

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

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ALVIN YORK AND AUDIE MURPHY:

**DO THEY FIT THE MOLD
OF HERO ARCHETYPES?**

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTERS OF LIBERAL STUDIES

By

**Glen Everette DeSpain
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BY

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my friends, relatives, and fellow classmates who have given me constant support throughout the master's program. Without their encouragement I would not have succeeded. Danny, you gave me inspiration by completing your thesis before I did, and then pressed me to finish mine. To my wife, Diana, who endured countless evenings only seeing my back as I sat at the computer typing this paper. I love you. I thank my children, Amber, Chad, and Jeremy for encouraging me to complete this paper and to graduate. I love you all.

I would also like to acknowledge the entire staff of the College of Liberal Studies. You all worked hard to design a quality degree program. You made it available and provided support, with professionalism and pride.

To the members of my committee, Dr. Davis and Dr. Lancaster, I thank you for your additional support and suggestions. Finally, I would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. Gross who reviewed and edited many drafts. You have been a wonderful and inspiring committee chairman. You always had the time to talk with me and provide direction. This process has been lengthy from the first time we spoke, however, when several months would pass between our conversations, you would respond as if it had only been a few weeks.

I am honored to have been able to participate in this program and to be associated with the University of Oklahoma.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Heroism and Mythology	5
The Collective Unconscious	
Hero defined and described	
Hero's Journey	
Chapter 2. Today's Heroes	23
The Congressional Medal of Honor	
Brief history of the CMH	
What it takes to earn the CMH	
Chapter 3. Alvin York	43
Background	
Formal citation	
Chapter 4. Audie Murphy	49
Background	
Formal citation	
Chapter 5. Movies and Heroes	60
Westerns	
War Movies	
Audie Murphy as an Actor	
Chapter 6. Conclusion	72
The Vietnam Conflict	
York and Murphy Comparisons	
Works Cited	86

Introduction

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Newspaper Clipping of the Author	27
Figure 1	Army Medal of Honor	32
Figure 2	Chart of Medals of Honor	34
Figure 3	Photo of Audie L. Murphy	57

means to be human (Pearson, 2).

When faced with a moral, ethical or spiritual dilemma or problem, it is the warrior in us that immediately tackles the problem, whether our own or another's. If an individual lets a wrong go by and does not do anything about it, it is the warrior in us that is humiliated (Pearson, 96). Depending on the circumstances, maybe we would not be criticized for non-action. But we still desire to succeed and to do the right thing in any situation. It is only natural to be self-critical.

As you read this, ask yourself if you have ever daydreamed about being a hero. Maybe you heard a news account or read an article describing a heroic act. You might, as Walter Mitty did, have put yourself in the place of the hero and imagined that it was you who was the hero. You try to imagine what it would be like to be recognized for some type of valor. You might wonder why you admire that hero. One theory that I will discuss later is that it is because our ancestors and pre-ancestors admired those who showed certain heroic behaviors or traits. These hero traits were

Introduction

The myth of the hero is important in the contemporary world. People of all times and places are linked to us by the timeless hero myth. The hero myth is about fearlessly leaping off the edge of the known to confront the unknown. It gives us hope that when the time comes, we will have what we need to face our dragons, discover our treasures, and return to transform the kingdom. Such stories about heroes are deep and eternal. They link our pain and passion as well as our own longing with those who have come before. They link in such a way that we learn something about what it means to be human (Pearson, 2).

When faced with a moral, ethical or spiritual dilemma or problem, it is the warrior in us that immediately tackles the problem, whether our own or another's. If an individual lets a wrong go by and does not do anything about it, it is the warrior in us that is humiliated (Pearson, 96). Depending on the circumstances, maybe we would not be criticized for non-action. But we still desire to succeed and to do the right thing in any situation. It is only natural to be self-critical.

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rooted deep in those admirers' unconscious because many before them had admired certain individuals who displayed these traits. Those were the hero archetypes that were passed from generation to generation. Heroes make our lives more interesting, more meaningful. We confront crises and experience terror along with heroes. Heroes help the sick, discover new lands, write memorable poems, and compose stirring symphonies. With heroes, we escape the mundane. We experience the extraordinary and expand our notion of what it means to be human (Gibbon, 178).

Writer James Thurber wrote a short story about identifying with heroes, about a daydreamer. In *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, Thurber described how Mitty daydreamed about being in several different hero roles, all in one afternoon. As Mitty was driving his wife to the beauty shop, he pictured himself as the commander of a Navy hydroplane. Later as he drove past a hospital, he was a famous surgeon who had to take over in the middle of a surgery to save the life of a millionaire. Next, as he walked along a sidewalk, he was the greatest pistol shot in the world and was being questioned on the stand in court. As Mitty was waiting in a hotel lobby for his wife, he was the captain of a bomber getting ready to blow up an ammunition dump. A few minutes later, Mitty was outside a drug store smoking a cigarette next to a wall and daydreamed that he was preparing to bravely face a firing squad. Walter Mitty is portrayed as just an average man, maybe living in a small town. He longs to be a hero, to be noticed, to be someone who is looked up to and respected. Walter Mitty wants to be a hero. Most of us have done the same thing. Thurber accurately captured what most of us have done at one time or another. He revealed the secret life most men live (Thurber, 73-75).

While Walter Mitty daydreams of being a hero, he lacks the qualities of a genuine hero in part because he lacks the courage to put himself into a position to act as a hero. He also lacks the opportunity to be a hero. He is not in the military nor is he a doctor. That is why he fantasizes. Mitty knows that the only way he is going to be a hero and be looked up to by others is in his imagination. He may also fantasize as a means of escaping a life with which he is not totally happy. He is escaping his everyday life by transporting himself into the stories of heroism. He desires the respect of others and must seek that through his imagination. Walter Mitty knows that a hero is someone who, faced with a tough challenge, reaches down inside and finds the courage, strength, and wisdom to triumph. He also knows that heroes take risks, they set the bar high, they are altruistic, and they act on their deepest conviction. Perhaps Mitty feels he could react like a hero if given the chance and in that way feels he is a hero. He also may feel it is not his fault that life has dealt him a boring life and career.

During World War I, a soldier from Tennessee, Alvin York, became famous for his heroism on the battlefield in France. During World War II, Audie Murphy, from Texas, also became famous for his heroism in France. When they came face to face with their dragons, the German army, the warrior in them tackled the problem, doing what it took to get the job done, whether it was to save others or to save themselves. These individuals shared much in common besides their heroism and medals. Their events were more than 26 years apart. They were in different world wars, but they came from similar backgrounds. This paper will discuss these commonalities. It will also discuss how they fit into our culture's mold of the

archetypal hero. Our culture has certain perceptions of what it takes to be a hero and what it expects out of its heroes. In today's time, some consider a hero to be someone who is popular, such as a celebrity or sports star. Throughout the centuries, though, human cultures have insisted on a more substantial and more meaningful definition of hero. Others believe a hero is someone who commits a heroic act. Whatever our definition, we need heroes. We want them to look up to or to pattern our lives after or as contrast to our ordinary lives.

Alvin York and Audie Murphy were prodigies of courage. They did not ask to be heroes, but when they found themselves placed in a position with the need for action, they succeeded in living up to our ancestor's image of heroism. They risked the greatest gift man possesses – his life.

A myth can be seen as a history of prehistory. It was the first attempt to explain how and why things happen. Myths historically arose in the earlier stages of social development. They explained creation and things of nature and told of heroes, usually gods or god-like characters. They told ancient people who they were and the way they should live. Individual myths are strikingly similar among cultures that are vastly separated by geography. Myths are constant among all human beings in all times. Patterns and details that are contained in myths are found everywhere and among everyone. It is a shared heritage of ancestral memories that are related consciously from generation to generation. Our lives today are saturated with myths,

Chapter 1 - Heroism and Mythology

As long as man has inhabited the earth, myths have flourished. Myths are propagated by cultures and passed on from generation to generation. They are folklore told by parents or grandparents to their children. The stories could have been told while sitting around a campfire or while walking a long trail. Some believe the stories are based on historic events and could have become exaggerated over the years. Or perhaps they were originally symbolic stories about people and events (O'Neill, 13).

Popular tales represent the heroic action as physical. The religions show the deed as moral. Regardless of whether the legends or tales are of physical power or moral deeds, there are amazingly little differences among the roles of the characters and in the victories they gain (Campbell, 1949, 38). This points to their origin and significance deep in human history and possibly in our subconscious minds.

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symbols, language and content. They all are part of our common history as human beings. Myths fill the gap between the images of the unconscious and the language of conscious logic. Myth is the thread that holds the past, present, and future together. Myths hold societies together. They are the basis of identity for communities, tribes, and nations (Bierlein, 5-6).

We seek to control and have power over certain aspects of our world. Our desire for order is the foundation of humanity. Myths tell us how the power can be won or lost. There is a shroud of mystery that surrounds mythology. It captivates people of all cultures.

Stories about heroism provide us with models for learning to live. These mythical stories; whether deliberately and consciously created as fiction or created through someone's vision or dream, provide us a guide by which to live. These stories fulfill human needs for a hero or role model (Pearson, 1).

The stories told through myths may have been about unusual rituals of primitive tribes or even great civilizations of the past. The purpose of the rituals was to transport people across the difficult thresholds of historical transformations. The transformations demanded a change in the patterns not only of conscious but also of unconscious life. Myths tell a particular society important things it should know about the gods, its traditional history, and the origin of the customs and class structure. It has been a prime function of mythology and rite to provide the symbols that carry the human spirit forward. The stories facilitated the explanation of these events to the younger generations and ultimately to future generations (Campbell, 1949, 10-11).

Myths are the imitation of actions at or near the conceivable limits of desire.

Myth is one extreme of literary design – naturalism is the other extreme. Romance is the entire area in between these extremes (Frye, 1957, 136).

Myths are stories where gods are the main characters because they are usually characters identified with aspects of nature. Mythology has gods of wind, sun, moon, earth, sea, love, and others. Myths differ from folktales and legends in that folktales are usually nomadic and travel through the world interchanging their themes and motifs. Myths seem to have been developed in the collective unconscious. They are the conscious manifestation of the archetypes and link myths and legends across cultures, and across time. Legends are usually stories about a particular place or culture-hero (Frye, 1990, 22-30).

In some form the hero's journey exists in every culture. The hero, in taking the hero's journey, does what seems to be impossible. By surviving difficult and dangerous encounters heroes gain our respect and are recognized as having near-deity status. Myths also attempt to recognize the common and archetypal tension between individual's needs and desires and a hero's obligation to the community.

Campbell believes that those who made up the mythical legends did not consider heroes to be mere humans who broke past the horizons that limited their fellow man. These heroes of mythical legends returned with such good fortune as any man, with courage and equal faith, might have found. The sources of mythical legends tended to give the heroes extraordinary power. They bestow upon the hero extraordinary powers, if not from the moment of conception, at least from the moment of birth. The hero's entire life was part of the legend, filled with marvels, and

culminated with the great central adventure. This supports the belief by Joseph Campbell that heroism is predestined as opposed to being achieved (Campbell, 1949, 319).

Campbell describes a pattern to represent the standard path of mythological adventure of the hero. It is separation—initiation—return. Separation is when the hero ventures from his common day world into an area of supernatural wonder. Initiation is when the hero encounters forces and he wins a decisive victory. Return is when the hero comes back from his mysterious adventure with the strength to endow benefit on his fellow man (Campbell, 1949, 30). As we will see below, the heroic experience of York and Murphy fits this pattern remarkably well.

Campbell describes the “call to adventure” as the first stage of the mythological hero’s journey. The ‘call to adventure’ is when the hero is summoned by destiny. The hero’s spiritual center of gravity has been transferred from within the pale of his society to an unknown zone. The region can be a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or a profound dream state or a foreign battleground. It is always a place of unimaginable forces, strangely fluid, superhuman deeds, and variable beings (Campbell, 1949, 58).

A hero is a man or woman who has battled past personal and local limitations. The hero has been reborn after having died as a mortal man. It is then his duty to return to society and teach the lesson of life he has learned from his adventure. After the hero returns, he is often honored by his society, although in some cases he is ignored or disdained. In many fairy tales, a hero achieves a domestic or microcosmic triumph, that is, fame on a local or smaller scale. That would be considered a local

hero. Examples of local heroes would be Moses, Emperor Huang Ti or the Aztec Tezcatlipoca. In mythology, the hero experiences a world-historical, macrocosmic triumph, and fame on a much larger scale. Examples of universal heroes would be Jesus, Mohammed, and Gautama Buddha (Campbell, 1949, 37-38).

Dr. Carl G. Jung, a noted Swiss psychologist and philosopher, is credited with first developing the theory of 'archetypes' in the field of psychology. The term 'archetype' is generally credited to Plato who connected two words: *arche* meaning original and *typos* meaning *form*. Through comprehensive studies on the subject of archetypes, Jung found they were associated with religions, mythological issues, and dreams. He suggested that there are three levels of the mind: conscious, personal subconscious, and collective unconscious.

Jung said the conscious level serves four functions: thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuiting. The personal subconscious acts as a filing cabinet for ego rejections. We are subjected constantly to a vast number of experiences. Most of these experiences do not become conscious because the ego is very selective and eliminates them before they reach consciousness.

