

— WCW POETRY SYMPOSIUM OVERVIEW —

**COME TO A POETRY SYMPOSIUM  
TO CELEBRATE THE 125<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS  
IN HIS HOMETOWN OF RUTHERFORD, NJ  
September 20 and 21, 2008 at the Williams Center, One Williams Plaza (201-939-6969)**

What exactly is a “SYMPOSIUM” anyway?

According to Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, a symposium is:

- a convivial party with music and conversation
- a social gathering at which there is a free exchange of ideas
- a formal meeting at which several specialists deliver short addresses on a topic or on related topics

The September Symposium is all of the above. It is being held...

... to celebrate the life and the 125<sup>th</sup> birthday of William Carlos William, Rutherford’s most famous citizen — a world-renowned Pulitzer Prize winning poet, who changed the voice of American poetry. To celebrate him with music and conversation, a free interchange of ideas, and presentations by specialists on him.

... to celebrate him here because he lived in Rutherford his entire life — even though he was famous enough to live anywhere — and he practiced medicine here for more than 40 years, making house calls for miles around and delivering more than 3,000 babies, probably to someone you or your parents or grandparents knew.

... to celebrate him here because his poetry was a new language that came from the voices of the people he spoke with every day—his patients, his friends, his neighbors. It is the language of America and is why he is called the father of modern American Poetry.

Scores of family members are coming from around the country for a reunion. Presenters are coming from around the world. So many preeminent people wanted to be a part of the 2008 Symposium it could have been two weeks instead of two days.

Below is an overview of people and events scheduled to help celebrate this great man we refer to as WCW. Many of them have said, “William Carlos Williams changed my life.” We know that after these two days of hearing them explain why, your life will be changed too.

**PRESENTERS:**

**WCW Family Members** — Traveling from all over the country, immediate family members will sit on a panel to reminisce about growing up with WCW, Flossie, Edgar, and each other.

**Neil Baldwin** (author, bio *To all Gentleness: William Carlos Williams, The Doctor Poet*) — revisits his friend WCW with the reissuing of his 1984 WCW biography.

**Dr. Robert Coles** (Harvard Professor and Pulitzer Prize winning author of some 50 books, including *WCW: The Knack of Survival*; and *House Calls with William Carlos Williams, MD*, with photographer Thomas Roma, and the introduction to WCW's *The Doctor Stories*) — reminiscences on accompanying WCW on house calls during the 1950s, and how his personal relationship with WCW as poet / physician / artist changed his life. His talk will be accompanied by a photo presentation with Thomas Roma.

**Peggy Fox** (New Directions Publishing President & Publisher) **and Ian MacNiven** (Professor Emeritus SUNY Maritime College) — on WCW's publishing company New Directions, its founder James Laughlin, Ezra Pound, WCW, and their turbulent relationships.

**Andrew Krivak** (ed., *Letters of WCW to Edgar Irving Williams, 1902 to 1912*) — on the close and competitive relationship of WCW and Edgar Irving Williams as revealed through their letters.

**Rod Leith** (Borough Historian) — award-winning slide presentation and bus tour of historic WCW Rutherford sites.

**Thomas Roma** (photographer, *House Calls with William Carlos Williams, MD*, with Robert Coles) — multi-media presentation with Dr Coles as they revisited the sites of house calls Coles made with WCW in the 1950s

**Melissa Sweet** (illustrator, *A River of Words*, children's picture book on WCW with Jen Bryant) — book reading with art presentation on WCW-influenced illustrations

**Emily Wallace** (ed., *An American Dad – Essays on WCW by William Eric*) — “Poet Among Painters: Williams and his Artistic Brother and Parents” a documentary

**POETS:** Paul Mariani, Harvey Shapiro, Lewis Warsh, Bill Zavatsky, Joel Lewis, Jim Klein, Zorida Mohammed

**PANELISTS:** Neil Baldwin, Paul Cappucci, Ian Copestake, Kerry Driscoll, Andrew Krivak, WCW family, Edith Vasquez, Emily Wallace, Bill Zavatsky, WCW Family Members

**PANELS:** “Still Getting the News from Poems: WCW in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”– Kerry Driscoll, moderator; with Neil Baldwin, Paul Cappucci, Ian Copestake, Edith Vasquez, and Bill Zavatsky

“World Class Williams Family of Rutherford, NJ” – Emily Wallace, moderator: with immediate Williams family members and Andrew Krivak

