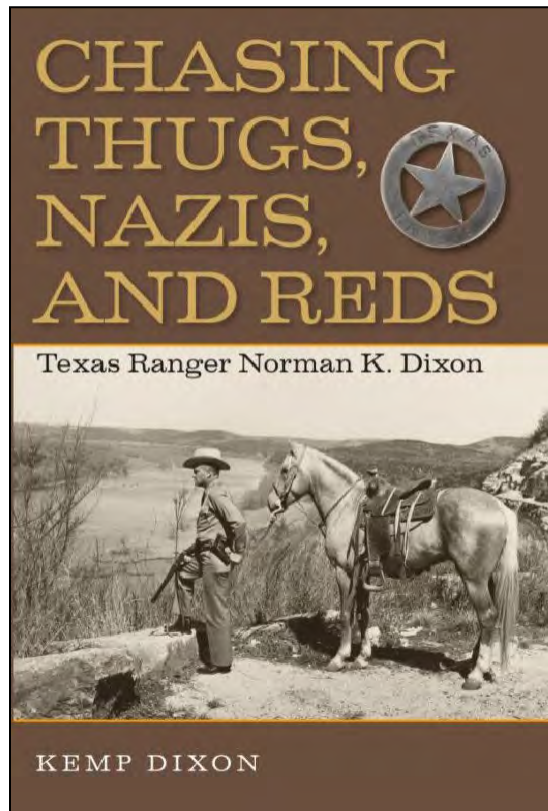


Figure 4: Chasing Thugs, Nazis, and Reds
Author: Kemp, Dixon; copyright 2015; ISBN 978-1-62349-256-4

Now you can see why I have always been fascinated by old pictures – and not just by the main subject of the photo. As we have seen, the supporting characters can have pretty interesting stories themselves.

– Mike West

Form 13-994
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
FIFTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1930
POPULATION—PANAMA CANAL ZONE

2751
Sheet No. **6A** 168

Enumerated District No. 46
Enumerated by me on April 12, 1930 George W. Recker Enumerator

Court District: Crotcha
City, town, or village: Fort Randolph Post
Name of Institution: _____

Note: Lines 1 to 28 removed to provide clarity

Serial	Sex	Age	Race	Color	Marital Status	Education	Place of Birth	Native Tongue and Native Language	Citizenship	Occupation and Industry	Code	Unemployment			
												Yes	No		
29	M	24	W	Y	Married	8	Pennsylvania	English	Yes		9892	W	Yes	No	29
30	M	23	W	Y	Married	8	West Virginia	English	Yes		9892	W	Yes	No	30
31	M	29	W	Y	Married	8	Missouri	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	31
32	M	32	W	Y	Married	8	Illinois	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	32
33	M	26	W	Y	Married	8	Oklahoma	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	33
34	M	27	W	Y	Married	8	Kentucky	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	34
35	M	23	W	Y	Married	8	Mississippi	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	35
36	M	21	W	Y	Married	8	Massachusetts	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	36
37	M	21	W	Y	Married	8	Texas	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	37
38	M	24	W	Y	Married	8	Rhode Island	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	38
39	M	22	W	Y	Married	8	Ohio	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	39
40	M	22	W	Y	Married	8	New York	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	40
41	M	15	W	Y	Single	4	Illinois	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	41
42	M	25	W	Y	Married	8	Illinois	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	42
43	M	26	W	Y	Married	8	Georgia	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	43
44	M	27	W	Y	Married	8	Pennsylvania	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	44
45	M	22	W	Y	Married	8	New York	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	45
46	M	23	W	Y	Married	8	Texas	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	46
47	M	23	W	Y	Married	8	Kansas	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	47
48	M	27	W	Y	Married	8	Pennsylvania	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	48
49	M	26	W	Y	Married	8	New York	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	49
50	M	25	W	Y	Married	8	Delaware	English	Yes		9893	W	Yes	No	50

Abbreviations to be used in columns indicated: Col. 1—Widow, Col. 2—Male, Col. 3—White, Col. 4—Caucasian, Col. 5—Single, Col. 6—Naturalized, Col. 7—Employer, Col. 8—Wage or salary worker, Col. 9—Widow, Col. 10—Female, Col. 11—Negro, Col. 12—Hispanic, Col. 13—Married, Col. 14—Divorced, Col. 15—Single, Col. 16—Naturalized, Col. 17—Wage or salary worker, Col. 18—Widow, Col. 19—Employer, Col. 20—Wage or salary worker.

Figure 5: 15th Census of the United States, Panama Canal Zone. Line 37 lists Everett Brandon as a member of Battery D, 65th Coast Artillery, on April 12, 1930.

Source: National Archives and Records Administration.