

## A San Antonio Diary by Kathleen Bailey

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<https://www.audiemurphy.com/msgb/viewtopic.php?t=4994>

**I**N THE SUMMER of 1971, Texas Congressman Olin E. Teague, introduced a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives which proposed the naming of a yet to be built veterans hospital in San Antonio, Texas after Audie Murphy. The bill would pass and a statute of Audie Murphy was later unveiled on May 17, 1975. Attending the unveiling were Audie's wife and sons, Pamela, Terry Michael, and James Shannon Murphy. Also in attendance were Lillian and Kathleen Bailey, the President and Vice-President of the Audie Murphy Memorial Fan Club. The hospital itself would be dedicated months later on November 17, 1975.

In 1975, Kathleen wrote a feature for their newsletter which provided an excellent description of that ceremony. The Audie Murphy Research Foundation would like to reprint Kathleen's account along with other related information, photos, information, and artifacts which – to date – have been nearly forgotten. Minor corrections have been made.

... Richard L. Rodgers  
Editor, Webmaster AMRF



*Newsletter XVII Artwork by Kathleen Bailey*

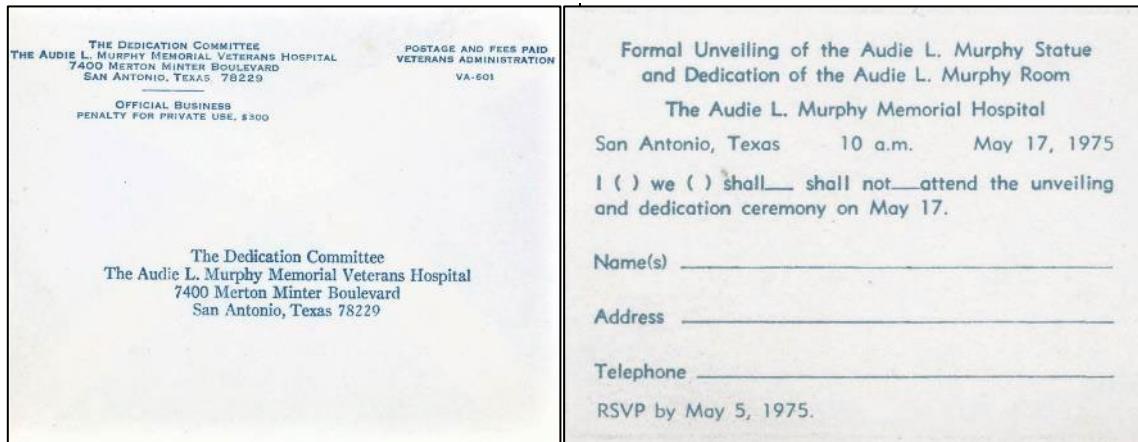
*[The following is first of a two-part article written for the Audie Leon Murphy Memorial Fan Club newsletter. The first part was published in the June 1975, Number XVII edition.]*

### SAN ANTONIO DIARY By Kathleen Bailey<sup>1</sup>

**[Part 1]**

**T**UESDAY, May 12<sup>th</sup> found your President and Vice President

<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Bailey was the Vice President of the Audie Leon Murphy Memorial Fan Club.



*Front and backside of the formal invitation for the unveiling of the statue and the Audie Murphy Room at the soon to be opened Audie Murphy Veterans Memorial Hospital. From the Lillian Bailey Collection.*

on an Amtrak train heading for Texas. We were certainly surprised to

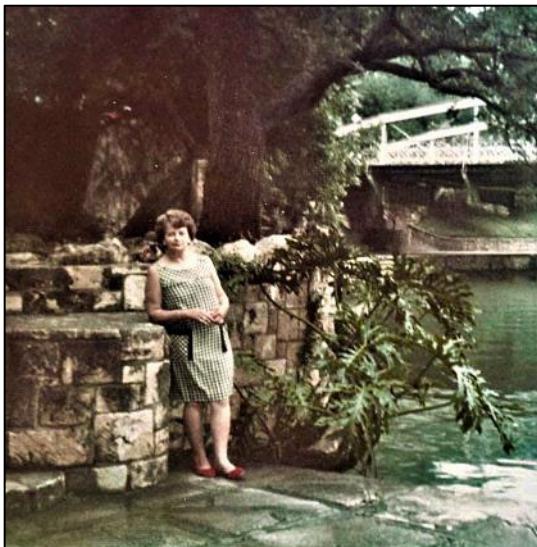
be going! We arrived at 5:30 a.m. on Thursday morning after a very pleasant train trip. We had never been to San Antonio before, so we sat stunned in the depot for close to an hour. Then I went through the phone book, and we called a Rodeway Inn. They were so kind; they even sent a driver to pick us up and take us to their motel. So that was our first view of San Antonio.

