

Dana Felty Bynum

- 12:06:06:03 [Eric Darling]: Yep, that's it. And go ahead. Perfect. And we're gonna let Micky settle. Tom, as per usual.
- 12:06:20:02 [Mickey Youmans]: Okay.
- 12:06:21:06 [Eric Darling]: And whenever you're ready, Tom.
- 12:06:22:22 [Tom Kohler]: Well, good afternoon.
- 12:06:23:19 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Good afternoon.
- 12:06:24:16 [Tom Kohler]: Thanks for coming and being with us.
- 12:06:26:01 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh, I'm, I'm honored to be here.
- 12:06:28:00 [Tom Kohler]: That's great. We're gonna start out by just asking for you to tell us your name and also if you would spell your name right. And then we will ask you if you would share your preferred pronoun as well.
- 12:06:38:10 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Sure. My name's Dana Felty Bynum, D-A-N-A F-E-L-T-Y B-Y-N-U-M. Preferred pronouns, she, her.
- 12:06:51:20 [Tom Kohler]: And then were you born and raised in Savannah?
- 12:06:55:04 [Dana Felty Bynum]: No, I was born and raised in a little town called Morgantown, Kentucky, about an hour and a half north of Nashville, Tennessee. The Kentucky Stereotypes apply. Everybody's related to me, so it was kind of nice to move away, you know, but it's great to go back home and visit.
- 12:07:17:11 [Tom Kohler]: And how did you wind up in Savannah?
- 12:07:19:23 [Dana Felty Bynum]: So, I, I left home to go to a liberal arts college, studied journalism, was super passionate about working for a newspaper, very passionate about it in and idealistic. So after college I moved to Washington DC and I started working for a Pew Charitable Trust project where we were training journalists. So I was doing program management, setting up these conferences for journalists around the country, and did that for a little over three years when I just had to do
- 12:07:55:17 it myself. I just really wanted to be in a newsroom. And through that work, I had met the editors of the Savannah Morning News who were really involved in our trainings and as speakers, presenters, I thought they were just brilliant.
- 12:08:10:18 [Tom Kohler]: Who, who was that by name?

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- 12:08:12:02 [Dana Felty Bynum]: That was Roxanne Lester and Dan Suwan. And got to know them and just told them, I think your newspaper sounds awesome. I would love to work for you. So they said, come on.
- 12:08:26:01 [Tom Kohler]: And when was that? When, when did you first go?
- 12:08:27:11 [Dana Felty Bynum]: That was in 2002. 2002.
- 12:08:33:06 [Tom Kohler]: And then when you came, did you have a beat?
- 12:08:38:06 [Dana Felty Bynum]: I started out like, you know, all newbs covering the police beat, you know, whatever crime came in, breaking whatever, breaking news there. It was general assignment and police. So I got to ride around town some with this guy. Everybody used to call a man in black. He was a photographer and he, he just, he, he lived and slept with a, a scanner on his bedside and worked every holiday pretty much. And so I
- 12:09:12:09 got to do a little bit of riding with him, learning the city from his point of view. You know, super nice guy. Wrote a column too called The Man in Black, which I know all longtime Savannahians will remember was really popular. In fact, you know, anytime I ran around with, with him and like, we'd stop at a gas station, everybody recognized him, Hey, you're the man in black, you know? Oh, and he loved it too. Yeah, yeah. I'm the man in
- 12:09:42:09 black, you know, you'd get in the car with him and his ego would just fill up the whole car, like, geez.
- 12:09:48:13 [Tom Kohler]: And then so you, so you worked with, oh, I'm trying to think of his name. And it slipped my mind.
- 12:09:53:21 [Dana Felty Bynum]: That's exactly what I did too. Gosh, isn't that crazy that you could spend so many years, you know, with somebody...
- 12:10:01:19 [Tom Kohler]: Was it somebody Rich? Was it something Rich Buddy?
- 12:10:04:22 [Dana Felty Bynum]: No....
- 12:10:05:14 [Tom Kohler]: Was it Buddy something?
- 12:10:06:07 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Gosh,.
- 12:10:06:15 [Tom Kohler]: Let's keep going,.
- 12:10:07:16 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Man In black was...
- 12:10:10:19 [Tom Kohler]: We'll Google it.
- 12:10:11:10 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Gosh. We will, we will. We'll get it. Yeah.

