

"The arts have always been a unifying force in our world, bringing people together across vast cultural, social, economic and geographical divisions. Through his work, William Meredith both enhances and strengthens the American spirit.

As you honor Mr. Meredith, you celebrate the timeless power of poetry and poets as our American memory, our purveyors of insight and culture, our eyes and ears who silence the white noise around us, and express the very heart of what connects us, plagues us, and makes us fully human."

*First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton*



1988, five years after his stroke, William Meredith was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *PARTIAL ACCOUNTS*, New and Selected Poems.

Ten years later William won the National Book Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Award for a new collection of poems, *EFFORT AT SPEECH*.

William Meredith died on May 30, 2007.

His home, Riverrun, has been designated an historic landmark by the State of Connecticut and has since become the William Meredith Center for the Arts where Meredith's poetry and spirit live on.



## The William Meredith Foundation

*"And the great sloth heart will move."*



*Riverrun*

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# The William Meredith Foundation

In 2007, with a desire to share William Meredith's legacy with future generations, a number of friends came together to form the William Meredith Foundation. Incorporated in the State of Connecticut that same year, the Board of Directors next achieved designation of Riverrun, (William's home on the Thames River in Connecticut where he lived and worked for 60 years), as a historic landmark by the State of Connecticut. In 2009 The Foundation received its non-profit 501(c)(3) status.

The goals of the Foundation are to preserve Riverrun, and to invite artists for brief residencies. To accomplish these goals the Foundation announced the establishment of the William Meredith Center for the Arts at Riverrun.

## The William Meredith Center for the Arts

Architectural plans have been drawn up for an annex to the original house to provide living accommodations and studio space for visiting artists. The William Meredith Center for the Arts will foster an appreciation for the work of local and regional artists and provide opportunities for them to present their work as well as those invited for artist exchange programs internationally, particularly with the Republic of Bulgaria where Mr. Meredith was made a citizen by presidential decree in 1996 for his work in the culture.

*The William Meredith Center for the Arts will offer another window on the world through which we can enhance our spirit, a window through which artists may search their private worlds and speak for us as we make our slow progress as members of the human tribe.*

The invited artists at the Meredith Center will share their work through art exhibitions, readings, publications and academic seminars. The center will serve as a retreat where artists can create new works in the same spirit of peace, equality, and serious endeavor that characterized William's life and work at Riverrun. This center will keep the flame of generosity and artistic camaraderie burning at Riverrun.



## Some Biographical Information on William Meredith

After service as a Navy pilot in WWII and Korea, William Meredith returned to his native Connecticut to begin his extraordinary career. He settled on a farm in Uncasville to share his talents as teacher, poet, and arborist. For decades, as the rare trees he nurtured on the banks of the Thames grew to beautiful maturity, so did his many fine students at Connecticut College. He continued his mastery of the art form of poetry and in 1979 was designated Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress, a position now (and retroactively) legislated as United States Poet Laureate.

For years, William Meredith was a good friend and good neighbor to the community, and a legendary host to students and fellow writers such as Robert Frost, Muriel Rukeyser, Richard Wilbur and Robert Penn Warren whose visits enhanced the cultural life of the community. William encouraged emerging local artists, sponsoring and guest curating numerous art exhibitions from Norwich, to Westerly to New Haven. Even after a devastating stroke curtailed his career, he faced the challenge and went on to win the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the Los Angeles Times Book Award for Poetry.

A short signature poem by William Meredith inspires us in our efforts to honor his memory as a model of courage, good will, civility and achievement:

## A Major Work

*Poems are hard to read  
Pictures are hard to see  
Music is hard to hear  
And people are hard to love  
But whether from brute need  
Or divine energy  
At last mind eye and ear  
And the great sloth heart will move*