

IN MEMORIAM

J. D. “Sam” Drucker

1952-2019



Born on November 17, 1952, in Kansas City, James Douglas “Sam” Drucker was adopted by Donald Kenneth and Jeanne Bellis Drucker and began his life in Missouri. James had multiple interests; fishing and hunting arrowheads with granddad Bart Bellis on his Wheatland, WY farm, cooking and, specially, spending time with his sisters Anne Claire, Mary, and Katie. After Sam and his family moved to Kearny, NE, he performed as the lead singer in a band, “Bittersweet Conspiracy” and also received the nickname “Sam Drucker” after the lovable grocer in the sitcom “Green Acres”. In 1971, his family returned to Wheatland and Sam enrolled at the University of Wyoming. Working as a surveyor for Banner and Associates, Sam found he had a knack for spotting artifacts which led to discussions of these finds with UW archeologists. In 1992, Sam re-entered college and earned a Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Arts in Anthropology, specializing in Archeology.

In 1992, Sam became a cartographer in the Cheyenne Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office. He left BLM for a Sheridan cultural resource management firm; then returned in 2004, transferring to the BLM Pinedale office. Though Sam’s professional accomplishments are too numerous to list, he was most proud of his work on the Wardell Buffalo Trap south of Pinedale, Holden Hill Emigrant Inscription Site, Jerry Hunt Pictograph Site, Sommers Medicine Wheel, and the Lander Trail New Fork River Crossing Historical Park. As a result of his respectful relationships with the Eastern Shoshone, Shoshone-Bannock, Northern Arapaho, and Ute Tribal Preservation Officers and Tribal Elders, he was asked to document the Ruby Butte Landscape site, an Indian burial ground. He was recognized by multiple historical organizations, including receiving a Distinguished Service Award from OCTA (Oregon-

California-Trail-Association). Sam’s professionalism and passion resulted in his designation by the BLM as a “National Heritage Hero” in 2019.

Sam freely shared his professional expertise and joined the Board of Trustees for the Sublette County Historical Society and Museum of the Mountain Man. He served eight years, including President for his last two years. Sam also founded the Upper Green River Basin Chapter of the Wyoming Archaeological Society (WAS). He relished involving others in archeology and history and participated in activities with the Sublette County Historic Preservation Board, Wyoming History Foundation, and Green River Valley Museum. A member of the Upper Green River Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Sam worked to protect coldwater fish habitats and enjoyed tying flies and sharing his expertise with younger anglers.

In 1982, Sam married Ellen Kay White and her 2 year old daughter Evonne became the light of his life. On November 17, 1984, daughter Chelsea Claire joined the family. Ellen and Sam divorced in 1999, but remained committed to raising their daughters with warmth and kindness. Having the same birthday was just one of many special bonds between Chelsea and Sam. They were lifelong best friends and Chelsea was his caretaker to the end. Sam’s love of children extended to his nieces Katelynn and Katherine who always enjoyed his frequent visits.

Sam passed away peacefully on November 6, 2019 at St. John’s Hospital in Jackson Hole, WY surrounded by his family and friends. One of the last things that Sam said was to “Look for him in the Smiles.” He is survived by daughters Chelsea Drucker, Denver, CO, and Evonne Shirzadegan with granddaughter Akacia Horsley of Flagstaff, Arizona, sister Katie and her hus-

band, Howard Johnson and two nieces Katherine Johnson and Katelynn Blasi and husband, Austin Blasi of Colorado. (Courtesy of The Pinedale Roundup).

TRIBUTE TO J. D. (SAM) DRUCKER

By Dave Vlcek

Sam Drucker came to BLM Pinedale in 2004 in the midst of a huge energy development effort. While the energy workload was substantial, Sam found time to engage in critical Section 110 efforts. A massive flash flood and erosional episode occurred in 2005 and heavily impacted the Wardell Buffalo Trap, a major National Register-Listed site on BLM land near Pinedale. Large quantities of bison bone and artifacts were exposed and deteriorating. While BLM pondered what to do, Sam got permission from BLM Pinedale to engage in emergency protection excavations. This he coupled with a research orientation that filled in several archaeological gaps left by the early 1970's University of Wyoming excavations. He took on volunteers, a very successful public education effort and, subsequent to the emergency salvage effort, secured \$120,000 to fund analysis, curation and related expenses.