After a rest in the motel, we set out on a short walk. It was so interesting in our area that we kept on walking for five hours. We started out in a residential area with charming older homes and walked all the way downtown (keeping the directions in my head). Only your President and Vice President could achieve this ... while on our walk we came upon a very unusual building and when we didn't see a sign, we stopped a lady on the street and inquired about the building.

She smiled at us and calmly replied, "Why, that's the Alamo." Naturally we felt like fools (but it certainly didn't look like the Alamo to me!).

On that first day we fell in love with the city. I wish that all of you could see the River Walk. It is a most beautiful area along the river that runs through the city. We spent a lot of time there three different days and are eager to go back, and this was another place we came upon accidentally.

On Friday we boarded a bus to go shopping and we rode out to a lovely place, the Central Park Mall. We enjoyed wandering through the mall and especially a shop, "The Blue Gnu." It was most unusual with beautiful paintings, sketches, sculptures, and items from around the world. While in the shop we began talking with a beautiful woman by the name of Jennifer. She was wonderful to talk with and, for the first time, made us feel welcome in Texas. By the time we arrived back at our motel we were



*Lillian Bailey by the River Walk in downtown San Antonio, Texas. From the Lillian Bailey Collection.*

ready for a rest. We had been invited to a formal affair at the Hilton that evening but we were too shy to attend.

That Friday evening, we left a 7 a.m. wakeup call for the next morning. We were so excited we had a hard time falling asleep. The motel called a cab for us and then we were on our way.

The ceremony began around 10 a.m. on the front lawn of the hospital. We were impressed by the size and beauty of the hospital and then by the size of the crowd there to witness the unveiling of the statue. We found our seats and sat there, trying to believe that we were really there.

## [Part 2]<sup>2</sup>

We sat there as if in a dream and then the music began. It was a band

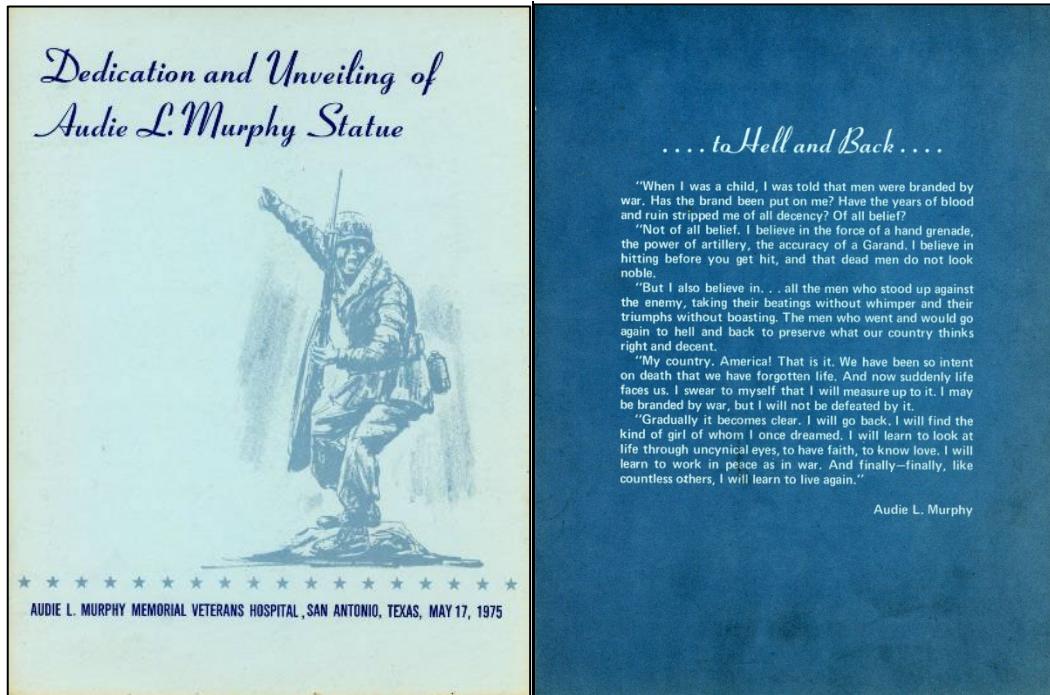


*Newsletter XVIII Artwork by Kathleen Bailey*

and choral concert featuring World War II Patriotic Airs and music written by Audie Murphy. Jerry S. Cottingham conducted the Fifth Army Band and Robert L. Boone directed the Texas A&M Singing Cadets. The music was simply beautiful.

