

Early Years



Murphy and brother, James

Bremen was a small town of 400 people when Tom was born there in 1924. Tom was the youngest of four brothers. His father, William, was a telegraph operator for the Central of Georgia Railroad.

The Murphys belonged to the Primitive Baptist Church. Growing up, Tom worked as a paperboy, a theater usher, and a “soda jerk” dispensing soft drinks behind a drugstore counter. He played baseball, liked movies, and went to watch trials in Buchanan, the Haralson County seat.



Murphy at age 17

Tom’s father stressed that education was the key to success. Tom was a straight-A student. After he graduated high school, he hoped to follow his dad and work for the railroad. His father objected, however, and Tom enrolled in North Georgia College, a two-year military school.

“Of course, my daddy was an education nut, you know. He wanted us kids to get a college education. He had a 4th- grade education. He wanted his kids to have better than he did.”

- Tom Murphy



Murphy in the Navy



During his freshman year, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor plunged the U.S. into World War II. Tom joined the Navy at age 18. He served three years in the South Pacific, where he built airstrips as a Seabee. At the end of the war he was eager to finish his education and start a career and family. Tom married Agnes Bennett in 1946.

Murphy with wife, Agnes, and family

