

Introduction to Special Tribute

A Tribute to William R. Freudenburg

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This special section of *Society & Natural Resources* is intended to honor William R. (Bill) Freudenburg. Those who knew Bill, whom we lost to cancer at the end of 2010, know that there would be no better way to honor him than to publish a collection of works that was inspired by his scholarship. Bill had a tremendous influence on the field of natural resource and environmental sociology. While his career was cut short before he had turned 60, few in the field will surpass Bill's productivity or creativity. Bill had an extremely inquisitive mind, tireless energy and enthusiasm for his craft, and a keen ability to draw insight and bring clarity out of seemingly jumbled and nonsensical data. Bill could spot the patterns.

At a gathering in Santa Barbara in November 2010, a few dear friends and fans of Bill suggested that we organize some Freudenburg-inspired sessions at the International Symposium for Society and Resource Management in Madison, Wisconsin, in 2011. The hope was that those sessions would provide sufficient quality material that we could subsequently put together a special section of *SNR* from those presentations. The idea was to invite work that was informed by or inspired by Bill's intellectual contributions to the field. The articles in this special section may appear to be all over the map and in a sense they are, but that is because Bill cast his gaze widely. His work includes major contributions to the Boomtown literature, and to social impact assessment more broadly. He wrote quite famously about resource-dependent communities (oil, mining, and forestry), and about polluters and the social and institutional relations around the production of pollution. Bill wrote about both government and corporate accountability, or more accurately the lack of it. His work touched on risk and disasters, both natural and unnatural, and anticipating a popular current trend, he often argued that so-called "natural" disasters have important human causal factors.

Another of Bill's special qualities is that he used and his work reflected and embodied the full breadth of sociological wisdom that came before him. He was

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not theoretically prejudiced. He drew from the big three, Weber, Marx, Durkheim, as well as many more contemporary theorists. He was always interested in power, and the nexus between technology, nature, and social institutions. There was almost nothing in that realm that did not interest him. There was no theory that he would not consider, no scholar that he would not engage in his search to understand the inner workings of social process as it related to the environment.

At the event in Santa Barbara where many of us gathered to honor Bill and acknowledge his tremendous professional contributions, it was clear that he touched many minds and inspired much scholarship through his work. What was also apparent was that he also touched many hearts. He brought a personal and caring approach to his work and absolute, unbridled enthusiasm. His Santa Barbara colleagues described how he would routinely get standing ovations for regular lectures in the huge Environmental Studies 1 class that he taught to first-year students. In short, Bill was one of a kind. It is our sincere hope that this collection of articles continues conversations and enquiries that Bill started. He would really like that.

Whether you have known Bill for decades or you are just discovering him for the first time through this special section, treat yourself to a viewing of the tribute video that was filmed at the celebration of Bill's life and career in November 2010. Former students and colleagues including some real luminaries in the field describe Bill's intellectual legacy and the many ways that he made this world a better place.

<http://vimeo.com/channels/186979/page:1>