

Larry McDaniel

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09:57:32:22 [Tom Kohler]: Good morning and thanks for being with us.

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09:57:34:16 [Larry McDaniel]: Good morning to you. It's a delight to be here.

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09:57:37:16 [Tom Kohler]: We're gonna ask a few questions right off the bat, just to kinda get things rolling. If you would just tell us your full name, and if you don't mind, please spell that name as well.

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09:57:46:04 [Larry McDaniel]: My name is Larry Wayne McDaniel, L-A-R-R-Y-W-A-Y-N-E Capital M-C Capital D-A-N-I-E-L, with no 's' on the end of my name.

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09:57:56:20 [Tom Kohler]: Thank you. And, and then for the record, and I mean do for the record, what pronoun do you prefer?

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09:58:03:15 [Larry McDaniel]: I'm very masculine, so he, him.

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09:58:08:21 [Tom Kohler]: And then let me ask you if I could a little personal history, you know, where were you born, how were you educated, kind of just kinda your path into adulthood if, if you would.

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09:58:19:19 [Larry McDaniel]: Okay. I am not from Savannah. I got here as quickly as I could, however. But I was born in nineteen forty three, eighty years ago, in Hamilton, Ohio. Lived there in Hamilton until I started junior high. We moved to Florida and started junior high in Florida in about 1955. Lived there until I graduated from high school, went to college at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee. And after that I began a half a

09:58:51:18 century of ministry, which I'm still involved in.

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09:58:55:10 [Tom Kohler]: And how did you choose to come to Savannah? How did all that happen?

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09:58:58:16 [Larry McDaniel]: I was actually living in London, England, and I was supervising the work of the Church of God in the UK and Western Europe. I had preached at a church here in Savannah called the Derenne Avenue Church of God. Later. That name was changed to Coastal Cathedral. Shortly after I had preached there, I was back in, in, actually, I was in, in Heidelberg, Germany, and I got a call from our missions director, said that a church in Savannah was needing a pastor, and they requested that I come

09:59:32:02 to be their pastor. And I loved that church and thought it would be a good thing to move back. So that was in 1985 when I came to Savannah to become the pastor of the Derenne Avenue Church of God.

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09:59:46:14 [Tom Kohler]: And how long in that position?

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09:59:48:10 [Larry McDaniel]: I was there for a little over seven years.

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09:59:52:21 [Tom Kohler]: And then?

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09:59:54:13 [Larry McDaniel]: I had another church invite me to come and be their pastor in Cleveland, Tennessee. At that time I was chairman of the board of directors of Lee University and loved that town. And so I chose to go there and stayed there for several years.

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10:00:11:06 [Tom Kohler]: And then somehow got back here.

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10:00:13:07 [Larry McDaniel]: Ended up coming back to Savannah. There were a group of people that were from that Derenne Avenue Church of God, which we had renamed Coastal Cathedral. They wanted to start a church that was not aligned with the denomination. At that time, if you were in that particular denomination, the denomination owned your property, therefore they owned you. They could determine who your pastor was and lots of things about you they could determine.

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And a group of people that were there at the time wanted to have a church that was not aligned with that organization where

10:00:46:04 we could make our own decisions. And they asked me if I would come and I said yes. And I came and we started with about 35 people and founded a new church called The Sanctuary of Savannah. Sanctuary of Savannah is still here and doing quite well. It's located at 8912 Whitfield Avenue. They have about 15 acres of property, three or four beautiful buildings. And I stayed there until I turned 70. At age 70, I stepped aside and my son, who was on

10:01:21:14 my staff, pastor Todd McDaniel, was elected by the church to become the pastor of the church. And I was the associate pastor for the next few years, actually for 10 years. As associate pastor.

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10:01:34:18 [Tom Kohler]: Gracious. Is there, was there something that made this group of people who wanted to establish their own congregation... Was there, was there a driving force other than we want to own the property?

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10:01:50:15 [Larry McDaniel]: Yes. The denomination determined who their pastor was going to be, and they had a pastor that they were not very satisfied with. And so they wanted to be able to choose their own pastor. The denomination said, no, we will, we will do that for you. Church of God is a, has a centralized form of government, a lot like the United Methodist, like the American Episcopal Church. And so they said, you know, we, we don't want that anymore. We want to be able to set our own goals.