## **RELATED EVENTS:**

### **YOUTH INVOLVEMENT:**

- + 10-county High School Poetry contest readings presented by judges Jim Klein, Joel Lewis, Zorida Mohammed, & Lewis Warsh
- + Elementary school art projects (grades K-3 birthday cards; 4-8 individual art works)
- + “Poetry in Music” a piano concert of music inspired by the works of major poets such as Agee, Dickinson, Goethe, and Tolstoy, performed by Anthony Serrao on “The Williams Piano” and vocalist Shannon Callandrillo
- + Commemorative stamp cancellation ceremony

### **WCW FAMILY & ACQUAINTANCES:**

- + Family reminiscences with Edith Williams Horn (daughter of Edgar Irving Williams), Will Horn & Elin Ingrid Wackernagel-Slotten (EIW grandson and granddaughter), Suzy Williams Sinclair, Erica Williams Gilbert, & Daphne Williams Fox (WCW granddaughters),
- + “About a little girl” – discussion on “found” poem and its legacy; now an art book by Michael Lund, the son of the poem’s subject, with afterwords by WCW granddaughters, Suzy Sinclair and Daphne Fox
- + Readings of WCW poems written for townspeople or patients, with photo/ poem display

### **WCW POETRY COLLABORATIVE:**

- + September 10 Second Wednesday Poetry Reading featuring the Red Wheel Barrow Poets
- + Issuance of special edition of Red Wheel Barrow Poets Anthology

### **RUTHERFORD LIBRARY:**

- + Library’s WCW office display; archival materials; photos; memorabilia; written experiences
- + Screenings of two WCW documentary videos throughout both days
- + Hall of Fame computer voting site
- + Exhibits of Rutherford’s grades K-3 WCW class birthday cards and 4-8 individual art works
- + WCW Birthday Cake Party (9/17)
- + Sale tables
- + Sponsor of community-wide reading and discussion of WCW’s *Autobiography*

### **MEADOWLANDS MUSEUM:**

- + WCW archival materials display
- + “Written in Rutherford” — local writers exhibit on WCW, Warren Lee Goss, Robert Leckie, and Eugene Wright.
- + WCW Flower Garden w/ flowers featured in his poems

### **BOROUGH OF RUTHERFORD:**

- + Mayor John Hipp declares September WCW month
- + New Jersey Hall of Fame WCW induction campaign, spearheaded by Daphne Williams Fox and Mayor John Hipp
- + Town-sponsors bus tours of WCW historic sites in Rutherford

## **EVENTS CALENDAR:**

8/13 Unveiling of Red Wheelbarrow painting by Patricia McCormack French, commissioned by former Library Board Trustee Anne McCormack (6PM Rutherford Library)

WCW Poetry Collaborative Second Wednesday reading featuring Red Wheel Barrow Poets (7PM – 9PM Williams Center Terrace)

8/26 Mayor John Hipp declares September is WCW Month at Council meeting

9/1 Rutherford Labor Day Street Festival (Park Avenue and Lincoln Park) – look for the WCW Symposium table with events calendar, books, and poetry t-shirts

9/8 Art Exhibit Opening of Rutherford’s elementary & middle school art projects

9/10 WCW Poetry Collaborative Second Wednesday reading featuring The Red Wheelbarrow Poets (7PM – 9PM Williams Center Terrace)

### **9/17 WCW’s 125 BIRTHDAY Cake Party**

Highlighting grades K-3 class birthday cards and music by community band members (4:30 to 6 Rutherford Library Courtyard)

### **9/20 & 21 – Two-day WCW 125<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY SYMPOSIUM**

9/27 Williams Center Fundraising Gala, in conjunction with the Bergen County Film Commission. Tickets for gala (9/27) or BCFC Film Festival (9/25-9/28) available by calling 201-693-2763 or 201-939-6969 or visit [www.bergencountyfilmcommission.org](http://www.bergencountyfilmcommission.org)

10/1 Community Book Read and Discussion of *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* Panel members: Borough Historian Rod Leith on “WCW’s Rutherford.” Poet Joel Lewis on “WCW & Official Verse Culture.” Poet Bob Quatrone on “The Hidden Poetry in WCW’s autobiography.” Moderated by library directors Jane Fisher (Rutherford) & John T. Trause.(Wood-Ridge). (7 - 9pm Library Auditorium)

### **Watch for updates on these events:**

- 10-County High School Poetry Contest Winners reading at Barnes & Noble in Clifton Commons
- First WCW historic plaque unveiling
- Community book discussions on:
  - *To All Gentleness* (WCW bio by Neil Baldwin)
  - *A River of Words* (children’s book by Jen Bryant & Melissa Sweet)
  - *An American Dad* (Wm Eric essays, Emily Wallace, ed)
  - *Letters of WCW to Edgar Williams, 1902 – 1920* (Andrew Krivak, ed)