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- 12:10:13:12 [Tom Kohler]: So you work with, so you're doing kind of the newbie thing, doing
- 12:10:16:03 [Dana Felty Bynum]: The noobs, what all new reporters have to do. Yeah.
- 12:10:18:18 [Tom Kohler]: And then what happens next?
- 12:10:20:05 [Dana Felty Bynum]: So what happens next? You know, and then I did get a beat because I had worked for the Pew Charitable Trusts and there were a lot of non-profits in town. I was sort of told, Hey, why don't you be the non-profits reporter? And we were really into like computer-assisted reporting at the time, creating databases. So, so I did some of that covered like the United Way, what their, what they were working towards. A lot of the projects that the United Way funded what they were up to, how
- 12:10:54:13 the money was being used. So I did that for a while, you know, but then that was the early two thousands, and we definitely knew at the time that newspaper budgets were getting leaner, so thus began the trimming down and the de-staffing, you know, so you didn't have reporters covering, you know,
- 12:11:19:14 just nice, very narrow beats like that anymore.
- 12:11:24:01 [Tom Kohler]: And then you did, I remember you did some reporting.
- 12:11:26:17 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yes.
- 12:11:26:22 [Tom Kohler]: Around the religious community as well.
- 12:11:28:08 [Dana Felty Bynum]: So the religion reporter left, and I thought that was a natural progression for me. I went to the editor and said, let me be your new religion reporter. Couldn't do just religion. So I was covering both religion and health at the same time. And I continued covering, that was 2006. So I'd been there about five years just covering general assignment. When I got the religion and the health position, they kind of moved me over to the features department rather than daily
- 12:12:01:19 reporting when I was covering religion and health. And I did that until 2011.
- 12:12:08:19 [Tom Kohler]: And then, so when you were a religion reporter, I mean, that's I think where we're gonna spend our time today. Yeah. And so, just curious, as you look back in that era, you know, we're particularly interested in this notion of how people of faith, faith communities and faith organizations, the role that they play in the larger community.
- 12:12:29:01 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right.
- 12:12:29:19 [Tom Kohler]: And wondering, as you look back in that time, that five years that you were paying attention to that particularly, do you have stories that you wrote? Do you have memories of many different ways that people were showing up in the larger community?

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12:12:45:10 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.

12:12:45:18 [Tom Kohler]: Kind of based on faith?

12:12:47:13 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah, I do. There was definitely a growing interest in interfaith. In reaching out beyond just this community that you meet with every week and trying to work together. And I mean, there were quite a few efforts like that. Some, I think that still survived. Backpack Buddies, I think a lot of people are familiar with that program here. And

12:13:21:00 at the time, that seemed to be a bit of a new concept. I don't know if it's the same people doing it, but at the time, that was a combination of Christian, Reformed Jewish, and I mean different, different mainline and non-mainline Christian denominations that were coming together around that and, and, and really trying to make it work, struggling some over the

12:13:47:16 mission and working it out.

12:13:49:02 [Tom Kohler]: And just describe the mission briefly, if you would.

12:13:52:02 [Dana Felty Bynum]: So I remember the mission of Backpack Buddies was to pull together volunteers from many different congregations, maybe adopt a different public school. Source, a bunch of backpacks for the children, stuff them with food that can get them through the weekend, distribute the backpacks on Friday as they're on their way home. Monday

12:14:22:03 morning, collect the backpacks and start it all over again.

12:14:25:21 [Tom Kohler]: And that's week by week, month by month, year by year. Right?

12:14:29:11 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right.

12:14:30:00 [Tom Kohler]: And it does continue.

12:14:30:22 [Dana Felty Bynum]: It does that, that's, I, I know I've still seen it around, so I, I think that's probably been a success. Again, the players may have changed, but I remember that getting off the ground at the time and people really putting a lot of heart into it.

12:14:46:06 [Tom Kohler]: Well, that's a great example. Would there be other things like that that you remember?