The collective unconscious, according to Jung, is the third level. It is the deep layer of the mind and is the origin of the archetype. Archetypes are a collection of images that we inherit. The content of the collective unconscious is made up of archetypes. The collective unconscious does not derive its information from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition, but rather is inborn. It is a cultural memory located deep in the unconscious level of the mind that links an individual to the rest of humanity. The collective unconscious is hereditary. It is the pattern of

one's psyche. Archetypes are permanent, very important, and universal to all people. Myth and fairytale are known expressions of the archetype (Jung, 3-43). This theory of inherited, universal content in the unconscious mind remains controversial, although it is widely accepted.

Jung identified several areas and figures as archetypal. They were birth, rebirth, death, power, magic, the hero, the child, the trickster, God, the demon, the wise old man, the Earth mother, and the giant. He also identified many natural things: the Sun, the Moon, trees, wind, rivers, fire, and animals (Jung 183-86).

The main source of the material for producing the psychic forms is dreams. Dreams are involuntary, spontaneous products of the unconscious psyche. Another source for producing the psychic forms is the active imagination. Jung believed that unrealized, unconscious fantasies increase the frequency and intensity of dreams. These would be fantasies produced by deliberate concentration (Jung 48-49).

Jung held that the hero myth was the most potent expression of archetypes and recurred in a wide range of eras and cultures. As time passes, the details that distinguish between fable and reality begin to fade until the majority of what is left is myth. This is the basis of the archetype itself. Another way to look at hero archetypes is as accumulated facets of individual heroes' personalities.

The collective unconscious describes mankind's inborn predisposition to certain feelings, perceptions, and behaviors. It does not depend directly on experiences of the individual. We react to certain instances in the same way that our ancestors and even pre-human ancestors did because we possess the same potentialities for reaction that they did.

What we learn from looking at archetypes is that our generation is not exactly like the generation that raised us, though it has much in common with that generation and with the generation that raised the generation that raised us. In other words, archetypes do not create archetypes exactly like themselves. The archetypal view sees human existence as falling into certain recognizable patterns. Each one has its own mode of behavior and thinking. The hero myth is the most widely noted. The myths that endure are the ones that highlight the virtues that successive generations see recurring in their own time (Strauss).

Northrop Frye, a Canadian professor who authored many books on literary criticism, attempted to describe literary works in terms of their connections to mythic origins and patterns. Literary drama and fiction have plots in which somebody does or fails to do something. What the character can do or cannot do is measured by the author's description of that character's abilities as well as the reader's expectations. This is called the hero's 'power of action.' To describe this Frye explained five kinds of literary heroes or main characters: Mythic Hero, Romantic Hero, High Mimetic Hero, Low Mimetic Hero, and Ironical Hero.

Frye believed fictions could be classified by the hero's power of action. Accordingly, he believed that if the hero is superior to the other characters and to the environment of the others, he is considered a divine being and the story about him is a myth. These stories are important to literature but are usually outside the normal scope of literary categories.

A character is a Romantic Hero if he is superior to the others and to his own environment. He is recognized as a human being, but his actions are spectacular. He

is in a world where ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended. He is a prodigy of courage and endurance. This is the area that is called legend and folktale.

A High Mimetic Hero is a leader if he is superior to other men but not to his natural environment. He is a leader if his passion, authority, and powers of expression are greater than others, but is subject to criticism by society and the order of nature.

The Low Mimetic Hero is one who is not superior to others or the environment. He is barely considered a hero. The Ironic Hero is less powerful and less intelligent than others. If he is frustrated and absurd, he is considered to be ironic. Frye distinguished myth from romance by the hero's power of action. In the myth, the hero is divine, while in the romance, the hero is human (Frye, 1957, 33-34).

Frye suggests that most cultures give more consideration to certain stories than others. It is because those stories are thought of as historically true or have more conceptual meaning (Frye, 1957, 188).

The word *hero* has its origin in Middle English and has mythological reference via Latin from Greek *heras*. Some believe its origin is Hera. Hera was one of the twelve Gods of Greek mythology. She was the sister of Zeus and later became his wife. She is considered the female power of the heavens, as Zeus was the male power of the heavens. Hera was the Queen of both the gods and humans. She was a protector of women, especially in marriage and childbirth (Hard, 28).

Our everyday, generally accepted idea of the hero is probably similar to the dictionary definition. The dictionary defines 'hero' as a man or woman of distinguished courage or ability, admired for his or her brave deeds and noble qualities. It also says a hero is a person who, in the opinion of others, has heroic

qualities or has performed a heroic act and is regarded as a model or ideal. The dictionary further defines a hero as a person who is admired for having done something very brave or having achieved something great, or the main character in a book, film or play, especially one who is admired for his good qualities. Hero worship is a feeling of tremendous reverence for great men or their memory. It can also be an excessive admiration for a personal hero (Stein, 665).

What I have been considering here is how and why societies and cultures understand and honor heroes. Perhaps more interesting is the question of what has been demanded of heroes throughout the centuries and millennia. What makes a person a hero? What constitutes a heroic act? What makes an otherwise apparently ordinary, everyday person a hero? As I noted in the introduction over thousands of years and all over the world there are striking similarities in the role and image of the hero. We look up to them and want to be like them. We want to find their qualities in ourselves.

We learn what a hero is and what to expect from a hero through culture. From ancient myths by way of great dramas and epic tales, a powerful figure of the hero emerged. The hero was godlike. In modern times that figure appears in fiction or film with fewer supernatural capabilities than in previous times. We also see the heroic figure, of modern times, in a world more similar to our own. In spite of the transition, the ancient outlines of the hero can still be seen. We still look at the hero similarly to the way we view the powerful hero from ancient times.

Outside of myth and legend, in the area of our lived experience, the modern hero can be described as a seemingly ordinary person who, by placing himself at

considerable risk, takes extraordinary action to defend someone else. Heroism is more than just finding a new truth. It is about having the courage to act on that vision. It is, in a very practical way, why heroes need to have the courage and care associated with strong ego development and the vision and clarity of mind and spirit that come from having taken their soul's journeys and gained the treasure of their true selves (Pearson 31).

Heroes are recognized on the basis of courage, nobility of purpose, or special achievement in the face of danger and death. Their motivations vary according to their type. The classical mythic hero searches for fame and glory. The ordinary hero just tries to get by in spite of adverse conditions or situations. All heroes have some mission or quest to accomplish. This self-focused command makes the hero a fascinating and praiseworthy character. In Freudian terms, the ego of the hero is in command. There is minimal conflict between the conscious and the unconscious of the hero. For this reason, we identify with the hero and our own image and sense of autonomy is strengthened. We bolster our identity and we feel better equipped to deal with reality (Rollin, 26).

Celebrating heroes is a good way to remember our own heroic potential. That is why we need our heroes today more than ever. We need to know them, know things about them, and honor them. They remind us of just what our potential is and how far we can go with it. Overcoming obstacles is not the only reason why heroes are so appealing to us. We are attracted to them because they are courageous and are not afraid to accept challenges. They stand up for what they believe in and defend others.

Heroes also have the ability to survive when backed up against a wall. They do what is necessary in order to come out on top.

Thomas A. Barron provides a link or bridge between the image of the hero in myth and ancient history and heroes in people's lives today. He writes in his book, The Hero's Trail, that there are seven qualities that heroes possess that define heroism. They are courage, faith, perseverance, hope, humor, adaptability, and moral direction. He divides heroes into five categories. They are based on what kinds of character they displayed. They are: hero on the spot; the survivor hero; the hero within; the hero to others near and far; and the hero for all times (Barron, 9-12). These types describe how heroes and heroism can have a direct and sometimes immediate effect on people's lives.

The 'hero on the spot' is a companion or a passerby at one instant and the next instant called on to help save someone's life. Such a hero is created in a heartbeat. It changes an average, ordinary, everyday person into a hero on the spot. Heroic situations often involve crucial choices, as well as courage and compassion. For the hero on the spot, these elements are telescoped down to a single instant (Barron, 16-20). In some ways Audie Murphy and Alvin York fit into this category. They may also have some resemblance to the survivor hero category. Audie Murphy and Alvin York performed acts that saved the lives of others and at the same time saved their own lives while confronting the enemy.

'Survivor heroes' do not start the day expecting to face a life or death disaster. However, York and Murphy, along with the other battlefield heroes faced life and death on a daily basis. Soldiers continue that today. Soldiers never know when they

could be killed or wounded. Survivor heroes' worlds come crashing down like an avalanche. This can be a hurricane, flood, lightning, or tornado. They have a will to live. It can be tied to someone or something specific; a person the survivor wants to see again or a place he wants to go. Like the other heroes, they have to reach down inside to find the special qualities it takes to survive" (Barron, 32-33). A recent example of this type of hero is the rock climber, Aron Ralston, whose arm became wedged under a huge boulder in a remote canyon in Utah. Aron Ralston was a guest on David Letterman's television show on CBS. He described his ordeal in detail. After five days his water was gone and he knew his only chance of survival was to amputate his own arm. He first had to use his body as leverage to break each of the two bones in his lower arm. He said he had to do it that way because he had no means to cut through the bones. He was then able to cut through the skin and other tissue to complete the amputation with a knife. He administered first aid, rappelled to the floor of the canyon, and hiked out. Ralston was discovered by a search team that had been sent after he had not shown up for work. Ralston had a very good attitude about his ordeal. He told Letterman that while he was assessing his situation, he decided he could either experience about an hour or so of pain, to sever his arm, in order to extend his life for many years, or he could give up and die.

Such men and women as just described do not possess all the traits of archetypes from myth and culture. For one thing, their acts affect only themselves. They do not combine individual will with collective action as Aristotle described in the hero. But their strength and courage seem "larger than life," beyond the capabilities of most people in the ways cultural heroes go beyond ordinary human

characteristics. As a model, their achievements and behaviors connect with their culture, beyond themselves, suggesting ways in which all humans might be capable of acting differently, acting better. Barron has covered a wide range of hero characteristics in these seven areas. While many of these characteristics describe the individual who is the beneficiary of the heroism, he still believes the hero can also have a tremendous affect that benefits others.

Barron described 'heroes within' as being people who have faced challenges and triumphed. Challenges like blindness, polio, cancer, or other diseases that strike people who were leading normal lives. These individuals must have tremendous faith and confidence (Barron, 75). Lance Armstrong is a good example of this type of hero. He overcame his cancer and won Tour de France five straight times as of 2003.

Another example is the professional tennis player, Corina Morariu, who overcame extreme odds against leukemia. She returned to the tennis circuit after recovering and played at Wimbledon in 2003.

Some real-life heroes have consciously set out to help others. They are 'heroes to others near and far.' It is their goal from the start to better their community or to make a difference to their world. Alexander Graham Bell, who invented the telephone, is in this group. Another is Allen Jay. In the 1820s Jay, a young boy, was a Quaker in Indiana. He hid runaway slaves in his parents' peach trees and cornfields. Then he helped them find their way to safety. Mother Teresa is another good example of this type of hero. Acts of this type of heroism are like pebbles thrown into a pond. By itself each pebble is very small. The ripples created by the pebbles spread further and further as more pebbles are tossed into the pond (Barron 75-91).

The fifth and last category of hero identified by Barron is the 'hero of all times.' These heroes do not just show qualities, but also symbolize and define the qualities. They are especially important to humanity and lodge themselves deeply in our hearts and minds. These are individuals who are truly respected and looked up to by many. These are heroes for all times (Barron, 101-02). Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill are good examples of this type of hero. I would place presidents Ronald Reagan and Harry Truman in this category also.

Joseph Campbell says there are two types of heroic deeds, the physical deed and the spiritual deed. The physical deed is where the hero performs a courageous act in battle or saves a life. The spiritual deed involves the hero learning to experience the supernormal range of human spiritual life and then coming back with a message (Campbell, 1988, 123).

The moral objective of heroism is that of the hero supporting an idea, saving a person, or saving a people. The morality of it is that the hero sacrifices himself for something. There is a judgment or perception involved in this. It is whether the hero sacrificed himself for something that is not recognized by everyone as a cause worthy of that sacrifice (Campbell, 1988, 127).

The hero leaves the land he knows and proceeds into darkness where he meets danger and accomplishes his goal. To complete his adventure, the returning hero must survive the impact of the world. When he reappears from the darkness, he brings with him the secret of his defeat over the obstacle. For every life there is certain to be one death. The hero can postpone his fate for a certain time by resisting death. Death is the last act in the hero's biography. He would not be a hero if death held any terror for

him (Campbell, 1949, 87-359). Throughout much of human history, heroes have been associated with warriors. Until recently we reserved our highest status and most respected medals for soldiers (Gibbon, 56).

Prior to World War I, the ideology of heroism was well rooted in American culture. It lived in factories, schools, parlors, and on farms. It could be seen in newspapers, novels, and eulogies. It could also be seen in the names parents gave their children. Many were named for celebrated Americans. Examples: George Washington Carver for George Washington, Robert Frost for Robert E. Lee. After the War of 1812 and the Battle of New Orleans, thousands of boys were named Andrew for Andrew Jackson. The founding fathers of the Constitution were looked up to as heroes. Pioneers moving west honored them by naming cities after them.

Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Franklin are examples. The capital of Wisconsin was named for James Madison. Even the streets leading away from the capital building were named for signers; Rutledge, Dickson, Blair, and Carroll (Gibbon, 19).

The unique aspects of the historical experience in North America since the arrival of the European settlers have lead to the rise of powerful hero figures. They have a close and interesting relationship with traditional and archetypical images of the hero. One of the most important is the Frontiersman. The Frontier itself is a key to this image. The difficulties of the Frontier, including the terrain, the climate, wild animals, finding food, as well as conflicts with Indians, are all infused with mystery and the unknown. These difficulties were so powerful and constant the need for heroism was clear, and important figures arose to take on the role of the hero. All

were brave in their actions, and all carried with them the collective will of the community to extend the frontier ever further to the West.