“Sound Off” ... and “The Dog Faced Soldier” march[es] were then played. These were followed by [the] invocation – *The Lord’s Prayer* which was sung by the Texas A&M Singing Cadets. After the *Pledge of Allegiance* and the *National Anthem* the speakers were [the] Honorable Lila Cockrell, Mayor, San Antonio; [the] Honorable Richard Roudebush, Administrator of Veterans Affairs; and Miss Jimilu Mason, Sculptor.

<sup>2</sup> Part 2 was published in the August 1975, number XVIII edition of the newsletter.



Front and rear souvenir card of the Dedication and Unveiling of the statue at Audie Murphy Veterans Memorial Hospital on May 17, 1973. From the collection of Lillian Bailey.

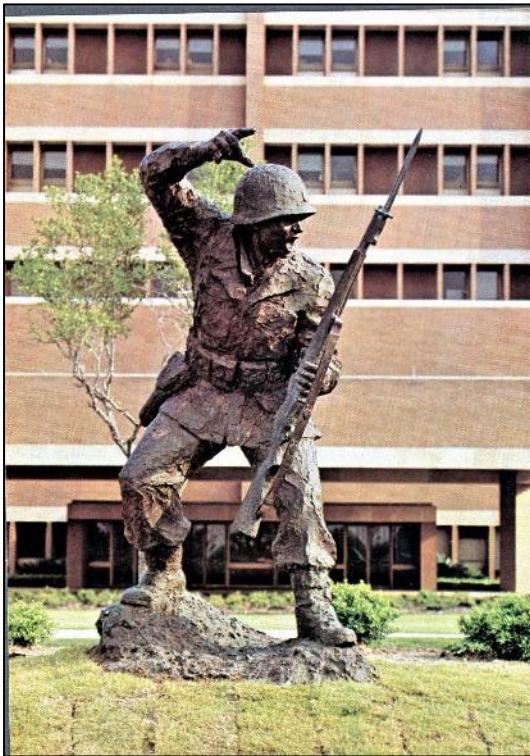
The Cadets sang again and then ... speakers gave tributes to Audie: [the] Honorable Ray Roberts, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans Affairs and SP4 [Specialist Four] Audy Ray Snodgrass, representing [the] 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division.

[The] Honorable Olin E. Teague<sup>3</sup>, President, Audie L. Murphy Memorial Foundation was the principal speaker. The Honorable Howard Callaway, Secretary of the Army, gave an address and this was followed by [a recorded] excerpt of one of Audie's speeches. It was so wonderful to hear his voice.



Pamela warmly greets a guest Source: from the Lillian Bailey Collection.

<sup>3</sup> Olin Earl Teague, born April 6, 1910, was a highly decorated World War II Army veteran receiving the Silver and Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts. He achieved the rank of Colonel and also served as the elected representative of the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Texas from August 24, 1946, until January 3, 1973. He died January 3, 1981.



*Audie Murphy Statue at the Audie Murphy Veterans Administration Hospital, San Antonio Texas. Source: Lillian Bailley Collection.*

Mrs. Murphy addressed the audience. Her whole manner [was] warm and friendly. Her remarks about Audie were touching. She introduced some of Audie's special friends that were in the audience. Among them was David McClure<sup>4</sup>, Mr. Harold B. Simpson<sup>5</sup>, and Nudie<sup>6</sup> (a special friend from Hollywood, well known for his designing of western costumes for entertainers).



*Terry Murphy next to the statue of his father.  
Source: Lillian Bailley Collection.*

Then Mrs. Murphy and her sons moved to the statue. When the statue was unveiled there was such a rush of feeling that passed the crowd. It took our breath away. It [was] a magnificent portrait of Audie as a fighting soldier. The statue overlooks such a lovely area.

<sup>4</sup> David McClure was a writer and close friend of Audie Murphy and assisted him with transcribing Murphy's autobiographical World War II account TO HELL AND BACK.

<sup>5</sup> Colonel Harold B. Simpson is the author of many books including AUDIE MURPHY, AMERICAN SOLDIER published in 1975 and 1982 by Hill College Press.

<sup>6</sup> Nudie Cohn, born 1902, an immigrant from Kiev, Russia immigrated to the U.S. as a teenager and tailor. He is credited as the inventor of Rhinestone western wear. He died 1984. Source: <http://www.nudiesrodeotailor.com>



*A quick snapshot taken of distinguished guests and visitors with Pamela Murphy and Terry Murphy.*

*Congressman Olin E. Teague stands between Pamela and Terry Murphy.*

*Source: from the Lillian Bailey Collection.*

Closing the ceremony with a benediction were the Texas A&M Singing Cadets. Their interpretation of *I Believe* was truly beautiful.