12:14:50:12 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah. Another one, again, not sure if it still exists, but another one was the Interfaith Hospitality Network that used the buildings, church buildings themselves for people who were temporarily without a place to sleep. I think primarily families with children, for them to stay until they could get into a stable situation. That was a United Way funded project. And I think, I think was pretty

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- 12:15:27:19 successful for quite a long time
- 12:15:30:18 [Tom Kohler]: And couldn't have worked without the involvement of the faith community.
- 12:15:33:23 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh, no way. Because the, you were using their buildings. I mean, you, and you had to have volunteers to stay with, with people in the building. You couldn't just leave people who, you know, who didn't know the building and didn't know where they were all alone.
- 12:15:51:19 [Tom Kohler]: Were there other, other efforts that might be, we're now really talking in some ways about homelessness or.
- 12:15:58:21 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right.
- 12:15:59:11 [Tom Kohler]: Lack of permanent home. Were there other efforts that you can remember that were faith-based? That might have been focused in that direction?
- 12:16:05:13 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh gosh, and the, there were lots of, of course, there's always been lots of congregations to come to the homeless community on their own. Now the question is, am I think, can I think of any that pooled their efforts? That's the cha... That's the challenge, you know, is working out an agreement with another group to pool your resources for something so complicated. For the homeless. I, you know, I can think of
- 12:16:41:23 a few really important players in the faith community for the homeless. Of course, Reverend Michael Cheney, who, I think that's his priority in his ministry, is the homeless. And I think he has enlisted the help again, of, I think the reformed Jewish congregation is certainly, has certainly got
- 12:17:08:19 his back in his effort. Again, the other players kind of in my memory from that time were, were really organizing their own congregation toward maybe a more temporary offer of help. But when I think of somebody who's like a
- 12:17:32:02 long-term player in the homeless community, it would be Reverend Cheney.
- 12:17:36:19 [Tom Kohler]: Did you ever have contact with Reverend Michael Elliot back in that
- 12:17:39:13 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Day? Oh, yes. Absolutely.
- 12:17:41:06 [Tom Kohler]: Tell us a little bit about the role he played if you wouldn't mind?
- 12:17:41:23 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yes. Gosh. That's another person when with the time passing, who I would talk to all the time. And so, gosh, so I, I don't, this isn't useful for, for what you're doing. You remember Jan Skutch? So Jan Skutch and Michael Elliot were buds and Jan Skutch, if he

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- 12:18:11:19 wanted the story, then he got the story.
- 12:18:15:18 [Dana Felty Bynum]: So, so, so Jan Skutch, who had, was in the Savannah Morning news for 50 years. He absolutely adored Michael Elliot's project. And so, so if it was Michael Elliot, Jan Skutch wrote about it. But yeah, Michael Elliot was another Savannah clergyman whose primary mission was to the homeless. And he was really able to organize the
- 12:18:55:07 evangelical community and the mainline community around an effective way long-term way of addressing the homelessness crisis. Not just providing bottles of water one day or a soup kitchen on the holiday, but really reaching out to the homeless, getting to know them, and trying to figure
- 12:19:23:23 out whole holistic ways of, of getting to their problems.
- 12:19:30:14 [Tom Kohler]: You know, many times when there's someone like Michael Elliot is trying to do something like that there'll be one or two champions that come alongside them who.
- 12:19:40:18 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right.
- 12:19:41:04 [Tom Kohler]: Who have enough social status and maybe money to, to really champion. Can you remember maybe who some of a couple of his champions might have been?
- 12:19:50:03 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh, Michael Elliott's champions. Hmm. His office. Help me remember. Where was he based? He was based over there at the Baptist Center on Wheaton Street.
- 12:20:06:16 [Tom Kohler]: My memory is maybe J. Curtis Lewis at first?
- 12:20:09:16 [Dana Felty Bynum]: That's right. Yeah, that's right. Yes.
- 12:20:12:00 [Tom Kohler]: So, so Michael, So I mean, Mike, Michael, I mean, Michael was kind of a radical, if you will, and radicals in Savannah sometimes don't...
- 12:20:20:19 [Dana Felty Bynum]: That's tricky. Yeah.
- 12:20:21:22 [Tom Kohler]: Yeah, it's tricky. They burn hot and they burn back out.
- 12:20:24:00 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right.
- 12:20:24:08 [Tom Kohler]: Michael did not.
- 12:20:25:07 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right.
- 12:20:26:02 [Tom Kohler]: Thoughts on why he was able to actually scale up and, and do the kind of work he did?