Frontiersmen were men and women who took it upon themselves to press beyond the safe limits of what was known and into the unknown. When we think of the West, we think of the brave men and women we have become acquainted with through movies and novels. Even though it was a real place, the West became a place in the imagination and remains a mythical domain today. We know something of the hardships these early Americans faced. However, we continue to perceive the opening of the West in romantic terms (Calvert, v-vi).

Many Frontiersmen and women can be considered to be heroes. They risked much and made sacrifices in order to find that for which they were searching. They were looking for a new and better way of life. Some people in those times were content to live in the city while others yearned for more room to live in and prosper. They battled weather, geographical elements, and different types of enemies. The enemies included outlaws and Indians. The frontiersmen blazed a trail westward. They lived off the land and certainly had no comforts, even by the standards of those times. The hardships they endured can be described in writings and depicted in films. Only those who actually lived it can truly appreciate the sacrifices and encounters.

Such famous people as Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, Calamity Jane, Buffalo Bill, and even General Custer have been considered personal heroes from the frontier era. One of the most recognizable names is Davy Crockett. He was born to a pioneer family in East Tennessee. His family followed the movement Westward. They moved three times by the time Crockett was twelve. They finally settled in Western

Tennessee. He later enlisted in the Tennessee militia. He returned home when his enlistment was up but re-enlisted less than a year later. He was in Andrew Jackson's forces at Pensacola, but discharged prior to the Battle of New Orleans.

Being a natural leader, Crockett became involved in politics. He served three terms in Congress. After his defeat in 1835, he moved to East Texas. He later died at the Alamo in San Antonio when it was overrun by Santa Anna and his men. Davy Crockett was known as an outstanding frontiersman, excellent hunter, good family man, leader of men, politician with integrity, and hero ("Davy Crockett").

Pioneers sought to colonize enormous tracts of land for the establishment of civilization and the nation. The impact of this tradition on successive decades of American life and progress has amply proved the frontier's existence in the hearts and minds of Americans. The era of the Western Frontier proved to be something much more appealing than a great historical period. The frontier was, in fact, the only mythological tissue available to this young nation.

The law of the gun and the conquest of nature must have appealed to the frontiersmen. He had his work cut out for him in the tremendous amount of organized effort needed to plow the earth, raise cattle, mine, and create towns and cities. A state of mind evolved and it was accepted with enthusiasm in the eastern states. This life must have been appealing to many who chose to head west (Fenin, 6).

From ancient myth and legend to our recent past, heroes have been important in all cultures. Modern American culture is no exception to this rule. While we as a culture conduct our daily lives we long to have heroes to look up to and admire. We would like to have a genuine hero to read about and talk about and about which to

daydream. We long for a hero's life to project ourselves into, as did Walter Mitty.

Heroes give us a goal we can attempt to attain.

We as a culture create heroes as role models, as ethics in flesh and bones like our own, and as standards of action. Lacking heroes in the 21st century, we are unable to live out our myth of communal aims and ideals in society. Whether one's hopes succeed or fail is not the hero or heroine's concern. We emulate the hero, and a multitude of women and men, modest and shy, old and young, feel a triumph of their own pulse, a strengthening of their own self esteem (May, 54-58).

It seems to be inborn in every person to look up to a particular trait in another and admire that trait. In this instance it is the hero-type. We may not know the reason why, but we may have this admiration and respect because our ancestors have passed that trait down to us through our collective unconscious by way of heredity.

Heroes give us the greatest gift possible, an assurance that there are people in our universe with whose characteristics we hope to identify. The rediscovery of heroism is central in the regaining of our myths. The arising of new myths will inspire us to go beyond our dreams. Myths will lift us above a purely mundane existence (May, 58).

Of all the different types of heroism, there is none more awe-inspiring or more mystifying than the one who selflessly risks his life for the life of another. This is the one that is most contrary to "normal" human nature. According to Darwin's theory of 'survival-of-the-fittest' this selflessness would signal an evolutionary dead end.

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Chapter 2 - Today's Heroes and the Congressional Medal of Honor

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Robert Cialdini, a psychologist at Arizona State University, believes that human heroism seems to be controlled by the same 'selfish genes' that makes animals

more likely to rescue relatives. He reports that people, on average, would be more likely to risk themselves to save a son or daughter than a cousin. By the same logic they would be more likely to take risks for a cousin than for a stranger. Cialdini further believes that early man traveled in tribes of twenty five to fifty people, most of them related. The natural selection favored those who helped out their fellow tribe members. "So the people we call heroes today are those who, for some still mysterious reason, seem to have adopted all humans as members of their tribe" (Clark).

Today's hero carries a great burden. It is the expectation that a hero be perfect. The American warrior has never enjoyed great status during times of peace. Since the warrior has usually been the source of heroes, it was during times of war that heroes were acknowledged. After the Civil War, many Americans easily dismissed the value of the military. Since the terrorist attack of September 2001, America has once again turned to the warrior heroes (Gibbon, 6-68). The U.S. military was called upon to go to the Middle East and combat terrorism. There have been a few mentions of heroes, but nothing close to what Audie Murphy and Alvin York provided for us.

On September 11, 2001, terrorists took control of three commercial airplanes. Two of the planes were flown into the World Trade Center buildings in New York City. The third plane was intentionally crashed into the Pentagon building. Clearly the rescuers, in New York City and Washington D.C. that day, were heroes. They entered the World Trade Center and the Pentagon knowing there had been substantial damage to those structures. They also knew there would be considerable risk involved in remaining in the buildings. They knew there would be injured people who needed

help. They also knew others would need help just getting out of the buildings. This resulted in the ultimate sacrifice of several hundred policemen, firemen, and emergency medical personnel when the World Trade Center buildings collapsed with the rescuers and victims inside.

Individuals who choose these careers know that they will often face danger and possible injury. This is especially true in large cities where there are more calls for service, creating greater numbers of risks. That should not take away from the fact they still chose to risk their lives to save others. They still had a choice to make before entering the buildings and chose to go anyway. Everyone knows that rescuers and other first responders encounter dangerous situations.

Also on September 11, several passengers on a fourth commercial jet earned the title of hero. After learning their plane had been taken over and appeared to be on its way to another target, some of the passengers resisted and attempted to take back control of the plane from the terrorists. Common belief is that this resulted in the plane crashing into a field in Pennsylvania before reaching its intended destination.

Although the crash killed everyone on board, this saved many more lives that might have been lost had the plane been allowed to reach its target. One of the passengers on this flight placed a phone call advising of the terrorists' takeover. He described that some passengers were going to try to regain control of the plane. He is heard to say "Let's roll." This was immediately adopted as signaling the heroes' charge (Longman, 202-04).

I joined the Oklahoma City Police Department in 1970. A hiring board, consisting of several high-ranking commanders interviewed all officer candidates

before hiring. During my interview I was asked why I wanted to be a police officer. I am certain my response was the same as most others when asked the same question. I told them I wanted to help people. I did not believe I was going to change the world. I just wanted to help someone if I could. I did not believe I would rescue someone in a life-threatening situation. I did not go into the job to try to be a hero. That I was considered a hero was a bi-product of being in the right place at the right time and deciding to try to do something then, and not wait for someone else.

After attending the police academy I was assigned to the patrol division. In December 1970, my partner and I were riding the night shift on the northeast side of Oklahoma City. Near Harrison and Walnut, we observed a fire in a structure. The fire was in a tavern and it appeared to be spreading to an adjoining apartment building. My partner entered the apartment building while I called for the fire department. I then entered the building to help my partner awaken residents and help them to get out of the building. We later learned the fire was arson. A customer had been thrown out of the tavern earlier in the evening. He got a can of gas, waited for the business to close and started the fire to get even with the people running the tavern. He was apparently unaware there was a security guard in the tavern that had been hired by the owner. The guard was asleep inside the tavern and died in the fire. Homicide detectives were able to identify the guilty patron. He was found guilty at his trial and was sent to prison.

In March of 1971, my partner and I observed a residence that was heavily involved in flames. The fire department was not on the scene. I entered the residence



He's A Hero

Mayor Patience Latting, left, admires the gold watch given Sunday in her name by the Citizens for Police Improvement at a banquet at Shepherd Mall along with a check for \$100 to Oklahoma City policeman Glen DeSpain. The young officer received the award for saving a woman from her burning home March 4—risking his own life in the process. (Staff Photo by George Wilson)

Figure 1 Newspaper Photo of the author

(Oklahoma Journal, 20)

to search for possible victims while the other officer called for the fire department. I found a lady toward the rear of the house and determined she was the only occupant. I led her out of the house to safety. The fire department arrived just as we exited the residence and they would later report that the ceiling of the living room collapsed immediately after we exited that room. I was awarded the Mayor's Award for Valor and was given a check for \$100 and a gold watch with the title of the award engraved on the back.

These two incidents show how quickly someone can be thrust into a situation with no warning. Barron refers to these as "hero on the spot" situations. Someone is a companion or passerby one instant and the next instant they must help someone and possibly save a life (Barron, 16-17). Decisions have to be made quickly. One decision is whether to try to help someone immediately. The other choice is to just sit back and wait for someone else to do it. The days these two incidents occurred began just like any other day. I was totally unaware that I would be involved in such a situation and have to make a quick decision. My actions were considered to be "heroic." They meet some of the criteria for heroism that I have presented here. But battlefield heroism seems closer to the classic models and in the United States, the Congressional Medal of Honor is our highest award for such heroism.

Throughout American history, millions of men and women have served in the military services. Tens of thousands have been recognized for varying degrees of heroic acts. The Congressional Medal of Honor is the highest award given in the United States (Manning, 5). Soldiers on the battlefield have to be less preoccupied with their own immediate survival than they normally would. This is called "reaction

formation” or “denial”. Psychiatrists say we can subdue the sense of danger by driving fear and trembling out of our conscious minds. A soldier must think of his civic obligations, of others, and of his situation. Factors that help him do these things include his moral and religious beliefs, and his patriotic loyalties. One soldier described how he was more afraid of going home and living the rest of his life remembering that he had been a coward than he was afraid of being killed fighting the war.

Robert Cole has been a professor of psychiatry and medical humanities at Harvard Medical School. He was an Air Force medical officer. He wrote an article “The Psychology of Heroism” that became part of the book Above and Beyond, A History of the Medal of Honor From the Civil War to Vietnam. He wrote that most brave warriors seem to stumble into their heroism. In their lives they find a haunting moment of “transcendence, when moral energy is released in response to the terrible exigency of a particular battlefield situation” (Manning, 274-75).

In a speech on October 26, 1963, President John F. Kennedy said “A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers” (Highland). The Congressional Medal of Honor is awarded to an individual for an act of the most noticeable gallantry and poise, far above and beyond the call of duty, and in the presence of an armed enemy. Many receive the award posthumously, having died in the act for which they would earn the award (Manning, 5).

Since World War I over fifty-five percent of the medals have been awarded posthumously. That number was nearly seventy percent during the Korean War and

the Vietnam War. The act must involve a clear risk of life. It must be the type of voluntary act that, if the hero did not do it, he would not be subjected to any criticism. There must also be at least two witnesses to attest to the act (Murphy, E, 1987, 1-3).

Robert Since the Civil War there have been 3,459 Medals of Honor awarded. Most of those, 2,400, have been presented to members of the Army. (See Figure 2) More than 550 have been killed in combat involving the act for which they would receive the award.

extended On July 25, 1963, Congress amended the U.S. Code to permit awarding the Medal of Honor for distinguished service (1) while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States (2) while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing force, or (3) while serving with friendly forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing force in which the United States is a belligerent (Murphy, E, 1987, 9).

(Doherty) The first Medals of Honor were awarded to "Andrews Raiders" in the Civil War. In April 1862, James Andrews led a group of twenty-five volunteers whose mission was to steal a confederate locomotive and ride it to the Union lines. This became known as the "Great Locomotive Chase". They were to destroy track and depots along the way. The mission failed and they were captured. Eight escaped, three were missing, and eight were hanged including Andrews. Six were turned over to the Union after almost a year in a Confederate prison camp.

York, The survivors met with Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, who then introduced them to President Lincoln. Staton left the room briefly and returned with a small medal in his hand. He announced that Congress had just passed a law ordering medals

to be made and awarded. The medal Staton was holding was the prototype of the first Congressional Medal of Honor. Staton then presented the medal to Private Jacob Parrott, who was the youngest of the raiders. The others were William Bensinger, Robert Buffum, Elihu Mason, William Pittinger, and William H Reddick.

During the Civil War there was no set procedure to determine the criteria for awarding the Medal of Honor. The medals were given out freely. In one instance an entire regiment of volunteers of the 27th Maine, was offered the medals if they would extend their service. Over 300 remained in the service while the others returned home. Due to a clerical error all of the 864 men were given the medal. For a period of time after the Civil War, soldiers were permitted to apply for the Medal of Honor themselves (Mikaelian, xiv-xx).

Nineteen recipients have been double award winners. That is to say, nineteen members received two Medals of Honor for two entirely different acts (Doherty 5-7). Of the nineteen double winners, not one is well known today. Destroyers in the naval fleet were named for three: Dan Daly, Smedley Butler, and John Henry Pruitt. A small army camp was named for Patrick Leonard. Fourteen of the nineteen were career servicemen. They came from a broad cross-section of American life, of varied national origins, religious, economic, cultural and educational levels. Five were natives of Ireland. Two were from Austria, one from Norway, one from the West Indies, and ten Native Americans. Three of the ten were from New York, two from Ohio, and one each from Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Illinois, and Louisiana. One was black and eighteen were Caucasians. Three of the nineteen



Figure 2 Army Medal of Honor Adopted in 1965

(Stern)

were killed in action. One of those was killed while earning the second medal. Butler was the highest rank of the double winners. He was a major at the time he earned his second award. None were large in physical size. Seven were considered undersized, as was Audie Murphy (Tassin, 223-24).

