

WALLACE D. WILLIAMS

Olympic Marathon Runner 1988 Seoul Olympics
Territorial Librarian/Director: Libraries, Archives & Museums (Retired)

wallacewilliams@msn.com

340-643-2557



CHICAGO DISTANCE CLASSIC 20K

July 14, 1985

Marathon Foto

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Williams, Wallace David

Birth Year : 1946

Wallace Williams is the retired Territorial Librarian/Director of the Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums (the "State Library") for the Virgin Islands of the United States of America. Williams is also a runner, an Olympic marathon runner (Seoul Olympic Games 1988) and a college basketball player, playing his freshman year (1965-66) at Bellarmine [now Bellarmine University] College in Louisville, Kentucky before joining the United States Air Force in 1966 for four years and for Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago (1971-73). He was born in Campbellsville, Kentucky and raised by his grandparents Emma and Clarence Spaulding. His family was a patriotic military family: his father David was a WWII Navy veteran, two of his father's brothers Walter and Wesley were WWII Army Veterans; another brother Harlon was a career Korea and Vietnam Army Veteran. His Grandfather Dan Williams was a WWI Army Veteran and his Great, Great Grandfather Dennis Williams was in the Union Army, a Civil War Veteran. His mother Anna worked on the military base at Fort Knox, two of her brothers, George and Villa were Korea Conflict Army Veterans. Her oldest brother O'Niel was a WWII Navy Veteran.

As a child Williams worked with his grandfather who was a track laborer for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company and on the side was a sharecropper in the tobacco industry; Williams was also a shoe shiner at the Taylor County Stockyard and the local pool hall, he delivered the daily newspapers *The Courier-Journal* and *Louisville Times* and the weekly *Louisville Defender* (black newspaper). and in 1951 he was the first African American to attend a white school in Campbellsville when he was enrolled for second grade at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School. He played on the first school basketball team there, The Falcons and was the first black to play on a white school team. In 1960 he returned to Durham High School (he attended first grade at Durham Elementary School) for three years. He was among the first African Americans to graduate from Campbellsville High School in 1964. He was the Statistician for the DHS Basketball team for his freshman, sophomore and junior years. He started running track and cross-country as a senior in high school. While a student at Bellarmine, he was a walk-on, the only African American on the cross-country team and the only African American on the freshman basketball team. Williams left college during the Vietnam War in 1966 and joined the U.S. Air Force. He completed Basic Training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas where he received the Expert Marksman Medal, and Technical Training as a Jet Aircraft Mechanic at Amarillo Air Force Base in Amarillo, Texas. While at Reese Air Force Base in Lubbock, Texas where he was a Crew Chief/Jet Aircraft Mechanic, he received The Top Crew Chief awards and served in the Outstanding Unit Medal squadron. Williams was the leading scorer on the base and squadron basketball teams at Amarillo and at Reese. He played on and coached the 3500 OMS Squadron basketball team there. He played on the Reese AFB fast pitch softball teams which ranked high in USAF Air Training Command. He competed in one track meet at Shepard Air Force Base in an ATC Championship. He received

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the National Defense Medal and an Honorable Discharge from the Air Force in 1970 and went to Triton Community College in River Grove, Illinois for a year and then to earn a B.A. in Political Science and Liberal Arts with honors at Northeastern Illinois University. He was the school's leading scorer on the basketball team during the 1972-73 season, one of his teammates was NBA (National Basketball Association) senior referee Danny Crawford, and he was winner of the Golden Eagle Award. He was also a member in the Evanston Running Club at Northwestern University. In 1975, Williams earned a Masters Degree in library and information science at Rosary College [now Dominican University] in River Forest, Illinois. He was the school's first athletic coordinator in 1974. He was its first student delegate to attend the International Federation of Library Associations Conference (IFLA), In Washington, DC in 1974. Here he joined forces with the Black Caucus of the American Library Association to prevent South Africa from formal representation due to its Apartheid stance. In the summer he taught study skills at the University of New Hampshire. He completed a legal course at the John Marshall Law School in Chicago and volunteered for the Cook County Jail Bail-Bond Project.

In 1974, Williams began his career as a librarian as a student intern at the Legler Branch of the Chicago Public Library on a U.S. Government Fellowship, he was the Branch Librarian for the Frederick Douglass Branch of the Chicago Public Library before beginning a 30 year career as a librarian in St. Croix, Virgin Islands USA in 1977. He was initially the Outreach Librarian at the Florence Williams Public Library and later became the Head Librarian and then Librarian/Coordinator for public libraries in St. Croix before taking on the responsibility for libraries, archives and museums for the Virgin Islands as Territorial Librarian/Director the equivalent to State Librarian and becoming a member of COSLA (Chief Officers of State Library Agencies). During his career, he taught library skills at the University of the Virgin Islands, and he taught coping skills in the Adult Education Program with the Department of Education. He was president of the St. Croix Library Association, and co-president of the Virgin Islands Library Association. Williams was a newspaper columnist, and contributed the weekly column "Your Library...What's In It For You" to *The St. Croix Avis*. He was secretary of the Rotary Club of St. Croix, He served as a member of the Council of the American Library Association. He was a member of the Public Information Association of the Virgin Islands; The St. Croix Arts Council, The Virgin Islands Humanities Council (The affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities). He was an Advisory Board Member in the 1978 V.I. Governor's Conference on Libraries and the White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services in 1979.