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- 12:20:30:12 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah. Well, you know, that's the benefit of being clergy is you, that comes with some credibility, right. In the community. You're not just a a, I mean, you're doing Jesus' work, but you got this title next to it, rather than if you're a radical, then you're probably gonna burn out. But if you got Reverend in front of your name, then you get a little more credibility, even if you've got the same passions as the radical follower of Jesus, you know? So I think the title
- 12:21:05:09 helped. But also he, Michael Elliot was a person who could work toward a big picture and pace themselves toward a big picture. And I think that's why he was so successful. You know, when you're looking for, you know, when you've got some people out there with money who are looking for a good way to make a difference, they need to hear a picture, a big picture plan. And
- 12:21:34:08 I think Michael Elliot could see that he could create it, he could see it, and I think he could communicate that. And I think that's what, I think that's what Mr. JC Lewis was looking for, was somebody with a big picture and who could do it.
- 12:21:49:22 [Tom Kohler]: And Mr. Lewis, again, if I remember right, was First Baptist Church. I believe it was his congregation?
- 12:21:56:18 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Now I'm that, I'm, I, I'm not re I'm not sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That would make, that would make sense. First Baptist Church, the older, more mainline, you've got different types of Baptists. You've got about, in fact, it was a First Baptist historian who told me there's about 52 types of Baptists in the country. There may be more now. So First Baptist Church, more of a mainline Protestant Baptist church. And like many of the Downtown Baptist Church, you had a lot of old
- 12:22:31:15 Savannah that were part of many of those congregations. So I don't remember Mr. Lewis... A conversation where he told me where he attended, but that would, that would make sense to me if that's where he went
- 12:22:47:05 [Tom Kohler]: As a reporter did you ever run into Tom Austin, Reverend Tom Austin, who was the minister at First Baptist by any chance?
- 12:22:54:03 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh, that name doesn't sound familiar. That might have been either before or after my time. Yeah. You know, the pastor during my whole time covering the religion beat was Reverend Finley. And Reverend Finley always, he reminded me of like a, a founding father in his very dignified way of preaching. Yeah.
- 12:23:20:13 [Tom Kohler]: You know, through the years in Savannah, from what I can tell, there have been many examples where women have quite frankly seen the need and organized.
- 12:23:28:00 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.

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- 12:23:28:18 [Tom Kohler]: And again, looking back inside of your church reporting, but there'd be example memories where there was clearly like a covey of women that realized something had to be done and they just went out and got it going?
- 12:23:40:17 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh, yes. You know, remember, gosh, Tom Bordeaux's wife was very involved in, in Backpack Buddies from the very beginning in that, in that vision, what was her name?
- 12:24:00:22 [Tom Kohler]: Nell, Maybe?
- 12:24:01:10 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Nell Bordeaux. Yes. Yes. Very smart woman. Very passionate about the community. I remember her being very involved. Her congregation was First Presbyterian, I'm pretty sure was here. Yeah. Where we are. Some other women, of course. Oh, of course. The Sisters of
- 12:24:31:13 Mercy. There've been many Sisters of Mercy here in Savannah who have done, who are responsible for a lot of the social services that we have here in Savannah today. You know, I think of St. Joseph's/Candler, Sister Margie Beatty, I mean, very, very active person in the health community. And
- 12:25:02:19 there's been so many sisters who have been part of the Good Samaritan of St. Mary's Clinic here, helping the community.
- 12:25:17:02 [Tom Kohler]: Tell me more about Good Samaritan. 'cause that...
- 12:25:19:23 [Dana Felty Bynum]: That that's out in Garden City.
- 12:25:21:15 [Tom Kohler]: I see.
- 12:25:22:00 [Dana Felty Bynum]: The Good Samaritan Clinic primarily serves a Spanish speaking community. It's right across from the Groves High School. Yeah.
- 12:25:32:23 [Tom Kohler]: And when you were reporting, I'd just be curious. Inner City Night Shelter?
- 12:25:38:10 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh, yes, that's right. So that's right. There was also the Inner City Night shelter. I think, you know, again, one of these just temporary shelters that would also try to provide some, I think what they provided was phone during the day, ability to make some phone calls, apply for jobs, get some clothes, help you get back on your feet. And that was a program funded, I think, largely by the Christian community
- 12:26:15:09 here across congregations.
- 12:26:21:02 [Tom Kohler]: Just curious, you've lived other places.
- 12:26:23:11 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yes.

