



Season 3 | Episode 1 | The Ties That Bind

(Music)

Taylor Peters, Host: TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY IS OFFICIALLY 100 YEARS OLD. ALL YEAR, WE'VE BEEN CELEBRATING THE UNIVERSITY'S CENTENNIAL AND ALL THE PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT IT'S HELPED BUILD. SINCE 1923, YOU CAN IMAGINE THAT A LOT HAS CHANGED. BUT AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL IS THE STUDENTS, AND THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THIS THE RICH, VIBRANT UNIVERSITY IT IS.

Lawrence Schovanec, President, Texas Tech University: As we look to our next century, we must elevate our thinking from Big to Bold....

Peters: THIS SEASON IS ABOUT US.

Schovanec: ...the key to our success will always be our people.

Peters: HOW THE ANCESTORS OF OUR TEXAS TECH FAMILY CREATED A COMMUNITY AND HOW GENERATIONS OF RED RAIDERS HAVE FOSTERED IT ALONG THE WAY. HOW SEATS AT THE TABLE HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR EACH OF US. AND THE INVITATION STANDS- BE PART OF WHAT'S REAL.

Peters: THIS IS EPISODE ONE- THE TIES THAT BIND.

(Music)

I WANT YOU TO START THINKING ABOUT ALL THE TEXAS TECH TRADITIONS THAT YOU KNOW AND LOVE... YOU GOT IT? NOW LOOK, I KNOW THAT THERE'S A LOT TO CHOOSE FROM. MAYBE LIKE KIM IT IS THE CAROL OF LIGHTS. OR HOW ABOUT THE RINGING OF THE BELLS AFTER A TEXAS TECH VICTORY. IT MIGHT EVEN BE THE TIMELESS SOUND OF THE GOIN' BAND PERFORMING ON GAMEDAY.

Peters: I have a question for you? I was wondering if you have a favorite Texas Tech tradition?

Student 1: A favorite Tech tradition... I do like the tortillas. Peters:

Oh yeah!

Student 1: It's a fun tradition.

Student 2: I like the Carol of Lights.

Student 3: Wrapping of the Will Rogers statue.

Student 4: Masked Rider for sure.

Peters: What's your favorite part about that?

Student 4: Probably just the hype toward it, when she runs out it gets everyone going. That's how you know the game is about to start. So, I'd say that.

Peters: THE TRADITION OF THE MASKED RIDER IS ONE THAT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CONNECTING WITH FOR DECADES. SINCE 1936 TO BE SPECIFIC... WHAT STARTED ON A WHIM HAS BECOME ICONIC. THE FLY ACROSS THE FIELD EMBODIES GRACE AND STRENGTH AND POWER. AND ITS UNIQUELY TEXAS TECH. TO THE WORLD, IT'S A GLAMOROUS AFFAIR.

(Music)

(Raking the stall)

Peters: BUT THOSE CLOSE TO THE PROGRAM KNOW THE MASKED RIDER'S DAY STARTS A LITTLE BIT LIKE THIS. *NATS* CLEANING THE HORSE STALL.

Peters: CLEANING THE STALL IS ANYTHING BUT GLAMOROUS, BUT FOR CAROLINE HOBBS, IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK.

Caroline Hobbs, 61st Masked Rider: "My name is Caroline Hobbs, and I'm the 61st Texas Tech Masked Rider."

Peters: CAROLINE TOOK THE REIGNS AS MASKED RIDER IN THE SPRING OF 2022. THE FIRST RIDER ASTRIDE A HORSE NAMED AFTER THIS MONUMENTAL YEAR- CENTENNIAL CHAMPION. DURING HER TIME, SHE'S MADE HUNDREDS OF APPEARANCES. SPORTING EVENTS, THE CAROL OF LIGHTS, BIRTHDAY PARTIES, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL APPEARANCES, AND RODEOS. AT A RIPE 22 YEARS OF AGE, CAROLINE HAS BEEN RIDING FOR LONGER THAN SHE CAN WALK. LITERALLY... HER DAD JOKES THAT RIDING LESSONS WERE THE MOST EXPENSIVE POTTY TRAINING THAT HE COULD FIND. BUT THE SEED PLANTED AT AN EARLY AGE TOOK ROOT AND IT GREW AS SHE DID.

Hobbs: And she was four and I was six. So, I broke my first horse when I was six years old. So, I started very, very young and I rode my first Grand Prix dressage horse when I was eight.

