

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.

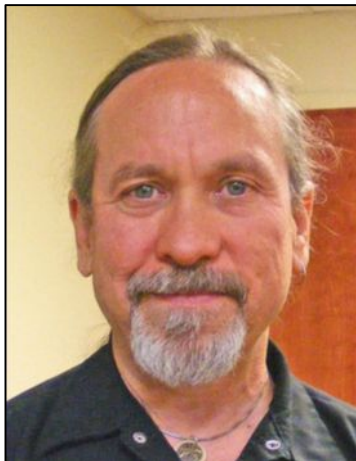
WILLIAMS LEAVES BEHIND NUMBER OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

by Laura Militana

Herald- Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 8 October 2012

COOKEVILLE — Randy Williams may have left his post as the director of cultural resources and historic preservation at the Upper Cumberland Development District, but he's not leaving the area.

"You've put a lot into this organization," Overton County Mayor and UCDD board member Ron Cyrus said at a recent meeting as Williams was honored by the board. "It's sad to see this kind of experience walk out the door."



After all, it was Williams who got that department established, with the goal of preserving and promoting a number of historic projects in the region.

"This agency has been through a lot over the last few years," Williams told board members at the Sept. 25 meeting. "I'm stepping away for my physical and emotional health. I've always felt that when I came here, I was on a spiritual path. Over the last few years, I realize that I've stepped off that path and I need to get back on."

Even though Williams has been with the agency for 10 years, he was asked to step into the interim director position in early July when Earl Carwile, former interim director, resigned. That position put him in the public spotlight, as he, along with board chairman and Cannon County executive Mike Gannon, was named in a lawsuit filed by then-former

employee Ashley Pealer who alleged he violated her Constitutional rights.

That lawsuit was settled upon the arrival of the agency's new director a few weeks later and Pealer, along with her mother, Kathy, were both re-hired.

“Both Randy and Dawn (Kupferer, former assistant director of the department) are huge assets to this agency,” executive director Mark Farley said. “We hate to lose them.”

Williams assured board members that even though he’s leaving the agency, he’s not leaving any loose ends with regards to current projects.

“I’ve been working on getting everything squared away with our current projects,” he said. “I’ll still be around to help in any way.”

Currently, the department’s big project is getting the Walton Road Scenic Byway — a 90 mile corridor spanning through Putnam, Roane, Cumberland and Smith counties — established. It’s currently in the planning stages, but he, along with Kupferer, enjoyed getting feedback from the different counties and entities that are on board with the project.

They have also worked on getting the grants together for the Tennessee Central Heritage Rail Trail project, constructing the new Dale Hollow Welcome Center in Pickett County, revitalization of the Cannon County Courthouse and White County’s Bon Air Historical Society railroad section house museum, among many others.

Williams has also helped a number of historic places get onto the National Register of Historic Places, such as the White Plains house in Algood, giving a boost in tourism in the region.

Nor does he have any ill feelings toward anyone on the board or employees within the agency.

“It’s just time to move on,” he said.

As for who will take over the department, Farley isn’t saying who just yet, but that he feels the new person is very capable in handling the duties.

“I am excited for the future of the department,” he said.

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