

Backgrounder on Bob Lilienfeld



Bob Lilienfeld did not originally intend to spend so much time poking around the trash. His interest in packaging and the environment took shape in the early 1990s, as a consultant helping one of his clients to develop a model plastics recycling program. The effort, which involved recycling for a variety of events in Chicago, became so successful that, while standing next to huge piles of collected paper and plastic, he had an epiphany: *It would be better to not create waste than to figure out what to do with it.*

Bob's interest in waste prevention, or source reduction, caught the eye of Dr. William (Bill) Rathje, the world's first and best known Garbologist, and Director of The Garbage Project at The University of Arizona. Together, they collaborated on a number of speeches, articles, TV and radio appearances, and the *ULS (Use Less Stuff) Report* newsletter. Also, public response to their January, 1995 full-page New York Times and International Herald Tribune Op-Ed piece, entitled *Six Enviro-Myths*, led to the publication of their book *Use Less Stuff: Environmental Solutions for Who We Really Are* (Random House, 1998).

Relying on fact rather than faith, Bob and Bill were among the first to explain, draw attention to, or predict, the following trends:

- In 1994, they showed how the ever-increasing growth of trash is related to the rise in household generation and not population growth, the widely believed culprit for the garbage glut. Using statistics and anthropology, they showed that trash is a sociological, rather than a psychological, phenomenon.
- In 1997, they predicted that the rapidly growing Chinese economy would lead to fast-rising raw material and energy prices, and that Chinese automobile production would be a major culprit behind these increases. In the last year, both material and energy prices have exploded for the reasons they specified.
- For the past 15 years, they have argued and proved that light-weighting of packaging and products is the single most effective way to reduce environmental impact, regardless of how and from what those materials and products were made. Their motto "light makes right" is as true today as it was in 1992.
- In 1995, they predicted that increases in recycling rates would not be able to offset the growing level of trash discards, and that the amount of stuff thrown away in 2005 would be the same as that thrown away in 1995. They were right.

Besides the book and newsletter, Bob has fielded and published a number of packaging related studies, including two analyses of packaging efficiency, and a life cycle inventory assessment comparing the environmental impact of plastics made from renewable resources to plastics produced from petroleum or natural gas feedstocks.

Mr. Lilienfeld also served on the Corporate Environmental Management Program Advisory Board at the University of Michigan Business School, and the Sustainable Enterprise Institute Advisory Board at the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler School of Business.

Bob is host of a monthly environmental segment on FOX TV. He has also been a regular commentator on NPR and has written on environmental issues for *The New York Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *USA Today*. Bob has conducted over 1000 television, radio and newspaper interviews in the last 10 years.

In 1996, Mr. Lilienfeld and Dr. Rathje declared the third Thursday in November to be ULS Day. It has been declared an ongoing official holiday in at least three states, including North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Kentucky. Bob and Bill have also been honored by Keep America Beautiful and the City of Austin, Texas for their waste reduction work.

Bob's Credits:

Author, Editor and/or Publisher:

- [Use Less Stuff: Environmental Solutions for Who We Really Are](#) (Random House, 1997)
- [The ULS Report](#) newsletter
- National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Middle School Waste Prevention Curriculum: [An Ounce of Prevention](#)
- [A Study of Packaging Efficiency As It Relates to Waste Prevention](#)
- [Review of Life Cycle Inventory As It Relates to Sustainable Packaging](#)
- Waste Prevention Topic Editor and Contributor, Encyclopedia of the Earth

Newspaper and Magazine Articles

- Full page Op-Ed pieces in The New York Times and International Herald Tribune
- Los Angeles Times
- Washington Post
- Chicago Tribune
- San Francisco Chronicle
- Boston Globe
- Houston Chronicle
- Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- Miami Herald
- Baltimore Sun
- Wall Street Journal
- Denver Post
- Cleveland Plain Dealer
- Time
- Forbes
- USA Today
- U.S. News & World Report
- The Christian Science Monitor
- American Demographics

NPR Commentator:

- All Things Considered
- Morning Edition
- Marketplace
- [The Environment Report](#) – Listen to a number of commentaries. (You may have to type in “Lilienfeld”.) Currently provide monthly commentaries for this show.

TV Appearances

- [Monthly Host of FOX TV](#) Environmental Segment
- America Recycles Day Media Tours
- CNN (3 times)
- MSNBC
- CBS, ABC and FOX Morning News
- NBC Late Night News
- WGN News (2 times)
- Comcast Public Affairs
- VH-1
- The Daily Buzz
- CW
- Over 250 local news interviews ([View a Clip](#) – You can watch 3 from this page.)

On the Web

- [National Geographic](#)
- [Ann on Line](#)
- [Forbes](#)
- Packaging World – [April, 2009](#) and [December, 2006](#)
- [Greenerpackage Expert Network](#)
- [Greenrightnow](#)

Education:

MBA, Northwestern University in Marketing, Finance, and Organizational Behavior
BA, Northwestern University in Behavioral Psychology

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