He trained for the marathon and established running organizations. In 1978 he founded the Virgin Islands Pace Runners and continues to organize and direct over 30 road races annually as its founding president. He consulted with NASA Astronaut Story Musgrave who he met while in the Air Force (Musgrave was the first civilian astronaut and took jet pilot training at Reese Air Force Base and flew planes in Williams flight, during a space-walk Musgrave repaired the Hubble Telescope, help design the Space Shuttle cockpit and space suits, completed research

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on "*The Impact of Heat and Humidity on Long Distance Running*"). Williams was a pioneer in the establishment of the annual ALA Run/Walk 5K winning the first race in Dallas in 1984 and a top finisher in several of the races including: Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, New York City, New Orleans and up to and including Orlando in 2004 the last year the race was held. He is founder of the Society of Olympic Marathon Runners, is a founding member of the Virgin Islands Triathlon Federation, and was co-founder of The Women Race for the Women's Coalition of St. Croix and has been the Race Director each of its 32 years; In 1979, Williams ran in the marathon of the Pan American Games in San Juan, Puerto Rico, a Virgin Islands first. In 1982 he was the first participant for the Virgin Islands to run in the Central American and Caribbean Games (CAC) Marathon in Havana, Cuba. In 1982 on behalf of the Virgin Islands Track and Field Federation he successfully proposed the establishment of the Central America and Caribbean Cross-Country Championships (Now the North America, Central America and Caribbean Cross-Country Championships) at the CAC Congress in Havana, Cuba. He was also a delegate for the International Association of Athletic Federations Congress for several years, beginning in 1982 in Athens, Greece, Los Angeles, California, Rome, Italy, Tokyo, Japan, Stuttgart, Germany, Helsinki, Finland, Osaka, Japan, Berlin, Germany. Williams competed in the World Cross-Country Championships in 1984 at the Meadowlands, NJ with team mates Marlon Williams, Greg Johnson, Ralix Clovis and Betsey Gladfelter, the first and only the second time the event has been held in the USA and in 1986 in Neuchatel, Switzerland. He competed in the Olympic Games Marathon in Seoul, Korea in 1988 with team mates Marlon Williams and Calvin Dallas and came in 81st with a time of 2:44:40. There were 118 athletes representing 70 countries, and 98 completed the marathon. He represented the Virgin Islands of the USA, he was the oldest competitor in the competition. He is (unofficially) one of three USA-born African Americans to complete the Olympic Marathon. In 2001 he was inducted into The University of the Virgin Islands Athletic Hall of Fame.

More recently Williams volunteered as a board member of the Women's Coalition of St. Croix in support of the fight against domestic violence and child abuse; served as contributor/partner for the National Park Service...U.S. Department of The Interior Foundation Document The Christiansted National Historic Site, Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve Virgin Islands USA; he is the president of Cruzan Bikeways and the proposed construction of a 15 mile health path along the south shore of the island of St. Croix; in 2013 he instituted The Durham High School Reunion 2 Mile Run to benefit the school's track; he serves as Technical Delegate and Organizational Delegate for the North America, Central America and Caribbean Cross-Country Championships/Commission; he is a consulting member of the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races and a participant/contributor for the past 10 consecutive years in Athens, Greece; The Marathon Museum in Marathon, Greece and the AIMS Museum at the Berlin Olympic Stadium, Berlin, Germany. As long-time General Secretary of The Virgin Islands Track and Field Federation, he has had a principal role in the development of the Virgin Islands National Track and Field Team including its Olympic Track

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and Field Teams, assisting athletes from childhood who have become Olympians, IAAF World Champions/medal winners, achieve number one in world ranking, NCAA National Champions (individual and team), All-Americans, college graduates, productive citizens, parents. In 2006 he received the International Olympic Committee Sports and the Community Award. In 2014 he received the Therald McIntosh & Gerald A Hall Sports Award "V.I.Pace All Time Runner Award"; the Women's Coalition of St. Croix Thirty Years of Commitment and Leadership Award; in 2005 he received the award for 10 years of selfless service to the Junior Solar Sprint Competition organized by the Virgin Islands Energy Office. He founded and managed for its 10 year existence the University of the Virgin Islands/Mount Eagle Scholarship Program, a collaborative effort of: The Mt. Eagle Corp., The University of the Virgin Islands, The St. Croix Library Association, The Florence Williams Public Library, St. Croix Central High School and The St. Croix Educational Complex High School providing scholarships and library internships to seniors headed for UVI.

Inspired by the history of U.S. founding father, Alexander Hamilton who grew up in St. Croix before moving to New York attending college at Colombia University and becoming General George Washington's top Lieutenant and the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Williams was successful in proposing that the Florence Williams Public Library, located on the same street where Hamilton gain his early education and finance/trade experience, be selected as one of 40 public libraries in the USA to host "Alexander Hamilton... *The Man Who Made Modern America*" traveling exhibit celebrating Hamilton's 250 anniversary sponsored by The American Library Association, The New York Historical Society and the Gilder Lerhman Institute of American History. Williams is acknowledged in the New York Times Best Seller book *Hamilton* by Ron Chernow for his support of the author's research at the public library in the Virgin Islands, the book that inspired the Broadway play "Hamilton".

Information in this entry was added with permission from the resumé of Wallace Williams. See also C. Buchanan, "On Island Profile: Wallace Williams," *St. Croix Source*, 07/29/2007 [[available online](#), photo at end of article].