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- 12:26:24:05 [Tom Kohler]: And would you have an opinion or a way of thinking about how Savannah's interfaith community, does it strike you that it's more robust in other places, or every place feels about the same, or...
- 12:26:36:15 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:26:37:00 [Tom Kohler]: Would you have kind of a sense of that?
- 12:26:39:00 [Dana Felty Bynum]: You know, for Savannah's size, I was surprised when I moved here by how, how accepting this city was of, of different faiths and how comfortable they were coming together. You know, I thought that was impressive. And that may have something to do with just the fact that the Jewish community here are the, some of the founding, the
- 12:27:10:15 part of the founding community. So I'm guessing, but it, it, it sounds like this community has evolved over many generations as being accepting of religious diversity. We've had the Irish come in, the Irish Catholic community, living right next to the Jewish community, living right next to the mainline Protestant community, the evangelical community that comes in
- 12:27:40:07 from the surrounding counties.
- 12:27:45:05 [Dana Felty Bynum]: There's, they know each other's language. They know each other's holidays. They stick little signs in their yard that, you know, welcome the neighbor's holidays into the year. So I think for me, having grown up in the South too, I thought that was different from some other places I've lived, where people tend to, you know, wanna leave each other alone, mind their own business, not appear to pry in anyone else's religion, but, you know, to also say it's it... Here in Savannah, I
- 12:28:22:06 think you will hear people say, you know, happy Easter to their Greek Orthodox friends, you know? 'cause they know, oh, it's, it's Easter for the Greek Orthodox today. So that's what they'll do here.
- 12:28:37:16 [Tom Kohler]: When you were reporting in town, did you have opportunity to be able to connect in with the African American faith community much? Or was that more of the purview of the African American papers? Or how, how did that play out? And if you were
- 12:28:53:20 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:28:54:14 [Tom Kohler]: Could we think about that a little bit?
- 12:28:56:13 [Dana Felty Bynum]: My editors, Rexanna and Dan shared with, with all of us, when we started working at the Savannah Morning News, we were told the history of this newspaper, which is an unwelcoming, racist history. So that's just the way it is, and we are, we are in the point now where we're, it's our turn to listen. So that was made clear. We're not

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- 12:29:31:02 coming from a great history. We're not in a position to, to know what the African Americans community's issues are. And, and, and we, we probably aren't doing a good job covering it. So we were often give, we were given a lot of space to just go out in the community and have coffee with people
- 12:29:58:11 and listen, and not come back with a story. That was one of the best parts of my job. I loved doing that.
- 12:30:09:06 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Going out and not having to come back with a story, but just listen to people. I remember, of course, any opportunity that I got to talk to Reverend Tillman at First African Baptist was always so great. He was so interesting. And there was a woman who she lived over in West Savannah, and now see, like, it's been so long, I'm terrible with
- 12:30:41:12 names. I can't even remember people I've, you know, worked with their names. But she was, she worked at a funeral home and she, her vision wasn't good. She did not have good vision, but she was a worked, she was pretty, had a big job at a funeral home over on West Savannah. And she knew everything about West Savannah. Do you remember her name?
- 12:31:08:15 [Tom Kohler]: I can remember. I know the funeral home. I could see the funeral home over there.
- 12:31:11:06 [Dana Felty Bynum]: She was, she was really smart, very opinionated. But I mean, she
- 12:31:16:16 [Tom Kohler]: Bines?
- 12:31:17:20 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Bines...
- 12:31:18:05 [Tom Kohler]: Bines Funeral Home?
- 12:31:19:01 [Dana Felty Bynum]: I don't think that wasn't her name.
- 12:31:21:01 [Tom Kohler]: No. Okay.
- 12:31:24:04 [Dana Felty Bynum]: And she struggled with health issues. And I have wondered over the years if she, where she is. But she, she would welcome me into her home any time, but I had to be ready to sit and just listen. And she was great. She was great. She would, she was absolutely honest. And, and I was so grateful for it about what a really lousy job we had done in the past. But she was never without ideas about what we could
- 12:31:57:15 do better. And man, if you're a reporter and you find somebody like that, I mean, that's just, that's, you know, that's a gem.
- 12:32:05:22 [Tom Kohler]: I've never thought about it before. But funeral home directors, quite frankly, have an interesting look at the faith community.

