

# A Wanted Man

On New Year's Day of 1954 at the Gator Bowl was when Texas Tech University introduced their first official mascot, the Masked Rider. The Masked Rider has been a well-known tradition since that day; a tradition that in fact, reels some people like Sam Jackson Ph.D., into Texas Tech, for life.

It was when Jackson was only a high school senior in Stephenville, Texas, that he was introduced to the Masked Rider. Jackson had planned to attend Texas A&M University after high school until he met Kurt Harris. According to the Texas Tech website Kurt Harris, from Collinsville, Texas, was the Masked Rider from 1981 to 1982.

"It was the Texas Tech vs. Baylor game," Jackson said, "and Kurt's father and my father were friends, so Kurt housed the horse in our barn for the weekend since we were close to the game location."

Kurt and his assistant Perry Church ate dinner with the Jackson family and invited Jackson to the game the next day. He had never been to a Texas Tech game before and didn't know a lot about Texas Tech.

"I went to the game with them and stood on the sidelines, it was pretty neat," Jackson said. "I don't even remember who won the game," he said, "it wasn't just Kurt, just being on the sidelines, or just seeing the fans, it was the whole package that stirred me."

Instead of visiting Texas A&M the next spring for college day, like Jackson had planned, he visited Texas Tech. Jackson stayed with Kurt during his visit.



"It was a set of circumstances were little things make a difference," he said.

"I wouldn't have come to Tech if it hadn't been a good school, with a good reputation, and good faculty, so all of that mattered too," Jackson said, "but it was that first real positive exposure of those two students that really made an impression on me."

"So that was kind of the tipping point of what made me choose Tech," he said, "after I saw the campus and visited with faculty and other students it confirmed what I was already feeling in my heart."

Jackson attended Tech for four years and received a bachelor's degree in animal science. During his undergraduate career he participated on the

livestock judging team and the wool judging team and won the national championship title with both teams.

Following a brief experience working at Texas A&M University, Jackson went back to Texas Tech to coach and work on a doctoral degree. After completing his doctoral degree in 1994, Jackson became a full-time faculty member at Texas Tech.

"The traditions, the organizations, faculty, you never know what the tipping point could be for a high school student who might want to come to Tech," Jackson said.

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