After the ceremony, Mrs. Murphy and her sons posed for pictures near the statue, and she greeted people near the platform. Mrs. Murphy and Terry and James looked wonderful, and they are such a credit to Audie.

While mingling in the crowd we were surprised when Mr. Harold B.

Simpson approached us. He is in the process of writing a book on Audie and

his war experiences. He had been corresponding with us since last year when he became a member of the club. He was a total delight. He turned and brought forward a sweet-faced woman and introduced us. We were so pleased to learn that she was Mrs. Poland Burns, Audie's sister Corinne. She gave us a warm reception that we shall always remember. We enjoyed speaking with her and Mr. Simpson very much.

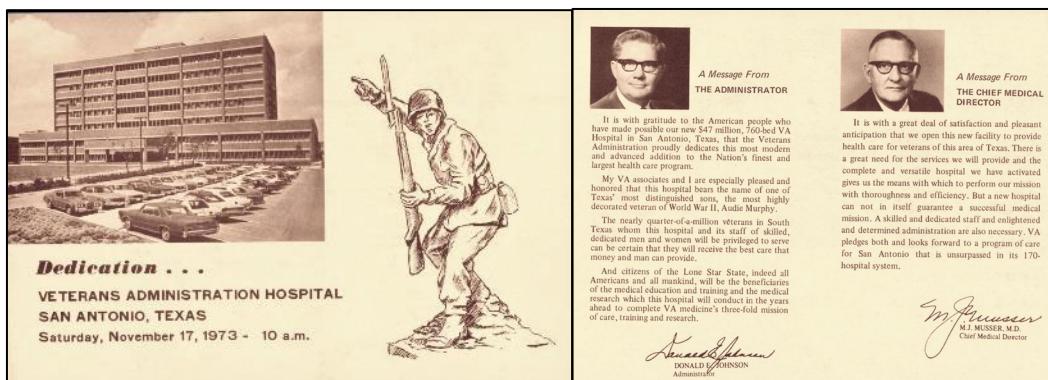
The crowd was so large we waited before attempting to view the Audie Murphy Room in the Hospital.<sup>7</sup> We remained on the grass near the statue and just rejoiced at being there. When

<sup>7</sup> The "Audie Murphy Room" at the Audie Murphy Veteran's Memorial Hospital displayed many personal items on permanent loan by the family belonging to Audie Murphy including his military uniform with all medals including his Medal of Honor. Since the original opening of the room, the room has been closed. Eventually, the room was needed by the hospital for other purposes and the Audie Murphy room was closed. All items were returned to the family and are now on display at the Audie Murphy American Cotton Museum in Greenville, Texas.

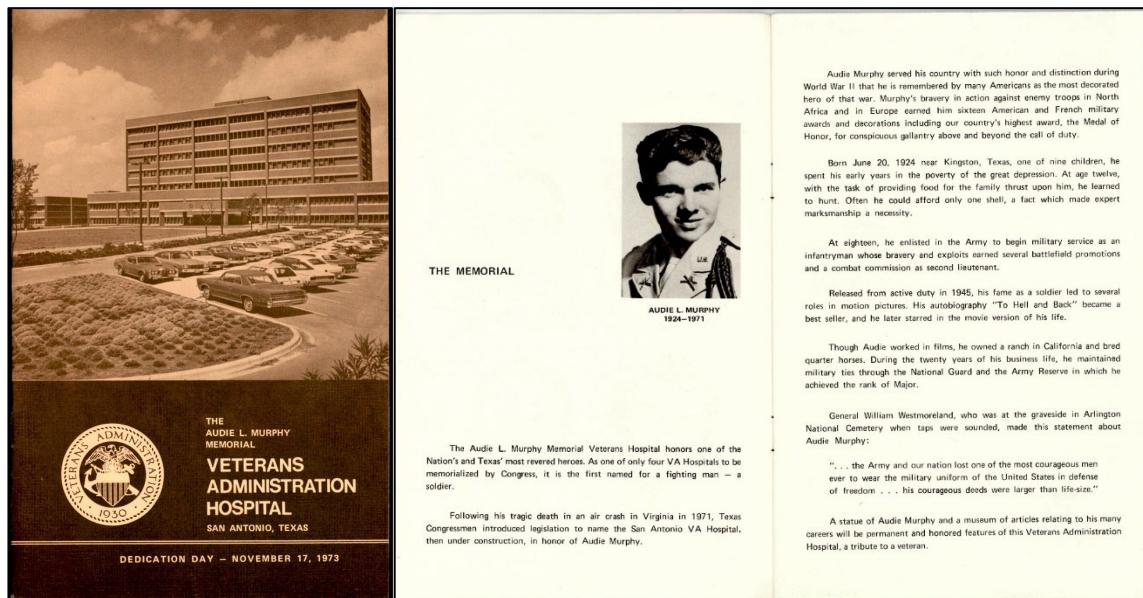
the crowd thinned, we went into the hospital. We were greatly impressed by the interior of the Hospital and then by the Audie Murphy Room. The room represents Audie so well and there is so much to see. We hope that all of you are someday able to view the pictures, the mementoes, and the personal belongings on display in this room. We hated to turn away and leave. We kept