Today, as in the recent past, the standard for receiving the CMH is extremely high. President Harry S. Truman, a World War I veteran, was speaking with a group of World War II CMH recipients. He understood the horrors of battle and the need for extraordinary heroism to help win battles. He told the group that he would “rather have this medal than be president.” General George S. Patton was an outstanding combat soldier who also had a complete understanding of combat bravery. He was awarding the CMH to a soldier. As he placed the medal around the soldier’s neck, he said, “I’d give my immortal soul for that medal” (Murphy, E., 1990, 1).

In general, recipients of the Medal of Honor represent nearly all walks of life. One was a president’s son while others were sons of sharecroppers. They have been from large cities and small towns. Some were rich and others have been poor. Some have held graduate degrees and others never saw the inside of a high school classroom. Even though they have had differences they all shared a common trait. They share the “ability to overcome their fear in the face of overwhelming odds and respond with courage above and beyond the call of duty”. This is courage worthy of the Medal of Honor (Murphy, E., 1990, 7).

In Medal of Honor Profiles of America’s Military Heroes – From the Civil War to the Present, Mike Wallace wrote in the foreword that no one can receive a

NUMBER OF MEDALS OF HONOR AWARDED BY WARS AND CAMPAIGNS
(AS OF MAY 2003) **

	Army	Navy	Marine	Air Force Corp	Coast Guard
Civil War (1861-1865)	1198	307	17	0	0
Indian Campaign (1861-1898)	426	0	0	0	0
Korean Campaign (1871)	0	9	6	0	0
Spanish-American War (1898)	31	64	15	0	0
Samoa	0	1	1	3	0
Philippine Insurrection (1899-1913)	69	5	6	0	0
Boxer Rebellion (1900)	4	22	33	0	0
Action Against Philippine Outlaws (1911)	1	5	0	0	0
Mexican Campaign (Vera Cruz)(1911)	1	46	9	0	0
Haitian Campaign (1915)	0	0	6	0	0
Dominican Campaign (1916)	0	0	3	0	0
World War I (1917-1918)	95	21	8	0	0
Haitian Campaign (1919-1920)	0	0	2	0	0
Second Nicaraguan Campaign (1925)	0	0	2	0	0
World War II (1941-1945)	324	57	82	0	1
Korean Conflict (1950-1953)	78	7	42	4	0
Vietnam Era	159	16	57	13	0
Somalia	2	0	0	0	0
Non-Combat	3	185	5	0	0
Unknowns	9	0	0	0	0

Total number of Medals of Honor awarded: 3459

Total number of Medal of Honor recipients: 3440

Total number of double recipients: 19

As of April 13, 2003, there were 137 living Medal of Honor recipients.

**Source: Congressional Medal of Honor Society

Figure 2 Chart of Medals of Honor

(Medals by Wars)

Medal of Honor for having acted under orders, no matter how heroically he carried out those orders. The medal is reserved strictly for those who act on their own accord and out of complete selflessness. It is customary that a Medal of Honor recipient, when wearing the medal, receives a salute from others regardless of the rank, including the president. The Medal of Honor is awarded only to one who, in action involving conflict with an enemy, "distinguishes himself conspicuously by gallantly and intrepidity." There must be evidence that he put his own life on the line and that he acted "above and beyond the call of duty" (Mikaelian, xiv-xv).

It is not unusual for children to fantasize about being heroes. I remember as a child, playing in my neighborhood. We played army or cowboys and bandits. In both, we would most often rescue someone. It might be an "injured fellow soldier or one who was pinned down by enemy fire". We might rescue ladies who were travelling through the west in a make believe stagecoach. It would make us feel good to have accomplished such a feat even though it was not real.

Rollo May in The Cry for Myth said "the presence of constructive myths is a product of the cultivation in citizens of the need for compassion, especially for the stranger. Without a myth that makes a child part of a community, a house which gives warmth and protection, the child does not develop in true human fashion" (May, 52).

Among the highest aims of communities has been to project the myth of the local hero. The hero is usually the soul of the community. Without a hero, the community lacks critical dimensions. "Heroes are necessary in order to enable the citizens to find their own ideals, courage, and wisdom in the society". Citizens have to be allowed to feel heroic. We want heroes as role models and as standards of

action. A hero is a myth in action. "We all cry for a collective myth which gives us a fixed spot in an otherwise chaotic universe" (May, 53-54). It may be that my own motivations to perform actions judged to be heroic included my conscious and unconscious sense of the need for heroism. After Audie Murphy became a highly decorated soldier and well known, several towns in Texas claimed to be his hometown. Everyone wanted to benefit from his glory and fame.

We as a culture create heroes. The hero is born in total as our own myth. The hero carries our ideals, our beliefs, and our aspirations. Heroism reflects our sense of identity. From this, our own heroism is molded (May, 54). Who we choose as our heroes goes a long way toward identifying who we are. It identifies our individual values. It also identifies aspirations and expectations we have as a culture. The heroes we choose represent the best of ourselves, but allow us to accept our limitations and individualities. This is a very important consideration when we apply the test whether heroism is a reality or a perception. Heroes are often shy about their notoriety. They often do not look at themselves as heroes. When they had to make a decision whether to do something then or wait, they chose to act immediately.

Today's heroes may lack a certain nobility, and that can make them difficult to recognize. That does not mean they no longer exist. The heroes of today may be harder to recognize because they are more human. They look just like us. That is in contrast to what the mythical heroes looked like. In fact today's heroes could be any one of us. It was much easier to recognize a warrior during wartime. It was especially easier to recognize a hero during a war that had great public support. Some may believe heroes no longer exist, but it could just be a matter of definition (Williams).

We find it hard to produce new heroes to replace the old ones. This happens most often during wartime. Everyone understands heroic acts associated with the battlefield. When a dramatic accomplishment is something like the steam engine, telegraph, light bulb, the inventor is also recognized for his feat, just not as readily (Boorstin, 54). Boorstin wrote his book, The Image, before man walked on the moon. In fact, since his writings, there have been hundreds of legitimate accomplishments that have been recognized as heroic. His writings, while they may be over forty years old, are still appropriate.

We try to make our celebrities into replacements for the heroes we no longer have. We imitate celebrities as if they were cast in the mold of greatness. The majority of the few classic heroes we have left hold our attention because we have recast them in the celebrity mold (Boorstin, 73-74).

during Rollo May believes we confuse celebrities with heroes. "A celebrity is someone who is known for being known". We also confuse heroism with who makes the most money. Fake heroes give heroism a bad name (May, 55-56). There is nothing heroic about being rich or making a lot of money. There is nothing heroic about being popular. In today's culture young people look up to and idolize celebrities, entertainers, or sports figures, wanting to be just like them. Popularity does not make one a hero. We look up to these individuals and many fans want to be like them. We want to be like them because they make a lot of money, have expensive things, travel extensively, and are given a lot of attention. Far too often these stars do not set good examples. Some even have a "bad boy" or "bad girl" image. These individuals are not heroes either.

In our culture, professional sports figures are often looked up to as heroes because of their athletic ability. This is in stark contrast to CMH recipients or the other real heroes of today. The ability of the sports figures may enable them to help their team win games and ultimately win pennants or championships. If a player becomes instrumental in leading the team to victory, that player is elevated to hero status in the eyes of the fans. Even a single instance of a "heroic performance" can elevate a player to this status if the performance helps to win an important game. This event can become even more magnified if it is the final play of the game. What is missing from the actions of the sports figure, as a hero, is the sacrifice. These athletes are playing voluntarily and many have very large contracts and are expected to contribute to the success of the team.

For an article on the History Channel's website, Elliott J. Gorn wrote that during the 1920s, spectator sports moved to the center of American interest. Before television, radio provided the source of live broadcasts that held the nation's interest with the World Series and championship fights. Athletes became more like movie stars in that they became celebrities whose images were seen in countless advertisements. Their salaries became public knowledge when reported in the media.

The advent of television brought the most important change in the 1950s. Contracts of millions of dollars affected the timing of sports events. It also caused rules changes in order to keep the games interesting and satisfy the advertisers. Television coverage even caused some sports to become more popular than others (Gorn).

Sports heroes are believed by some to be some of the most valuable heroes in our modern times. Sports activities bring the entire world together. It brings together the rich and the poor, royalty and servants, upper class and lower class. We probably admire our sports heroes too much, while their achievements are recorded deeply in our minds.

The perception of a lot of people today is that too many players are poor role models for the young people. They appear to be spoiled and act as if they are better than everyone else. Sports figures in earlier times played for the love of the game. Today it seems they play for money. They appear less friendly toward their fans and want to be paid for their signature. They benefit from an apparent double standard afforded those with celebrity status. Some get into trouble with the law in some way or another or become involved with drugs. Some are given numerous chances while a few may be imprisoned. If they are not jailed, they are at least suspended from the sport.

A few modern day sports announcers believe that we as a society need to abandon the idea that athletes should be anything more than skilled professionals who are paid to tackle, pitch, and score. Basketball player, Charles Barclay, said in a Nike commercial, "I am not paid to be a role model. I am paid to wreak havoc on the basketball court" (Gibbon, 84-85).

Some individuals have given hero status to athletes. However, certain ones have fallen from that plateau. Daryl Strawberry and Steve Howe were repeat drug offenders while they played for the New York Yankees. They were instrumental in the ironic renaming of Yankee Stadium to "The Halfway House that Ruth Built." Pete

Rose received a lifetime ban from baseball for gambling. Wilt Chamberlain bragged of sleeping with twenty thousand women. After he tested positive for HIV, Magic Johnson, another professional basketball player, told of sleeping with scores of women. Jennifer Capriati had won twenty million dollars by the age of twenty. She was arrested in Miami, Florida, for shoplifting and drug use. Barry Bonds signed a multimillion-dollar contract with the San Francisco Giants. After hitting a home run, he displayed his middle finger to the crowd (Gibbon 78).

Before the 1960s, athletes did not make the astronomical salaries they do today. Professional and college athletes appeared to have been better behaved. One consideration is that the media was less active then. Fans were not part of interviews in the dugouts or locker rooms. Fans did not have access to the information about how their heroes behaved off the field.

Most athletes before the 1960s felt a responsibility, at least on the field, to pass down to the next generation some measure of idealism. Joe DiMaggio believed that being gifted held some responsibility. He said "there is always some kid who may be seeing me for the first time or the last time. I owe him my best" (Gibbon, 78-85).

Celebrities today have become more than entertainers. They have become spokespersons and philosophers because of technological advances and shifting values as well as a fundamental change in the way we treat them. Since the late 1960s they began informing us about war and telling us what was wrong with America. Some celebrities use their notoriety to further their beliefs in areas such as air pollution, gun control, forest conservation, animal rights, and direct politics.

Legend A celebrity is someone who has won our attention whether for a few seconds or a few years. A hero does something truly important regardless of whether anyone else notices. A celebrity is all about being noticed (Barron, 4-6). It is normal to wish we were like glamorous individuals who have traits we would like to find in ourselves.

Overview Daniel Boorstin warns that we should not confuse celebrity-worship and hero-worship. However, we do just that everyday. Boorstin said that by doing so we come dangerously close to depriving ourselves of real models. The old heroic human mold was broken during the 20th century. We are making a new mold that makes the modern hero more marketable and can be mass-produced (Boorstin, 49).

“A celebrity’s claim to fame is fame itself. They are notorious for their notoriety. The hero is distinguished by his achievement, the celebrity by his image or trademark. The celebrity is created by the media, while the hero is created by himself. The celebrity is a big name. The hero is a big man. The celebrity is someone who is known for his well-knownness” (Boorstin, 57-61).

Heroes are made by folklore, history books, and sacred texts. Celebrities are created from public opinion, gossip, newspapers, and magazines. The passage of time, that creates and helps establish the hero, destroys the celebrity (Boorstin, 63).

The modern media may be responsible for degrading potential heroes by publicizing the mistakes of great individuals. This could not occur if there was not such a market for these stories. Readers enjoy reading about the troubles of others.

It is difficult to combine the qualities of heroism with the values of today’s entertainment industry and celebrities. The media uses the hero in conjunction with “legend, icon, and idol”. Heroes have always been connected to legendary stories.

Legends have a strong emotional pull. We long for colorful and romantic stories and legends. As American families deteriorate, we yearn for role models in our daily lives. Some individuals prefer using "role model" to the word "hero". We like to imagine role models succeeding at a particular job, doing what they have to do, and overcoming obstacles (Gibbon, 8-9).

In the movie "The Mask of Zorro," the hero, Zorro, had been called heroic. Zorro represented a force that protected the unfortunate people from the evil ones. He was a classic hero who sought out people who tried to suppress the lower class and taken their property. His heroism was referred to as a romantic illusion.

In 400 B.C. Thucydides wrote, "They are surely to be esteemed the bravest spirits who, having the clearest sense of both the pains and pleasures of life, do not on that account shrink from danger." Plato once wrote, "What is honored in a country will be cultivated there" (Highland). Even if sports achievements and other sorts of celebrity may be confused with heroism, our deep need for real heroes remains.

