



Sam Drucker
BLM Archaeologist, Pinedale, WY

Sam Drucker is a cultural specialist for the Bureau of Land Management in Pinedale, Wyoming. Sam's work includes continued excavation of the legendary Wardell Buffalo Trap. Since 2005, Sam has been leading a group in recovering bison remains, weaponry, and other cultural resources, which were under threat from local poaching. The resources found within the Trap, a National Historic Site, have provided insight into Native American buffalo herding techniques from a thousand years ago (link to article: <http://www.pinedaleonline.com/news/2005/09/WardellBuffaloTrapRe.htm>).

"I never dreamed a person could actually 'make a living' by studying culture," Sam recalls. Sam had been interested in archaeology since the age of 7. He remembers spending hours with his grandfather, an "avid Oregon Trail buff," looking for historic artifacts and "arriheads."

After graduating from high school, Sam found work for 18 years in construction and land surveying. At the age of 40, the surveying company that employed him went out of business. He decided to return to school. A 7-year career at UW ended with BA and MA degrees in anthropology.

Upon first starting his student career at UW, Sam thought that he would become a drug and alcohol counselor. He was only taking archaeology courses "because they were fun." Sam had a young family, and hence needed to "bring home a paycheck." His archaeology professors always seemed to have use for an experienced draftsman and surveyor, so he was able to find work through college. During field seasons, he worked for the Office of the State Archaeologist, the BLM and various professors and technicians at UW.

About eight months before his undergraduate graduation date, Dr. George Frison took him by the shoulder, looked him in the eye and said "Sam, you don't really belong in the counseling world, where you have to deal with live people – you belong with us in archaeology." Sam "searched his soul" and "knew he was right." Dr. Frison told Sam that "there are no guarantees in life, but if you work hard towards a goal, somehow through serendipity something good seems to happen."

After earning his MA, Sam took a position surveying with the Cadastral Survey Department of the BLM. He never gave up looking for an archaeology job, however. At the end of his 4-year term surveying with the BLM, a private consulting firm hired Sam to assemble an archaeology branch in Sheridan, WY. After a year and a half, he moved back to the BLM in Pinedale, this time as an archaeologist "making a living" by studying culture.