
Biography of Ele “Tony” Baker (1944—2012)

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Tony Baker in 2008.

A family of archaeologists

Tony grew up in a family steeped in archaeology. During the 1930's, at the height of the dust bowl years in the central U.S., his grandfather discovered a large number of important sites and shared data generously with professional archaeologists. Tony's father, Ele Baker, worked for the Anthropology Department at the University of New Mexico and later restored ruins near Amarillo, Texas for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). As a teenager, Tony and his father explored Paleo-period lithic scatters around Albuquerque, New Mexico. Yet, Tony shelved the family fascination with artifacts for a time, deciding instead to pursue a career in oil.

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A “walk” about the world

His job working for Texaco required Tony to work in many areas around the world, where he could observe new landscapes and lifeway's through the prism of his archaeological upbringing. Whenever possible, he recorded sites and collected artifacts as a preferred means of relaxation. In time, his engineering training would provide a valuable foundation for his studies of lithic analysis.

Circling back

Eventually, Tony decided to advance his resurging interest in archaeology by earning a Master's Degree from the University of Denver in 1990, with his thesis focused on projectile point resharpening (Baker 1990). By then, his involvement with the Society of American Archaeology and the Plains Anthropological Society had put him in contact with many of the principle scholars in Paleoamerican archaeology.

Starting anew

Tony's retirement from the oil industry was not an end, but an opportunity to revitalize old passions. He spent many summers on the Alaskan North Slope with archaeologist Mike Kunz, exploring and recording sites for the Bureau of Land Management. After attending a Society of American Archaeology lecture in which Andrew Pelcin (1996) described his lithic experiments to isolate the variables effecting the formation of flakes, Tony saw the possibility of using computers to model lithic fracture. Having acquired a finite-element analysis program, he immediately realized the enormity of his self-appointed quest. The task was eased somewhat by writing new code but there remained a problem with validating the predictions. As a fellow engineer, my collaboration began as discussions about how to apply engineering principles in the emerging model but rapidly expanded to conducting scores of experiments to test conclusions. The Baker family artifact collection was instrumental in revealing numerous archeological traits that were predicted by theoretical modeling (Patten 2005).

Whether Tony and his wife Simone traveled to archaeological meetings or simply on vacation, time was made available for visiting with lithic experts or viewing archaeological sites, always looking for morphological traits shared between diverse cultures and speculating about their potential cause. Along the way, Tony was generous in helping others further their own interest in lithic studies and championed open access to research reports. His website (see below) reflects that interest in breaking down barriers to intellectual exchange.

The untimely passing of Tony Baker, prior to the International Symposium on Chert and other Knappable Materials, meant that many participants missed the valuable opportunity to meet a passionate proponent of the study of lithic artifacts. Tony was ever eager to engage with fellow enthusiasts on a global level and always emerged with fresh projects to explore. He was particularly excited to participate on the scientific committee, where he saw opportunities to foster innovation.

It seems appropriate to illustrate Tony's scope of interest by an inventory of his writing. We can only guess at what contributions were denied us by his departure.

Listing of Tony Baker's printed publications:

Baker, Ele Antoine (Tony)

1990 *Expediency and Projectile Resharpening*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Colorado, Denver, 95 p.

- 2000 Family Memoirs. In: *Archaeological Excavations of Antelope Creek Ruins and Alibates Ruins, Panhandle Aspect 1938-1941*, (Ele M. Baker & Jewel A. Baker), Publication Number 8, Panhandle Archaeological Society, Amarillo, Texas: p. ix–xii.
- 2002 Digital Crabtree: Computer Simulation of Folsom Fluting. In: *Folsom Technology and Lifeways*, (Clark, J.E. & Collins, M.B., Eds.), Lithic Technology, Special Publication Number 4. Department of Anthropology, University of Tulsa: p. 209–226.
- 2007 A Simple Request. *Prehistoric American*, 41: 20–21.
- 2007 The Paleo End Scraper (edited by Gene Hynek). *Prehistoric American*, 41: 60.