York spent much of his youth drinking, gambling, and being rowdy in the hills near his home. In 1915, York turned back his type of life after his good friend was killed in a fight in a bar. He joined the Church of Christ with the encouragement of Gracie Williams, who would later become his wife. The members of this church did not believe in war. They were pacifists. He was opposed to his beliefs and was opposed to the war when the United States entered World War I in Europe in 1917 (Doherty, 48).

The draft was started and began calling up young men from across the country to military duty. In the fall of 1917, York was ordered to report for military duty. He

Chapter 3 - Alvin York

Alvin C. York was born December 13, 1887, in a one-room log cabin in Pall Mall, Tennessee, to William and Mary York. He was the third of eleven children and was the oldest boy. When his father died in 1911, York assumed the enormous responsibility of supporting the rest of the family. He left school after the third grade. While Alvin's younger brothers ran the farm, he operated his father's blacksmith shop. York was an excellent marksman and won most of the shooting contests in the area (Lee, 4).

York drank a lot when he was young and on several occasions while drunk was involved in shooting incidents. Once he was on his way home from drinking and saw six turkeys sitting on a fence. He decided to test how sober he was. He shot the six turkeys with six shots (Lee, 7). His shooting ability would later save his life and those of his fellow soldiers.

York spent much of his youth drinking, gambling, and being rowdy in the hills near his home. In 1915, York turned from this type of life after his good friend was killed in a fight in a bar. He joined the Church of Christ with the encouragement of Gracie Williams, who would later become his wife. The members of this church did not believe in war. They were pacifists. He was sincere in his beliefs and was opposed to the war when the United States entered World War I in Europe in 1917 (Doherty, 48).

The draft was started and began calling up young men from across the county to military duty. In the fall of 1917, York was ordered to report for military duty. He

originally claimed conscientious objector status and tried to avoid the war. He asked four times for exemptions to his draft orders and was denied each time (Doherty, 48).

Eventually he was ordered to report to Camp Gordon, Georgia, for training. During his training York still had doubts about the morality of war. It was not until he was assigned to a combat unit that he went to see his company commander. The commander recognized York's sincerity and took him to see the battalion commander. They had a lengthy discussion and York found that the major was well versed in the Bible. The major tried to convince York that the Lord expected his people to defend themselves (Lee, 19).

York would later say that he was more confused than ever after his talk with the Major. He asked for and received a pass to go home to think about a decision. After arriving back home, York went up into the mountains and prayed. When he returned he was convinced God wanted him to fight. He also felt God would protect him in battle. On May 1, 1918, York's division left the United States by boat. After arriving in France, the division trained for several weeks preparing for combat. By late June they were sent to the front line. In September the division was in the Argonne Forest and was involved in its first heavy combat. By this time, Alvin York had been promoted to corporal and was in charge of a squad (Doherty, 48-49).

On October 8, 1918, York was part of a 16-man patrol sent to eliminate several enemy machine-gun nests that were holding the wooded side of a hill. York's patrol was able to get behind the German lines. The surprised Germans thought the patrol was part of a large American force. The Germans surrendered immediately. The patrol then moved to the next group of Germans. Those Germans recognized that it

was a small American force and opened fire on them. Six American soldiers were killed immediately and three were wounded, including the officer in charge.

The German prisoners, as well as the seven remaining members of the patrol, took cover. They became caught in a crossfire that hit some of the prisoners. Alvin York took command of the patrol. He ordered his men to watch the prisoners while he went to engage the enemy positions. York was about to put his marksmanship to work. He shot the Germans in the first position one by one. When another group charged his position, he pulled his Colt .45 pistol and shot each enemy soldier one at a time. He had shot seventeen Germans with seventeen shots. While returning to the American position, they took many more prisoners. The remaining seven of the patrol, the three wounded men, and 132 German prisoners returned safely (Bosco, 5).

York would later observe that his military column contained so many German prisoners that he feared the U.S. artillery would mistake them for a German Unit and shell them (Lee, 38).

York's citation reads:

Rank and organization: Corporal, U.S. Army, Company G, 328th Infantry, 82d Division. Place and date: Near Chatel-chehery, France, 8 October, 1918. Entered service at: Pall Mall, Tenn. Born 13 December, 1887, Fentress County, Tenn. G.O No.: 59, W.D. 1919. Citation: After his platoon had suffered heavy casualties and three other noncommissioned officers had become casualties, Cpl York assumed command. Fearlessly leading seven men, he charged with great daring a machinegun nest which was pouring deadly and incessant fire upon his platoon. In this heroic feat the machinegun

nest was taken, together with 4 officers and 128 men and several guns (Lang, 433).

York appeared larger than life. His heroic acts vaulted him to instant fame. Fueled by newspaper accounts, he became linked in the popular imagination with such icons as Abraham Lincoln, Davy Crockett, and Daniel Boone. It was not because of who he was. It was because of what he represented. He represented a humble, self-reliant, and religiously dedicated life. He also represented that combination of individual strength, skill, and courage linked to the ideals of the community (the nation) seen in the figure of the hero for thousands of years, from Aristotle.

When York returned home from the war, attempts were made to lure him to Hollywood, Broadway, and many advertisers wanted his endorsement. Instead, York returned to Tennessee to help improve education there, to help improve roads, and to help his fellow man.

In response to demands for his endorsement, York is quoted as saying "This uniform ain't for sale." Another quote shows his modesty and unwillingness to use his fame for his own benefit. He said, "It's over; let's just forget about it" (Iavarone).

In attempting to determine the factors that contributed to York's success, it is fairly certain that besides his military skill, the fact that the terrain and his position in relation to the enemy made it possible for a single rifleman to be highly effective against the greater firepower provided by the enemy. In addition, it was York's long experience with weapons that helped him exploit his advantage over the machine gunners. Another factor contributing to the success was the condition of the enemy.

They were exhausted, confused, and frightened. This was indicated by the fact that the German Lieutenant, Vollmer, emptied his pistol at York without hitting him, before surrendering to York (Lee, 46).

When the United States entered World War II, York not only supported our military efforts, he attempted to re-enlist in the service. He was rejected due to his age and obesity. It will be remembered that York had originally condemned war and even questioned America's involvement in World War I (Birdwell). In 1952, York suffered a stroke (cerebral hemorrhage). By 1961 he was partially paralyzed and almost completely blind. He died September 2, 1964. York possessed several mythic attributes. He stood for Pioneer America in the midst of an industrialized twentieth century. He was a Citizen soldier. General John J. Pershing, commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in World War I referred to Alvin York as "the greatest civilian soldier" of World War I. When Alvin York died in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson, in a statement, called him "a symbol of American courage and sacrifice" who "epitomized the gallantry of American fighting men and their sacrifices in behalf of freedom" (Burzynski).

Among Alvin York's awards were the Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Service Cross. He was also awarded the French Croix de Guerre. When he was being awarded the French Medal by Marshal Foch, Foch told him, "What you did was the greatest thing accomplished by any private soldier of all the armies of Europe" (Lee, 39).

Alvin York fit the model of a hero that was established by culture. Admiration for his traits was determined by history. It was determined long before York became a

hero. His actions and his strengths and the accomplishments they led to were real, as recognized by his medals. His entry into the world of heroes of history, myth and legend was made possible by the cultural accounts of his actions in the press and in the film "Sergeant York." Our need for such a figure was fed by the cultural forces that turned a real person into a archetypal hero.

Campbell suggests that whether we look at someone as a hero or as a monster depends on our focus. A German soldier who dies in a battle is just as much a hero as the American who was sent over to kill him (Campbell, 1988, 127). It is all in the perception of the one who is considering it. During WWI, German civilians as well as the German military obviously had those who they looked up to and admired. They had their heroes and respected them very much, just as we Americans respected our heroes. They had heroes who encouraged them and who they believed would lead Germany to victory in its conquests. It must have been very demoralizing when word spread that Alvin York single-handedly captured 132 Germans and killed dozens more. For one soldier to accomplish so much could only have undermined the German strength.

Chapter 4 - Audie Murphy

Audie L. Murphy was born June 20, 1924 in Hunt County, Texas, the seventh of twelve children. He was the son of Emmett and Josie Murphy who were both from large families. Emmett was the seventh of twelve children. Josie was the fifth of thirteen. Audie's family were tenant farmers and sharecroppers who moved frequently. By the time Audie was two years old he had a new brother. By the time he was four he had another new brother. Audie's mother had to give the most attention to the newest child. This necessitated Audie being raised mainly by his older sister, Corinne, who was sixteen when Audie was born (Simpson, 15-18).

Audie Murphy only completed the fifth grade. He was needed to help with the income of the family and could not afford to stay in school (Graham, 17). Audie's mother died when he was sixteen. Audie enjoyed hunting and had the ability to see and hear animals that others could not. He was described as being an excellent marksman with a rifle (Simpson, 15-18).

Audie Murphy had a very solid and deeply rooted military heritage. One of his great-great-grandfathers fought in the American Revolution. A great grandfather fought in the War of 1812. He had three great half uncles who were in the Texas Revolution. A great half uncle fought in the Mexican War. He had a great grandfather, three great uncles and two great half uncles who fought for the Confederate Army in the Civil War. Three uncles on his father's side and two uncles on his mother's side fought in WWI. Two of Audie's own brothers fought in WWII. His patriotism and fondness for the military came naturally. He inherited it. There are

not many Americans who can brag about having a military background such as his (Simpson, 5).

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Audie wanted to enlist even though he was only seventeen. He wanted to be a Marine sniper. In the spring of 1942, he attempted to join the Marines. He was rejected by the Marines and tried the Paratroopers. Recruiters at both offices he visited turned him down, in part because he “looked fifteen” and because he was about 5’5” and weighed 110 pounds. Audie then tried the army where he was told to return when he was eighteen. There are discrepancies concerning when he actually returned to enlist. Some documents show it was June 20, 1942, while others show June 24 or June 29. He was unable to convince recruiters he was eighteen (Simpson, 45-53). Audie Murphy had his sister, Corinne, and the doctor who delivered him, notarize documents to attest to his age. Audie became one of eighteen million men to be processed by the armed forces between 1941 and 1945 (Graham, 24).

The U.S. Army grew in size from approximately 267,000 soldiers in June of 1940 to 8,113,000 in June of 1945. Out of such a large number of soldiers, it is significant that one soldier became one of the nation’s best known, as well as most decorated (Graham, 26).

Audie Murphy’s incomplete formal education put him in the group, grammar school or less, which produced the highest rate of ineffectiveness in the armed services; this group represented 32 percent of the soldiers. Murphy came from one of the two regions that had the highest rate of rejection due to poor educational systems. The two regions were the Southeast and the Southwest (Graham, 27). Yet this

unpromising soldier received the nation's highest military honor. He would overcome several obstacles, personal as well as military related, to become a successful and decorated soldier.

During his training, someone in authority tried to send Audie to Cook and Baker's School, so that he would have a safer and less punishing military job. He protested so much that the plan was dropped. Later another commander tried to give Audie a job at the post-exchange. Again Audie complained. He said he had joined the army to fight, not to sell merchandise. He completed his advanced training in January 1943 and received orders to ship out to North Africa (Simpson, 45-53).

Audie Murphy received his first decoration for valor on March 2, 1944. It was the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device. The "V" indicates the award was for valor. There are instances in which the Bronze Star Medal is awarded to a soldier for action not involving valor. He received this medal for destroying an army tank that he helped to put out of commission. This act had two purposes. One was to disable the tank, preventing the enemy from being able to repair it for use later. The second purpose was to block the only road providing passage to the area where the 15th Infantry was located. Ground in this area was extremely soft and not passable for heavy vehicles. The only portion of the area the tanks could use was a narrow, hard road. By blocking this road, the area was safe from enemy tanks as long as the other ground remained wet and soft (Simpson, 99-100).

Audie received two more awards from special orders dated May 8, 1944. They were the Combat Infantry Badge and the First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Bronze Star. He had been eligible for the Combat Infantry Badge for several months. Apparently

because of a paper-work oversight, Murphy had not been given the medal until this date. The First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Bronze Star was awarded “for exemplary conduct in ground combat against an armed enemy.” It was not for any specific act, but was for the numerous patrols he conducted while at Anzio (Simpson, 102).

In August 1944, Audie earned the Distinguished Service Cross. In the citation in the general order dated January 28, 1945, he was described as displaying “extraordinary heroism in action.” His rifle platoon landed near Ramatuelle, France, August 15, 1944. As they advanced inland they were pinned down by machine gun fire from a hill in front of them. Alone, Audie charge the hill killing six German soldiers, wounding three more, and capturing five who surrendered to him (Simpson, 121).

During three days of action at Monte Limar, France, in late August 1944, the 1st Battalion of the 15th Infantry took 804 POWs, killed or wounded approximately 485 enemy soldiers, and captured or destroyed over 500 vehicles and about 1000 horses. Audie’s unit was given the Distinguished Unit Citation (Presidential Unit Citation) (Simpson, 124).

On September 15, 1944, Audie was wounded for the first time. Shrapnel from a mortar round struck him. The explosion knocked him unconscious. It also tore the heel from his shoe, cut his foot open and broke the stock of his rifle. He returned to his unit after a 12-day healing period. He would later receive the Purple Heart for this injury (Graham, 72).

