

Audie Murphy asked Partin to change his Hoffa story

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The late Audie Murphy
Could he have freed Hoffa?



Partin of Louisiana
Weird skein of events

WASHINGTON — The war hero and movie star Audie Murphy, who will be buried in Arlington cemetery today, will take with him to the grave information that might have freed Jimmy Hoffa.

Or it could have backfired and kept the Teamsters boss in Lewisburg, Pa., federal prison, where he is serving an eight-year sentence.

The film star recently helped to persuade the key government witness in Hoffa's 1964 trial to repudiate his testimony. But a few weeks before he died, Murphy received evidence that the repudiation was false.

We have now had access to the evidence submitted to Murphy. It indicates the witness lied when he backtracked on his testimony against Hoffa. Yet Murphy ignored this evidence and sought a second statement from the witness, plugging up some of the inconsistencies in his original statement.

The weird skein of events that weaves together the most decorated World War II hero and the hard-knuckled Teamsters boss can be traced back to Hoffa's 1964 conviction for attempting to bribe a Nashville jury.

The key witness against him was Edward Grady Partin, a Baton Rouge, La., Teamsters leader and intimate of Hoffa. Until this March, Partin stuck firmly to his story that Hoffa tried to bribe the jurors. But as Hoffa's parole hearing drew near, pressure was brought on Partin to change his testimony.

Friends of Hoffa approached Partin with promises that they could get the Nixon Administration to lift federal charges now pending against him.

Murphy's maneuver

One approach was made by Audie Murphy, who had filed for bankruptcy in 1968 and was strapped for cash. His associates told us Murphy was hoping to get a Teamster loan to bail out his business interests.

Murphy used all his Hollywood charm to persuade Partin to recant his 1964 testimony. As evidence the Nixon Administration might be lenient with him, one of Murphy's

associates even produced a letter — believed to be a forgery — bearing the signature of the President and praising Partin for coming forward on Hoffa's behalf.

Finally on the night of March 27, Partin dictated a statement in the presence of California lawyer Irving Kramer and four witnesses in which he claimed he had been bullied by the Justice Department into testifying falsely against Hoffa.

The statement, which Partin neither signed nor swore, alleged that he had been given daily written instruction by the government on what to say against Hoffa. It said the Justice Department even provided the matches with which to burn the instructions.

We have obtained a copy of the 31-page statement. It is shot through with factual errors. Moreover, we have evidence that some of the Hoffa allies who were pressing Partin to give the statement knew perfectly well that it was a fake.

Suspicious statement

At Teamster Headquarters, Partin's statement was regarded with suspicion because earlier pro-Hoffa testimony from such questionable witnesses as prostitutes and known criminals had hurt Hoffa's cause. When Hoffa's parole hearing came, the Teamsters lawyers did not introduce the Partin statement.

Nevertheless, Audie Murphy went ahead and got ex-Sen. George Murphy, R-Calif., to pass the statement on to top White House aides and to Atty. Gen. John Mitchell.

Since the parole hearing, Hoffa's lawyers have been trying to get Partin to make a sworn, signed statement before a lawyer more familiar than Kramer with the jury tampering case and who would be able to weed out inaccuracies.

And Audie Murphy, until his tragic death, was also working to get a more plausible affidavit from Partin although, according to a trusted friend, he was convinced that Partin was lying to get himself off the hook in the case pending against him.

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