

BEAT FROM THE STREET

"I'm a seventh-generation from the first white settler, direct descendant. I'm really a native, a real hillbilly. You won't come across too many of them. Probably you don't find many people who are actually natives."

Yeah, that's very true.

"I mean, people can't believe it when I tell them I'm a native. They're like, 'Ooh, there are natives here?' You know? So, I've watched downtown evolve since the sixties and from growing up here and coming to these stores. These used to be huge department stores and then Woolworths, you know? There was a lunch counter in Woolworths. There's one now, but, you know, it was a really, you know —"

Fancy?

"No, it wasn't fancy. It was slinging the food, you know, and it's kind of like it is now but it was a lot larger and a lot more people. The S&W Cafeteria was open. This was where everybody came. It was safe for us to ride a bus from wherever we lived to downtown at the age of 12 without parents and then watched it decline and it was a ghost town and everything moved out from downtown and then, yeah. So, I've watched it evolve and I'd like to see it stay about where it is now. It's about to go over the top, as far as I'm concerned."

Yeah, financially, yeah.

"Well, financially, that's all of Asheville, I mean, rent and purchasing, too, you know purchasing property. So I kind of feel lucky that I'm old enough to have bought property when you could afford to buy it, you know? But UNCA is wonderful."

So if you were to describe your style, what would you say it would be?

"I just like things that are, are you talking about fashion style? Well, that would go for my home, too. I love art of all kinds and I like for my clothing to look like some kind of art, I guess. Yeah, so, this coat definitely would qualify."



NANCY ALEXANDER, 63, REAL-ESTATE INVESTOR ORIGINALLY FROM ASHEVILLE

PHOTO BY DUSTY ALBINGER

Yeah, it has a very artistic element to it for sure. It's beautiful. So if you have a life motto that you live by on a day-to-day basis —

"I wasn't ready for that."

— what would you say it would be and why?

"Oh boy, I don't know. I thought of one recently and now I'm trying to remember it, what it was because I did actually write it down. It was, well, for me, because I'm old, it's the words of a song, from an old song and it's, 'I was so much older then I'm younger than that now.' It's a Bob Dylan song."

Nice, yeah. That's pretty profound.

"Yeah, so, and this coat that you noticed was the result of having a sick dog and being confined in a room most of the time for the past five weeks with my dog and just being there by myself with her and ordering things on the internet. It caught my eye and I've been looking at this company for a couple of years and admiring things but wondering what the quality was like because the prices are really good and thought

I'd take a chance and it turned out to be just right."

So if you were to describe yourself in three words, which three words would you choose and why?

"Wow, now there's a broad spectrum, especially the older you get. Open-minded, respectful, welcoming, I guess."

Those are very good adjectives.

"It's kind of hard to think on the spur of the moment when you've been confined in a room for five weeks. But, I'm out now."

Yeah, you're out and about in the world. So, if you could describe one thing you like about Asheville and one thing you dislike about Asheville, what would it be?

"I like that, oh my gosh. Have you seen that?"

Oh, the beer man, yeah.

"Oh, I didn't know, I thought. I didn't see him with the beer cans when I saw him the other day. I didn't see him until last week and I thought he was for real because I just saw him from a distance

and I just thought, 'He is really strange making that work.'

No, he has a brewery that he's employed by.

"Oh, he's like the nun on the bike?"

Yeah, yeah. He's a mascot for Highland Brewery.

"Oh, he is? Well, he wasn't yelling. He was just going down the sidewalk when I saw him before. But, what do I like about the — ?

Asheville and dislike about Asheville.

"Well, I love that it's a small city in the mountains, because I love the mountains and I take advantage of being in the mountains. I do a lot of hiking and as far as downtown Asheville's concerned, I love the architecture and I like all the various restaurants and shops, you know? I think we're really, really lucky to have what we have here. I just think that we're getting to a point where we don't need any more people or any more hotels here, especially the hotels. It's just too much."