

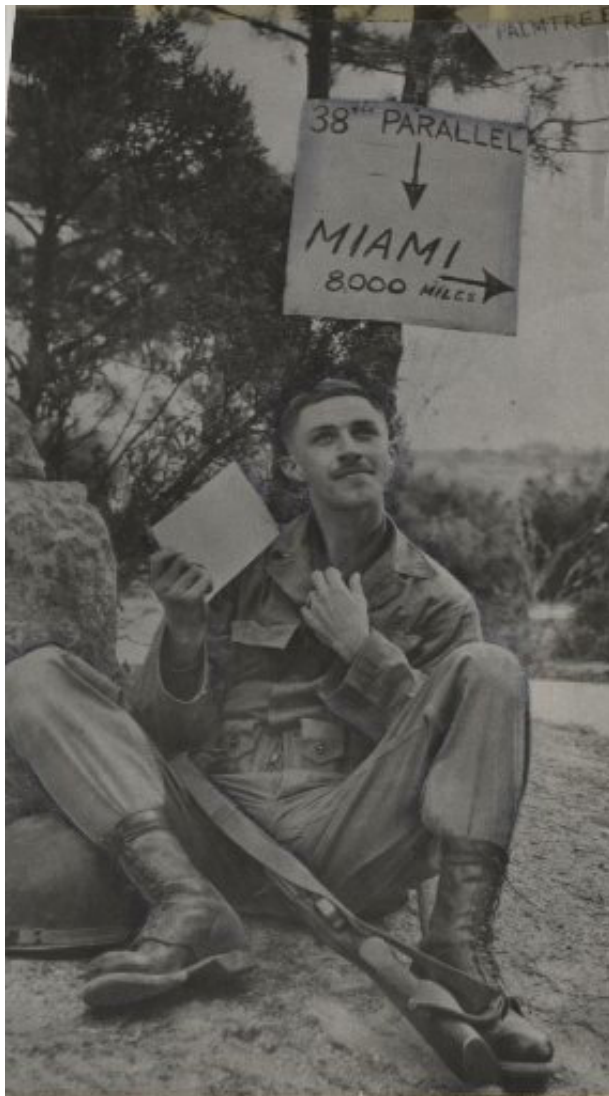
The Miami Herald

Posted on Wed, Oct. 12, 2011

Pat Murphy, published Coral Gables newspapers

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Pat Murphy

L.D. “Pat” Murphy was a decorated U.S. Army war correspondent in Korea whose path to the publisher’s office of a major daily newspaper ran through Miami and his native Coral Gables.

Along the way, he married a Miss Universe contender, learned to fly jets, and hosted radio shows, interviewed world leaders and A-list celebrities, covered the 1970s energy crisis and the first Gulf War.

He joined The Miami Herald news staff in 1952 as its Key West bureau chief, moved on to The Coral Gables Times and Guide— all owned by Knight Ridder Newspapers—before being named publisher of The Arizona Republic and Phoenix Gazette in 1986.

In the early 1970s, while the Gables papers’ editor/publisher, Murphy headed the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce’s Aviation Action Committee, which advocated for a regional jetport that was never built. He’d been a licensed pilot since he was 14.

He also testified in Congress that the federal government acquire South Florida’s Big Cypress area, which it ultimately did.

“Don’t allow the Big Cypress to slip through your fingers and become a morass of concrete and unlimited development when we can take this opportunity to preserve and protect this area for all future generations to enjoy,” he said. “Dade Countians know all too well and from recent past experience the immense nature of the water shortage problem. We don’t want people who lived in Southwest Florida to face a future without an adequate water supply.”

His last job was part-time reporter/columnist for the Idaho Mountain Express in Ketchum, where he lived with his wife, Betty Gibson Murphy, and their Labradors Spud and Tater.

Although a close friend of the late Republican presidential hopeful, Arizona's Sen. Barry Goldwater, Murphy leaned left, and in one of his last columns both lamented that the U.S. had never elected a woman president and disparaged the female Republican possibilities.

"Except for Democrat Hillary Clinton, most women prominently mentioned lately as presidential material are Republicans who frankly are giddy and shallow, not impressive adults with the intellect or levelheadedness for the Oval Office," he wrote. "That kind of standout candidate won't emerge as long as Republican elders tacitly accept the likes of [Sarah] Palin and [Michele] Bachmann as party favorites. They should be publicly rejected as skin-deep pretenders."

Illness forced his retirement over the summer, and he died of complications from cancer surgery on Oct. 8 in Boise.

Born Lorenzo Dow Murphy Jr. on July 28, 1929, he was named for his father, who was named for a famous, early 19th-Century evangelist, Lorenzo Dow. His parents, L.D. Murphy Sr. and Kathryn Sharpe Murphy, were "pioneers of Coral Gables," Betty Murphy said. "His mother was secretary to George Merrick," the city's initial developer. "Some of the original deeds are signed by her."

An obituary in the Phoenix paper, which he led for three years, said that Murphy once belonged to "the highly influential group of civic leaders known as the Phoenix 40." He joined the Republic's editorial page in 1972, became a political columnist then rose to publisher in March 1986.

