

IN MEMORIAM

## “Even Jades Are Shattered . . .” William Timothy Sanders, 1926–2008

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When William Sanders applied for Social Security benefits he was initially turned away because, according to official records, his middle name was Thayendanega, not Timothy as he claimed. The confusion was the result not of bureaucratic ineptitude, but rather because, as a very young man, Bill was so enamored with the storied Mohawk chief Joseph Brant that he adopted Brant’s Indian name when first applying for his Social Security card. From such beginnings developed the extraordinary career of a great anthropologist and archaeologist. At the time of his death he was Evan Pugh Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Penn State University, where he had worked since 1959. He was responsible for the compilation of a huge body of archaeological information, most notably, the comparative record of settlement patterns over the entire culture history of the Valley of Mexico, one of the world’s cradles of civilization. His work was always informed by his anthropological perspective, the explanatory framework that made all of his archaeological endeavors meaningful. He is survived by his wife Lili, three daughters, nine grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

William Timothy Sanders died at age 82 on July 2, 2008 in State College, Pennsylvania, after a brief hospitalization resulting from a fall in his home in Julian. His long and distinguished career as a Mesoamerican scholar began in the 1950s and continued right up to the time of his death, when he had just completed (with Edward Calnek) the first draft of a history of Mexico City from the earliest times up until the nineteenth century. He left behind a legacy of dozens of books and monographs, scores of influential articles, and an immense accumulation of data from field projects in many parts of Latin America. More importantly, innumerable students and colleagues in many countries were inspired by his energy, his dedication, and his endless reservoir of information and insights about all things anthropological—both in Mesoamerica and beyond. He did fieldwork in Canada, the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru, and received many professional honors, including a Fulbright Award (1964) for teaching and research in Peru, the A. V. Kidder Medal for Achievement in Mesoamerican Archaeology (1980), the Penn State Faculty Scholar Medal for Outstanding Achievement (1984), an Evan Pugh Research Professorship (1985), and membership in the National Academy of Science (1985).

These achievements would not have been predicted from Bill’s beginnings. Born on April 19, 1926, the eldest child of what

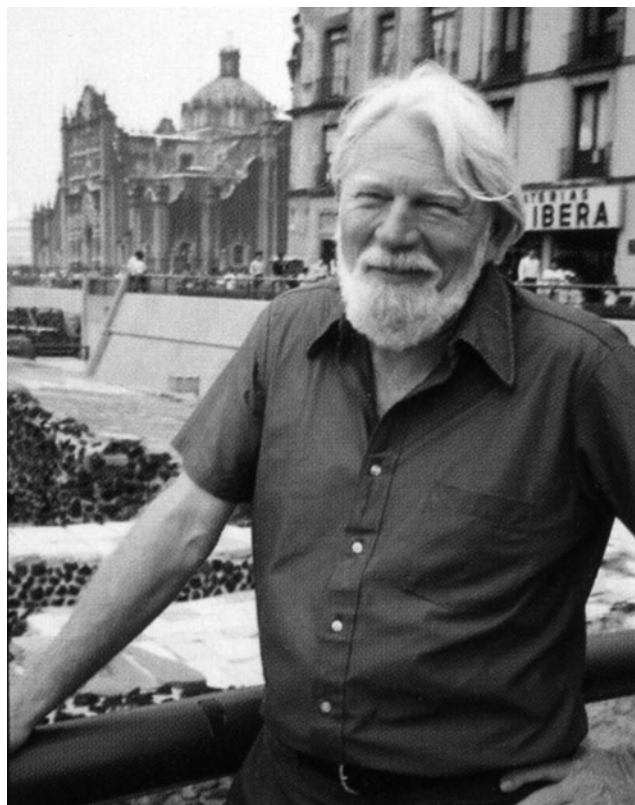


Figure 1. Bill in Mexico City in the 1990s.

would become a large Long Island family, he grew up in modest circumstances—he liked to tell of walking with his father behind coal trucks during the Depression to pick up stray lumps. He was an avid reader and autodidact, and a copy of the *Book of Mormon* given to him by an uncle exposed him to one view of the origins of civilization in the New World. Shortly thereafter Bill discovered Prescott’s *Conquest of Mexico and Peru* and was enthralled to realize that he could read all manner of such stirring and exotic stuff in the local library. This youthful enthusiasm might have come to nothing had it not been for World War II. Bill, who was a high school leader in sports and theater, as well as academics,



Figure 2. Bill in the Navy (1943).

received permission to skip the last few weeks of his senior term at Patchogue High School in order to join the Navy as soon as he turned 17, in 1943. He was sent to North Africa and served on long reconnaissance patrols over the Mediterranean in PBV flying boats, looking for enemy submarines. His one belligerent action occurred when he mistakenly dropped marking flares around an allied ship, which fortunately was undamaged. In later years he regaled friends with many stories, most not repeatable, about his formative experiences in the Navy.