During a 24-day period in October 1944, Audie Murphy received two medals for valor, a battlefield commission to 2nd Lieutenant, and received his most serious

injury. On October 2, 1944, a group of soldiers was surprised by an enemy machine gun. Murphy approached to within 15 yards of the enemy position and threw two hand grenades at the enemy soldiers, killing four Germans, wounding three and completely destroying the position. For his action, Murphy received the Silver Star. On October 5, Audie earned the 1st Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star. He crawled fifty yards to within 200 yards of a heavily fortified enemy position. Despite heavy machine gun and rifle fire, Audie, using a radio he was carrying, was able to direct artillery fire for about an hour. This resulted in the killing of fifteen German soldiers and 35 injuries. On October 25, near Les Rouges, a German sniper fired on Audie's unit. One shot struck Murphy in the hip. He returned fire and killed the sniper (Graham, 77-78).

Audie's unit was fighting near Maison Rouge on January 25, 1945. The enemy poured a heavy barrage of mortar rounds in the area of Audie and his men. One round hit close to Audie knocking him down. Some of the small pieces of shrapnel hit his left leg. There were many fragments in his leg but the wounds were superficial. He was awarded his 2nd oak leaf cluster on his Purple Heart. He did not miss any combat with this injury and in fact would earn the nation's highest award the following day (Simpson, 153).

On January 26, 1945, Murphy had been placed in charge of Company B, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry. The previous commander had been seriously wounded the day before during fighting in the area of the Colmar Pocket in France. The official citation reads:

... The directions of artillery fire wiped out many of the enemy; he killed or wounded about 50. Lieutenant Murphy's indomitable courage and his

Second Lieutenant Audie L. Murphy, 15th Infantry, on January 26, 1945, near Oltzwihr, France, commanded Company B, which was attacked by six tanks and waves of infantry. Lieutenant 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. Lieutenant Murphy continued to direct artillery fire which killed large numbers of the advancing enemy infantry.

With the enemy tanks abreast of his position, Lieutenant 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 Lieutenant 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 ten yards, only to be mowed down by his fire. He received a leg wound, but ignored it and continued the single handed fight until his ammunition was exhausted.

He then made his way to his company, refused medical attention, and organized the company in a counter attack which forced the Germans to withdraw. His directions of artillery fire wiped out many of the enemy; he killed or wounded about 50. Lieutenant 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 (Lang, 546-47).

Following the war, Audie Murphy once said "If I discovered one valuable thing during my early combat days, it was audacity, which is often mistaken for courage or foolishness. It is neither. Audacity is a tactical weapon. Nine times out of ten it will throw the enemy off balance and confuse him. However much one sees of audacious deeds, nobody really expects them." Audie's luck was always underwritten by an instinct to survive. He was an expert store of combat knowledge that was added to every day under fire (Graham, 59-72).

In his book, To Hell and Back, Audie Murphy wrote "Here was a war itself; and I was too young to enlist. I was sure that it would all be over in a few months and I would be robbed of the great adventure that had haunted my imagination". He also wrote, "When I was a child, I was told that men were branded by war. Has the brand been put on me? Have the years of blood and ruin stripped me of all decency? Of all Belief?" He said he believed in "the men who went and would go again to hell and back to preserve what our country thinks right and decent" (Murphy, A, 7-273).

Ron Owens is a retired captain from the Oklahoma City Police Department. He has written several books about OCPD history, heroes of Oklahoma, and other stories about Oklahoma Law Enforcement. His most recent book, Jelly Bryce, is about a former Oklahoma City Police Detective who later became an FBI agent. Bryce was involved in 19 shootings in the line of duty. He was renowned for his fast

draw, having been electronically timed at four tenths of a second to draw and fire using live ammunition.

Owens, in his epilogue, pointed to similarities between Jelly Bryce and Audie Murphy. He described that they were both small in stature, both being about 5'7" and weighing less than 170 pounds. Neither of them backed down from confrontations with a larger opponent. Neither of these two great men were well educated. They both had phenomenal eyesight.

They were extremely calm and had a great deal of confidence. They were outspoken, blunt, direct, and forceful men in their speech. Both died unexpectedly. Audie Murphy died in a plane crash in 1971. Bryce died of a heart attack in 1973 (Owens, 204-06).

Murphy was a passenger in an Aero-Commander on May 28, 1971. The plane was flying in fog and rain when it crashed about eighty miles northeast of Galax, Virginia, in Craig County. There were four others on the plane including the pilot. Audie Murphy's body was recovered on Memorial Day (Simpson, 385).

Audie Murphy had lived the American Dream. He worked his way up from being a "commoner" to being a lieutenant in the Army and later a Hollywood film-star. He was successful in surviving long periods of combat and emerging a great hero. He became a successful actor. On the surface he won the struggles he was involved in. However, on the inside, he struggled with other things. He had problems with gambling, drinking, and relationships. He was less successful with those struggles. He struggled against adversity and sacrificed much, a necessity of heroism.

(Rodgers)



Figure 3 Audie L. Murphy

(Rodgers)

A little known fact about Audie Murphy is that he wrote a lot of poetry and even wrote some lyrics for songs that were recorded by country music artists.

Between 1962 and 1970 he wrote or co-wrote words to thirteen songs. One song, "Shutters and Boards," was recorded by such well-known artists as Porter Wagoner, Jimmy Dean, Teresa Brewer, Dean Martin, and Jerry Wallace (Simpson, 446).

He once observed: "Two weeks of combat can make an old man out of you. You grow up real fast in the army and you learn not to make the same mistake twice. Because if you do, you don't grow up at all" (Simpson, 370).

Audie Murphy received thirty-three awards. These awards included such medals as the silver battle star (representing five bronze Battle Stars, the Bronze Star Medal with "V" (Valor) device and one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Distinguished Service Cross, a Presidential Unit Citation with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Silver Star with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Legion of Merit, and the Medal of Honor. He was given an award from Belgium and three awards from France including the highest their country officers. Twelve of the awards were presented to him for Valor (Simpson, 442).

Audie Murphy was buried with full military honors in Arlington Cemetery on June 7, 1971. The day he was buried, President Richard M. Nixon said "As America's most decorated hero of World War II, Audie Murphy not only won the admiration of millions for his brave exploits, he also came to epitomize the gallantry in action of America's fighting men. The nation stands in his debt and mourns at his death" (Simpson, 385-404).

Audie Murphy just performed the acts of heroism. We as a culture did the rest. We lifted him up, put him on a pedestal, and admired his feats and admired him. Then it went a step further. Murphy became popular as an actor in many films playing the part of the hero. He became admired in these hero roles all over again.

Earlier I cited Joseph Campbell's observation that a hero is someone who has battled past personal and local limitations. York certainly did that by overcoming his religious convictions. He felt very strongly about his religious beliefs. These convictions had originally prevented York from committing himself to be the soldier that the Army wanted him to be. Murphy overcame his physical limitation of being small in stature. He also overcame the lack of an education by excelling at leadership and providing a good role model for his fellow soldiers.

Like Alvin York, Audie Murphy fits the model of a hero that culture has established. The traits recognized as those of a hero were determined long ago in history. His deeds, accomplishments and abilities are undisputed. His acknowledgement by all as the most decorated soldier in WWII is proof. His addition to the long list of heroes was inspired by the media and honored by the military as well as foreign nations. Our craving and need for a model such as Murphy was determined by cultural forces that created a archetypal hero from an ordinary person.

Chapter 5 - Movies and Heroes

There was a time when the most heroic of heroes was the type seen on the movie screen. During the 1930s, male stars played many roles of characters who were daring and appeared indestructible. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, the film industry began losing large numbers of people who were somehow associated with making movies. This was from directors and producers to cameramen. By the end of 1944 a large number of people who had been involved with filmmaking had either been drafted or enlisted in the military. Forty-nine leading men and stars were gone. To fill the gap, aging actors were used and more movies were made from stories that put women and children in the leading roles. Some film technicians who found themselves in the military were used to make military training films or combat photographs (Look, 58-59).

During World War II movies were shown to servicemen worldwide. Surveys were taken among soldiers and the results showed servicemen did not like movies about war or westerns. They preferred musicals, comedies, mysteries, and romantic dramas. The movies were shown to combat soldiers as well as in field hospitals and rest camps. Army and Navy doctors considered the films to be therapeutic. While war movies were not popular with soldiers, the public craved information about the war even if it was re-enacted, edited, or somewhat fictional. In the three years after Pearl Harbor ten percent of all of Hollywood's output was war movies (Look, 104-05).

Movies about the Vietnam War contained more graphic depictions of violence than ever before in war movies. They showed women and children being murdered

and soldiers dying slowly. These movies, although realistic, were sympathetic to soldiers. They were, however, not depicted as heroes because they were caught in a war without a purpose. There was hardly a trace of glory in these Vietnam War movies, unlike the popular war movies made in the 1950s such as "Sands of Iwo Jima" and "To Hell and Back" (Gibbon, 64).

During the American Revolution, two partisan groups battled fiercely resulting in bloody skirmishes. Guerrillas fighting for Washington's cause were called "skimmers". Those who supported King George III's British dragoons and Hessian mercenaries were called "cowboys". The name developed from young boys on English farms who cared for the cattle in the Surrey and Essex areas. Several decades after the establishment of the colonies' independence the "cowboy" became an American. Soon after that he achieved the required status of maturity. He then graduated with honor into folklore and legend and was a living symbol of the Wild West during the original American frontier period (Fenin, 3).

One of the most powerful and pervasive myths is that of the lone cowboy and the West. There are untold numbers of films about the lonely cowboy. In these films the courage of American frontier men and women are depicted (May, 96-97).

There is a three-way system of the Western theme. It is the hero, the adventure, and the law and has at all times been fascinating to movie audiences. The cowboy-hero represented physical and moral strength and was the backbone in the boom of the "B" Westerns in the 1930s. Shortly after WWII, there was a noticeable move to make the hero a less idealized character. The hero had aims of those of the chivalrous knight, but he was too much of a realist to attempt to achieve his aims

chivalrously. Too many illusions had been destroyed by the war (Fenin, 27). Post-war skepticism eroded the American psyche and we started doubting the heroes of the West. The lure of the Western gradually began fading away.

The movie hero has been presented as an archangel without wings or as a superman whose main interest is in redressing wrongs. This can certainly be seen as a popular version of heroic archetypes as described from Aristotle to Jung and Campbell. There are themes based on the hero rescuing a girl or a widow left alone to manage a farm or a ranch from the mortgage holder who was usually scheming to get the land for his own use. The hero usually returned to his horse after he had disposed of the villain. In the earlier Westerns the hero would ride off on his horse alone (Fenin, 30). In later movies the hero would end up with the girl. Everyone remembers the Lone Ranger. After he and Tonto had saved the day, they would ride off after having left a silver bullet with a certain individual. Only one person in the group watching them leave knew he was the Lone Ranger and would tell the others as the show ended.

A variation to the theme of the western movie might see the hero battling bank robbers, cattle rustlers, or stagecoach bandits. Sometimes the hero would be a United States Marshall, other form of law enforcement, or he could just be a concerned citizen. He might even be a reformed outlaw. This caused an interesting concern. He would turn against his former friends causing both sides to distrust him until he proved himself toward the end of the movie. After WWII, another variation was introduced where the villain killed the hero's wife or entire family. Another variation would find

the hero joining the outlaw gang and would be “undercover” and bring the outlaws to justice (Fenin, 31-32).

There will always be an audience for the Western. It represents romantic adventure and idealism, achievement, optimism for the future, justice, individualism, the beauty of the land, and the courage and independence of the individuals who won the land. It is in the Western that we are reminded that we are descendants of a people who knew how to work hard, who knew how to fight, and who were prepared to die. The code of the west was that a cowboy was honest, brave, and kind to his horse. He treated women with respect, looked out for the homeless homesteader and was someone young people could look up to and admire (Nott, 57).

Westerns have always been a source of great family entertainment. The shows were about the good guys against the bad guys, the white hats against the black hats. These stars taught America the difference between right and wrong and made it look fun and easy. Part of the attraction of the Western was its simplicity. With everyone wearing pistols or carrying rifles, complex conflicts were resolved in plain, clean violent actions. The West was able to take on mythical proportions because of this decisiveness. It became a place where great legends were born.

A Hollywood legend who was known by many as an American Hero was John Wayne. He played a variety of roles in movies. Most of his roles were in Western or War movies. His roles were usually that of a character that ended up being a hero in some manner. While John Wayne was never in the military, he was looked upon as having been a veteran. Wayne was patriotic and was supportive of the military. His movies provided great inspiration for many young and old Americans alike. He was

more than a celebrity. He was an archetypal hero without ever actually committing a heroic act. This was due in part because of his persona and qualities of the characters he portrayed. His notoriety developed during a time in our history that we needed heroes and models.

The movies about the West were sold to an eager audience. Conflicts grew out of several archetypal situations: ranchers vs. farmers (*Shane* and *Man without a Star*), Indians vs. settlers (*The Searchers* and *Hondo*), and outlaws vs. civilization (*My Darling Clementine* and *High Noon*) (Johnson).

For about five decades the American public was given a steady diet of Western myths, legends, and heroes. During this time the Western myth influenced the American culture. Denim jeans and jackets, cowboy boots, toy cap guns, rubber tipped arrows, and tom-toms are just a few examples of the influence Westerns exhibited (Johnson).

There came a time in the life of the Western, when the man with the gun was given a psychological aspect, and confronted with problems that could not be solved by the speed of his draw, the simple appeal of the Western was in doubt. We believe the world was too complicated a place for the Western heroes (Johnson).