Murphy was publisher "when controversial Gov. Evan Mecham was impeached and Secretary of State Rose Mofford became governor in 1988," the Republic noted. "...Among the other big news stories during Murphy's stint as publisher were the 1987 crash of a Phoenix-bound airliner in Detroit, killing 154 on board, and the visit of Pope John Paul II to Phoenix, also in 1987.

"Always intellectually curious, Murphy in 1990 spent about a month in the Middle East, mainly in Saudi Arabia, maintaining his contacts with Saudi princes and working on a film documentary. While in the Mideast, he filed reports on the military buildup for the first Persian Gulf War for Valley radio station KTAR," an ABC affiliate.

A frequent guest on Larry King's WKAT radio show in Miami during the 1960s, Murphy covered the war from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for radio and tv stations in the Phoenix area.

Decades earlier, Murphy honed his craft in combat. After graduating from Gordon Military College in Barnesville, Ga., he enrolled at the University of Miami but left after a year to enlist in the Army.

"I was sworn into the Army for three years on Dec. 21, 1948," he wrote in a memoir of his military service. "...[When] I heard of a special program for information specialists, I signed up for a longer term...Only 100 enlistees were accepted for the program, and had to have some experience in radio, newspapers, magazines or advertising agencies... [I] had been working in the Miami office of Platt Forbes, a New York City ad agency, on the National Airlines account."

Days later, Murphy caught a Florida East Coast railway train to Fort Dix, N.J., for basic training.

"I had nothing but light Florida cotton clothing, an Army poncho (rain coat), a helmet and nothing else to wear for two days," he wrote. It was the first time I saw snow."

He did his Army journalism training at the Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Enquirer, then published by "an

elegant Southern gentleman who wore white suits and brown and white wing tip shoes:” Alvah Chapman Sr., father of Alvah Chapman Jr., who became Murphy’s mentor as Miami Herald publisher and president and was later Knight-Ridder chairman.

Months later, Murphy found himself headed to Japan, where his unit “spent three days at Camp Drake firing weapons, filling out our last Will and Testament, getting a briefing on the fighting in Korea. We then took a train to a port down south, where we boarded an old Japanese cargo ship for an overnight trip to Pusan, South Korea. I remember a grizzled old sergeant telling us most of us would be dead in 48 hours,” he wrote.

He spent 13 months in combat zones.

“I was immediately assigned to Task Force 777 under the command of Col. William (Wild Bill) Harris, of the 7th Cavalry Regiment, made up of infantry, artillery, tanks — and we took off up through the North Korean enemy lines in the first United Nations offensive,” Murphy wrote. “Except for stopping for fire fights with enemy soldiers, the long task force kept moving right through enemy lines, finally linking up with 7th Army in Suwon...We then plowed ahead to Seoul, the first unit into the South Korean capital, then the first units across the 38th Parallel and then the first units into the North Korean capital of Pyongyang...”

His combat assignment: “go the front every day, look for human stories of GIs, return to wherever our headquarters company was bivouacked, write stories, then give them to the civilian correspondents and stick them in the mail to hometown newspapers of the GIs involved...I wrote an article and sent it to The Miami Herald — ‘Sunday on a Hilltop in Korea’ — which led to me getting my job at the Herald when I returned home,” with several medals, including a Bronze Star, in the spring of 1952.

He wrote a column called Around the Island in Key West, then transferred to Broward County, where in November 1953, he was assigned to cover the visit of the newly-crowned Miss Toronto. He took her dining, dancing, and strolling on the beach.

They wed in Canada on the day after Christmas, and became parents less than 11 months later.

“I could tell him I gave up my country, my crown and my title for you,” Betty Murphy joked.

The following year, Murphy took over the free papers in Coral Gables. By then, he’d been the Herald’s picture editor and assistant city editor under Al Neuharth, who’d go on to found USA Today.

“He was very successful,” said his wife. “He loved working at the Herald and in Coral Gables, and loved being publisher, although they were very hard jobs.”

He also loved to fly, said daughter Patti Murphy, of Boise. “He’d rent these little single engine planes. He took me up and we buzzed Miami Beach.”

He later qualified to fly commercial jets.

Thirteen years ago, Murphy signed on with Ketchum’s Express newspaper, then a weekly, now a 13,000-circulation twice-weekly.

“He covered the airport beat and wrote a column and was on the editorial board,” said publisher Pam Morris.√. “He was a true-blue newspaper guy who believed in finding out what was going on and telling people about it.”

The airport serves busy ski-resort areas and is slated to expand, she said.

Murphy also sometimes filled in on the copy desk, “on condition that he had an hour off to take his dogs for a walk in the afternoon.”

In addition to his wife, daughter Patti, and his dogs, Murphy is survived by daughter Kathy Carson of Ketchum, and a grandchild. His ashes will be interred during a military service in Ketchum on Saturday.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to the Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley, 100 Croy Creek Rd., P.O. Box 1496, Hailey, ID 83333.

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