Peters: SHE HAS AN EXPANSIVE MEMORY BANK OF ALL THE HORSES SHE'S HAD OVER THE YEARS. EACH ONE OF THEM WITH A DIFFERENT STORY, HOLDING A SPECIAL PLACE. SHE RECOUNTS THEM FOR US AS SHE TAKES CENTENNIAL CHAMPION FOR A FEW LAPS INSIDE THE COVERED ARENA... THEY'RE GETTING SOME EXERCISE IN.

Hobbs: He's awesome. And then I just brought back another and he's 24... he was going to the kill pen too and I bought him for a dollar...

Peters: CAROLINE IS LIKE AN OLD SOUL. AND MAYBE I THINK THAT BECAUSE SHE HAS TO BE ONE OF THE MOST MATURE, RESPONSIBLE YOUNG PEOPLE THAT I'VE EVER BEEN AROUND. IT'S A REALLY BIG DEAL WHAT SHE DID, IT'S A BIG JOB. AND YEAH, SHE HAD A LOT OF FUN DOING IT, BUT SHE TOOK THIS REALLY SERIOUSLY.

Peters: What is something that you will like never forget that was maybe expected or unexpected about this experience?

Hobbs: One of my favorite events was the photo shoot and video shoot that we did at Dan Law with Fearless, and that was so cool.

Peters: CAROLINE IS UNIQUE, SHE IS BOTH THE FIRST AND THE LAST. SHE WAS THE LAST RIDER TO WORK WITH FEARLESS CHAMPION AS HE ENDED HIS 10-YEAR STINT AND THE FIRST ONE TO PRESENT CENTENNIAL CHAMPION TO THE RED RAIDER FAMILY. SHE'S TALKING ABOUT AN INSTITUTIONAL COMMERCIAL THAT WAS FILMED LAST SUMMER... AND IT IS PRETTY AMAZING, YOU CAN FIND IT ON OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL.

Hobbs: And my aunt from San Angelo sent it to me and she's like, we saw you, you know, on TV today. And I was expecting, you know, just like a news or ESPN video or something. And it was that. I was at my house, and I just started bawling just because, one it reminded me of Fearless and how much, you know, he had done for this program and how much I missed him. But then it also reminded me of how cool that one once of a lifetime, you know, not many riders can say they got to do something like that.

Peters: GENERATIONS OF RIDERS HAVE MADE THEIR MARK IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. THE FIRST FEMALE RIDER- THE ONE WITH THE MOST APPEARANCES, THE LAST ONE TO RIDE A BELOVED HORSE INTO THE SUNSET. IT'S HARD TO PUT INTO WORDS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROGRAM FOR THE PEOPLE THAT ARE INVOLVED IN IT. FOR CAROLINE, THE 60 RIDERS BEFORE HER, AND THE THOUSANDS WHO HAVE HELPED OVER THE YEARS... IT'S MEMBERSHIP IN A CLUB THAT MAKES AQUAINTANCES FEEL LIKE FAMILY.

(Brushing Horse)

Peters: THE SOFT BRISLES OF THE BRUSH FLECK LOOSE DUST AND HAIR INTO THE STILL, THICK AIR INSIDE THE STALL. HE'S DUSTY AFTER HIS RUN AND A LITTLE BIT SWEATY, TOO. BUT CAROLINE TAKES GREAT JOY IN THE SMALL THINGS. THEIR BOND GROWS DEEPER IN THE DETAILS. IT'S THE EPITOME OF QUALITY TIME.

Hobbs: ...feeding them is a huge bonding thing to them because they see you as their provider. They rely on you to come at 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. or whatever time you can to, to feed them. And so, I think that was a big part. But also, it sounds cheesy, but I would just sit in a stall and kind of watch him or I would turn him out in the arena and just watch him kind of see what he does.

Peters: CENTENNIAL CHAMPION ISN'T THE ONLY ONE THAT RELIES ON HER... UPHOLDING ONE OF THE MOST TREASURED TRADITIONS ON CAMPUS IS A LOT OF PRESSURE BUT CAROLINE WILL TELL YOU IT HAS BEEN THE GREATEST REWARD OF HER LIFE. UNFORTUNATELY, LIKE ALL GOOD THINGS, IT CAME TO AN END. WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN, A YEAR FLIES BY FASTER THAN THE MASKED RIDER'S ENTRANCE AT A FOOTBALL GAME... THEN YOU LOOK UP TO FIND THE NEXT RIDER IN LINE, READY AND EAGER TO TAKE THE REIGNS. *NATS* CROWD FADES OUT SLOWLY

(Music)

Peters: WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

Glenys Young, Editor of Evermore Magazine: Hi- My name is Glenys Young... I'm the editor of Texas Tech's Evermore magazine... In our office, we are driven by stories. They might be written, or through photos or video... through podcasts, like the one you're listening to right now... and as storytellers, we believe it's a privilege to bring people together through shared experiences. It's what Fearless does and it's what Evermore does. Be part of the journey with us as we uncover all the ways that Texas Tech is proving that From Here, It's Possible. And if you're interested in learning more about Evermore, visit today.ttu.edu/evermore.