In films, the hero's journey follows a very predictable pattern. This is a recipe for a successful film. The hero is leading an ordinary life when he receives a call to adventure. He refuses the call at first, but receives the aid of a mentor and crosses the first threshold. In his account of the hero's journey, Joseph Campbell describes all this in detail. The hero meets tests, makes allies, and meets enemies before undergoing the supreme ordeal. He escapes with the prize that can be a sword, elixir,

or treasure. He is pursued by enemies, symbolically dies and is resurrected. He returns to his ordinary world with the prize. The American public has shown many times over that they will flock to any movie that has the promise of following this pattern. This certainly seems to suggest that our need for heroic archetypes continues.

This recipe for heroism is seen as a very close match in all of the Star Wars movies. Obi Wan and Yoda are the mentors. The supreme ordeal varies in each movie. Luke Skywalker is the hero and is believed to be dead before being 'resurrected'. We want to be able to escape into the lives of these heroes and live through their adventures.

The hero archetype plays into all of these roles whether they are about westerns, war, police, or space. Tami Cowden described eight contemporary hero archetypes. They are: the Chief, the Bad Boy, the Best Friend, the Charmer, the Lost Soul, the Professor, the Swashbuckler, and the Warrior.

The Chief is a dynamic leader who concentrates on his work. He is a born leader, tough, and goal-oriented. William Shatner in "Star Trek," Marlon Brando in "The Godfather," and Harrison Ford in "Sabrina," are examples of The Chief.

The Bad Boy is wild and dangerous. He is a rebel, bitter, and volatile. James Dean in "Rebel Without a Cause," Matt Damon in "Good Will Hunting," and Patrick Swayze in "Dirty Dancing" are examples of this archetype.

The Best Friend is kind, responsible, decent, and dependable. He does not want to hurt anyone's feelings and does not like confrontations. Jimmy Stewart in "It's a Wonderful Life," Hugh Grant in "Four Weddings and a Funeral," and Kevin Spacey in "American Beauty" fit this description.

The Charmer is a gigolo-type. He creates fantasies, is irresistible, but not responsible or dependable. Examples would be Leonardo DiCaprio in "Titanic," James Garner and Mel Gibson in "Maverick," Mel Gibson in "What Women Want," and Dustin Hoffman in "Midnight Cowboy."

The Lost Soul is sensitive, understanding, and is a loner. He is creative but secretive. This would be Mel Gibson in "Lethal Weapon," David Duchovny in "The X-Files," "Shrek," and the Beast in "Beauty and the Beast."

The Professor is logical, introverted, and knows everything. He is honest, faithful, and will not let you down. Leonard Nimoy in "Star Trek," Robin Williams and Fred McMurray in "Flubber," and Russell Crowe in "A Beautiful Mind."

The Swashbuckler is an adventurer. He is physical, daring, fearless, and an explorer. He needs thrills to keep him happy. This would fit Antonio Banderas in "The Mask of Zorro," Michael Douglas in "Romancing the Stone," and Harrison Ford in "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

The Warrior is noble and acts with honor. He is a reluctant rescuer and the knight in shining armor. He always takes up for the underdog and is a protector. He does not always follow the rules. Clint Eastwood in "Dirty Harry," Russell Crowe in "Gladiator," and Mel Gibson in "Braveheart" are good examples of the Warrior (Cowden).

There is a common thread among these actors and their roles. They do something, or provide something, that others are not willing to do. They may rescue someone who is in danger of dying. They may capture a villain, or save a city or a planet. The characters provide a model for others to look up to and respect. These

characters represent the values and ideals of the archetypal heroes. They tell us something about ourselves and who we want to be.

Audie Murphy worked hard to learn how to act. Several Hollywood stars aided him. When it came to making movies, Audie Murphy did not have to be shown how to use a gun. He had experience with three elements necessary for classic Western film lore: honor, death, and violence. Between 1949 and 1967 he made 32 Western films, compared to 39 by Randolph Scott and 26 by Joel McCrea. During the same period, John Wayne made about 21, James Stewart made 15, and Gary Cooper made around 10 (Nott, 6).

I recently viewed a movie in which Audie Murphy starred. "The Red Badge of Courage" was made in 1951. Murphy played the role of Henry Fleming, a very young man who was caught up in the Civil War. He was a Union soldier with a unit from Ohio. Murphy's character was scared, as were many of the other soldiers. When the fighting first started, Fleming (Murphy) ran away but rejoined his unit the next day. He seemed to have a different attitude when he returned. When his unit began fighting again, he found the courage he needed to be a good soldier and become a man. He overshadowed the other soldiers. He developed a passion for destroying the enemy and may have felt the power of an army within himself. A soldier next to him, who was carrying the American flag, was shot and went down. Fleming picked up the flag and led the charge against the enemy. This displayed the same tremendous courage that Murphy exhibited in real-life combat. Fleming was recognized for his bravery. Audie Murphy was a young boy when he actually enlisted, but developed into a man when he began fighting.

Interestingly, Audie Murphy is quoted once as saying "I don't know what bravery is, sometimes it takes more courage to get up and run than to stay. You either just do it or you don't. I got so scared the first day in combat I just decided to go along with it" (Simpson, 369). Murphy, in saying he did not know what bravery is, makes for interesting consideration. Since he came from a long line of family members who were soldiers in previous wars, he certainly inherited traits such as honor, respect, and determination. What he displayed were the traits of the archetypal hero, even though he did not know the meaning of bravery. The traits he displayed were traits or characteristics like courage, nobility of purpose, and bravery. The hero archetype is a facet of Audie Murphy's personality.

I watched another of Audie Murphy's movies, "To Hell and Back", which was based on Murphy's autobiography of the same name. Audie Murphy wrote it in 1949. It was made into a movie and released in 1955. Murphy had the unusual position of being cast as the lead role and playing himself. Murphy appeared to be an accomplished actor in this movie. It did not seem that it was awkward for him to play himself, but he must have been somewhat uncomfortable, not wanting to over glamorize his heroics.

The director wanted to end the movie with a scene showing Murphy being presented with the Medal of Honor. It took the director two days to convince Murphy to let them use that scene. Murphy did not want to focus that much attention on himself because he wanted recognition for his friends who had been killed. This is a trait of many heroes. They are shy and reject too much attention on themselves. The movie "To Hell and Back" was released at a perfect time in the history of the United

States. The Korean Conflict had just ended prior to 1955. Combat victories were not clear-cut in that war as they had been in World War II. The movie made Audie Murphy a “modern folk hero.” He was referred to by many as the “Sgt. York of World War II” (Graham, 160-62).

While watching many Audie Murphy movies, I have made an observation. Murphy seems to perform heroically in a very natural manner. What he does in playing his roles is in the same fearless way he performed in real life. Whether it is in “To Hell and Back”, “The Texican”, or “The Guns of Fort Petticoat”, Murphy appears natural and comfortable being a hero.

We will never know whether Audie Murphy would have become a popular movie hero had he not reached celebrity status as a war hero. The chances are he would not have. We do know Alvin York chose not to capitalize on his fame from the war. He did use it, however, to help the citizens of Tennessee.

A movie about Alvin York was released in 1941, “Sergeant York”, starring Gary Cooper. Cooper won an Academy Award in 1942 for Best Actor (Burzynski). It portrayed Alvin York as a very wild youngster. He drank a lot and was viewed by others around him as what today would be called a delinquent. York’s mother was faithful to the church and was well respected. The preacher went to see York one day and described to him that the tree is strong because it has deep roots that hold it up and support it. He said you can not see the roots but you know they are there. The preacher then told York that a man needs “roots” outside of his own self. This is like the archetypal hero who unites strong personal strength and courage to beliefs and values that go beyond himself to embody hopes and beliefs of the community. These

roots can not be seen either, but they provide support for the person. Animals gather food to prepare for winter. Birds fly south for the winter. There is no one telling them to do that. They are guided by something else to do this on their own.

“Sergeant York” depicts the importance of the relation between religious faith and heroism. York struggled with his faith and patriotism. His patriotic heroism was made possible by spiritual values that contribute to the inner strengths. York was deeply rooted in faith. He is shown in the movies teaching a Sunday School Class and telling about Cain and Abel. He points out that resorting to violence is wrong. This was something in which he truly believed.

Later in the film, after York was drafted and was in training, he struggled with his faith to determine if he would fight or try to remain a pacifist. He went to see the preacher who told him some men do not know what they have until they lose it. The preacher told him the cost of his heritage is high. Sometimes it takes all we have to preserve it even if it costs lives. York went out on a mountaintop alone and sat for awhile. He asked himself what Daniel Boone was looking for when he went out into the wilderness. He decided Boone wanted “to be free.” York came to the conclusion that he had to fight even though he was against it, in order to defend the rights of all men and to be free. “Sergeant York” suggests that our deepest hopes for peace on earth may sometimes lead us to do battle on behalf of all men. This is just like archetypal heroes.

After York was decorated as a hero, his major asked him why he did it. He told the major it was to save lives. He said that machine guns were killing hundreds, maybe thousands of Americans. He knew if he could stop the machine guns he could

stop the killing. He said he was not proud of what he did. It was something he had to do.

This movie may or may not be totally accurate as to the exact dialogue between the real people. That is not important here. What is an important aspect of the movie is that it helped create a myth of a "salt of the earth" hero, who embodies many of the traits of heroes we have recognized for thousands of years. An archetypal hero being created from an ordinary man resulted from our craving and need for a model and was determined by cultural forces.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

We have seen that our evolving culture has taken different views of the military hero. WWI and WWII saw a great rise in the adoration of military heroes. The heroes of those wars were envied by many who wanted to emulate them. WWI and WWII produced Alvin York and Audie Murphy. The Korean and Vietnam Wars saw a reversal in the public's view of the warrior. The increased exposure by television caused damage in two ways. The coverage of Vietnam adversely affected American sentiment toward the soldier and our need to be in this war. About the same time, television provided an increase in the exposure of sports, politics, and entertainment. These three areas introduced another type of hero that became widely accepted and respected by the public. Sports replaced the source of our previously recognized heroes, the military. Kennedy's inaugural speech in 1961 made Americans feel like they had a mission to defend freedom all over the world. Very few people opposed Kennedy when he increased the number of American military advisers in Vietnam. Most Americans had not even heard of Vietnam. In January 1963, Buddhists, committing suicide, were on the front pages of newspapers worldwide. It was then that Americans became aware of Vietnam and began questioning our support of the South Vietnamese Government.

Lyndon Johnson was elected as a peace candidate. He sent large numbers of soldiers to Vietnam in a troop build-up only months after his election. Many people felt they had been lied to. Although the government annual reports showed we were winning the war, it dragged on. Critics attempted to prove the reports false. Many

Americans began to feel they could not trust their leaders to tell the truth (Hoobler, 119-21).

Vietnam was our longest war, our first televised war, and most bitterly contested war. Since the previous war, the Korean Conflict, nearly every household had acquired a television set. It brought the news to more Americans than newspapers and magazines. Every night, while sitting down to eat their evening meal, Americans could watch a war 9,000 miles away, and they did not like what they saw (Hoobler, 121).

Large numbers of the American population opposed the war, particularly college students who faced being drafted into the war. The image of the American soldier declined, while daily news coverage of the war talked of violence in Vietnam and protests in the United States. This caused an erosion of the confidence in the military. After the massacre at My Lai, South Vietnam, in 1968 and the Ohio National Guard shootings at Kent State University, the concept of the American soldier as a hero was pushed to an all-time low (Gibbon, 62-63). Vietnam was a bitterly divisive war that eventually tore the country apart. It became a national trauma that brought on the downfall of two presidents (Mikaelian, x).

During the Vietnam War, 2,215,000 men were drafted. An additional 8,720,000 men and women volunteered. Some volunteered for patriotic reasons and some because they were expecting to be drafted and wanted to choose their branch of service. Men could be deferred from the draft by attending college. Therefore, the greatest burden of those drafted fell on those who were too poor to afford college or did not meet academic requirements. Later in the war more men were needed,

resulting in younger men being drafted. The average American soldier in Vietnam was nineteen years of age compared to twenty-six years of age during World War II (Hoobler, 102).

Vietnam not only tarnished the military in our culture, it contributed to a value shift harmful to heroism. The war contributed to a counterculture that questioned authority, ridiculed conventional values, and disparaged patriotism. Many who protested the Vietnam War believed a society that could be involved in such a war was fundamentally flawed (Gibbon 65-67).

The declines in the popularity of the military hero can be attributed to two areas. The Korean Conflict and the Vietnam War were both unpopular with the public. This was especially true of Vietnam. There were about 245 Medals of Honor awarded as a result of the Vietnam War (see Figure 2). Nearly seventy percent of these were awarded posthumously (Murphy, E, 1987, 1-3). The media did not promote these heroes. The media did not support the war; therefore, it did not want to foster anything favorable that would be associated with the war. The decline in popularity of the military hero does not in anyway diminish the accomplishments of the previous military heroes. While their deeds stand alone, their sacrifices should not be taken lightly. If Alvin York and Audie Murphy were to receive their awards today, they would most likely be lauded as classic hero archetypes.

The other area responsible for the decline of the military hero is that the military has become more high tech. It seems less heroic to push a button to launch a rocket or missile to inflict damage on the enemy. During WWII, battles often lasted for weeks or months without letting up. More recently, military operations, especially

the opening days of war, involve high level bombing or missiles fired from long distance. Tanks and rocket launchers are computerized with long range and extreme accuracy. The foot soldier comes into an area later, after it has been pounded repeatedly with munitions. Skirmishes are often short-lived and almost considered as “mop up” operations. We saw this in the 2003 version of the Gulf War in Iraq. Rescued POWs are hailed as heroes, but we have not had a “stand out” soldier who has gained the fame of those of the past.

