

22 QUESTIONS: RANDY WILLIAMS



Upper Cumberland Development District's Director of Cultural Resources Management and assistant to the executive director Randy Williams in his office. Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea

Name: Randal Williams (Randy to my friends)

Hometown: Nashville

Now living in: Outer Hilham, Overton County

Family: Wife, Edie; two children; three grandchildren; four dogs

First job: Dishwasher, Rodeway Inn, Nashville, \$1.60 per hour.

Current Occupation: Director of Cultural Resources Management; assistant to the executive director at the Upper Cumberland Development District.

What I love about my job: Being able to help preserve, protect, and promote the cultural and natural resources of the Upper Cumberland, getting to work with so many interesting people, and having a boss who lets me be me.

Part of my job I could do without: The disappointment of not being able to help communities, local governments or organizations with their projects due to a lack of funding opportunities.

What drew me to this occupation was: A love of history and human culture, and the insatiable desire to find answers to fundamental questions concerning cultural origins and evolution.

Dream job: Combination shaman and "Globe Trekker" correspondent.

When I'm not working, I'm: Reading, riding, hiking, canoeing, contemplating.

I'm most proud of: My cultural roots and legacy, and the fact that my children are productive human beings.

Something most people don't know about me: I met blues/folk legends Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee in 1978. I got to hang with them, and I got to play Sonny's Hohner Golden Melody harps.

Favorite movie: The Big Lebowski, an American cultural classic. The Dude abides.

Favorite food: Southern barbecue. I consider myself a connoisseur. I like to seek out hole-in-the-wall barbecue dives to experience the food and ambience.

My hero (and why): My grandmother, Adele Williams, who died on Christmas Eve, 2002. She loved me unconditionally, and was the most selfless, faithful, patient person I have ever known. She was an absolute paragon of Christian virtue, and I loved her very much.

As a child I thought I'd grow up to be: A naval aviator. I was on my way to Annapolis, but the fates intervened.

What I watch on TV: Documentaries, history and science programming, football and selected comedies.

Favorite childhood memory: My grandmother Williams' house at Christmas. The house would smell of a combination of citrus, Christmas spices, and the cedar of the Christmas tree. The windows in the kitchen would fog over as my grandmother cooked, and the anticipation of the meal and Santa's arrival was almost spiritual in nature.

If I could do it all over again, I'd: Even though I've made more than my share of mistakes, and experienced much spiritual pain, I'd probably do it all pretty much the same way. If we learn as we live, we become better people. I feel I've learned much throughout my life, and if I changed anything, I would no longer be me. Karma is inexorable.

I'd love to meet (living or dead): Thomas Jefferson, who was one of the greatest geniuses in human history. Politician, inventor, author, early American anthropologist, and the list goes on.

How cool would it have been to hang out with Mr. Jefferson for a couple of weeks? Mind altering, I'm sure.

Advice I'd pass on to future generations: Learn something new every day, think for yourself, seek truth, and follow your bliss.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 24 April 2011.

*See more history of Putnam Co., TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>