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10:02:20:14 [Tom Kohler]: Do you mind, just since I grew up here, do you mind who three or four of the people that were central to the formation of this new church?

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10:02:29:06 [Larry McDaniel]: I, I would think the, the main one is a businessman by the name of Zeno Moore. Zeno passed away a couple of years ago and he had been on the board of directors called the Council of the Derenne Avenue Church. And he and several of those council members said, we wanna start a new church. So...

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10:02:46:20 [Tom Kohler]: And Zeno would be famous for, have his business on Montgomery Crossroads?

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10:02:51:12 [Larry McDaniel]: Oh yeah, owned lots of property.

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10:02:53:09 [Tom Kohler]: Right, and if you're a young person, the name's Zeno, like, yeah, what's up with that? Yeah, as I remember. Yeah. How did you, tell me, how did you get connected with the Old City Mission? How did all this take place?

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10:03:05:17 [Larry McDaniel]: It's an interesting story and, and a little bit by accident, while I was pastoring the Coastal Cathedral Church, I had a good friend named James Lewis. James Lewis had been a Church of God missionary. And I got acquainted with him because we were missionaries at the same time. I was a missionary before I went to the UK. I was missionary in Haiti. I was the superintendent of the Church of God in Haiti, Republic of Haiti for seven years. Before that I was in Barbados, but in general,

10:03:38:17 mission meetings, conventions. I got to know James Lewis, who was a, a missionary in Spain. Later on, Jim got a, became affiliated with the Los Angeles Mission in LA. He later became the executive director of the Los Angeles Mission, which was the largest and most prestigious rescue mission in America, perhaps the world at that time. Because of our friendship and missions, Jim would invite me out to California to speak in convocations

10:04:09:07 and revivals, graduations. And so I had been out there a number of times. After I moved in, we founded the Sanctuary Church. He continued to have me out there. And the last time I was there visiting with him, he said to me, Larry, you need to go back to Savannah and pray about starting a gospel rescue mission in Savannah. I'm thinking, first of all, I was in a building that cost 30 or \$40 million to

10:04:36:10 build. He was with an organization that had a budget of 30 or \$40 million. And I'm thinking, you know, there's no way we could ever do anything like that in Savannah. James just said, Larry, pray about it. And if it's God's will for you to have a rescue mission there, he'll open a door. The very next Sunday morning after I'd preached and I had not mentioned anything about the Los Angeles mission or the conversation I'd had with Mr. Lewis, a lady in my congregation walked up to me

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10:05:04:18 [Larry McDaniel]: and said, pastor, do you know what I do for a living? And I said, no, I, I really don't know. She said, I'm in the mortgage business. And she said, we have just recently foreclosed on a four apartment, apartment building down on 38th Street. And she said, the Lord spoke to me today and said, if the church could use that for ministry, we will just donate it to the church. It happened to be a crack house. It was all boarded up. It was on one of the number

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one crime blocks in town at that time. In fact, every house between Bull Street and Drayton Street on

10:05:39:22 38th Street was boarded up. They're all crack houses. So I took a group of my men down there and we pulled the boards off the windows and found out, even though it was boarded up, they were using it to, to sleep in there and to smoke crack and do drugs there. We cleaned it up and started a mission there. My oldest son and his wife decided to move in one of the upstairs apartment and start the mission there. So that's how we started in that old

10:06:06:04 building on 38th Street.

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10:06:08:00 [Tom Kohler]: And that would've been what year? Again?

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10:06:09:09 [Larry McDaniel]: That would've been about 26, 20 something years ago. It was 1996. You can do the math. I don't remember exactly how many years it was.

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10:06:16:18 [Tom Kohler]: Oh my gosh. And so how long there, and then if we could sort of the, you know, the progression from there to what stands today?