Peters: ON 13TH STREET AND BROADWAY, GREEN PLANTS STAND IN STARK CONTRAST AGAINST A BLACK AND GREY BUILDING. LARGE, OPEN GLASS WINDOWS SPAN THE FRONT ENTRANCE FROM THE CEILING TO THE FLOOR

(Walking on concrete)

Patron: 'There were three tables left'

Peters: INSIDE IT'S BUSY, AND RIGHTFULLY SO. DIRKS HAS BECOME A LUBBOCK STAPLE.

Peters: Have you been here before?

Patron: Yes, we've been a few times, it's so good.

Peters: NAMED AFTER DIRK WEST, A MAN WITH FINGERPRINTS ALL OVER LUBBOCK AND TEXAS TECH... THIS PLACE DOES ITS NAMESAKE JUSTICE. IT WAS CREATED BY HIS NEPHEW, THE LATE TOM WEST, A TEXAS TECH GRAD.

(Ordering food)

Patron: Can I do the KFC?

Waitress: Okay and your side? Patron:

Just fries.

Waitress: Sounds good to me, I'll get that in ya'll.

Peters: COVERING NEARLY EVERY SQUARE INCH, ARE HUNDREDS OF HAND DRAWN CARTOON PICTURES. EACH ONE TELLING A DIFFERENT STORY. ACROSS THE WAY, A YOUNG MAN IS STANDING AT A BLACK, WAISTHIGH BAR SQUEEZING A LEMON INTO A CLEAR, FIZZY DRINK WITH A SALTED RIM. IT'S A CHILTON... ANOTHER LUBBOCK STAPLE.

(Music)

Peters: DIRK WAS BORN IN LITTLEFIELD IN 1930. HE'D GO ON TO BECOME THE MAYOR OF LUBBOCK IN THE LATE 70'S AND HIS CARTOON ILLUSTRATIONS OF COLLEGE MASCOTS WERE MEMORABLE. WHILE WORKING AS AN ILLUSTRATOR AT THE LUBBOCK AVALANCHE-JOURNAL, HE CREATED THE CARICATURE THAT WOULD SHAPE WHAT WE NOW KNOW AS RAIDER RED. DIRK DIED IN 1996, BUT HE WON'T EVER REALLY LEAVE LUBBOCK. NOT WHEN HIS FAMILY IS KEEPING HIS LEGACY AS BRIGHT AS THE LIGHTS INSIDE JONES AT&T STADIUM. DIRK EMBODIES TEXAS TECH HISTORY IN A WAY THAT WILL PERSIST FOREVER. ITS DOCUMENTED IN THE HUNDREDS OF FRAMED PHOTOS THAT THESE WALLS HOLD. DIRKS IS A LITTLE SLICE OF HISTORY. BUT TO GET THE WHOLE THING, WE NEED LYNN WHITFIELD.

(Walking)

WE'RE WALKING INTO SOUTHWEST COLLECTIONS NOW WHERE WE FIND HER. SHE'S THE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVIST. AND IF THERE IS ANY PART OF TEXAS TECH HISTORY THAT YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT, SHE IS YOUR PERSON. SHE'S SMART AND ORGANIZED, SHE HAS AN INCREDIBLE MEMORY... AND YOU NEED ALL THOSE THINGS TO DO HER JOB AS WELL AS SHE DOES IT. LYNN TELLS US THAT DIRK'S ILLUSTRATIONS WERE USED ACROSS THE COUNTRY- IN BIG 12 BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT PAMPHLETS, POSTERS, PROGRAM BOOKS, MAGAZINES... THEY WERE A REALLY BIG DEAL- AND HE WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO UPHOLD THE QUALITY OF HIS WORK.

Lynn Whitfield, Archivist, Texas Tech University: He actually had a process where he carved out each of the figures, each of the mascots, out of Styrofoam. He painted them and then when he did the drawings, he would turn them so he could kind of get the profile or the dimensions and he drew them. We actually have the mascots.

