



Dave Hake

SIGN CUTTER

The term “*Sign Cutter*” is derived from the United States Border Patrol trackers of old, if you consider eighty years “old.” I learned the term and the persons so designated when I entered into the Border Patrol in 1965. There were only a few so designated by their peers and recognized by the “Service” as “master trackers.” These were specialists with an uncanny ability to “know” more and “see” that which remained a mystery to other trackers.

It was then, and is now, somehow the mistaken concept that *Sign Cutters* work sign for miles and miles to overtake those making the sign trails. The truth of the matter is that which made *Sign Cutters* was to “know” where to look for and find the person being tracked. The more learned, the greater skill acquired, and the less time spent tracking.

Today’s modern world of “professional tracking” is much the same, yet very different from days of old. *Sign Cutters* today must know how to use the computer, the GPS, navigation, meet state and federally imposed rules, regulations and training mandates -- all before any opportunity to see sign. The fact of the matter is that today’s *Sign Cutter* progresses through many years of formal training and mission experiences. This *Sign Cutter* must deal tactfully and respectfully with political attitudes and prejudices; interpersonal relationships; requesting agency jealousies and conflicts; and many more issues all outside of the actual tracking arena. Inside that arena the *Sign Cutter* must market his talents through public service introductions; encourage and engage new tracking recruits; train these novice trackers; work with other trackers to provide a “program” platform for recognition, credibility, accreditation, integrity and more.

Dave Hake meets the written criteria of the Joel Hardin Professional Tracking Service to accomplish the above requirements and much more. Dave is a quiet, soft spoken man, electrician by trade, who loves to track, loves to teach tracking, and loves to know about people from the physical evidence called “sign” that is left behind in their footsteps. I have had the opportunity to train and work with several thousand trackers over the past forty years and have certified only a few as “*Sign Cutter*.” Dave typifies the modern version of those I once knew...quiet, reserved, confident and totally competent. This man is neither a miracle worker nor one who has all of the answers; he is a man with the knowledge to know what he knows, and to see that which others look at and do not recognize.

I commend Dave Hake as a modern “*Sign Cutter*” to the Larimer County Sheriff’s Office and Search and Rescue Organization.

Joel Hardin
Joel Hardin Professional Tracking Services