LeTourneau, Philippe D., and Tony Baker

- 2007 The Role of Obsidian in Folsom Lithic Technology. In: *Folsom Technology and Lifeways*, (Clark, J.E. & Collins, M.B., Eds.), Lithic Technology, Special Publication Number 4. Department of Anthropology, University of Tulsa. p. 31–45.

LeTourneau, Philippe D., Raymond Kunselman, and Tony Baker

- 1999 Results of Additional XRF Analysis of New Mexico Folsom Obsidian Artifacts. *Current Research in the Pleistocene*, 16: 99–101.

Rinella, Steven

- 2007 Meet the Flintstones. *Outside Magazine*, August 2007
(An account of a North Slope archaeological survey with Tony Baker and Michael Kunz).

Paleoindian & Other Archaeological Stuff website (www.ele.net):

Baker, Ele Antoine (Tony)

- 1996a Images from the Asian Steppe.
- 1996b Projectile Refurbishing.
- 1997a Art and The Folsom Point.
- 1997b The Belen Point: Plainview Variant?
- 1997c The Clovis First/Pre-Clovis Problem.
- 1997d The Folsom Workshop: A Conference on Prehistoric Replicative Folsom Knapping.
- 1997e The Paleo End Scraper.
- 1998a Application of Finite Element Analysis to the Understanding of Flake Formation (by Tony Baker & Andrew Pelcin).
- 1998b Folsom Point Manufacture.
- 1999 The 2nd Folsom Workshop (1999): A Conference on Prehistoric Replicative Folsom Knapping.
- 2000a The Clovis/Folsom Transition.
- 2000b Digital Crabtree: Computer Simulation of Folsom Fluting.
- 2000c The New Mexico Archaic/The Oshara Tradition.
- 2001a My Parents, The Archaeologists.
- 2001b Transporting and Caching Lithic Material in Biface Form.
- 2001c Understanding Flake Mechanics: An Unifying Theory.
- 2002 Variation in Paleoindian Lithic Assemblages Through Time.
- 2003a Contrasting the Lithic Technologies of Mesa and Folsom (by Tony Baker & Michael Kunz)
- 2003b Static and Dynamic Loading Modes.
- 2003c A Theory for Flake Creation.
- 2004a The Clovis First/Pre-Clovis Problem: Revisited 2004.

- 2004b The Lithic Containers of the Archaeological Record.
- 2005a Bruce Bradley Has Gone Academic.
- 2005b The Elephant in the Parlor: Another Story about Sandia Cave Based on an Interview of an Individual Who Excavated in the Cave.
- 2006a The Acheulean Handaxe.
- 2006b The Flake: Stepchild of Lithic Analysis.
- 2006c North Slope Slide Show.
- 2007a The Acheulean Handaxe at Boxgrove.
- 2007b Pleistocene Bones and Stones in the New World.
- 2007c Recycling.
- 2007d Tony's Quick and Dirty Opinions.
- 2008a Dear Arrowhead Hunter.
- 2008b Lithic Artifacts from North of the Arctic Circle.
- 2008c Marvin McCormick – The First Modern Fluter.
- 2008d A Simple Request.
- 2009a The Antler Foreshaft – The Original Shrink Wrapped Package.
- 2009b I Forgot to Remember to Forget: 1st Peoples in the New World
- 2010 The Invisible Signature of the Folsom Point Knapper.
- 2011a Definition of Flake Types.
- 2011b From Mesa To Monte Verde (by Michael Kunz & Tony Baker)
- 2011c Lithic-Rich and Lithic-Poor Environments.
- 2011d The Santa Claus Paradigm.

References cited:

- Patten, B. 2005, *Peoples of the Flute: A study in Anthropolithic Forensics*. Stone Dagger Publications, Denver. 288 p.
- Pelcin, A. 1996, *Controlled Experiments in the Production of Flake Attributes*. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania. 794 p.
 URL: <http://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI9627983>