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- 12:32:12:05 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah. She, man, she knew everything about West Savannah. She knew issues we should be covering. She knew the faith leaders, you know, she knew that a lot of these pastors, and they're not, they're spending all their time being, you know, doing social services, providing social services for people. You know, it would, they're not spend, what they're spending their time doing doesn't look much like
- 12:32:44:18 running a, a church. I mean, they're just providing, helping people survive, you know. So it was, man, it was great to find her. And even if, you know, she would tell me that a story I wrote was pretty worthless, you know? Okay, thanks. I need, I need to hear that. Right. I mean, it's, and I, she had credibility, so I knew, okay, well, well good, now I can go in a
- 12:33:17:01 better direction. It's not somebody yelling, you know, you get people in the newspaper just calling yell at you over the phone. It's like, well, I can't do anything with that. But, but with her, I, I could go somewhere. Yeah. Other folks who, gosh, there was, and see there was another pastor, older man, and he was very involved in the civil rights movement. And he lived to be in his late nineties, I think he only passed a few years
- 12:33:48:19 ago.
- 12:33:50:22 [Tom Kohler]: John Q. Adams?
- 12:33:53:03 [Dana Felty Bynum]: No, no, no, no. And he was, he was the pastor of one of the bigger downtown churches. And he retired. Oh. He was pastor of the one out there, like near Matilda Park. What is the big one out there? Big Red Brick two Story Church.
- 12:34:16:17 [Tom Kohler]: St. Matthew's.
- 12:34:17:11 [Dana Felty Bynum]: St. Matthew's.
- 12:34:18:12 [Tom Kohler]: This would be Matthew Brown.
- 12:34:20:11 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yes. Yeah, yeah. Matthew Southall Brown.
- 12:34:23:01 [Tom Kohler]: Okay.
- 12:34:23:21 [Dana Felty Bynum]: There was another person who would call us up and tell us, there's an event coming up in the African American community. I want to make sure that it's on your radar. And if he, if Reverend Brown called, then we were doing it because he knew what was going on. He knew that, that we had blinders in the past. And rather than wait till something had passed and scold us, because we, you know, we can't, we didn't see,
- 12:34:57:18 he'd call us up beforehand and say, here's what I think you, you, we, we've got this going on. Here's what I think you need to be there. And he, he didn't even say

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why we were, we'd be there. Very brilliant, very calm person, and a, and a real honor to meet.

- 12:35:22:13 [Tom Kohler]: So, I mean, in his own way, it seems like what he was doing was connecting the, he was helping, he was connecting the faith community to the larger community and counting on y'all to help do it?
- 12:35:36:17 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yes.
- 12:35:37:20 [Tom Kohler]: And was creating an expectation for the newspaper.
- 12:35:42:01 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right.
- 12:35:42:10 [Tom Kohler]: The... right.
- 12:35:42:17 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right, right.
- 12:35:43:14 [Tom Kohler]: Right.
- 12:35:44:10 [Dana Felty Bynum]: So he, he had, he had his finger on the pulse of the faith community in Savannah. Not just the faith community, but, you know, the Morning News. Our newsroom was primarily White. And the African American faith community is different there. There's, they're primarily African American faith community. There's some mixed congregations, but not, you know, even across the country that's not just in Savannah, across the country, people go where they feel like everybody looks like them. It's
- 12:36:14:23 okay. But our newsroom was primarily White. So he would call up and, and make sure that we were aware of community events, that events that affected our broader community affect affected the, the African American community. Make sure that we knew it was important to be there.
- 12:36:39:14 [Tom Kohler]: This reminds me of a story about Mr. Law.
- 12:36:42:08 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:36:43:00 [Tom Kohler]: Who would stand in front of City council and explain to them that the word was Nee-gro, not Nih-gro, but Nee-gro.
- 12:36:56:03 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Hmm.
- 12:36:56:06 [Tom Kohler]: And actually touch his knee,
- 12:36:58:08 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Huh.
- 12:36:58:19 [Tom Kohler]: In front of city council. But I, I share that story with you.
- 12:37:01:10 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right.