Bill's short Navy career entitled him to the benefits of that most enlightened of all U. S. government initiatives, the G.I. Bill. His Harvard education (Phi Beta Kappa B.A. 1949, M.A. 1951, PhD 1957) would be the envy of many today, but Bill was not drawn to Harvard because of its prestige, but because, in high school, he had read books by Harvard physical anthropologist Earnest Hooton and wanted to continue studying anthropology. He was hungry for ideas and knowledge, and studied with Hooton, Alfred Tozzer, and especially Carleton Coon, to whom Bill fondly credited his life-long fascination with comparative ethnography. At Harvard he formed stimulating relationships with contemporaries such as Michael Coe, David Kelley, and H.B. Nicholson, who also became notable Mesoamerican scholars.

Bill's undergraduate and graduate career coincided with an astonishingly robust time in American anthropology. Cultural evolution was resurgent under the influence of V. Gordon Childe, and Julian Steward and others were formulating the basic principles of cultural ecology. Archaeology, goaded by the criticisms of Clyde Kluckhohn and Walter Taylor, was reinventing itself as the full partner of ethnology and physical anthropology. Bill's own identity as a cultural ecologist and cultural materialist, which he maintained for the rest of his life, had its roots in this intellectual ferment.

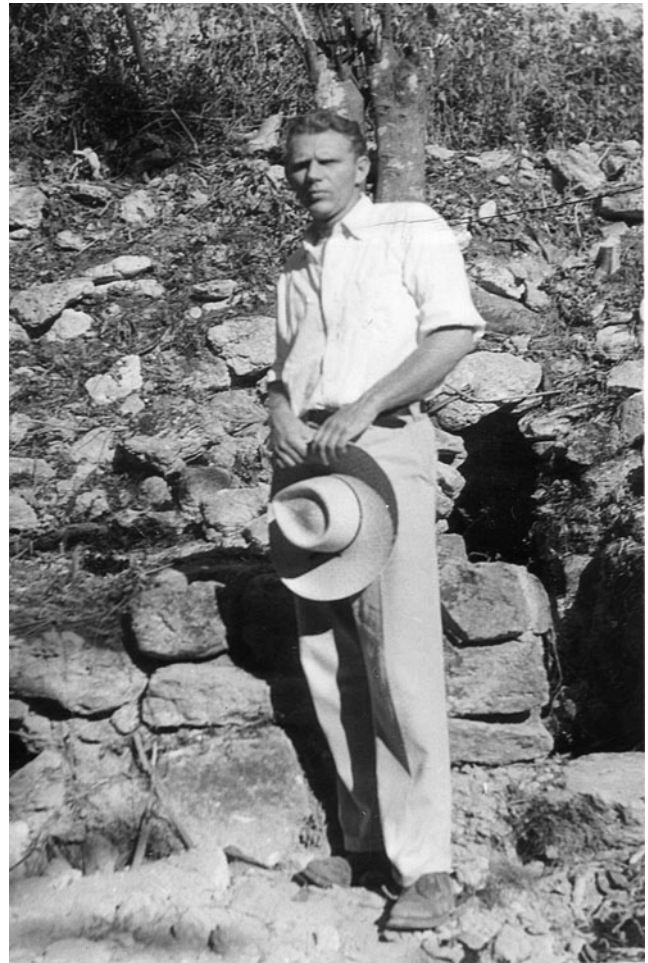


Figure 3. Bill in the mid-1950s.

Gordon Willey became Bowditch Professor in 1950, just in time for Bill to take courses from him in graduate school, and Willey provided an introduction to the methods of regional settlement survey that later dominated Bill's career.

His Harvard days also provided Bill with his first taste of fieldwork at Kilarney Bay, Ontario, Xochicalco in highland Mexico, and Tabasco on the Mexican Gulf Coast, where he worked for the New World Archaeological Foundation (and profited from his grasp of Mormon theology). In 1951 he attended the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City, forging relationships with archaeologists there that he maintained for the rest of his life. Pedro Armillas was a particular hero of Bill's, instilling in him a great interest in landscape analysis, and especially chinampa agriculture.