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10:06:26:18 [Larry McDaniel]: Well, first of all, we didn't know how to run a rescue mission. We didn't know what to do with it. We cleaned it up and we decided to have bible studies. A gentleman came by to see me one day when I was down there. His name was Robert Nasworthy. Robert Nasworthy was a retired grocery man. He had a grocery store over in East Broad Street for many, many years. He walked in one day and he said, my name is Dub. Now, his real name was Robert Nasworthy. But he went by the name of Dub for some reason. He said, what do you all do here? I said, well, we're having bible

10:06:59:08 studies. He said, really? He said, are many people coming? I said, no, almost nobody is coming. He said to me, pastor, if you want people to come, you have to give them something to eat. Remember Jesus gave away fish sandwiches? And I said, we don't have anything to give people to eat. He said, well, he said, I'm a retired grocery man. I've just closed my grocery store after 50 years. He said, I know every grocery man in Savannah, if you will let me, I'll go around and

10:07:28:08 pick up groceries that they will give us. And he said, groceries that are nearing their expiration date, still good, be good for probably another three or four months. He said, but dented cans or lettuce that's beginning to wilt or milk that's reaching its expiration date. He said, all you need to do is make some little flyers

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and put 'em on the street and said, anybody will come to bible study between these hours. We will give you free groceries. And so we put the little flyers out and people began to come.

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10:07:56:03 [Larry McDaniel]: And so Dub brought us food. He used his own car every day. He would bring us several loads of groceries, more groceries than we could almost give away. Shortly after that, another gentleman came to see me and he said, I'm a friend of Dub's. He said, my name is Gregory Corrales. Part of this, the old Greek families in Savannah. He said, I've run a liquor store in this part of town for the last 50 years, and it's time for me to give something back if you'll let me. I'm going to join in with Dub and said, we'll use our cars and we'll bring you groceries. Those

10:08:29:02 two old men brought us groceries every day right up until right before they died. They're both deceased at this time. But that's how the crowd started coming. And we got the idea of getting people to come by, giving them groceries. Of course they would come for the food, but we would share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them. And we had a measure of success that lasted about two years. I got a phone call one day from a Savannah businessman who

10:08:57:03 introduced himself as Albert Epstein, not Einstein, but Epstein, a Jewish gentleman. He said, I'm aware of your ministry you have on 38th Street. He said, I have a building the corner of Bull Street and Maupas. And he said, if you could use that for ministry. He said, it's a two story building. It's quite large. He said, I think it's like 60 feet wide, but nearly 300 feet long. And it's two story. He said, the building is empty now, and I've had it on the market to sell. He said, I'm asking \$750,000 for it. Of

10:09:30:14 course, we had no money at all. He said, but if you'll use it for charitable ministry like you have on 38th Street, he said, I'll let you have it for 325,000.

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10:09:41:22 [Larry McDaniel]: Well, it might as well have been a million. 'cause we didn't have 325,000. But I prayed about that and I went to see a, a gentleman that I knew who would stop by our little mission from time to time. He had lots of businesses in Savannah. He wanted to be anonymous after he made a gift to us. But I, I called him on the phone and, and asked him if I could come and see him. And he gave me an appointment time. I went to see him. I was going to ask him to loan us the 325,000 because I know no

10:10:12:18 bank would loan that little flimsy ministry money. So I went to see him and I said, before I start, would you mind if I have a word of prayer? He said, no, by the way, he was a Catholic gentleman. I don't think he was an active Catholic. I don't think he went to church on a regular basis, but he was raised Catholic and that that's

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what his religion was. And so he had no problem with me praying. And so I had a prayer with him, and then I made the pitch. I told him what we were doing and what we would like to do if we got this

10:10:42:03 other building that we'd like to have an overnight program where men could come in and have a rec... recovery time with us. And I took maybe 20 minutes, maybe 25 minutes, and he opened his desk drawer and he pulled out a little personal check, not a big corporate checkbook, a little tiny personal checkbook. He said, how would you like the check made out? And I said, Old Savannah City Mission. And he wrote a check for \$325,000, signed it and slid it across the desk.

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10:11:11:08 [Larry McDaniel]: And I said to him, I said, well, we didn't, we didn't discuss terms. He said, what do you mean? And I said, what is the rate of interest in for how long? Do do we have this money? His pastor said, this is not a loan. This is a gift. I'm, I'm giving you this. Go buy your building. And so I said, you know, I've always thought of myself as a pretty good motivator. I said, but what did I say that convinced you to write a check for 325,000? He said, pastor, you got me with the prayer. So we took the \$325,000. We, we bought the building and we started doing the

10:11:43:05 kind of ministry that we're doing now.

