



## Kenneth Howard Williams

April 16, 1964 - January 12, 2026

Kenneth Howard Williams of Triangle, Virginia, passed away on January 12, 2026, at age 61. Ken was a historian, writer, photographer, musician, sports fan, and most importantly, a beloved husband, father, son, and devoted friend. Ken is survived by his wife and life partner of 32 years, Melinda Williams; his seven children, Ariel, Julianna, Eric, Victor, Janae, Ethan, and Marion Williams; his mother, Rose Janelle Mitchell Williams; and his brother, Elbert Jackson Williams. He was preceded in death by his father, Elbert Taylor Williams.

As a professional historian, Ken was deeply committed to not only studying the past but also cherishing and recording the present. His life is perhaps best summarized in his own words:

The greatest highlights [of my life] have been a long and loving marriage and the raising of seven—yes, seven—kids. I also have 13 published books of which I have been an author or editor, have been the senior editor of two scholarly journals (one of which I started), and founded a small university press. I performed in front of tens of thousands of people as a member of the Auburn University Marching Band during the Bo Jackson era, was on the front row with the pep band during Charles Barkley's only NCAA Tournament game, and sang with a vocal group that recorded an album and performed the National Anthem at multiple NBA games (where I re-encountered Sir Charles).

I've photographed bald eagles, presidents, national parks, volleyball stars, and dragonflies.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1964, to parents Elbert Taylor Williams and Rose Janelle Mitchell Williams, Ken spent his early years growing up there with brother Elbert Jackson (Jack) Williams, who was 11 years his senior. In 1970, he and his family moved to Troy, Alabama, where Ken spent the rest of his school-aged years and had many of his formative experiences.

The move to Troy was precipitated by Elbert's appointment as the campus minister at the Baptist Student Union at Troy State University. This strong familial focus on the Baptist faith led to Ken being a devout Christian throughout his life. He was also very active in his involvement with the Baptist Student Unions at Auburn

University, the University of Kentucky, and Rice University at various phases throughout his life. He remained an active member of Westwood Baptist Church in Springfield, Virginia, until his death.

Always a gifted academic, Ken breezed through Junior and Senior High School classes (although by his own admission, he was almost foiled by the most advanced math classes). He particularly enjoyed his history and journalism classes, where he learned to express himself and the world around him through writing and photography. He found community, though, in the band room. After learning the saxophone in sixth grade, Ken was a part of the band all the way through his schooling career and particularly enjoyed being part of the high school marching band. Ken continued playing saxophone in the band all through his time at Auburn University as well and made many lifelong friends through the experience.

After graduating from Auburn University with an undergraduate degree in history, Ken went on to complete a master's degree at the University of

Kentucky. His first job out of college was also at UK, where he worked as an assistant editor for the Henry Clay Papers. After that position ended in 1991, he moved to Houston, Texas, to begin working on the Jefferson Davis Papers at Rice University. This move to Houston would be life-changing in many ways, as he met his soon-to-be wife of 32 years, Melinda, while attending church at South Main Baptist Church in Houston.

Over the next few years, Ken would begin building what he viewed as his life's greatest achievement, his family. After marrying Melinda (Mindy) in 1993, they went on to have two biological children together while in Houston, Ariel and Julianna. In 2000, Ken and Mindy moved back to Lexington, Kentucky, where they had their third biological child, Eric. They also went on to foster many children from the state foster care system and to adopt another four children, Victor, Janae, Ethan, and Marion. In 2008, the young family moved to Triangle, Virginia, where Ken took a civilian editorial position with the US Marine Corps history division and eventually, the US Air Force history division. Ken and Mindy put down roots in Virginia, spending the next 18 years happily raising seven kids, six cats, and two dogs. These words cannot begin to encapsulate or describe this kind, loving, and exuberant man and how much he is deeply mourned and sorely missed.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, January 24 at 11 a.m. at Westwood Baptist Church in Springfield, Virginia. The service will be followed by a reception, then a 2 p.m. graveside service at Fairfax Memorial Park.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating in Ken's memory to the Auburn University band. Donations can be made using the link <https://give.auburn.edu/campaigns/auburn-university-band-donor-program-2>.

# Cemetery Details

## Fairfax Memorial Park

9900 BRADDOCK ROAD  
FAIRFAX, VA 22032

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

JAN 24. 11:00 AM (ET)

Westwood Baptist Church  
8200 Old Keene Mill Rd  
Springfield, VA 22152

## Reception

JAN 24. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Westwood Baptist Church  
8200 Old Keene Mill Rd  
Springfield, VA 22152

## Graveside Service

JAN 24. 2:00 PM (ET)

Fairfax Memorial Park  
9900 BRADDOCK ROAD  
FAIRFAX, VA 22032



# Tribute Wall

JS

“ I was fortunate to be on the committee to hire Ken for his job with Air Force history. Our decision was unanimous, and we never had reason to regret it. It was a privilege to work as his colleague and friend. He brought a strong work ethic and a positive attitude to the office. After I retired, I knew that he would continue to be a valuable asset. While I understand that his family will be the ones to grieve him the most, the office where he worked has lost a valuable colleague, and they will greatly miss him. My prayers for his family and friends.

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**John Q. Smith** - January 23 at 07:31 PM

JS

“ I have known Ken since his family moved to Troy in 1970. My greatest honor was walking down the aisle at RA Camp to make our professions of faith together. We have been friends ever since, serving in each other's weddings and sharing many memories and sorrows.

*He had a persistent manner and friendship that I was not always ready to accept, but which made him loyal to so many. If we are to see our friends in heaven, I will see you my friend.*

*Jonathan Spann*

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**Jonathan Spann** - January 23 at 09:03 AM

CM

“ My every thought of Ken is of a wonderful person with a beautiful spirit. Rest in peace my friend/classmate.

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**Cynthia McCullough** - January 19 at 06:53 PM

SH

“ I was shocked to hear of Ken's passing. My deepest condolence to the family. Ken was a friend and great supervisor. He was very talented and took some beautiful photographs. I will miss him and his birthday wishes. May you rest in peace Ken.

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**Steve Hill** - January 18 at 01:02 PM