

## William R. Farrand 1931–2011

PAUL GOLDBERG

Department of Archaeology, Boston University, 675 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215, USA; [paulberg@bu.edu](mailto:paulberg@bu.edu)

### OBITUARY

27 APRIL 1931 – 22 MARCH 2011



Bill Farrand at Tabun (Israel) in 1969.

When I arrived at The University of Michigan in the mid-1960s I had never heard of geoarchaeology, nor Professor William R. Farrand. At the time, I was thinking of being an invertebrate palaeontologist, studying rugose corals. Then I took Bill's Quaternary Stratigraphy and Quaternary Research Methods courses, where he not only introduced me to the Ice Age World, but also the fact that one—and it was virtually just Bill at the time—could combine geology and archaeology to investigate both archaeological and geological problems. I was hooked.

Under his guidance I started my MSc thesis studying the material of Yabrud and Jerf 'Ajla Rockshelters in Syria, samples that Bill had brought back from the field and needed to be worked up. During this time I was encouraged to learn some more archaeology and it was during this time I met Art Jelinek who was about to begin excavations at Tabun Cave in Israel. The geoarchaeology of this site ended up being the subject of my dissertation. All of these sites have proven to be very important ones in the Levantine prehistory and I look back now and see how fortunate I was, not only to be able to work at these sites, but also learn under the leading geoarchaeologist at the time. I learned an incredible amount of information from Bill, as well as geoarchaeological skills that I would take with me and use for the rest of my career. I am indebted to Bill for helping me foment my present passions for working in the French Palaeolithic and with French friends and colleagues with whom I still interact after 40 years. His groundbreaking work on Abri Pataud was a true source of inspiration

and set the bar for these kinds of studies.

Bill started out as a Glacial and Quaternary geologist in the 1950s and 1960s, and it was during the mid-1960s that his interests shifted dramatically toward the yet-to-be-defined field of Geoarchaeology. It was then that he started to investigate cave and rockshelter sediments, notably Yabrud and Jerf 'Ajla in Syria. This groundbreaking work for the Near East was later accompanied by geological studies of other important caves including Tabun, Qafzeh, Yarımburgaz, Fontéchevade, Abri Pataud, and Franchthi, all significant Paleolithic and Neolithic sites. His notable publications on cave and rockshelter sediments, Quaternary and archaeological stratigraphy are essential references, as is his co-edited volume on *Sediments in Archaeological Context* (with Julie K. Stein).

He was well respected by both his archaeological and geological colleagues who bestowed upon him in 1986 one of the most distinguished awards in the field of Geoarchaeology—the Archaeological Geology Award of the Archaeological Geology Division, Geological Society of America. He was Chair of the Division in 1980. He also served as President of the American Quaternary Association (AMQUA) from 1994 to 1996, as well as on numerous editorial boards of respected international journals, including *Geoarchaeology*, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, *Paléorient*, and the *Review of Archaeology*. He also was a Panel member of the Quaternary Geology & Geomorphology Division, Geological Society of America, and a Member of the Governing Board, for the journal *Radiocarbon*.



*Bill Farrand at Hamra (Israel) in 1970.*

It is in this view of his accomplishment in the fields of research and service that I was shocked and very saddened to hear of Bill's passing on 22 March 2011 while recovering from spine surgery. Bill was a guide and figure for at least two generations of geoarchaeologists, and his published and edited volumes are at the backbone of any geoarchaeology course taught today. His impact, kind-hearted and generous nature, and his incredible knowledge of the field

will be sorely missed by me, and all former and future students in the field.

*Paul Goldberg  
Boston, Massachusetts  
Sunday, 24 July 2011*