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Unsung Hero of the Tanner--Alvan Williamson

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UNSUNG HERO OF THE TANNER:
ALVAN THE BEAR MAN

BY ELISABETH ANDERSEN
When I first entered Alvan Williamson’s office the Friday before I actually had the chance to sit down and talk with him, I was greeted by a member of his custodial staff. She eagerly told me that if I was to interview Alvan, I would have to ask about his motorcycle gang and title this article, “Alvan the Bear Man.” Alvan on the other hand, who was sitting across the room, jokingly threatened to be out of the office at the time we planned to meet. However, when I showed up the next week, Alvan was at his desk. With a smile on his face he stated, “Well, I’m still here. I didn’t run away,” for which I am very grateful.

Although many individuals might not know who Alvan Williamson is, the work he does for the N. Eldon Tanner Building is important to us all, whether we notice it or not. For the past 10 years, Alvan has been in charge of the Tanner Building’s custodial staff and has remained because he likes the association, the people he works with, and the fact that there is enough work to keep him busy, which seems to be a common objective in his life. Alvan not only keeps the Tanner Building clean, but also owns two online businesses, runs a cleaning service with his wife, and manages three rental properties. However, he will tell you, “I actually have a lot of free time.”

If I have learned anything about Alvan, it is that he enjoys working with his hands and spending time out in nature. In one of his online businesses, he sells pinewood derby cars, which he crafts and designs himself. When he and his wife moved to Springville, he took on the responsibility of roofing their home, painting it, and doing all of the clean-up work at the end. As if building part of a house wasn’t enough, he also constructed a shed in their backyard. Alvan described his woodworking accomplishments in the same way that a child would describe building a house out of Lincoln Logs: simple and easy, as if anyone could complete the task. During all seasons of the year, whether it’s sunny or snowing, he can be found fishing with his friends and family.

However, woodworking and fishing are not the only ways that “the Bear Man” spends his vast amount of free time. Contrary to the custodial employee’s previous comment, Alvan is not actually part of a motorcycle gang. Nevertheless, he does own a motorcycle and goes on multiple-day trips with a couple of his friends, so you be the judge. In fact, the name “the Bear Man” comes from a time when he was riding through Yellowstone with his “motorcycle gang” and saw a bear running alongside the road. He stopped to let the bear pass him and cross the street. Fortunately, no actual contact was made between the bear and Alvan or his friends. He recalls that his trip to Yellowstone was very memorable indeed because of the time that he was able to spend with his friends and be surrounded by nature.

Nevertheless, when I asked Alvan about his family, he replied, “[Family] comes before motorcycles or fishing. Family comes first.” From the moment that I walked into his office and spoke with one of the custodial staff members, to the end of our interview when he told me, “I don’t like things like this,” referring to the attention that he was receiving, Alvan’s humility and the love that he has for his family and friends was apparent. Whether we work as investment bankers or custodial staff members, we will be remembered by what we did and how we treated people. As William Arthur Ward stated, “Greatness is not found in possessions, power, position, or prestige. It is discovered in goodness, humility, service, and character.”