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10:11:46:17 [Tom Kohler]: So you have seen some faith in action in your time. I mean, these stories that you're telling one after the other are faith in action stories. Where individual people have decided to take an action. Because they believe in the world and they believe in the spiritual world in a certain way. That's really, yeah, I mean...

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10:12:07:23 [Larry McDaniel]: True. Well, when, when we got the building now, that was just the start. We, we bought this building. The upstairs of the building was just open. There were no partitions, there was no air conditioning. I, I think they had used it for storage. And also, I think at one time they, they built windows, aluminum frame windows there. Downstairs had a few offices in it, but, but not much. In order for us to use it, we were gonna have to renovate the building. Not only that, when we announced to the city that we're gonna

10:12:38:16 start a rescue mission there, then he said, well, no, no, it's, it's not zoned for that. I, I talked to our mayor at who at that time, mayor Adams, who became a, a very close friend. And he was a wonderful mayor in our city. And he was very sympathetic to us.

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10:12:55:21 [Larry McDaniel]: And I asked him, I said, it was not zoned for a rescue mission. I said, would it be zoned for a church? He said, yeah. I said, you can have a church about, about anywhere. I said, can churches have like a kitchen and a dining room where you can serve meals? He said, oh yeah, the church that I attended. And he, he was a Catholic also and attended St. James over on Montgomery Crossroad. He said, I said, our church has that. I said, well, can, can a church have rooms where you could put guests up for the night? Like if you had a visiting choir or, or youth

10:13:28:02 group? He said, yeah, churches can do that. I said, well then we're not a rescue mission. We're a church. And so that solved that problem. So we're, we're a church now so we can, we can do the work that we wanna do there, but if you're a church, you have to have off-street parking. Well, we didn't have that. So we, we learned number one, we're gonna have to buy some property around us and we're gonna have to renovate this building to make it to where we could have the mission there. I went back

10:13:58:11 to see the same man that gave me the \$325,000 and he said, I will loan you the money. And he loaned us enough money that we bought property around us. We owned both sides of Maupas Street and back behind us on the Drayton side, we have a parking lot there that is a hundred by a hundred. So we qualify as a church with off-street parking. And so we started the mission that we know it now.

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10:14:26:22 [Tom Kohler]: That's quite a story. I mean, really, I don't guess you'd tell us who the man is?

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10:14:33:16 [Larry McDaniel]: He's deceased. His name was Mr. Bradley. Martin Bradley.

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10:14:40:12 [Tom Kohler]: A remarkable story. Tell me, so you're in this building, you have convinced the mayor that we're going to this direction. You're in the building. I mean, how do you raise the money? I mean, where, where, where's the money come from? How do you run the place and then how does it evolve to what we see when we drive by there today?

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10:15:02:14 [Larry McDaniel]: That's a wonderful question, and it is not miraculous, but it, it's a wonderful story. And we do have the money coming in to, to run our program. About two and a half million a year is what it costs to run it. Our first problem though was not money. Our first problem was how do you do a rescue mission?

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What do we do with this property? We, we built it where we have dormitory rooms upstairs and restrooms. We have one large dormitory for our overnight guests, and then we have smaller dormitory rooms, two man rooms for the men who are going to be on our drug

10:15:33:12 and alcohol recovery program and restrooms for all of that. We had to build a kitchen and a dining room and offices. But what do we do if we have all of that? So my friend James Lewis was still the director of the Los Angeles Mission, and I would call him every day, how do you do this?

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10:15:51:10 [Larry McDaniel]: How do you do that? And he, he told us about the program. And the program that we have, the way we operate now is almost identical to what Los Angeles Mission was doing at that time. Now, their situation has changed a little bit now, but we are still doing what they did back, back then, which is number one, we have a dormitory for men that need emergency shelter. They need a bed for a few nights lodging. They need food, they need some clothing. And so we are that. We are an overnight

10:16:26:22 shelter, but we're not primarily that. Primarily we are a drug and alcohol recovery center, but the way we reach the men who need recovery is by offering emergency shelter. So anybody that walks in our doors now and they say, we're homeless, we need a place to go. Will you let us stay here a few nights? And we say, yeah, you can come here and stay, but we're different from other missions in town. One of the things that makes us unique is from the

10:16:54:23 beginning we said, we're not gonna ask for, nor will we accept any money from the government, federal, county, or city government, no government money here. And the reason we do that is because we believe it's the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ that sets men free. We don't know of any government program that sets people free from drug and alcohol addiction. There are programs, but they're not working. The gospel of Jesus Christ really does work. It sets people free. So if I'm taking any government

10:17:26:02 money and a guy comes in and says, I want some lodging and I want some food. And I say, great. Not gonna cost you or your family anything, but you're gonna come in our chapel and you're gonna sit down at our noon service and somebody's gonna tell you about Jesus.

