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George C. Williams

The eminent evolutionary biologist George C. Williams died on September 8, 2010, at the age of 84, [according](#) [4] to the Evolution & Medicine Review blog (September 10, 2010). Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, on May 12, 1926, Williams served in the U.S. Army from 1944 to 1946, and then studied at the University of California, Berkeley, where he received his A.B. in zoology in 1949, and the University of California, Los Angeles, where he received his Ph.D. in biology in 1955. During his academic career, mostly at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, he published a string of important work, including the books *Adaptation and Natural Selection* (1966), *Sex and Evolution* (1975), *Natural Selection* (1992), *Why We Get Sick* (coauthored with Randolph M. Nesse, 1994), and *Plan and Purpose in Nature* (1996). His honors include induction in the National Academy of Sciences (1993) and the Crafoord Prize in Biosciences (1999).

A long-time member of NCSE, Williams was concerned about creationism. In a brief 1996 article in *Biology and Philosophy*, he defended his treatment of genetic information in *Natural Selection* against "intelligent design" advocate Phillip Johnson's misrepresentations of it: "Johnson's argument is based on some obvious fallacies," he explained, "such as information requiring an intelligent author." In 1999, he reviewed the early "intelligent design" anthology *Mere Creation* for the *Quarterly Review of Biology*, writing that the contributors "reject the idea that a strictly trial-and-error process of natural selection can

account for the functional design of organisms, and propose that a creator's wisdom has been directing evolution. They make no attempt to deal with the many examples of egregious unwisdom seen in functionally arbitrary and sometimes maladaptive historical legacies, which suggest a creator with no understanding or concern with what he was imposing on organisms."

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