

Jade Smith; a Wyoming Natural Resource!

By: Anthony J. Sacco, Sr. © Copyright July 2006
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PINE BLUFFS — Northern Wyoming's Big Horn Basin is rich in scenic beauty and natural resources. One of those natural resources is Jade Smith, CITM. I'd heard about this energizer bunny of the Big Horn Basin who runs tours to exotic places out of Shell, a smallish spot in north central Wyoming, from several friends. The investigator in me wanted to know more.

Smith, a February 2006 graduate of the International Guide Academy in Denver where she earned the coveted Certified International Tour Guide Manager's rating, has been in the travel business since May 1997. "I began as an outside agent for Eagle Travel Services," Jade said when I contacted her about doing this profile. "I soon learned I enjoyed working with groups, developing, organizing and promoting tours and cruises." So she struck out on her own, and is now an independent tour guide. "In the past four years I've escorted tours to Deadwood, SD, Branson, MO, New Orleans, LA, two Alaskan Inside Passage trips, and Washington, D.C." Her business name? Trapper Travel & Tours.

Jade and I first "met" after I e-mailed her questions for this profile. "Hi, Tony!" she replied. "Just got your e-mail." Her exuberance pulsed through my computer's keyboard. "Today I head out for three days of tour presentations with my Denver

Globus representative. We'll present my Fall Foliage tour information in Worland, Thermopolis, Lovell, Cody and Greybull. I'll try to get your questions answered [soon]."

Busy, I thought. *Won't hear from her again for a couple weeks.* Imagine my surprise, then, when she contacted me just a few days later.

"Busy" doesn't adequately describe Smith. Formerly a professional photographer, this perky Shell, Wyoming resident works as a thirty-hour/week advertising sales manager for the Greybull Standard and the Basin Republican Rustler. That's not all. As president of the Greybull Chamber of Commerce, she was involved in preparations for Greybull's July 2006 centennial celebration. She gets it all done when she's not escorting groups of Wyoming residents to exiting rendezvous with adventure.

Most people simply tolerate their work. Some love what they do. They're truly blessed. Jade belongs to the latter group.

"I'm married, with two sons and two grandchildren," she reported. "My husband, Gil, travels with me. He's a wonderful asset; very supportive . . . and helpful when we're on tour."

Corroboration came from Fr. Hugo Blotsky, pastor of St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church in Buffalo. "Met Jade and her husband in 2004 on the Branson tour," he said. "Jade's very enthusiastic, with a real desire for adventure. Gil's an educator, studying to be a lay minister. He's personable and good to talk with. He helps organize, accompanies her on tours, and serves as chaperone. Enjoyed it so much I went again in 2005."

Getting the tour business off the ground wasn't all smooth sailing. "Finding time

to grow my business while working 30 hours weekly at the newspaper has been my greatest challenge," she relates. "Until two years ago, I only made one or two trips a year. I'd take my vacation time to do them. As demand for more tours increased, juggling both jobs has been hard. Thanks to an understanding employer, I've been able to work at the paper four days most weeks, devoting Fridays to my business."

One problem? "It's hard to reach suppliers on weekends to get quotes and plan itineraries. Then, too, my advertising sales for the time I'll be gone must be done before I leave, even though it often involves ten-hour days before departure."

Is being away from home and family hard? "Since my sons are grown and on their own, the problem of balancing family and travel isn't the issue it once was. [And since] Gil travels with me on most tours, it's great to have him along to share the trip."

Jade, a member of Outside Sales Service Network (OSSN), Group Travel Organizers (GO), and Group Leaders of America (GLAMOR), dreams of running her tour guide business full-time. "Now that I've received my CITM," she says, "I want to offer overseas as well as domestic tours and cruises."

What's in this high-energy lady's future? "Plans to expand my tours to include Europe, Asia and Australia, and eventually design inbound tours to Wyoming." On tap this year: a Fall Foliage Tour to New England and the Christmas Holiday Tour to Branson in November.¹

"Each trip is full of special memories," she says. "Standing at the rail of a cruise ship with my group watching glaciers calving along the Alaskan Inside Passage, riding

¹ Reach Jade by e-mail @ trappertours@yahoo.com; by snail mail @ Trapper Travel & Tours, P.O. Box 166, Shell, WY 82441, or by phone @ 307-765-9239.

on a bright red double-decker bus in Ketchikan enjoying our Scottish guide's narrative, sitting on the deck of a paddle wheeler cruising down the river, sharing a poignant moment with a veteran in my group while visiting the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C., and especially, knowing our efforts to provide my group with a great trip had succeeded when I overheard a woman in an elevator say to her companion, "Oh, that bunch from Wyoming? All they do is laugh!"