

Alumnus remembers time as the Angry Wave

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Stephen Jordon (A&S '81) had a blast roaming the sidelines of the Superdome as the Angry Wave team mascot while he was a Tulane undergraduate student.

“I just kind of marched up and down the sidelines,” said Jordon. “I tried to be near the end zone when we scored, and I’d run around. It was just a lark, but I really enjoyed it.”

As college mascots go, the Angry Wave of the 1960s-1980s is one of the most offbeat. A vibrant green, the mascot stood about 7-1/2 feet tall with elf-like shoes and tiny hands in white gloves. Jordon said the students nicknamed it Gumby.

Because of the uniqueness of the mascot, Jordan was often asked to pose for pictures with opposing teams' mascots. "It's such an odd-looking mascot. It was just kind of a larger-than-life figure. I got lots of attention as the Gumby on the sideline."

Tulane has had several mascots through the years. The Angry Wave mascot first appeared on the sidelines in the 1960s and lasted until the 1980s.

Jordan served as the Green Wave mascot from his sophomore to senior year. The story of how he became mascot was really a case of who-you-know and being-in-the-right-place. One of his sophomore suitemates in Irby was a former football punter-turned-cheerleader who asked if Jordan knew anyone interested in being the mascot, because the position was open and needed to be filled ASAP. "I said, 'Heck, yeah, I'll be the mascot.' But I said, 'I don't know gymnastics or cheerleading, and I can't be doing backflips.' He said, 'Oh no, you just have to basically survive in that thing (the mascot costume), because it's kind of like a walking sauna.'"

And, luckily for Jordan's friends, Jordan scored them two sideline passes for every game. Those friends served as his "minders" and tried to make sure no football players ran into him. The mascot costume had a metal back brace that made it a bit unwieldy. To put on the costume, Jordan would have to lie down, maneuver into the costume, then his friends would help him to his feet. The mascot costume lived in a storage room at the Superdome, Jordan remembers.

At halftime, he'd take the costume off in that storage room to take a rest. "I was just drenched in sweat, and I'd have to cool off for 10 minutes. Somebody would get me some liquid refreshment, and then I'd jump back in it for the second half of the football game."

Jordan served as the Angry Wave for about 2-1/2 football seasons. The inauspicious termination of his tenure occurred near the end of the final season his senior year. At the beginning of every game, fans would stand in two rows with the Angry Wave standing prominently at the end of the crowd, and the football team would run into the stadium through that cheering crowd. Once, a too-excited Tulane student jumped on the wave at the top of the mascot costume and snapped the metal support system. "So basically, if you can imagine, that extra part of the wave above my head, it kind of crested and folded over the top of me," Jordan explained.

He found his way off the field, but there was no quick fix to the costume. There were only a couple games left in the season, so that was the end for Jordon's reign.

A member of the Navy ROTC at Tulane, Jordon joined the U.S. Navy after graduation and spent more than 30 years in the military, serving as a naval helicopter pilot and retiring as a captain in 2012. He is now the executive director of the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program, providing free legal services for veterans in need. He and his wife Elena also run a childhood cancer non-profit, [Kidz Fighting Cancer](#), that they started in memory of their daughter Emma, who passed away from cancer at the age of 7.

As Jordon gets ready to celebrate his 40th reunion from Tulane, he is looking back fondly on his time as the larger-than-life Angry Wave.

He has three sons, ages 24, 22 and 16, and he enjoyed showing them a full-length picture of him dressed as the Angry Wave. It was taken by his roommate, a photographer for the Jambalaya yearbook. "They got a big rise out of that," he said.

Jordon remembers the excitement of being on the Superdome's sidelines when Tulane beat LSU. "I was there during a bit of Tulane's glory years," he said.

In addition to being asked to pose for numerous photos, children would often ask for his autograph.

But the best part of being the mascot, Jordon says, was representing Tulane, a place close to his heart. "I loved every bit of the experience."