Dana Felty Bynum

- 12:37:02:04 [Tom Kohler]: 'cause it's another example of someone in the African American community, quite frankly, educating
- 12:37:07:07 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah, yeah.
- 12:37:08:03 [Tom Kohler]: The majority community.
- 12:37:09:13 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right.
- 12:37:10:01 [Tom Kohler]: About a fundamental,
- 12:37:11:19 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Right. right.
- 12:37:12:17 [Tom Kohler]: Yeah. Which, yeah. Interesting.
- 12:37:14:19 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah. You know, I remember, and I know he has since passed away, covering the religion community. I wanted to at least introduce myself to everybody. So they had a phone number. If they thought of anything important happening in the community, they had a name and a phone number to call. So, you know, I looked for every different type of religion. Every, I asked everybody in town, who do you know, who's, who's
- 12:37:45:03 kinda the person to know in the primitive Baptist community? Who's the person to know in the mainline Baptist community? You know, call 'em up. Hey, I'm just, I just want you to have my name and my phone number. And then if they suggested, I more like, well, hey, come over and meet. Or, hey, you wanna get coffee then? Yeah, sure. You know, and many didn't. They said thanks, and they, I never heard again, which is fine. But I remember reaching out to, and you know, this would've been, again, two thou, mid two
- 12:38:19:22 thousands, not terribly far after nine 11, reaching out to the Muslim community here and Imam Ali being incredibly welcoming, very welcoming, very intelligent, very willing to share information about their community.
- 12:38:43:04 [Dana Felty Bynum]: And, you know, there were some Muslim communities I reached out to who, who were, you know, certainly weren't like that, who, who shared that they really were a target. They felt like a target. And they did not wanna be in the paper. And again, I wouldn't push, but just, here's my name, here's my number. If you ever want anything, you know, but, but Imam Ali, he was not afraid.
- 12:39:10:20 [Tom Kohler]: That's a lovely memory of him. He was not afraid. Yeah. Are there questions or ways that either of you want to kind of push on me a little bit here?
- 12:39:26:03 [Eric Darling]: Well, first of all, Bob Morris was the name you were looking for.
- 12:39:29:01 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yes! Bob Morris.

Dana Felty Bynum

- 12:39:29:21 [Eric Darling]: I thought I'd help you out.
- 12:39:30:19 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Thank you.
- 12:39:31:17 [Eric Darling]: I looked it up.
- 12:39:32:11 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Thank you.
- 12:39:33:05 [Eric Darling]: I do remember that column,
- 12:39:34:13 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Bob. Yeah. Gosh, we all love Bob. Yeah.
- 12:39:38:14 [Eric Darling]: But other than that, no. I think we've covered a lot of good ground other than, I mean, maybe just, I hate to say it this way, but just in terms of, from your perspective as a, you know, covering the religion beat and knowing what you know about the community and being part of it yourself, maybe just your own thoughts about Savannah in general, along those terms about why you alluded to it earlier about why, how it's different here.
- 12:40:07:20 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:40:08:05 [Eric Darling]: But maybe some of your thoughts on why it might be that way. I'd like to hear, you know...
- 12:40:13:10 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:40:13:16 [Eric Darling]: What you thought about that. But of course, talk to Tom. Not to me.
- 12:40:16:22 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Why, why is Savannah a little different than the rest of the south? Yeah. It's, I think partly the fact that we, you know, we're so lucky as to have a lot of different people from day one just sailing into port. A Jewish community right from the get go. And, and then over time, the immigrants from Ireland who had a
- 12:40:54:22 very strong identity and brought over a very deep faith of Catholicism, established, you know, one of the strongest diocese in the country here in Savannah. And, and then an expanding Jewish community. A very diverse
- 12:41:17:05 Jewish community. I mean, we, we don't just have a Jewish community. We have many Jewish communities in Savannah who are very different. Of course, the, the majority of Savannah are, are, are Christian, Protestant Christians. And we have them representing all kinds. We have this deep history of African American faith with all of its influences, a
- 12:41:51:10 very rich history of African American faith. I remember in my short time at the newspaper feeling like that really wasn't being appreciated for how rich that was. This African American history, old, old history here. And