Most people think of Bill Sanders primarily as an archaeologist, but he was a comparative anthropologist first and an archaeologist second, a relationship he saw as inseparable. For many years he taught a world ethnographic survey course of the kind that has gone out of fashion today, but that his students still remember as extremely stimulating and essential to their development as anthropologists and archaeologists. In part because of his close association at Penn State with biological anthropologist Paul Baker, he was well versed in many aspects of human adaptation, ecology and demography. Bill was also an avid, though formally untrained,

ethnohistorian. Nowhere are these interests more evident than in his dissertation, *Tierra y Agua: A Study of Ecological Factors in the Development and Personality of Mesoamerican Civilizations*, based on fieldwork among peasant farmers in the Basin of Mexico and Tabasco (he also made a film of the same title). Throughout his career he delighted in talking to rural people about every aspect of their lives. No one was better at strolling into a rural house and quickly establishing rapport with traditional farmers, whose ancient counterparts he recognized as the essential social and economic building blocks of all preindustrial agrarian societies. One might say that Bill was himself a peasant at heart, always fascinated by the intimate relationships between people and their landscapes, nor was this only an intellectual perspective. He was an enthusiastic gardener who loved to grow things, especially fruits and vegetables. Those of us who lived with him at Copan fondly remember when he sowed all manner of garden crops in the courtyard of our house, only to find his plants ravaged by the tobacco virus in the soil he laboriously hauled into his planting beds. Only his taro plant, fortuitously situated under a dripping faucet, thrived. After he moved to his farm near Julian, Pennsylvania, in 1977 he devoted much time to gardening. His initial maize crop looked like a Mangelsdorf exercise in retrogression, but he got better at it and delighted in harvests of tomatoes and chilies.

Bill wrote much of his dissertation while living in Mérida where he worked for the Carnegie Institution of Washington. One of his projects was a survey of coastal sites in Quintana Roo, including Ixpaatun and Tulum. The east coast of Yucatan was then a very backwoods region that attracted many questionable elements of the Mexican population. Bill was very fond of his roughneck workmen, some of whom were murderers on the run, and he did his survey using mules, he himself shod in penny loafers instead of snake boots. Few of the countless tourists who now visit Tulum each day could imagine it a few decades ago when Bill slung his hammock in the main temple.

In 1956 Bill accepted a faculty position at the University of Mississippi while finishing *Tierra y Agua*. While there he excavated at Etowah, Georgia and, after earning his doctorate from Harvard in 1957, again worked with the New World Archaeological Foundation in Chiapas, Mexico. In 1959 he became assistant professor of anthropology at Penn State University, where he was to spend the rest of his career. At that time anthropology was part of a joint department with rural sociology, and Bill, along with Paul Baker, Fred Matson, and others, was later among the founders of the independent department in 1968.

Bill could not have launched his Ph.D. career at a more opportune moment. Sputnik went up in 1957, much to the consternation of the American scientific community, and suddenly there was abundant government funding for scientific research of all kinds. Prior to the late 1950s, as Bill was fond of pointing out, only a few institutions funded large-scale archaeological projects, so many promising archaeologists struggled to make a living or dropped out of the profession. Even worse, the most important sponsor of Mesoamerican archaeology, the Carnegie Institution, was just shutting down this part of its program. After Sputnik archaeologists were suddenly faced with unexpected resources and opportunities, particularly in the form of the nascent National Science Foundation (NSF). Eric Wolf, one of the first beneficiaries of NSF largesse, invited Bill to a conference at the University of Chicago in 1960. Participants were charged with developing a program of research focused on the Basin of Mexico, an ancient and dynamic region

of successive urban civilizations about which surprisingly little was known. To Bill Sanders fell the survey of the Teotihuacan Valley, which he directed with NSF funding between 1960 and 1964. During this interval he refined or invented many of the basic methods of regional settlement survey that are still in use today, and particularly the effective use of aerial photos, and these methods were applied to as much of the Valley of Mexico as could feasibly be surveyed. Spin-off projects, initially by Jeffrey Parsons, Richard Blanton, and then by many others, continue into the present. All this groundbreaking research was undertaken just in time because the urban explosion of Mexico City and the commercialization of agriculture were rapidly destroying much of the archaeological record and the traditional agrarian landscape. Bill's many subsequent trips to Mexico distressed him as he witnessed all these changes, and he felt privileged to have been in the field at the critical moment.

