

TEXAS CHAIN SAW MIRACLE

Samuel Tankersley

As I stepped out of the car in the blistering summer heat, it was almost unreal what stood before me. Many times, I had seen every inch of the house, every faded, roughed-up wooden part of its frame, and even the furniture inside was known to me instinctively. I had seen the movie dozens of times and knew every wooden inch of the house. It was like walking into the film itself. Even the grass around us was torched brown by

the harsh Texas sun.

My father had driven my brother and me to the house where the original *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, spelled that way at the time, had been filmed. Ironically, it was now a restaurant. This was laughable because a central taboo of the film, which sparked controversy and ultimately got it banned in some countries abroad, was its focus on the murderous family's consumption of meat—specifically, human meat.





After hundreds of miles and a lot of Red Bull, we stood in front of our destination. I walked slowly up to this monolith from another world. A world that had never been real. Someplace I had always looked up at on a screen but could never really accept existed on the same planet as me. I walked up the steps and looked across the porch, half expecting Leatherface, the chainsaw-wielding slasher from the movie, to throw open the door and take me away at any second. With a deep breath and shaking hands, I entered.

As we looked about us, walked around, and sat down to order, I was always seeing two things at once. Even though it meant letting the sun accost my eyes, I looked directly at the large dining room window, and imagined Sally, the only survivor and final girl from the film, launching herself through with a feral scream. She was running from the macabre, cannibalistic family dinner she had just barely been able to escape from. It breathed a different kind of life into the dining room. I was gifted with new memories while the movie scenes

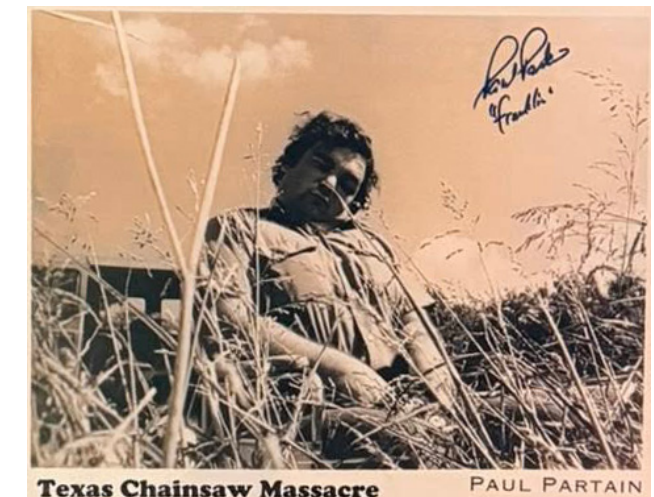
played alongside them. Nothing, though, could have prepared me for what lay upstairs.

As my brother and I reached the top of the steps, we were both at a loss for words. All around us were photos of the cast, signed images of Gunnar Hansen and Tobe Hooper, and posters from 1974. Hansen was the man behind the mask, Leatherface. Hooper was the director, one of the most influential the horror genre would ever see. These men had shaped my life and had been some of my favorite creators. This moment was the closest I would ever get to meeting them. Every short I had ever written, or every attempt I had made at a book, was inspired by their movies.

At that moment, I truly felt like I was in the movie—like I was part of a movie. Power filled my lungs and veins. The inspiration of



Gunnar Hansen autographed photo.
Courtesy of Carly Perez.



Paul Partain autographed photo.
Courtesy of Carly Perez.

those who had been a part of this house mixed with my own as my mind raced to a thousand stories I wanted to tell—I needed to tell—to make those who had been in that house proud. I could have spent energy, words, and creativity going over everything there. In that instant, I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my life.

Even as I pursue a career in law, I still write as much as I can. Shorts, manuscripts, and screenplays fill my laptop. So far, my writing has an audience of one, but I continue to write. As I vomit up millions of words, I always keep in mind the ones that were permanently imprinted on my soul the first time I saw *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. Even at my law school, I am a member of the Sports and Entertainment Law Society and cannot wait to see the intermingling of the film and legal worlds.





Kitchen door.
Courtesy of Carly Perez.

As I went down the stairs, I sneaked into the entrance of the kitchen so I could slightly open the cold, metal door Leatherface had first used to reveal himself, just like Gunnar Hansen had done. Pushing the door with my hand and feeling its cold metal skin made me feel how alive it was, alive with memories that changed the world. So much strength transferred from it to my mind, filling me with awe, as I quickly pulled it past and ran back to my table, where my father was waiting. As we wrapped up there, it physically hurt to leave.

I could have stayed there, shocked by the brilliance of both its history and limitless, imaginative inspiration. Those characters still linger there like ghosts, visible to those who love things meant to scare. They’re still breathing their beautiful, awful life into the minds of kids who want nothing more than to grow up and tell their own beautiful, awful stories.

About The Author



Samuel Tankersley is a
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graduate. He
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writers and directors like Clive Barker and Tobe Hooper have always been a source of inspiration for him, which has influenced the book he self-published, *Into the Void*, and the short “Elephant in the Sea,” which he got published in the quarterly anthology *Trembling with Fear*. He is now pursuing a legal career at William H. Bowen School of Law, with aspirations to become a Marine Corps JAG officer.

