

Tuesday, February 5, 2013

Cowboys' senior guard gets arraignment date **B1**

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Bye bye

Bam Bam achieved international fame for butting cars

By **BENJAMIN STORROW**
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Bam Bam, the bighorn sheep whose penchant for butting cars made him an international star, died of natural causes at Sybille Canyon near Wheatland on Thursday. He was believed to be 12.

Bam Bam was the last of the Sinks Canyon State Park bighorn

herd, surviving a plague of pneumonia that wiped out the park's sheep population in the middle of the last decade. Friends said he loved a scratch on the ear, Doritos and a good head butt.

"He will be missed," said Randy Wise, naturalist at Sinks Canyon State Park in Fremont County.

Bam Bam first appeared along the roadside at the park as a young

ram, said Park Assistant Superintendent Jamie Simsonson. He and another ram came down off the mountains to play by the road. As the years passed, the other ram disappeared. Bam Bam did not. He descended the mountain with increasing frequency, establishing himself as a local icon at the park.

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CONTRIBUTED

Bam Bam, the bighorn sheep of Sinks Canyon State Park, died Thursday. He achieved international fame by butting cars.

BAM BAM

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People in Lander and Riverton made trips check on him, Wise said. Some fed him.

"I saw him eat a bag of Doritos once and was like, 'That's not healthy for anyone, yet alone a bighorn sheep,'" Wise said.

Others petted him.

"If you didn't scratch his ears, he'd butt at you," Simonson said. "Really, all he wanted was a scratch."

Indeed, it was his love of butting that gave Bam Bam his name. He butted garage doors. He dented nearly every park vehicle, including the superintendent's personal car. He was especially fond of taillights. It is believed the sheep saw his reflection in the vehicles, the sight of which prompted him to rear back and charge.

An encounter with Lander artist Mark Jones in the spring of 2009 made Bam Bam a celebrity.

Jones came across Bam Bam gazing at his reflection in a car parked at the ranger station. He stopped to take a photo and, in so doing, attracted Bam Bam's attention.

In a video taken on Jones's camera, Bam Bam can be seen giving the grill of Jones's Toyota 4-Runner a menacing look before rearing back on his hind legs and crashing down inches from the vehicle. The scene repeats itself six times before the sheep finally makes contact with the vehicle.

"He had a thing for the 4-Runner," Jones said Monday. "It was crazy."

Jones posted it on YouTube. As of Monday, it had 653,052 views. It has appeared on television programs in Japan and the United Kingdom, as well as on the National Geographic Channel and World's

Wildest Vacation Videos.

Jones never saw Bam Bam again. A month or so later, state officials moved Bam Bam to Sybille Canyon for his safety and everyone else's.

Park officials tried to keep Bam Bam away from people and the road. Simonson shot a pistol filled with firecrackers on numerous occasions to scare Bam Bam away. Wise chased him repeatedly into the mountains with a bull horn. Nothing worked. Bam Bam even walked into the visitor center multiple times, having found the door left ajar.

Moving him was a tough decision, park officials said. Despite all the damage he caused, they came to love the sheep. When Wyoming Game and Fish Department officials came to take him to Sybille, he came right up to them, got a scratch on the ear and walked into the trailer.

A memorial service may be held for Bam Bam this summer, Wise said. Bam Bam's remains were donated to Sinks Canyon. Park officials intend to have a full-scale taxidermy mount made, and he will be a part of a new exhibit at the park's visitor center.

The exhibit is increasingly important today to commemorate the park's former bighorn herd, Wise said. The close proximity of domesticated sheep herds and the bighorns' susceptibility to domestic sheep diseases means it is unlikely any bighorns will be back at Sinks Canyon anytime soon, he said.

"He was the last survivor of the herd," Wise said.

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