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10:17:41:07 [Larry McDaniel]: Now I got government money. The government would say, no, no, no, no, no. Separation of church and state. And I believe in separation of church and state. I believe in government. I'm not anti-government. We thank God for the government we have. We thank God for the wonderful city government and county government we have here in Savannah, but we're not part

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of that. And we believe it's the gospel of Jesus Christ. So I don't want anybody saying no, because you get our money. We're gonna tell you what to do. And so when those men come and sit down in

10:18:12:04 our serv... we have two services a day. We have one at noon. It lasts about 30 to 45 minutes. We generally have 50 to a hundred men that will come for that noon meal. And we have local gospel preachers. Many of them are lay preachers, some are pastors of churches, mostly small churches because big church pastors don't have the time to do that. But they'll come and they give simple messages about the gospel of Jesus. They don't talk about the stuff that divide us. They talk about what Jesus

10:18:43:02 did on the cross so long ago. And you can be forgiven of your sins and you can get help for your addiction. And they give them an opportunity to accept Christ as their savior. And then somebody will get up and say, if you are mature in your misery, that's code for if you're sick and tired of being sick and tired. If you're tired of living under bridges and sleeping in parks and eating out of dumpsters and garbage cans and you're tired of the bondage of drugs and you would like to get off the street and learn how

10:19:16:22 to, to, to live, see our chaplain, we have a full-time chaplain. If they convince us that they're mature in their misery and want to come and live with us, our program is a 13 month program.

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10:19:30:08 [Larry McDaniel]: While they're there with us, we provide everything they need, all their food, their clothing, medical care, dental care, eye eyewear care. If they need hearing aids, we find a way to do that for them. And they have classes every morning. They have an hour of class, just life skills. So many of these men that come to us, they don't know the simple skills to, to do life and to work. And then they have bible classes, two hours of class every day. These men also work in the mission, all of

10:20:01:12 the labor that's done on our mission. All the cleaning, all the cooking, all the dish washing, the trucks. We own three big trucks where we go out and pick up things that people donate to us. We train our men how to drive those trucks. We train men how to go into upscale homes and pick up very expensive furniture without scratching the walls of those people. And they bring that back. And we sell those things in our thrift store and we turn furniture into food. Now you asked me, how do we raise our money? We have professionals that

10:20:35:11 help us do that. There are organizations or companies that are specialists in fundraising for charitable groups like that. We have a company in Milwaukee and call Milwaukee Direct Mail. And they write all of our letters for us. We send out a letter every month and, and a monthly newsletter. And it tells the story of the men in our mission, the pictures that are used in

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10:21:02:08 our mail, actual pictures we have made right there. The interviews they do, they will call us and say, we need to feature one of your students. And so we'll pick a student and they will interview him and they will tell his story. They know the words that get money. They know the pictures that get money. They know the phrases that get money, but we don't lie. They tell the stories, but they are professionally trained to tell our story. And people give in the mail. So most of our money comes in the mail. Our

10:21:33:13 average gift is less than \$50. They tell me our average giver is an older person. Most of them are females that give to charities like ours. And then of course we, we raise money through our thrift stores. People that give us clothing and furniture, we turn around and sell that in thrift stores.

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10:21:57:18 [Tom Kohler]: It would seem to me that I'm asking you, you must have an awful lot of what I would just call, I think the word now is partners. Everybody has partners. I mean, you must have an awful lot of partners in so many different ways. Would that be true?

