

Marley Brown of the College of William and Mary, Virginia shared this memory, 8 March 2013.

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Driving to Work with Dave

There are so many contexts that one could chose in which to remember Dave Frederickson – the classroom, the field, the Parker Street party, the music in a hotel room at an SCA meeting. I’ve chosen the front passenger seat of his old GMC van.

For a time in my life in Berkeley, the most anticipated moment in my day was standing look out by the front door of my aunt’s house on San Lorenzo waiting for Dave to pick me up for our trip to school. My first glimpse of that old green GMC van swinging around the corner at The Alameda and coming down the street produced in me a feeling of total joy. Of course, every opportunity to spend time with Dave was to be valued, even treasured, but I knew that we were going to have a block of time to ourselves on the ride during which we could talk some serious “shop.” Some of you will know that this wasn’t my first opportunity to have a close friendship that was based in part on intellectual to and fro across the front seats of a moving vehicle. I had ridden shotgun on my trips down Route 44 between Plymouth, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island with Jim Deetz in the 1970s, and ideas from some of those conversations, also extremely stimulating, wound up as footnotes and asides in Deetz’s books.

For many reasons, Dave and I had much more to talk about than I had had with Deetz. Not only did he want to rehearse ideas about North Coast ranges archaeology with me, we had serious conversations regarding what the ASC should be doing with historical archaeology. Perhaps even more importantly, our conversations often turned to what would today fit into the category of archaeological ethics, the necessity of true collaborative archaeology, and into the rather fuzzy domain of how best to encourage and evaluate students in the department as well as in the Cultural Resource Facility, which offers students the opportunity to learn on the job, prove themselves, and move into more regular employment. I should stress that these latter conversations were much more about pedagogical philosophy than about personnel matters and from Dave I came away with the basic model for what I would try to accomplish as Director of Archaeological Research at Colonial Williamsburg, giving both undergraduate and graduate students an opportunity to learn their craft and move on in the profession.

My favorite and most frequent subject was the nature of obsidian and its research potential broadly conceived. I had met Jonathon Ericson during his time

at Harvard, where he taught archaeological science, and I had seen a book he had done with Tim Earle, but in these conversations, I had with Dave on obsidian studies I was mostly just responding to Dave's extremely creative ideas about the potential for this whole area of research. I believe I was able to help him refine some of his aspirations, and in the process I learned much about such topics as extending social boundaries into the past based on assemblage ratios of obsidian from different sources, and combining sourcing and hydration on obsidian preforms and other artifacts to develop more refined chronologies such that excavation strategies could be altered. Dave wanted to discover what my friend and colleague Ed Harris calls "period interfaces" on prehistoric sites and focus data recovery efforts on them. I believe that he was successful in doing this, and believe he also implemented several other innovative procedures in sampling and data recovery using the combined approaches of sourcing and hydration.

I am the last of Dave's friends and colleagues who could do justice to his contributions to the field of obsidian studies. I'm sure that Tom Origer and Richard Hughes have done so already or will be doing precisely that during the conference [Society of California Archaeology 2013]. It is just that Dave's interest in this subject got him so pumped up, so to speak, that it was often a topic that we were still discussing as we pulled into school. Of course, we also devoted considerable time to the question of why and how historical archaeology should be done, and at what sites. Dave's initial interest in me came after hearing a talk I gave at an SCA northern data sharing meeting at Contra Costa College in the fall of 1978, in which I laid out some principles for evaluating the National Register eligibility of historic sites. He liked what he heard and he wanted to know more. But it took no time at all for the subject of obsidian sourcing, dating, trade, and exchange to enter the conversation.

Long before I had met Dave, I read an essay "Driving to Work" by Anthony F.C. Wallace. It was about cognitive maps and how to document and understand them. Wallace based his understanding on what he called "the introspective consultation of memory by an anthropologist-informant." My memories of driving to work with Dave and connecting with him personally and intellectually when it was just the two of us are among the best I can recall in my life so far and what I said as I closed my written memorial for Jim Deetz, who died in 2000, are just as true for Dave, "a mental spark from him was such a great pleasure, in large part because it was always a two-way street for him." But unlike Jim Deetz, Dave Frederickson baptized me and also conducted my marriage ceremony to Katie Bragdon in August 1982. So as you all know in your own way, Dave Frederickson was a truly exceptional person and a man that I, like the rest of you, was most fortunate to have known; in my case as colleague, mentor, and most importantly for me, chauffeur. (He was such a good driver – he said it came from his years working as a cabbie).