Peters: LYNN GUIDES US ON A LITTLE FIELD TRIP UPSTAIRS... WE RIDE THE ELEVATOR TO THE SECOND FLOOR WHERE WE FIND A MASSIVE STOREROOM WITH BOXES, SEALED AND PROTECTED, ENCASING THE MODELS LYNN TOLD US ABOUT.

Whitfield: These are the Dirk West figurines... we've had them on, these on display at the museum. But otherwise, when they're not in use, they're kept in the dark. And I hate these peanuts, but, at the time, they kind of give us support so he's not rattling around.

Peters: EACH ONE IS MORE THAN A FOOT TALL AND DETAILED TO PERFECTION. IT TAKES ME OFF GUARD NOT ONLY HOW INTRICATE THESE MODELS ARE, BUT HOW EXPERTLY THEY'VE BEEN PRESERVED- YOU CAN SEE PICTURES OF THESE MODELS IF YOU FOLLOW TEXAS TECH ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Peters: IT STRIKES ME IN THAT MOMENT HOW MUCH OF TEXAS TECH HISTORY SURROUNDS US RIGHT NOW AS WE STAND IN THIS HUGE SPACE, WITH SHELVES OF BOXED DOCUMENTS, STACKS AND ROWS OF PHOTOS, AND PAPERS, AND ARTICLES. IT'S LYNN'S JOB TO KEEP THE ORDER HERE, TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR PAST IS PRESERVED. AND IT'S THE JOB OF CERTAIN STUDENTS TO ENSURE THAT OUR HISTORY – OUR TRADITIONS – ARE ALIVE AND WELL TODAY.

(Music)

Hobbs: Okay hat, please work with us.

Peters: CAROLINE HOBBS IS PULLING A BLACK SATIN MASK OVER THE EYES OF LAUREN BLOSS...

METICULOUSLY PLACING THE ICONIC FLAT BRIM BLACK SUEDE HAT ATOP HER HEAD. IT'S LATE APRIL, A BEAUTIFUL SUNNY, WINDLESS DAY. A WEST TEXAS SPRING TREASURE.

Hobbs: If it's too high, just leave it...

Lauren Bloss, 62nd Masked Rider: Okay, It's too low.

Hobbs: Okay, I'll fix it. Just leave it. Cape, boom, done, got it, we know how to do that one.

Peters: LAUREN FASTENS THE MASKED RIDER CAPE AROUND HER NECK FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME. TODAY WILL MARK HER FIRST APPEARANCE AS THE 62ND MASKED RIDER.

Bloss: My parents were in the car when Steph called and my dad started crying, it was really cute. And my mom was trying to get groceries at the same time, she was like 'what do we want for dinner?' I'm like 'it's the call'.

Peters: I'M HERE WITH OUR PHOTOGRAPHER, ASHLEY... SHE SNAPS PHOTOS OF LAUREN AND CENTENNIAL CHAMPION- HER CHEEK SOFTLY RESTING AGAINST HIS. A MOMENT FROZEN IN TIME BEFORE THE CHAOTIC AFTERNOON BEGINS, MARKING THE START OF HER YEAR-LONG REIGN. LAUREN HAS BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THIS PROCESS DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS SHE HAS INVESTED IN THE MASKED RIDER PROGRAM. THOSE TWO YEARS HAVE LAID THE PAVEMENT, THE ROAD THAT SHE TRAVELED TO BE WHERE SHE IS TODAY- STANDING IN FRONT OF A MIRROR INSIDE A HORSE TRAILER, SEEING HERSELF WITH THE MASK AND CAPE FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME. THE CULMINATION OF AN INVESTMENT HAVING PAID OFF IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE.

Hobbs: You never know. It's the unknown is hard. And so definitely my advice to the next rider and the next 20 riders, 50 riders, you know, so on and so forth, is to take every day, day by day.

(Music)

Announcer: Hello, good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for joining us today for the Transfer of Reigns ceremony, we're so happy to have you here. We get to celebrate our 61st Masked Rider today Caroline Hobbs for her year of service and we get to welcome our 62nd Masked Rider Lauren Bloss into our program.

Peters: TRANSFER OF THE REIGNS AND PASSING OF THE GUNS IS WHERE THE NEW MASKED RIDER IS NAMED... AND WHERE THE IDENTITY OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S RAIDER RED IS REVEALED FOR THE FIRST TIME.

