

Austin Peay

601 College St. (Morgan UC) • Scott Wise, Artist
by Wilson Mendez, Jr.

The life-size bust that sits in the Morgan University Center on the campus of Austin Peay State University is dedicated to the memory of Governor Austin Peay for whom the university derives its name. Peay served as the governor of Tennessee from Jan. 16, 1923, when he was inaugurated into office, until his death on Oct. 2, 1927.

The university was named in his honor in 1929. Scott Wise was commissioned by the APSU National Alumni Association. The project was coordinated by Sheila Boone, who at the time was the alumni director, and Nelson Boehms, president of the APSU National Alumni Association.

Wise's favorite aspects of any work he is commissioned to do is dealing with one individual or a small group of individuals and the artistic freedom he is given to create the piece once he is given the idea or concept.

The greatest difficulty in creating this sculpture was the lack of photographic references of Austin Peay to work from. Wise normally takes several pictures at varying angles of a model in order to capture life like semblance.

Ironically, because of the limited photos available, Wise ended up using Austin Peay, the late governor's great grandson who was named after his great grandfather, as the principle model for the sculpture. Wise found the facial similarities between the great grandfather and his great grandson uncanny.

Wise serves as a Clarksville fire fighter. He worked on the piece during his downtime at the station one fire department located near Outlaw Airfield and on his days off.

Austin Peay

601 College St. (Morgan UC) • Scott Wise, Artist
by Wilson Mendez, Jr.

Once completed, the piece was sent to the Lugar Foundry outside of Memphis Tenn. There, it was cast for molding. The piece was cast in Wise's favorite material, bronze. It is his material of choice because it has a lifetime of durability if properly cared for and maintained.

A wooden cabinet was built specially for the piece. On the front of the cabinet is a plaque that gives a brief history of the bust and its significance to the university. The bust sits on red marble on top of the cabinet. Wise indicated the process from conception to completion took between six and seven months.

The unveiling took place during the Governors Gala held at Emerald Hill on May 10, 2002. Wise attended the event with his wife Lisa Wise, Sheila Boone, Nelson Boehms and several past alumni directors. The likeness of Austin Peay was met with approval by the remaining Peay family who still reside within Clarksville.

The bust has been moved within the Morgan University Center a few times over the years, but no matter where it rests its significance and meaning does not change. The piece pays tribute to a man who was well respected and admired his vision of moving toward a brighter future for Tennessee.

Austin Peay

