

History

Lt. Michael P. Murphy

Congressional Medal of Honor



Lt. Michael P. Murphy was born May 7, 1976 in Smithtown, N.Y into a family where Irish traditions and the virtues of public service ran strong. His paternal grandfather was the definitive Irish American, being literally born on the boat taking his family from Ireland to a new life in America. Murphy's grandfather would serve as a member of the Fighting 69th in World War II. Murphy's father would volunteer for Viet Nam and be seriously wounded before returning home to a career as a Suffolk County Prosecutor. Murphy's Mother traced her roots back to relatives who were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and fought for Ireland's freedom. Murphy grew up among other family members and friends who were police officers and firefighters. It is small wonder that the need to serve others seem to be in his DNA.

Stories of Michael Murphy as a young boy depict a good-natured daredevil who excelled in sports as well as academics, a varsity football player who earned a National Merit Scholarship. Yet even when very young, stories depict a young man of deep moral character. While in Middle School, Murphy's parents were called to the school because young Michael had been in a fight. It would turn out that Murphy confronted three other students who were bullying a disabled student. This would not be the first or the last time that the boy who seemed to succeed at everything he tried would come to the aid of an underdog, well justifying his nickname of 'the protector.'

Upon graduating from Penn State University with majors in Political Science and Psychology, Michael had offers to attend several law schools. However, again, the "call to serve" was too strong, and he selflessly put off his promising and secure personal future on hold to serve others. As per everything in his young life Murphy set his sights high and began training for one of the most elite military units in the world, the Navy SEALs, a program that despite stringent entrance requirements 85% of those accepted cannot complete the rigorous training. Murphy won his trident and was commissioned an Ensign, and would subsequently be promoted to Lieutenant. As a SEAL, Murphy served on missions in Jordan, Iraq (twice), Qatar, and Djibouti in East Africa.

In 2005, Lt. Murphy was deployed to Afghanistan and was the leader of a four-man SEAL squad. As a reminder to his team as to why they were there, Murphy wore on his uniform the shoulder patch of Ladder 43/Engine 53 of the FDNY on his uniform. Murphy was given a mission, code named Operation Redwing, to lead his squad into the 9,000-foot high mountains that form the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan in search of a high-value Taliban target. Within hours after being secretly inserted into enemy territory, three local goat herders stumbled on the squad's position. There was no way the squad could hold these civilians prisoner behind enemy lines. With full knowledge of the threat that these civilians posed to the security of himself and his team, Murphy followed the moral principles that had marked his life, he released them with full knowledge of the risks involved rather than kill unarmed civilians. Murphy's justice was repaid by betrayal; the goat herders immediately reported the SEALs presence to the Taliban.

Using their innate knowledge of the local terrain, an estimated 140 Taliban fighters surrounded Murphy's four-man squad. An intense firefight ensued. Despite having inflicted an estimated 80 enemy casualties, all four SEALs were wounded multiple times and were running low on ammunition. Attempts to contact their base for aid were ineffective, as the rock the team was using for cover was blocking transmission. Lt. Murphy, already severely wounded and knowing the risks, left the cover of his position and walked into a fully exposed position to get a clear signal to make a call to his base for help. During the course of his message, Murphy was shot again in the back, causing him to drop his phone and rifle. He picked them both up and continued his message providing the information necessary so that his squad could receive support. He finished his message, severely wounded with: "Roger that, sir. Thank you." He returned to cover where he continued to engage the enemy until receiving another and fatal wound.

Sadly, the story of Operation Redwing has no happy ending. Only one man from Murphy's squad would survive though severely wounded, having been blown clear of the fighting after the explosion of a rocket propelled grenade. An attempt was made to extract Murphy's squad, but the Helicopter carrying eight navy SEALs and eight Army Night Stalker commandos was itself ambushed as it attempted a rescue, killing all on board. Among the rescuers killed was Quartermaster 2nd Class James Suh, considered by many to be Murphy's best friend in the service. Eleven Navy SEALs were killed that day, making it the deadliest in the history of the SEALs.

Lt. Michael P. Murphy was awarded the first Congressional Medal of Honor to be presented for service in Afghanistan. Those who question America's moral compass would be well to remember the supreme price Murphy and his men paid for acting with morality and honor as opposed to the enemy who shortly after this battle posted videos on the internet of themselves looting and desecrating the bodies of these brave men. To

Did you Know that....

- Timothy Murphy, the son of Donegal immigrants was a hero of the pivotal battle of Saratoga in the American Revolution. An expert marksman in Morgan's Rifle Corps, Murphy successfully prevented the British Troops from rallying at a key point in the battle by specifically targeting the officers General Simon Fraser and Sir Francis Clerke, disrupting the British chain of command and turning the tide in the Americans Favor.

- The most decorated American Combat Soldier of WW II was Audie Murphy. Among the many citations and decorations bestowed upon him, Murphy was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor when a German force of six tanks and supporting infantry attempted to envelope their position. Murphy ordered his men to withdraw while he singly handedly held off the German attack for over an hour by using the machine gun on a disabled and burning American tank, saving his company.

- A veteran of two World Wars, William "Wild Bill" Donovan was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor while an officer in the famed "Fighting 69th" during WWI. He would later server his country in World War II by forming the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) a command that carried out intelligence and espionage work behind enemy lines and was a precursor to today's Special Forces and the CIA.

- In the Korean War, Irish-American pilot Capt. Joseph McConnell Jr. , became history's first triple jet ace by shooting down 16 MiGs.

- Among the thousands of Irish-Americans on "THE WALL", the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, there are also twenty Irish immigrants: 19 men and 1 woman (nurse 2nd Lt. Pamela D. Donovan, from Dublin Ireland.)

us as Irish Americans, it is well to remember that our heritage and culture have helped form special Americans who have, and more importantly continue to, distinguish themselves in the service of their country.