One product of this research program was the classic monograph *The Cultural Ecology of the Teotihuacan Valley* (1965), the prototype for many similar volumes on the Teotihuacan Valley later published in the Penn State Anthropology Department's Occasional Papers series, covering the history of occupation of the valley, and edited by Sanders. Several years later Bill laid out his theoretical position in *Ancient Mesoamerica: The Evolution of a Civilization* (1968), co-written with Barbara Price. The crowning achievement of the Basin of Mexico research came a decade later, in 1979, with the publication of *The Basin of Mexico: Ecological Processes in the Evolution of a Civilization*, co-authored with Jeffrey Parsons and Robert Santley, a classic analysis of the evolution of one of the world's great preindustrial traditions and a source of endless data and methodological insights.

All his experience in the Basin of Mexico served him well in his next big project at Kaminaljuyu in the highlands of Guatemala (1968–1973, co-directed by Joseph Michels). This impressive site, well-known from Carnegie Institution excavations, was being gobbled up by the expansion of Guatemala City—the kind of threat Bill knew so well from Mexico. Salvage considerations apart, Bill knew that Kaminaljuyu was somehow connected with his beloved Basin of Mexico through its links to Teotihuacan. The KJ project (as we all called it) was in many ways a more sophisticated outgrowth of Bill's Mexican research. It was one of the first large efforts that heavily involved the use of computers both in

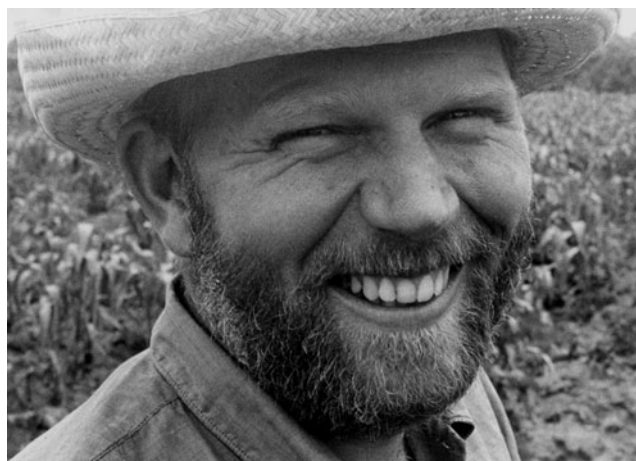


Figure 4. Bill in the 1960s.

the field and the laboratory. Bill recognized that a deficiency of his early Teotihuacan work had been too little excavation, so intensive test-pitting and larger excavations accompanied the mapping of Kaminaljuyu and the survey of the Valley of Guatemala. Such a huge project drew graduate students from many institutions and served as a training ground for many archaeologists still active today. When they heard of Bill's death many KJ veterans no doubt fondly remembered the wonderful party he threw in Guatemala City in 1969 to celebrate the moon landing, almost 39 years to the day before he died.

As the Kaminaljuyu project wound down Bill spent 1973–1976 as a visiting professor in three separate Mexican institutions: the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (along with Armillas and Kent Flannery), the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia. Bill is fondly remembered today as a mentor by many Mexican students who later became distinguished professionals. He also supervised small field projects at that time, one of which examined prehispanic agricultural systems. In the late 1970s and 1980 he organized a large Penn State excavation at Tlajinga 33, a craft-producing apartment compound at Teotihuacan.

By this time Bill's reputation and field credentials were such that opportunities came his way almost unsought. In 1980 the Honduran government asked him to head up a project at Copan, one of the most famous of all Classic Maya centers. Gordon Willey (1975–77) and Claude Baudéz (1977–1980) had earlier started new episodes of research at Copan, well-known both for its rich epigraphic and sculptural records and from the intensive excavations done there before World War II by Bill's old employer, the Carnegie Institution. In December of 1980 Bill (with David Webster as co-director) began Proyecto Arqueológico Copan Phase II. Funded by many sources, including the Honduran government and the World Bank, this research formally ended 1984, although many spin-off projects continued until 1997. In many respects this was the most mature and integrated of all the field projects Bill carried out. His previous experiences with various Mesoamerican centers had stimulated his interest in comparative urbanism and household archaeology. In addition to regional survey and test-pitting that built on the earlier Willey/Baudéz efforts, PAC II (as the Penn State project is labeled) carried out large-scale excavations at Copan's Main Group, as well as in household remains in the Las Sepulturas urban enclave. Epigraphers and iconographers were integral parts of this research, and Bill himself conducted interviews with farmers throughout the valley. The project collected and analyzed one of the largest skeletal samples from any site in Mesoamerica. Much PAC II data is summarized in a set of four monographs that Bill edited called *Excavaciones en el Area Urbana de Copan*.

