

IN MEMORIAM



Archaeology in the Making is in production – [\[Link\]](#)

I am editor with Bill Rathje and Chris Witmore. With many friends and colleagues we explore the **human face of archaeology**.

Chris and I have added a post script to the Preface about Bill Rathje and Lew Binford.

Lew Binford passed away during the final preparation of

the manuscript, Bill Rathje just as the book was going into production. Bill delighted in describing Lew's friendly banter with Michael, the sparring that revealed not the inflexibilities of hardened academic positions, but true and generous exchange, and Lew's wonderfully dry humor. We suggest that the conversation recorded in this book is a great testament to Lew's intellectual courage and daring, a testament of all that he gave to archaeology, and what will be sadly missed.



Bill and Lew

In many ways, Bill embodied what this book stands for – a deep human understanding of archaeology, indeed of all the archaeological aspects of contemporary society. With a perspective that began in the archaeology of central American civilizations, Bill reached out in the 1970s to create two of the foundations of archaeology today – the anthropology of modern material culture,

and garbology, scientific research into all things garbage. At the core of both lies the care for things that marks the human condition. As Bill originally put it, his was *the archaeology of us*, inclusive, and connecting past and present.

Bill wrote academic papers, a text book (with Mike Schiffer), a best-selling popular work on garbology (with *Atlantic Monthly's* Cullen Murphy), and his greatest contribution was arguably to be found in his interventions and commentary upon everyday life. Bill was a model of public archaeology. In newspaper editorials, magazine articles, television programs, court testimonies, and more, Bill took every opportunity to challenge common public opinions about the waste we leave behind. He was always faithful to a maxim of our current era, 'what we say we do rarely matches up to what we actually do.' You claim to lead a healthy lifestyle? You laud your efforts at recycling? Bill knew that your trash, by and large, said otherwise – Bill had a 237 and a half ton mountain of garbage to prove it. Bill knew that soft solutions to waste issues often came with hard consequences and he regularly demonstrated what archaeological research and thinking

could contribute to addressing the ecological and social crises that we face today. Bill's science was a passionate one committed to consciousness raising and making the future a better place.

Bill carried lightly his expertise, born of the great changes in American anthropology in the 60s and 70s. It never stopped him appreciating and learning from alternate standpoints; he was big enough to deal with disagreement and diversity. Bill always chose to begin with what we share rather than what makes us different. This is so very clear in the conversations contained in this volume; his direct and candid questioning, accompanied by his fabulous anecdotes prompted profound reflection.

Bill had a laugh that shook the room. This laugh was matched by his sense of humor. Bill never missed an opportunity to make a joke; garbage was an easy target, and he always responded with style. A kind and gentle man, his open generosity ran deeply into his Buddhist faith. His intellectual creativity was here matched by experiment in photography, to which he devoted much time in his last years. With wit and sometimes lyrical intensity Bill's still lives, landscapes and nature

photos explored the fleeting and ephemeral, which is also often to say the timeless, in our engagement with material things.

Bill and Lew shared a profound love and mutual respect for each other. We feel it appropriate to dedicate this volume to their memory and the bonds they shared in a care for people and their things, past and present; this care was, and is, so central to archaeology's on-going importance.



(image below – © Louie Psihoyos/Science Faction/Corbis – though I have this slide in Bill's archive at Stanford)



Thanks Bill!