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10:22:12:04 [Larry McDaniel]: We do. We do. We have lots of wonderful people who are regular donors and we have some major donors that have given huge gifts to us and we're thankful for, for those people. The way we started our fundraising with the company, it was exactly what they do at Los Angeles Mission. We sent out a letter, it's called an acquisition letter. I had never heard the term acquisition letter, but that first acquisition letter cost us about \$80,000 to do that. And that was money that we had to raise from special donors upfront to do the letter. Here's the way they do

10:22:44:22 that. They will rent a list. There are lists that have names of people who have shown a proclivity to give to charities like ours. People that are interested in the hungry and hunger or down and out people. And so they will rent that list and they will send a letter. Our, our first letter that goes out is around the holiday meal. Most of our fundraising is done from October through the end of the year. And we'll do

10:23:14:19 a, a major meal for, we've had as many as 7,000 people come to our Thanksgiving dinner. We cook enough turkeys and stuff to feed 7,000 people. For years we did it in Forsyth Park. Now we're doing it on our own property there at, at Bull Street. But we'll ask people to give to that. And there in the letter there will be a, a picture of a homeless person sitting at a table with a Thanksgiving meal. And the caption or the letter will simply

10:23:43:20 say, for a a dollar 59 cents, you can provide a hot Thanksgiving meal or holiday meal for a homeless person. Or for \$15 90 cents for 10 and multiples of of that.

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And the people that give us that money, the, the first time we did it, we were hoping to get just enough money to cover the \$80,000.

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10:24:05:08 [Larry McDaniel]: And, and we did. And and then some, we might think, well, you're spinning your wheels if you only get enough money to pay for the acquisition letter. What did you acquire? What we acquired was not just the \$80,000 plus, but as the name of a person who believes in what we're doing. And immediately they get a thank you letter back from us. And this is one of the things that I do every day. I sign thank you letters, and I write a personal note on every letter. Thank you so much for caring enough to send us your, your offering. And so we have developed a mailing

10:24:40:05 list of donors who now are regular donors,

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10:24:45:06 [Tom Kohler]: Which would be from their side, one way for them to put their faith in action.

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10:24:50:12 [Larry McDaniel]: Yes.

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10:24:50:20 [Tom Kohler]: In, in a, in most people's situation, probably a fairly easy way. But it is faith in action.

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10:24:58:17 [Larry McDaniel]: We, it, it is. But we have discovered if people will care enough to, to give you one gift, if you respond immediately with a thank you letter that's personalized, and give them a newsletter that has pictures that are current of things that are really happening to these people here in Savannah, they will give you, again. We've found if a person will give you a hundred dollars, that person may may very well give you a thousand dollars. Person will give you a thousand dollars, give you \$10,000 if you communicate right. And if you're honest and upfront and you operate

10:25:29:00 with integrity, which we do.

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10:25:32:10 [Tom Kohler]: Help me with, lemme think. I've come at this. Help me with the politics of all this. There must be people that disagree with your success. 'cause there are always people that disagree with everything,

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10:25:50:06 [Larry McDaniel]: I'm sure.

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10:25:50:23 [Tom Kohler]: Do you, I mean, have you had, have you had to contend with any of that?

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10:25:56:07 [Larry McDaniel]: Not really. In, in the beginning we had a little bit of opposition from other groups that were raising money to do similar things because they saw us as a competitor. We don't have that now. We, for example, we, we get big donations like tractor trailer loads full of stuff, more stuff than we can sell or give away. We immediately, we're gonna call the Salvation Army. We're gonna call inner City Night shelter. We're gonna call Union Mission. And we share all that with those and they

10:26:26:08 share with us. So there's no competitiveness there now. I'm sure there are people that don't like what we do, but it, it's, it's very minimal.

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10:26:38:11 [Tom Kohler]: And, and then you had mentioned that preachers come in every day.

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10:26:44:04 [Larry McDaniel]: Yeah, twice a day.

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10:26:45:14 [Tom Kohler]: Twice a day. I mean, how many men of the cloth and women of the cloth in one way or another are connected in that way? I mean, this is part of how they live their faith in action. They come and, and preach?

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10:26:57:03 [Larry McDaniel]: We'll, we'll have pastors that'll come and, and they'll volunteer and they'll take one of our night services that, like I said, I'm gonna do every Monday night. And, and they'll do that for a while. But they have so many other responsibilities that they might say, you know, we're, we're gonna take a little leave of absence for a while. Or they'll say, I've got a young man on my ministry staff, my preaching staff that would love to come and do that. And so we have a lot of that. We have a lot of young men and women, by the way, that come and share the gospel. And we, we limit them in a way of what they can preach about. There are

Larry McDaniel

10:27:31:19 things that divide us as Christians. For example, the church that I grew up in, we believe in baptism by immersion. We actually dunk 'em.