An unexpected bonus of PAC II was a major telecourse series titled *Out of the Past*, completed between 1986–1993 (with WQED and Cambridge Studios as filmmakers). Bill and David Webster were the academic directors and hosts of this series, which was sponsored by the Annenberg/CPB Project. Matching funds came from many sources, including NSF, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Penn State University, and the series was unusual in that most funding, and hence content, was controlled by the academic directors rather than the filmmakers. Copan formed the core locale of *Out of the Past*. Its eight one-hour video programs and its accompanying textbook were broadly comparative, however, and addressed basic topics signaled by the titles of the individual videos: *The Hearth*; *Signs and Symbols*; *Artisans*

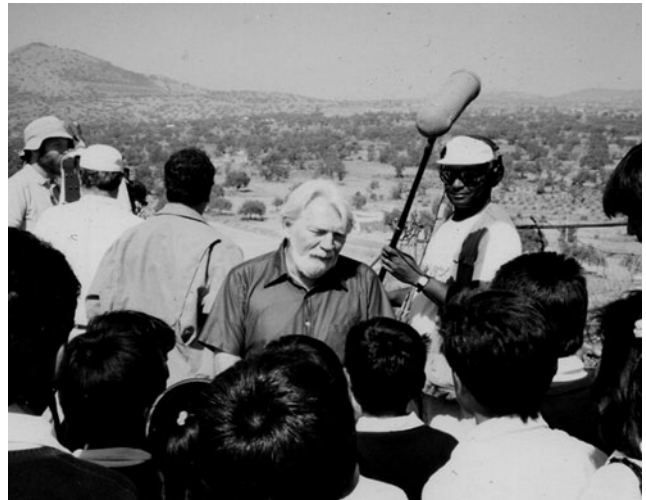


Figure 5. Bill in Mexico filming “Out of the Past” (1980s).

and Traders, etc. Cultural examples included modern and traditional societies as well as those known from archaeological research, and much shooting was done on location in Rome, Morocco, and various parts of Mesoamerica. Bill loved all the traveling and being on camera and anyone wishing to see him in action can do so by watching the videos, still available from Annenberg by calling 1-800-LEARNER.

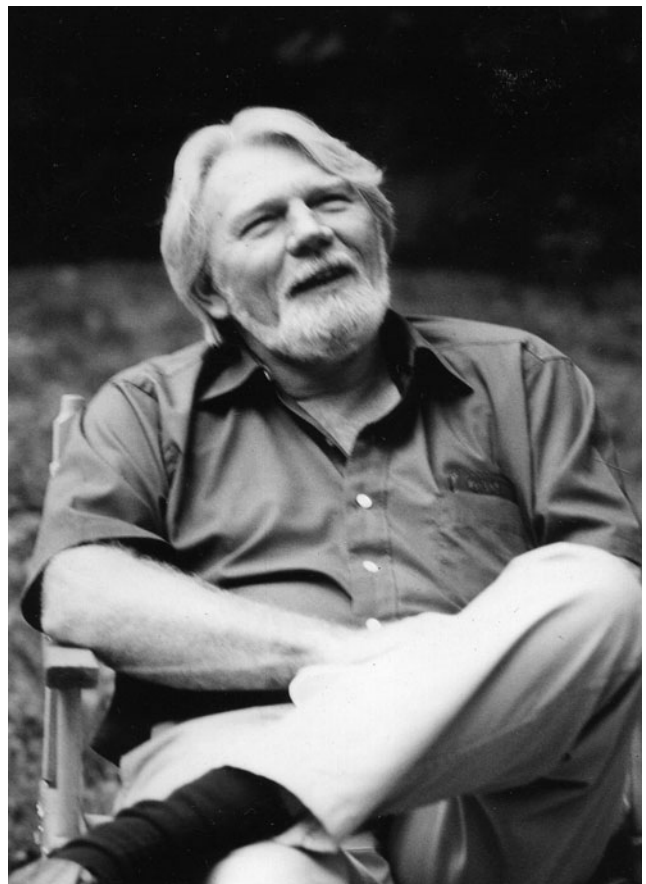


Figure 6. Bill ca. 2000.