At BLM and especially after (senior archaeologist) Dave Vlcek's retirement, Sam became a respected leader in proactive, positive Native American and Tribal consultations. He was very well regarded by the Shoshoni, Ute and Arapaho elders who name selected him for BLM government to government consultations. In typical Drucker professionalism and enthusiasm early in the 2000's, he developed an innovative Paleontology program, active, productive and functional. It set a statewide standard for success.

After hours, Sam became involved in local museum volunteer work, becoming President of the local Archaeological Society chapter (a post he still holds) and was appointed President of the Museum of the Mountain Man for one term. In these roles he organized speakers, volunteer projects, a volunteer workforce and a positive image of BLM and the cultural program at the local level. He sat on the Sublette County Historic Preservation Commission.

Sam also possessed historical interests. He was pivotal in the initiation, development and opening of the Lander Trail New Fork River Crossing Sublette Historic County Park. Funded by innovative Section 106 work, not federal dollars, it was a success story. Indeed, the actual Lander Trail segment that ultimately led to recognition of the historical significance of the area was due to his extensive knowledge of F. W. Lander's survey field notes from the 1850's. In this effort, Sam employed expertise he developed as a land surveyor before and while at BLM Cheyenne. His historical expertise

extended into his volunteer work evaluating the 1959 Bierstad campsite in South Pass. More significantly, he sponsored and carried out the total recordation of the Holden Hill Oregon Trail Inscription Site, arguably the largest, best preserved Emigrant Trail registry in the nation. His team of volunteers included BLM Denver Office 3-D wizards who employed state-of-the-art 3-D photogrammetry. And all on Pinedale BLM!

His professional writing skills were polished by his master's Thesis, a settlement pattern analysis of energy-related inventories in the Granger gas field. More recently, he completed a comprehensive study of BLM's land and projects at Boulder Lake, including a highly successful volunteer effort at prehistoric site evaluation. As part of a public recommendation from the Pinedale Anticline Working Group (PAWG), he co-authored a poster presentation at the national Society for American Archaeology meetings highlighting the cultural resources of Pinedale BLM and encouraging professional investigation and research. He also developed a poster highlighting the Lander Trail in Wyoming as partial mitigation of energy developments in the Lander Trail, part of the National Historic Trail network.

At BLM, he managed a huge workload, but also found time (usually his own donated time) to enhance documentation of BLM's "Piney Creek Indian Skull" and the "Mobil Gravesite" and developed, at the Ute Indian Tribal Elder's request, a Landscape Analysis of the "Ruby Butte Landscape" (a complex important to several Indian Tribes on BLM land), to aid in BLM's NAGPRA efforts. He fully supported the recordation of 48LN4881, the Jerry Hunt Pictograph Site (on Pinedale BLM) the largest pictograph site in all of southern Wyoming, the location of which was lost for some 20 years. He continued to plug away at the legacy reports sometimes called BLM's "back-log"

Then, in 2018, when National Park Service funding fell through, Sam succeeded in eliciting BLM Cheyenne staff to fund and execute an innovative "Drone Mapping Project" of two highly significant Rock Alignment complexes, the Sommers Medicine Wheel, and Aspen Ridge. Encouraging use of state-of-the-art technology, these complex (and significant from Native American perspectives) archaeological sites were recoded and important data relating to BLM land ownership, site condition and tribal interests resulted.

Sam continued to foster excellent working relationships and partnerships with the University of Wyoming, Department of Anthropology, Sublette County, the local Ranching community, the Museum of the Mountain Man, the Oregon California Trails Association and several local and statewide professional groups. He epitomized what a dedicated, hardworking and skilled BLM Cultural Resource Specialist is all about.