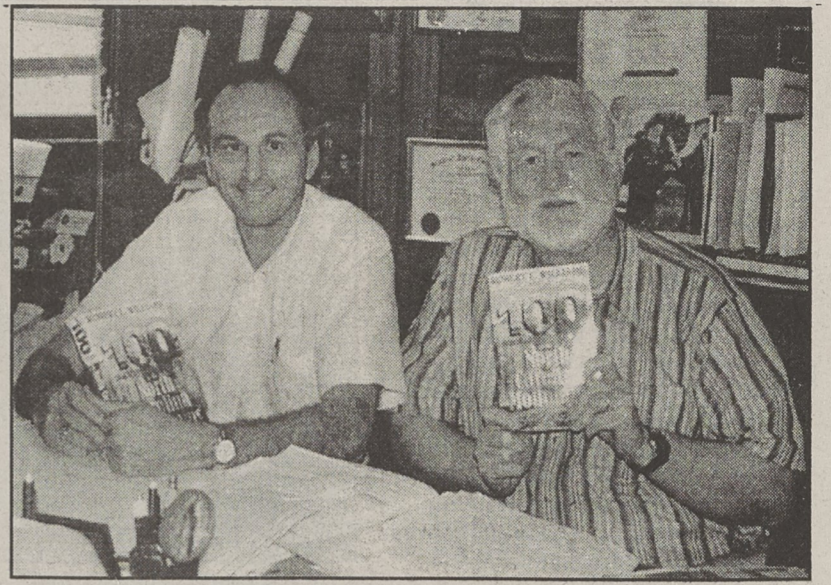


Visit God's House

THIS WEEKEND



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Dean Carpenter, left, and Robert Williams with copies of Williams' newest book, 100 Practically Perfect Places in the North Carolina Mountains

Williams to sign copies of most recent publication

On July 17 from 1 pm until 4 pm, local author Robert Williams will appear at Books-A-Million to autograph copies of his latest book, "100 Practically Perfect Places in the North Carolina Mountains." Books-A-Million is located at 3710 East Franklin Boulevard at Franklin Square in Gastonia.

The new book, the 36th Williams has written during the past several years, contains 100 trips to the mountains of the Tar Heel State and to such diverse destinations as the best mountain peaks, waterfalls, mountain towns and cities, walking tours, hikes, driving tours, historic homes, historical or architecturally unique churches, lakes and streams, educational (Don't tell the kids!) locations, and even trips to the unusual or historic graveyards of the mountains.

"We wanted the book to meet every possible need," said Williams, whose most recent book prior to the "Practically Perfect Places" publication was the second edition of "Gaston County: A Pictorial History." Other recent books include "The Thirteenth Juror" and "Starting Over," the latter an account of the horrors the Williams family endured during and after the devastating tornado that destroyed their home in 1989.

"The book offers the traveler a specific series of destinations for one-day or full-vacation trips. And the destinations are as close as Crowders Mountain and Kings Mountain and as far away as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. There is also information on hiking, camping, and fishing, as well as other outdoor opportunities, in the 456 page book, which contains more than 120 photos, many of them in color."

"100 Practically Perfect Places in the North Carolina Mountains" has a unique history. It is the first book to be issued by a brand-new publishing house located in Gaston County. Southeastern Publishing came about, Williams explains, because some of his earlier books were too successful.

"A few years ago, my family and I wrote a small book about the North Carolina mountains, and it shocked us that in one year it earned nearly half a million dollars," Williams said. "But most of that money went to New York, where the publisher's offices are located. That lesson prompted me and Dean Carpenter to set up our own publishing firm in Dallas."

Carpenter, who is best known for his real estate business and for his community activities, agreed immediately that a local publishing house could be effective and profitable. "We want to see that money stay in Gaston and Cleveland counties," he said. "At least we want to keep it in North Carolina." "When Southeastern Publishing was started, the first

Carpenter added, "One of the greatest successes we've had came a few days ago when the Blue Ridge Parkway Eastern Regional Office with its 130 bookstores chose to carry the book. We are also in the bookstore at Grandfather Mountain and other leading tourist attractions. And we are delighted with the local response we have had. Books-A-Million has sold books by the case, and there are no signs that sales are slowing."

Cost of the book is \$15, plus tax and shipping and handling, but people who come by Books-A-Million on Saturday, July 17, can save the shipping costs and also get an autographed copy.

Williams will also be signing "Starting Over" at the Books-A-Million event. When the May 5 tornado struck, Williams had just retired from Gaston College, where he had taught English for 20 years, in order to launch his full-time writing career. On the day of the tornado he had completed two books for McGraw-Hill and a television script for the "Matlock" series. All three works, along with the Williamses' restored pre-Civil War house, their furniture, and all their other belongings were destroyed. When Williams received no Federal aid or even benefits from his insurance company, he and his family set out to build their new home with a chain saw.

The result was a 4,300 square foot log house containing 14 rooms. The house has been featured on national television and has been on the cover of national magazines. Cost of the book is \$12.95.

Southeastern Publishing, which will in the near future look at other local manuscripts, will release Williams' newest novels, "Faces of the Snow" and "Vortex," the latter written by Robert L. Williams III, in the fall. Other books in the "Practically Perfect" series will include one book about the North Carolina Piedmont, the North Carolina coast, and three books each about South Carolina and Georgia.

"We'll continue the series as long as energy and the number of states lasts," Carpenter said. book had already been selected, and the initial effort has not been disappointing in any respect," Carpenter said. "Already the sales have been wonderful, and at present the book is moving rapidly in such markets as Books-A-Million, Book Warehouse, Barnes and Noble, Borders Books, B Dalton, and other immense markets."

Those who miss the July 17 signing can purchase a copy of the books by calling 922-5253 or 538-7900. Williams is also available for speaking engagements at churches, schools, and civic organizations.

Wal-Mart helps provide miracles

Wal-Mart #1034 of Shelby raised \$19,109 for the Children's Miracle Network during the past year.

During 1998-99, the associates held various fund raisers in their store, such as holding "Casual Fridays," selling miracle balloons, and collecting spare change through their check-out lines. The effort con-

tributed to a total of \$587,481 in donations from 33 Wal-Mart and Sam's Clubs in the Carolinas HealthCare System service area.

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