Bill finally retired at the age of 67 in 1994 and was honored in 1996 by the two volume *Arqueología Mesoamericana: Homenaje a William T. Sanders* (Mastache, Parsons, Santley, and Serra Puche 1996). He remained very active in research and departmental affairs, and served on many Ph.D. committees. One of his retirement projects was the organization, aided by Mexican and U.S. colleagues, of six conferences on the theme of comparative urbanism, jointly sponsored by the Mexican Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia and Penn State University. These conferences were held at Penn State, Mexico City, Paris, and Leiden, and were attended by international scholars from many fields. The first conference volume was published in 2003 and proofs of the second volume arrived, sadly, just after Bill died. His intellectual legacy continues, however, in the mountains of material, much of it unpublished (and now irreplaceable) that he left behind; photos, maps, notes, and unfinished manuscripts. His colleagues, aided by graduate students, are now organizing all this material (Bill was, to say the least, an indifferent curator of records, but always seemed to know where things were). The most important ongoing efforts are aimed at getting masses of central Mexican material entered onto a GIS database, where they will be available to future generations and from which many new insights will be drawn. Bill was a bit of a technophobe (typewriters baffled him), but one can only imagine what he might have accomplished had GPS, GIS, and other computer-based methods of spatial recording and analysis been available in 1960.

Most people perceive Bill as a Central Mexican scholar, and certainly Bill's archaeological heart was in the highlands. Mayanists who remember the old highland vs. lowland debates concerning the development of Mesoamerican civilization sometimes referred to Bill's interpretations dismissively as having a Central Mexican bias, forgetting that he did a huge amount of Maya archaeology and certainly had informed reasons for his opinions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We appreciate the insights and photographs that were kindly provided to us by Bill's widow, Lili Chablé de Sanders, his daughter Kathleen Sanders, his brother Gerald Sanders, and his niece, Cheryl Hinton.

The title of this tribute, "Even jades are shattered. . ." is from the last line of Song 20 (*Cantares Mexicanos* 1985: 185, folio 17), attributed

Someone once remarked that all recent Mesoamerican archaeology was a dialogue with Bill Sanders (some might object that "dialogue" is an inappropriate description of Bill's conversational style). It could hardly be otherwise. Who else had worked in so many places, or headed up so many big, important projects? Who else maintained such a clear-headed and well-thought out explanatory perspective for so long, whether you agreed with him or not (and there were many vociferous disagreements)? Bill was always receptive to new ideas and always free with whatever he knew. His confidence in the soundness of his own ideas may have been interpreted, by some, as brusqueness, but he was a caring and even gentle man, greatly concerned with the well-being of others. In particular he was always kind and encouraging to junior scholars. He was extremely sociable, never happier than in the midst of a crowd, especially if he was the center of attention. He was devoted to his family—to his parents and siblings, especially his brother Gerald, and he celebrated the arrival of each grandchild and great-grandchild. An accomplished raconteur, Bill greatly enjoyed hearing good stories himself. He was never mean-spirited in the fractious and sometimes vituperative arena of Mesoamerican archaeology, and he was therefore universally respected. His concern was always issues rather than personalities, and to the day he died he retained the touching faith that if only other people listened to him long enough—preferably over a couple of beers—they would agree with him.

Bill greatly looked forward to December 21, 2012, when the thirteenth Baktun cycle of Maya creation will end. He envisioned a boisterous conclave of Mesoamerican archaeologists who would celebrate this milestone, and no doubt he anticipated that, as usual, he might dominate the dialogue. It was not to be. And yet, when such a great gathering takes place (as it surely will), Bill will be there as a kind of revered ancestor: much honored, and still impossible to ignore.

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to Nezahualcoyotl, 15<sup>th</sup> century king of Aztec Texcoco. The whole line reads:

"Not forever on earth, but briefly here. Even jades are shattered. Gold, broken. Ah! Plumes, splintered. Not forever on earth, but briefly here."  
It was a favorite of Bill's.

## William T. Sanders (1926–2008), In Memoriam

Michael D. Coe

Charles J. MacCurdy Professor of Anthropology, Emeritus, Yale University; and Curator Emeritus, Division of Anthropology, Peabody Museum of Natural History.

I sigh when I think of how much time has flown by since I first met my friend, colleague, and classmate Bill Sanders. It was six decades ago, in the second semester of the 1947–48 academic year at Harvard, by which time I had discovered that I wanted to become a Maya archaeologist, not a professional writer. It was not long before I found out that there were two other Harvard undergraduates with similar interests in what was called “Middle America” (Kirchhoff’s term “Mesoamerica” was then disdained in Harvard circles). One was Bill, the other was Dave Kelley, both returned veterans and my seniors by several years.

Our mentor was the renowned Alfred Tozzer, who was to retire as Bowditch Professor at the end of the semester; for the next few years, he continued to occupy his old office on the second floor of the Peabody Museum. Bill and Dave already had an established friendship, and Tozzer made sure that I fell within their orbit, for I knew next to nothing about Mesoamerica, and they already knew a lot. For the next two years, I learned more from evening get-togethers with these two than I ever did in my anthropology coursework.

