New Book Recounts Life Of Sculptor Of Rudder Statue
Larry Ludtke Also Sculpted Nine Other Campus Works
By James R. Reynolds

The January-February 2004 issue of Texas Aggie published a wonderful article by Mike L. Downey titled “A Legacy in Clay,” which described the process by which the statue of General James Earl Rudder ’32 came to be created and placed on the Texas A&M campus. The article also focused on the artist, Lawrence “Larry” Ludtke ’51, his relationship to Texas A&M, and his unusual career path which led him to be recognized as one of the top portrait sculptors of the late 20th century.

The creation of the Rudder statue, which was sculpted from the same clay as the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue (in 1917), was an amazing tale of former student commitment, enthusiasm, vision, and generosity, with the idea first having been envisioned by R.N. Conolly ’37, picked up and promoted by Frank Muller ’64, and supported strongly by the efforts of Bob Walker ’58.

Ludtke and his wife, Erika, became strongly involved with Texas A&M and hosted several Memorial Student Center Spring Leadership trips to their home and Larry’s studio in Houston. Students often described their visit with Ludtke in his studio as being almost a religious experience and commented that for the first time they had some understanding of creativity and the process by which art is created.

Ludtke’s incredible story was coming to an end in the early days of this century. The cancer with which he had been wrestling for more than a decade was winning the battle. Discussion with his family and friends and professional artist colleagues made it clear that Ludtke’s biography should be written by someone who was close to him and someone who understands Texas A&M and the Aggie Spirit.

One of the student MSC officers of the early 1990s who had become close to the Ludtkes—and who by this time had published her first book, Building Leaders, Living Traditions, through the Texas A&M Press—was approached to write the book. Her special relationship with the Ludtkes, and especially with Larry when his health began to decline rapidly, gave her extraordinary insights and information which no other author could have obtained. The biography of an incredibly talented artist with an unusual relationship to Texas A&M written by an Aggie who had experienced the magnificent humanity of this gentle man... that is the stuff of which Aggie Spirit is made!

Life in Bronze by Amy Bacon ’91 was released by the Texas A&M Press on Muster Day, just a few weeks ago. For members of the Texas A&M family who have enjoyed the statue of General Rudder and the story of how it came to be and who have enjoyed the other nine pieces of Lawrence Ludtke’s work on the campus, we urge you to read Bacon’s thorough review of the life of this great artist and very special friend of Texas A&M.

James Reynolds retired after more than two decades of service as director of the Memorial Student Center.