

A little about Audie . . .



Audie's prowess with a rifle and his courage on the battlefield are a matter of record. What some may not know is that his outstanding ability to handle weapons and his willingness to engage in daring feats stemmed from his childhood.

On several occasions, Robert Cawthon, his Celeste neighbor, and Audie's brother Gene recalled seeing Audie hit and kill running rabbits with rocks. Bob Sullivan and Ray Brewer, other friends of Audie's, attested that Audie could not only hit a standing target with a slingshot, but could bring down a bird in flight or a rabbits on the run.

Most of his hunting as a boy was done with a single shot .22 caliber rifle, and he became very proficient with it. Although he was small, he had large, strong hands and long fingers which allowed him to easily handle a gun. He shot rabbits and hunted birds with his .22, but his chief targets were the plentiful squirrels. Audie's friend Monroe Hackney said that Audie had "eyes like a hawk and could spot squirrels in the tallest, bushiest tree when no one else could." Hackney added, "A quick shot by

Audie would invariably follow the sighting and the little gray would come tumbling down through the branches." Audie's kills no doubt added welcome meat to the dinner table. Jake Bowen, a man for whom Audie worked in Greenville remembered how well Audie could shoot rabbits with a .22 from a moving car.

Audie and his boyhood friends lived dangerously and played rough. They were not content to limit their marksmanship to animal targets. Audie, more than the others, often engaged in a deadly game of "Hunt County Roulette." It was a tribute to Audie's skill with a rifle that his friends volunteered to let Audie shoot things off their heads, and it was a tribute to Audie's courage that he was unafraid to reverse the role and become the target for boys less skilled with a gun than he. Monroe Hackney recalled that he and Audie shot "Big Little Books" (3-1/2" by 4-3/4") out of each other's hands at about 40-50 feet. Since they both thought the target too large, they changed to shooting cigarettes out of each other's hands. Gene Murphy said his brother often shot snuff boxes about the size of a silver dollar out of his hand and cans off his head at 30-40 feet. Gene also recalled that the most daring feat of marksmanship was exhibited when fourteen year old Audie and his oldest brother Buck took turns shooting at a glass marble held between their lips at 10-15 feet away!

Audie's audacity was shown in ways other than his use of weapons. According to his friends, he had great courage and always accepted a challenge. Another friend, Ray Brewer, recalled Audie jumping from a rafter 15-20 feet high into a storage elevator filled with cotton seed. The danger of suffocation did not keep him from accepting the challenge. Other feats of daring reported about Audie included climbing telephone poles without the use of leg spikes, driving swarms of bees out of clover patches with paddles, climbing to the top of the Celeste water tower and then sliding down the guy wires that anchored it, hopping on and off fast moving freight trains, and wading across armpit high, fast flowing swollen creeks even though he was not a strong swimmer. Several of Audie's friends remembered that on a few occasions they would stage a ".22 shoot out" using trees for shields! Amazingly, no one was "seriously" hurt during these exchanges.



Audie's daredevil feats--both with and without a weapon--must have added a few gray hairs to his beloved mother's head. However, it almost seemed as if Audie knew what his future would hold and was "in training." Audie's accuracy with weapons from rocks to rifles was unusually accurate. He had catlike reflexes, was well-coordinated, and had nearly perfect eyesight and hearing. Combining these attributes with his natural aggressiveness, steady nerves, level head, good judgment, and Irish luck allowed him to successfully survive two years of front line combat and become the most decorated soldier in WWII.