Two more different types than Bill and Dave could hardly be imagined, and I was pretty different, too. Unlike most of the callow, preppy crowd that I had run with in my first three semesters at Harvard, Bill was a rough-cut, wonderfully opinionated individual from a modest background, who cared nothing for the social niceties of our Cambridge environment. He had been totally absorbed with the Aztecs and their predecessors since high school days, and had a correspondingly low opinion of the ancient Maya. Dave was like nobody I had ever met in my life, wonderfully eccentric and with a broad and deep knowledge of arcane matters such as ancient calendars and the genealogies of forgotten kingdoms—the stranger the better. The study of the ancient Maya suited him perfectly. Both Bill and Dave had been lucky enough to have taken classes with Tozzer, but I had missed out since I couldn’t switch my major from English to anthropology until the following September.

Brilliant teacher and scholar though Tozzer was—he had taught most of the Mayanists of his day—he was also a bit of a snob. Although born “on the wrong side of the tracks” in Lynn, Massachusetts, he had married rich, his wife being heiress to a Hawaiian pineapple fortune. One day Tozzer gave Bill a lecture about his future prospects as an archaeologist—the gist of it was (so Bill told me) that if you didn’t have any money (i.e., were poor) then you wouldn’t get very far in a profession in which most practitioners were independently wealthy. His advice to me was the mirror-image of this, that if you came from a wealthy family (as I did), then you couldn’t expect to get any support from scholarly institutions!

Tozzer was also a practiced gossip. Here is how he went about gathering information on his three acolytes. Each of us was separately invited in turn to have cocktails with him in his large house on Francis Avenue, not far from the Peabody. The drinks in question were extremely potent dry martinis, undiluted with ice but chilled in his deep freeze. Once alcohol had mounted to the brain, and one’s tongue began to wag, he would pump each of us for gossip about the other two. One of his questions to Bill was, “Is it true that David Kelley dries his socks on the radiator?”

I know from later conversations that Bill resented all this, and was never much influenced by Tozzer, but Dave definitely was, and so, to a certain extent, I was, too. Far more important to Bill’s development as an anthropologist was Carleton Coon, and the textbook that Coon had written with Eliot Chapple, *Principles of Anthropology* (Henry Holt 1948). The charismatic Coon had been one of Harvard’s greatest and most popular teachers, but he had failed to get tenure and moved to Penn the year that his book was published. Bill had taken his course, and much of his own life as a Mesoamerican scholar was devoted to the study of social complexity and ecological adaptation along the lines of Chapple and Coon’s *Principles*.

Bill and I had many wonderful, and to me enlightening, arguments about central Mexicans and Mayas, not only in those days but all through our careers. He was about as strictly materialist as one can get, without ever falling into the rigid dogmatism of Marxist materialism. The ideological side of Mesoamerican prehistory and history had little or no attraction to him, as it has always had for Dave and me. “Cognitive archaeology”, as it is sometimes called, would have been a no-brainer to Bill. But in my opinion no other scholar has made such a lasting contribution to understanding the broad evolution of Mesoamerica from hunting and gathering societies to complex urban states.

In 1956 Bill published what has to be one of his greatest contributions to Mesoamerican research, in a Wenner-Gren volume on New World settlement patterns edited by Gordon Willey, the new Bowditch Professor at Harvard. While Willey didn’t originate the study of settlement patterns as a prime theme for Mesoamerican prehistorians (the palm for this should go to Julian Steward and Jim Ford, who had conceived the Virú Valley Project), it was Willey who was its prime mover. But Bill was doing something else in this paper, less social anthropological and far more evolutionary and ecological. He demonstrated that because of the striking regional variation in climate, soils, productivity and population within the central Mexican highlands, all of it was bound together into one grand symbiotic region that allowed the rise of complex societies and urbanism—in contrast to the non-symbiotic lowland Maya area, with its weak or non-existent urbanism.

Then he set out on foot to prove it, with his great Teotihuacan and Valley of Mexico projects. But the Maya were there all along, and during his career Bill was several times torn away from his beloved Valley of Mexico to conduct excavations in both the Maya highlands and lowlands, at first for the Carnegie Institution of Washington, and later as director of the Penn State project at Kaminaljuyu. As long as his research was confined to Maya settlement pattern studies, I suspect he was happy there. But with the ancient Maya, the trio of art, religion, and writing kept coming to the surface, not to be ignored in trying to explain how Classic Maya society worked.