Dana Felty Bynum

- 12:42:18:14 I'm still not sure if it is, there's, you know, there's some folks in who here in Savannah who really are committed to, to sharing African American history. I'm surprised that it hasn't it been embraced more so. Because I mean, that's something we have in Savannah that really very few communities across the country have.
- 12:42:49:07 [Tom Kohler]: I, I'm gonna propose this. I would wonder, I hadn't thought about it before, but if you think about the squares downtown.
- 12:42:55:12 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:42:56:09 [Tom Kohler]: And how many churches were on the squares.
- 12:42:58:22 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:42:59:19 [Tom Kohler]: With the square is common ground. Yeah. I wonder if there's any possibility.
- 12:43:04:20 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh yeah.
- 12:43:05:08 [Tom Kohler]: That what the geography may be even...
- 12:43:06:17 [Dana Felty Bynum]: The squares, they're a great metaphor for living together. I don't know, did that affect our attitudes towards interfaith cooperation? Yeah, maybe. Yeah. I'm sure. I'm sure geography plays a part of it too. Yeah.
- 12:43:29:02 [Tom Kohler]: Maybe four churches on one square.
- 12:43:30:21 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:43:31:04 [Tom Kohler]: At 12 o'clock everybody leaves church and you know...
- 12:43:34:13 [Dana Felty Bynum]: And then you're standing in the square when church lets out all together. Yeah. Yeah.
- 12:43:41:14 [Tom Kohler]: That's interesting. Well, thank you very much.
- 12:43:43:04 [Dana Felty Bynum]: welcome.
- 12:43:43:23 [Tom Kohler]: This has been an interesting interview because you're coming at it from a completely different angle than anybody else, you know, as a journalist.
- 12:43:50:04 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:43:50:12 [Tom Kohler]: Which gives it just a whole nother kind of, you know, like you think about a diamond and a shaft of light, you know, you keep tilting a diamond and shafts of light come through it.
- 12:43:58:22 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.

Dana Felty Bynum

- 12:43:59:04 [Tom Kohler]: This is a little bit different shaft of light to come
- 12:44:00:21 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:44:01:08 [Tom Kohler]: Through it, which is very interesting.
- 12:44:02:14 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Well, that's, that's good to hear. Yeah. Glad it was, there was something useful. Yeah.
- 12:44:07:00 [Tom Kohler]: And just while we're talking about Rexanna, she's gonna come in tomorrow, I believe.
- 12:44:10:13 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh, good!
- 12:44:11:07 [Tom Kohler]: Talk about the, the UUs.
- 12:44:12:23 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:44:13:17 [Tom Kohler]: Unitarians. Because she's very active there.
- 12:44:15:01 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yes. She, she is. Yeah. And gosh, there's another really rich history there. Yeah. That's great. Yeah. That's great.
- 12:44:24:06 [Tom Kohler]: We've done about what, 25 of these so far? 30.
- 12:44:27:12 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh my gosh. Wow.
- 12:44:28:03 [Eric Darling]: Getting there.
- 12:44:28:23 [Tom Kohler]: Yeah.
- 12:44:29:16 [Eric Darling]: Oh wow. That's a lot of editing.
- 12:44:31:22 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:44:32:12 [Eric Darling]: It's a lot of transcription.
- 12:44:33:03 [Dana Felty Bynum]: That's a lot of transcription. Do you use AI to do that?
- 12:44:36:01 [Eric Darling]: I do. Well, it gets me 80% of the way there.
- 12:44:38:09 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah.
- 12:44:39:17 [Eric Darling]: And then I have to listen again and fix it.
- 12:44:41:10 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Yeah. Then you gotta fix it. Oh my gosh.
- 12:44:43:00 [Eric Darling]: And I'll be transcribing what I'm saying right now.

Dana Felty Bynum

12:44:47:22 [Mickey Youmans]: I turned it off.

12:44:49:08 [Tom Kohler]: Smart.

12:44:51:00 [Dana Felty Bynum]: Oh my gosh.

12:44:52:01 [Eric Darling]: Cut. I should cut. Cutting. Okay.