looking back as the bus took us from the Hospital. May 17<sup>th</sup> is a date that will always bring back very happy memories. Our thoughts are often in San Antonio, and we are most eager to return.

... Kathleen Bailey, 1975  
*Audie Leon Murphy Memorial  
Newsletter Editor*



Front and back of a souvenir card printed for the dedication of the hospital which occurred on November 17, 1973, when the hospital opened. From the collection of Lillian Bailey.



Front, inside, and rear of souvenir brochure for the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital.  
Source: from the Lillian Bailey collection.

# Audie Murphy Statue Unveiling Scheduled

By K. MACK SISK

Audie Murphy was symbol of a time when a man could come home from war a hero.

An eight-foot likeness of America's most decorated World War II fighting man will be unveiled Saturday, Armed Forces Day, at the entrance to the Veterans' Administration hospital that bears his name.

The one-ton bronze statue of Murphy in battle dress with rifle and bayonet is the work of an admirer of both Murphy the war hero and the movie actor, sculptress Jimilu Mason of Alexandria, Va. Murphy died four years ago at the age of 45 in the crash of a private plane into the Blue Ridge Mountains of Georgia.

According to a VA announcement, Miss Mason studied hundreds of wartime photos of Murphy and saw his autobiographical movie "To Hell And Back" three times while doing her homework for the statue.

## AT UNVEILING

On hand for the unveiling are to be Howard "Bo" Calloway, secretary of the Army; Rep. Olin E. Teague, D-Tex., president of the Audie L. Murphy Foundation; members of the Texas American Legion who donated \$5,000 to help build the statue and a memorial room; and Murphy's widow, Pamela, and two sons, Terry and James.

Murphy was a genuine hero in his native Texas, admired in life and remembered in death by many in great detail. In a state proud of its bigness, Murphy was 5-7, residents recall, but he made up for his height with his deeds and eight feet of bronze is considered about right for him.

Born in Kingston in the northeast corner of the state, Murphy grew up poor, boarding his bullets when hunting Texas jackrabbits recalling later, "I just



**BRONZE STATUE** of Audie L. Murphy, most decorated hero of World War II, will be dedicated in special ceremonies Saturday at San Antonio Veterans Administration Hospital named in Murphy's honor.

couldn't afford to miss."

When war broke out, Murphy was turned down by the Marines as too small, and too frail for the paratroopers. He joined the Army as a regular infantryman — and won every medal with the Third Division in Europe that a foot soldier could, some of them many times over.

Driving off a force of 24 Germans and six tanks singlehandedly with a tank destroyer for a weapon earned him the Medal of Honor. The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded Murphy for storming a hill alone and killing or

capturing a detachment of Germans who had waved a white flag, then opened fire on a friend of his.

## 24 DECORATIONS

In all, Murphy received 24 battlefield decorations. He was credited with killing, wounding or capturing 24 Germans.

After the war Murphy came home to Texas to settle but was talked into a movie career by actor James Cagney. His fame spread through a series of action films, including the one about himself at war, but he complained about Hollywood.

The town was "full of

phonies" he said and he blamed it for wrecking his first marriage, to actress Wanda Hendrix, in less than a year.

A television series, "Whispering Smith," was a self-admitted failure. His movies worsened; there was a series of financial disasters, one of which he was trying to rescue when the plane he was on crashed killing all six aboard in May, 1971.

On Saturday, they look past the later years and honor the soldier.

The dedication of the Audie L. Murphy VA hospital, Congressman Teague says, is intended as a "tribute not only to a great citizen soldier but to a fine American as well.

"We hope that by building this memorial, Audie Murphy's spirit and gallantry will help rekindle a greater degree of patriotism in us all."

*San Antonio Light article appearing on May 17, 1975, reporting the dedication of the statue at the Audie Murphy Veterans Memorial Hospital. From the collection of Lillian Bailey.*