I'm not exactly sure of the date, but at some time in the late 1960s or early 1970s, when we were in the revolutionary throes of the New Archaeology, a conference was held at MIT to discuss all these new so-called "paradigms". The immense lecture room was packed with eager students from several New England universities. I was among the speakers who had been asked to discuss specific monographs, and I had been assigned one of the Kaminaljuyu monographs, co-authored by Joe Michaels and Bill. In summary, I generally like the volume, but noting that the very large corpus of Kaminaljuyu stone monuments had been totally ignored, I rashly stated that nobody would guess from their book that it was the ancient Maya who had created Kaminaljuyu.

Bill immediately jumped up excitedly, and roundly declared "I don't give a hoot whether they were Maya or Vietnamese! I'm interested in cultural regularities wherever they may be!" By now the student audience was ready to boo, not at Bill but at me, which they did when I defended myself by claiming the Maya to be the most complex and advanced civilization in the pre-Spanish New World, and that their distinctive culture should be taken into account. Stung, I riposted: "All right, I'll tell you why I say that—it's the only native American civilization that's of the least interest to historians of science." In subsequent years, on thinking more about this exchange, I finally realized that I was really focused upon what made complex cultures distinctive, and Bill was interested in what made them the same.

Incidentally, that was the same conference in which I was bested in debate by Colin Renfrew, who quoted Wittgenstein in the original German without giving a translation!

Over the years, Bill's research began to focus more and more on population growth as the "prime mover" in stimulating cultural and societal complexity, and no other Mesoamerican archaeologist knew more about this subject. This is probably why he was generally not willing to put the lowland Maya on the same level of development as his beloved central Mexico. He was sure that they had never proceeded beyond the chiefdom level of organization, a view that became more difficult to hold once the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs had accelerated. But Bill's insistence on relatively low Maya populations even during the Classic period still seems to me to be reasonable.

In 1979, we both attended a conference in Minneapolis in honor and memory of Dennis Puleston, who had tragically died the

previous year. The basic theme in most papers was agricultural intensification in the pre-Spanish New World. The discovery of raised fields in the Maya lowlands had created great and often uncritical excitement, and in his enthusiasm my friend Don Lathrap went so far to propose that the Maya *milpa* was a myth created by Sylvanus Morley! William Denevan and B. L. Turner claimed that raised fields in one part of southern Quintana Roo could have supported 233,800 persons, comparable to the chinampa zone of the Valley of Mexico (which had supported the densely-occupied twin cities of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco!). In fact, I knew that *that* particular region of the Maya lowlands had remarkably little ancient settlement. Bill and I were seated together in the audience, and I whispered to him, "Do you believe that?" Bill in eruption was something to witness, and he rose to the bait, stood up, and tore into all those assumptions about the prevalence of agricultural intensification and enormous populations.

As usual Bill was right. He prevailed here simply because no one knew more than he about the cultural ecology of the Maya lowlands in pre-Spanish, Colonial, or modern times. In subsequent years, many claims of such field systems turned out to be premature, and in some cases these raised and drained fields turned out to be not Classic, but Late Formative period in date. Some even turned out to be illusory, the product of natural soil processes, or even methodological artifacts (such as the supposed field systems apparent in radar surveys of the Peten). The Maya *milpa* was no myth.

I'm sure that the last thing that Bill ever wanted to find in his archaeological career would have been a major Maya inscription, but this was his fate in the early 1980s, when the project directed by him, David Webster and Bill Fash uncovered the magnificent hieroglyphic bench in Copan's "House of the Bacabs" (now known to be the residence of a noble scribe). Maya epigraphy was "beyond the fringe" as far as his own scientific life was concerned, but he fully appreciated what our old friend Dave Kelley and others like him had accomplished. I have read somewhere that the paper that he would most liked to have written was Tatiana Proskouriakoff's epochal 1960 article on historical evidence in the inscriptions of Piedras Negras.

In those 60 years of our friendship, I came to realize that in the fractious world of Mesoamerican academia, Bill was almost unique. He could completely disagree with one, yet never let these intellectual differences spiral down into personal animosity. Ever since those early days in Tozzer's Cambridge, we had "agreed to disagree" from time to time. In meetings, he could get as worked up over a point as an Old Testament prophet, a resemblance that became more striking as his white beard grew in later years.

But in the long run his unassailable intellectual integrity, his anthropological vision, and his vast command of the Mesoamerican facts won the day. It's impossible to think of Mesoamerica without thinking of Bill Sanders.