BILL RATHJE



Bill Rathje died last Friday.



Inventor of garbology, pioneer in anthropological approaches to contemporary material culture, expert in ancient civilizations, prescient, daring, and, above all, a great and warm person, larger than life.

He had been ill for a long while, but I always thought he'd get better when his doctors found the right medication, and we'd share many more of the wonderful conversations that were the heart of our friendship.

We had just put the finishing touches to our book with Chris Witmore – *Archaeology in the Making* – now in production with Routledge and due out in the summer. I know Bill saw this as his greatest contribution to understanding what archaeologists get up to.

I'll have more to say when I feel more composed. – ([Link] to a later post)



Bill loved this photo he took of me and Lew Binford back in 2002. I had been quizzing Lew about a comment he had just made about some archaeologists denying the validity of science, asking him to name them. “Well, you for a start!” he barked back, not altogether seriously. I have found myself increasingly taking the role of a champion of strong scholarship and argument, and yes, science. This irony, given the way some have read my earlier work as a kind of postmodern relativism, was not lost on Lew or Bill – we talk about it in the new book I just mentioned above. Bill’s own work was exemplary in its negotiation of social science, empirics, and subtle negotiation of crucial contemporary political agendas. It was the conversations we had with friends and colleagues over the years that led us both to appreciate the human face of science.