The United States is currently involved in a war in Iraq. We have gone into Iraq in part due to the war on terrorism that was brought on by the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Early in the battle, a unit of U.S. soldiers was attacked. It was a maintenance unit made up of citizen soldiers who had been activated with their unit. One member of the unit, who would play a key role, was Patrick Miller who had been a welder before being called up. He was part of a convoy that was on route from Kuwait to Baghdad. Their job was to pick up military vehicles that had broken down. Their convoy came under fire and many of its members were killed and some listed as missing and feared dead or captured. Information was later developed that one of the soldiers was being held in a hospital in Iraq. Jessica Lynch was rescued by a special operations force. She was immediately labeled as a hero. Stories were written that she had fought to the last bullet before being captured. In interviews, written and televised, Lynch did not claim to be a hero. She acknowledged her rescuers as the heroes. She even admitted that she was captured and that she did not fire a shot. When her vehicle collided with another military vehicle and she suffered several injuries. She was tortured by her captors and

held until her rescue. By labeling her a hero, the military and the media were trying to give America what it needed and wanted. It needed a classic hero to help the public accept the war. A hero would help by increasing moral and support for our involvement there. Morale is definitely improved when a prisoner of war is found and rescued alive. This especially holds true when the POW is female (Ryter). She was a hero by fate. The media made her a celebrity.

Jessica Lynch was quoted as saying "My heroes are the soldiers over there, the soldiers that were in that car beside me, the ones that came and rescued me" (Sawyer). One of the soldiers she was referring to was Pfc Patrick Miller. He was awarded the Silver Star for his valor involving his incident. He was in a vehicle behind Lynch's vehicle. When her Humvee collided with a jackknifed truck, Miller began firing on some Iraqi soldiers nearby who were preparing to fire mortar rounds at the disabled convoy. While shooting at the enemy soldiers, Miller's rifle jammed and he had to feed the rounds into the weapon one at a time and then fire. He was able to kill six or seven soldiers and was credited with saving the lives of the remaining members of the unit. This included Lynch who officials say would certainly have been killed by the mortar attack. Miller and six others became POWs and were held for twenty two days before being released (Wallace).

While looking at microfiche at the library, I came across an interesting newspaper article. It was on the front page of the Daily Oklahoman on November 8, 1971, and was titled "Hero Quitting Army – Harassment Claimed." Anthony Herbert was the most highly decorated enlisted soldier of the Korean War. He had been an enlisted soldier during the Korean War and later became an officer and served as a

battalion commander in Vietnam. He had reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He was alleging personal harassment by the Army and stress on his family as contributing factors while applying for retirement. Lt. Col. Herbert said he had attempted to help the Army eliminate the stigma of the concealment of war crimes that he saw or of which he had personal knowledge during the Vietnam War. He had claimed two of his superior officers had been involved either directly or indirectly in incidents of murder and torture of civilians of Vietnam in 1969. Charges that had been filed against his two superior officers were dropped (Daily Oklahoman, 1-2). I wonder whether if Lt. Col. Herbert had been a hero of a popular war, his allegations would have been received differently and would he have been treated differently.

A hero's welcome is not only a way of thanking soldiers. It shows that those at home approve of what the soldiers had to do in battle. It helps to heal the wounds and ease the guilt of killing. There was no such approval for the Vietnam veterans. This could in part have been caused by the logistics of that war. A tour of duty in Vietnam was for 365 days. A soldier was pulled from the ranks at the end of his tour of duty and was sent home. He was replaced by a new arrival. This was entirely different from previous wars. Those soldiers had returned home together, usually on ships. They were met by large crowds and welcomed home. Additionally, because of the type of warfare the soldiers experienced in Vietnam, the enemy was intermingled with civilians. Even civilians posed a threat to the troops. American soldiers found the enemy sometimes to be elderly people, women, and even children. Soldiers had difficulty dealing with having to kill these types of people or just seeing them dead. The war also caused the economy to be bad at home so that returning veterans had

difficulty finding jobs. All of these things contributed a great deal to Vietnam veteran's difficulties coping with adjusting to life when they returned home. When the war was over it had cost about \$150 billion, more than 58,000 American soldiers had been killed and over 300,000 had been wounded (Hoobler, 182-83).

When Saigon was taken over by the North Vietnamese in 1975, almost all of the Vietnam heroes were gone. They were building careers, raising families, and paying mortgages. Few were active in community affairs. Few were involved with parades. For them the graves of posthumous medal recipients went unacknowledged, except by relatives. The American society had implied that the war was over. We had lost. There were no nationally recognized heroes. American wanted to forget that war and forget the men and women involved in it. The dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. on November 11, 1982, catalyzed national recognition of the Vietnam veteran. It had taken the American public nearly twenty years to realize that it was all right to hate war, but not to hate the warrior (Murphy, E., 1987, xi). The Vietnam veteran finally became accepted by the public and was recognized as a warrior.

When the soldiers returned home following the Korean and Vietnam Wars, there were no celebrations or ticker tape parades as there had been after the two previous wars. Soldiers were sometimes even looked down upon by civilians. Their status had declined. A million Vietnamese and fifty eight thousand Americans died in the Vietnam War for a cause nobody could fully explain. There was no Alvin York or Audie Murphy, no Douglas MacArthur or Dwight D. Eisenhower to come out of

Vietnam. The few heroes to emerge from that war were the prisoners of war (Gibbon, 63).

Alvin York and Audie Murphy were both from the South and came from impoverished backgrounds. They were from large families that were both involved with farming. Neither finished elementary school. York quit school after the third grade while Murphy quit after the fifth grade. Both learned to shoot and hunt at an early age out of necessity. They knew about terrain and how to use it to their benefit. They knew the psychology of hunting. This involved hunting prey and using the terrain to their advantage. York and Murphy both found it necessary to be leaders in their families. They had to assume tremendous responsibility within their families. All these life experiences helped prepare them for what was to come in their military careers. York had to take responsibility because his father died. Murphy had to because his father was frequently gone and later because his mother was in ill health. The fact that York was drafted and Murphy volunteered does not diminish either of their accomplishments and the ability for us to admire and respect them equally.

Audie Murphy and Alvin York were typical small town boys who made good. They were underdogs by being under educated and appearing to be back-woods type. They believed they were just doing their job. They had to step it up a notch. They rose to the top. They did what they had to be done without planning in advance that they would be heroes. They were just doing what was expected of them.

We have seen that Alvin York and Audie Murphy fit our image of classic military heroes. They sacrificed and risked their lives for others in combat. They stepped up to a higher level when it was needed. York and Murphy displayed

leadership roles with their fellow soldiers. They were admired by their peers. York took over his patrol when it was under fire and their lieutenant was killed. Murphy was given a battlefield commission, rewarding him for his leadership abilities. Each earned their Medal of Honor late in the war in which they were fighting.

When Audie Murphy received the Medal of Honor, his picture was on the cover of Life magazine. No recipient of the Medal of Honor during Vietnam was accorded the same recognition. Heroes of earlier wars received much publicity. The heroes of Vietnam received very little publicity. No one wanted to hear about the heroism of the soldiers from America's longest and most frustrating war. Most of the surviving recipients of the Medal of Honor from Vietnam quickly settled into an obscure lifestyle. Few sought public recognition. Of the eighty-eight survivors who received the Medal of Honor, fifty-six remained in the military. A military career provided anonymity and acceptance from their peers. The military was a haven for them. They would not have to explain what they did or why they did it (Murphy E, 1987, x)

Some say there is a great deal of luck involved in a heroic act. While that may be true, that individual still had to make the decision to put himself in that situation. He still had to commit to a sacrifice, a sacrifice that could cost him his life. Brave men and women will continue to fight for freedom and democracy. Medal of Honor recipients will display the courage that free people need when threatened with a loss of their freedom (Doherty, 7).

Now, individuals who influence public opinion such as politicians, lawyers, talk-show hosts, professors, teachers, columnists, editors, and more increasingly

entertainment celebrities, have had no first hand experience with the military or war. This has caused a widening in the gap between a civilian culture that values comfort and individualism and a military culture that stresses sacrifice and discipline (Gibbon, 67). We cannot have it both ways. Our country has been protected by a powerful military for two centuries. The military eventually has had to be used to prevent the spread of significant threats to our peace and security. This does not mean that only the military can produce heroes. There appear, however, to be more opportunities for heroic deeds during military action.

A society or culture is great if it admires a range of accomplishments and celebrates as many people as it can. It looks beyond statues of generals on horseback. It looks into small towns and in obscure places of history for its heroes. Heroes will still be from small towns and communities. They may even be from large families and be uneducated. Society will continue to need and want heroes. Regardless of the sentiment of the public, the hero will be recognized for his action. How well the soldier hero is accepted will depend on the public's view toward the military action that produces the hero (Gibbon, 12).

We as a culture need local heroes, role models, and mentors. We need them more now than ever before. Heroes should add quality to our lives whether it is in the way we live or in the way we look at the world. If we restrict our heroes to celebrities or people we know, we limit our aspirations. Public heroes show us we can push beyond our own comfort zone in search of excellence (Gibbon, 3).

Famous people and individuals with well-known names who populate our consciousness are, with few exceptions, not heroes at all. We can create fame and

make someone well known, but we can not make them great. In many cases, the more famous we make them, the less they are worthy of our admiration. "We can make a celebrity, but we can never make a hero" (Boorstin, 48).

Many people today toss the word *hero* around very loosely in ways that do not fit the definition. It seems like everyone is a hero whether they genuinely performed a life saving act or just act nicely toward a neighbor. Even the student who sells the most candy to help his high school band is called a hero. When you compare these types of acts to those performed by Audie Murphy, Alvin York, and thousands of other warrior heroes, there is a great deal of difference. We still recognize a classic hero. In the absence of classic heroes, we tend to expand our definition, or make the "mold" bigger, in order that people we are wanting to look up to can meet our expectations. We still inherit what we admire in heroes. We want so desperately to have heroes to look up to, that we attribute heroic characteristics much too widely. That is why some admire celebrities and sports figures as if they were super heroes. Because we would like to discover more heroic qualities in ourselves, we even may find ourselves worshipping heroes.

Heroes are sometimes ordinary people who go about their lives as everyone does. What sets them apart from others is the way they react to a situation in doing their job or stand up for specific morals. We need living heroes for many reasons. We need them to stop criminals, explore outer space or other frontiers, cure diseases, and right wrongs. We also need heroes for spiritual reasons. Heroism is contagious. Stories of heroes gladden our hearts and souls.

I just heard a news report on television about a burglar who broke into an apartment. The resident hid in a closet and called police from her cell phone. The suspect ran when the police arrived but was grabbed by a citizen and held for the police officer. The woman, during an interview, called that citizen a “superhero”. He was a superhero only to her. While I acknowledge that the citizen performed a very commendable act worthy of recognition, I do not believe it rises to the level of a “superhero”. If he were truly to be recognized as a “superhero”, where does that put Audie Murphy and Alvin York? Another consideration is her actions. She was in her apartment with the suspect and she was able to remain calm enough to call the police. Some would perceive this, in itself, as a heroic act.

Heroism is about character. Whether heroes are real or imaginary, they can guide and encourage us (Barron, 6). Heroes are “imperfect people of extraordinary achievement, courage, and greatness of soul whose reach is wider than our own” (Gibbon, 13). Alvin York and Audie Murphy were in fact imperfect people. They each had something about their life that they would have traded if they could. York had a rowdy and drunkard past. Murphy was small in stature and lacked an education. His stature almost prevented him from being accepted in the military. These heroes displayed extraordinary achievement, overcoming obstacles that would have stopped others.

Senator John S. McCain wrote this in the foreword of Brave Decisions by Colonel Harry J. Maihafer: “It is impossible to live in the United States and remain ignorant of the actions undertaken by warriors who have protected our way of life with their own blood.” McCain also suggested that battlefield valor has always been

necessary. It is the result of placing average Americans in circumstances that cause them to reach deep within themselves for the strength to overcome extraordinary adversity (Maihafer, xi-xii). Senator McCain was a prisoner of war for five and a half years in Vietnam. His airplane was shot down over Vietnam. He was wounded prior to his capture and sustained a broken leg and two broken arms.

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, "Show me a hero and I'll write you a tragedy." I believe I know what he meant by that. Heroes who return to their lives as it had been prior to their "hero's journey", find a lot of things are different. Not only do they see things differently than before, but people look at them differently. The hero often struggles with life trying to live it as before and it cannot be accomplished. Some are fortunate and can make the adjustments necessary to be successful.

Alvin York and Audie Murphy were not the only great heroes of the past, but they are the two I chose to focus on. Their stories of heroism are legendary. I have read many accounts of their combat history. I continue to be in awe of their decisions, actions, and sacrifices. They became famous as a result of their feats. They returned to their civilian lives with different goals in mind. York just wanted to live in his home state and help the citizens there. Murphy chose to use his fame for his own benefit. He developed a talent for acting and with his name recognition was able to have a successful acting career. Even with his popularity, he was modest about his heroism.

Audie Murphy and Alvin York are archetypal heroes. They are the epitome of what our ancestors, their ancestors, and even primitive man recognized as heroes. They were prodigies of courage and endurance. They are not the only ones to display

this type of courage and heroism. They are the ones who are well known to us because each possessed an aura about them, a mysterious side. They were from the recent past and were both made famous after their return from combat.

Future military action will determine how the military hero is viewed. Audie Murphy and Alvin York will always be viewed as great heroes of their times. They fit the hero mold. "I will learn to work in peace as in war. And finally—finally, like countless others, I will learn to live again" (Murphy, A, 274).

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