(Clapping)

Peters: AMONG THE SEA OF PEOPLE JOINED TOGETHER AT THE MERKET ALUMNI CENTER, TWO CLAPPING HANDS BELONG TO A MAN WHO HAS ATTENDED THIS EVENT BEFORE. JOINING IN PERSON TO CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY THAT RAIDER RED HAS TAKEN.

Jim Gaspard, former Raider Red: The passing of the guns back in 1971 was 'here's the head' it was paper mâché and chicken wire. The head weighed 25 pounds... If I got off centered a little bit, I would pretty much be on the ground.

Peters: JIM'S SMILE REACHES HIS LIGHT BLUE EYES BEHIND TAN AND BROWN RIMMED GLASSES. HIS GREY VEST FEATURES THE HAT AND MUSTACHE OF AN ILLUSTRATED RAIDER RED PRINTED ON HIS LEFT CHEST POCKET. HIS NAME BADGE READS JIM GASPARD, RAIDER RED- 1971.

Gaspard: Donna and I, my wife, were dating when we created Raider Red, in Wells Hall, which is no longer here.

Peters: THEY CELEBRATED 50 YEARS OF MARRIAGE IN THE SPRING, IT'S SOMETHING HE PROUDLY SHARES. YEARS AGO, MANY STADIUMS WOULDN'T ALLOW LIVE ANIMALS TO APPEAR FOR OPPOSING TEAMS. SO, WITHOUT THE APPEARANCE OF THE MASKED RIDER, THERE WOULD BE NO MASCOT FOR TEXAS TECH ON THE ROAD AND AT INDOOR SPORTING EVENTS.

Gaspard: I did call Dirk West and I asked Dirk if I could take his Old Red cartoon character that he had in his syndicated cartoons... and uh, if I could use him as kind of a model for a mini mascot that we wanted to do at Tech. The conversation was probably 60 seconds. He said sure... So, it's been a lot of fun to see our Raider Reds grow up over the last 50 years. We're so honored to be part of that legacy here at Texas Tech.

Bruce Bills, Cheer and Mascot Coach, Texas Tech University: Alright, I want to welcome you and thank you for coming to our 17th annual passing of the guns ceremony. My name is Bruce Bills, I'm cheer and mascot coach and had the privilege of serving with the students over the years as they serve Texas Tech.

Peters: RAIDER RED AND THE MASKED RIDER... ICONS AS FAMILIAR AS AN OLD FRIEND. THEY'LL STILL BE HERE WHEN YOU COME BACK, WHETHER YOU'RE ON CAMPUS OR NOT. THESE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT SHOW US WE'RE HOME. THEY WELCOME US BACK LIKE A WARM BLANKET. A UNIVERSITY'S TRADITIONS ARE WHAT SET IT APART... IT'S THE MOMENTS THAT RESONATE IN OUR MEMORY, DRAWING US EVERMORE BACK TO THIS PLACE.

(Music)

Peters: TEXAS TECH AND THE LUBBOCK COMMUNITY. WE ARE ONE IN THE SAME. CAMPUS BUILDINGS DON'T SERVE AS A BOUNDARY THAT SEPARATE ONE FROM THE OTHER. AND WE WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY.

(Counting and cheer practice)

Peters: THE TIES THAT BIND US ARE STRONG- AND WE SEE IT IN THE WAY THE COMMUNITY RALLIES FOR RED RAIDERS AS THEY FIND SUCCESS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

(Cheering)

Peters: BRUCE BILLS AND ERIN ALVARADO, THEY KNOW THAT.

(Counting and clapping)

Erin: If you want a traditional college experience, don't be on this team. If you want to have a once in a lifetime experience in college, be on this team.

Peters: THAT'S NEXT TIME ON FEARLESS.

(Music)

Peters: FEARLESS IS PRODUCED BY THE TEXAS TECH OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING. IT'S HOSTED AND WRITTEN BY ME, TAYLOR PETERS, AND CO-PRODUCED BY ALLISON HIRTH. THOMAS BOYD IS OUR AUDIO ENGINEER- HE DOES SOUND DESIGN AND EDITS THIS PODCAST.

Peters: IF YOU'D LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CHARACTERS WE TALKED ABOUT IN TODAY'S EPISODE, GO TO TODAY.TTU.EDU/FEARLESS AND DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Peters: FEARLESS IS A TEXAS TECH PRODUCTION. FROM HERE, IT'S POSSIBLE.