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10:27:40:04 [Larry McDaniel]: We don't hold 'em under, but we do that. There are other churches that believe in sprinkling. There are some churches that believe the first day of the week, Sunday is when we ought to come to worship. There are others that say it's Saturday, it's the, it's the seventh day. The Adventist, for example. And there are some churches that are Trinitarian, some are Unitarian. But we say, well, if you're gonna come and preach for us, don't get into the stuff that divide us. The simple gospel, preach the stuff that Jesus did. And, and they have no problem doing that. The simple Bible preaching and people are coming to Christ. And

10:28:15:03 by the way, after all of these years, now we have hundreds and hundreds of men who have graduated from our program that are still clean and sober and working with their families.

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10:28:25:10 [Tom Kohler]: That's what I wanted to ask about next. I mean, as you, as you look at the work that's been done, fruits of your labor, how would you describe fruits of your labor?

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10:28:34:05 [Larry McDaniel]: I don't have hard numbers to give you. Like 79% of the people that come through are successful. I can just say this, almost all of them that graduate from the program continue on living good, godly lives and hardworking lives and are out with their family. We have a lot of guys that will start with our program, but they don't last. They stay for a while and then they leave almost in every case. If a man leaves before graduation, it's because of family interference. A mother, a wife, a

10:29:09:06 girlfriend, say, you're fine. Now we, we need you back here. You've, you've been here long enough and you're off the drugs now. Now come on back here. Be because we need, they need their income and they need their, their help at home. And so many times when they leave without graduating, they end up going right back to, to a life of drugs.

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10:29:25:23 [Tom Kohler]: Are there folks that have come through your program that have gone on to do, when I say big things, I wanna be careful here, but, but whose lives didn't become an exemplar for other people in terms of their faith and their actions in the larger community?

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Larry McDaniel

10:29:43:03 [Larry McDaniel]: We have lots of guys that have graduated from our program that are now serving as pastors of churches. Not just here in Savannah, but you know, these guys are from all over the country. And they go back to where they came from and, and, and do well. And we hear from them. A lot of 'em go into business. Our successful business people, we had one donor recently, a guy called us and I didn't really know him, but he said, I'm a graduate of the program. And he said, I'm working and with my wife and we're doing good and we're getting, getting ready to move into our new house that we've just built. And said, we wanna put all new furniture

10:30:14:09 in the house, but I wanna donate the furniture from where we're living now to the mission. And I thought, that's just a wonderful story. He's successful and he is moving up, but he still cares about, about the mission.

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10:30:25:21 [Tom Kohler]: So he spent 13

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10:30:27:16 [Larry McDaniel]: Months, yeah.

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10:30:28:18 [Tom Kohler]: Months inside your building, basically?

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10:30:30:20 [Larry McDaniel]: Yes. Yeah.

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10:30:31:16 [Tom Kohler]: And after that, he has built this life. And is now able to...

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10:30:36:04 [Larry McDaniel]: Right, right. Our program is, is a program of work and study and worship. If a man doesn't have his high school diploma, we help him get his GED. If he, you know, a lot of guys, they have no idea how to, how to do a job application or a job interview. We teach 'em how to do that. We give them leads. And so most all of our men, when they graduate, they have a job waiting for them.

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10:31:02:17 [Tom Kohler]: So how, how, how big is your personal Rolodex?

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Larry McDaniel

10:31:08:18 [Larry McDaniel]: I don't think there's any such thing as a Rolodex anymore. I, on, on, on Facebook, I have about 5,000 friends, but you know, I have a whole, whole lot of people that, that I'm in contact with.

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10:31:20:16 [Tom Kohler]: I could imagine. How, what, what was your moment in terms of finding your faith path? I mean, when did that happen for you?

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10:31:35:13 [Larry McDaniel]: I was, I was raised by a mother who was a godly mother. She was from Appalachia. She was an orphan and came to know Christ shortly after she married my dad. My dad was not a believer. My dad lived to be 93 years old and he was not a believer until the last seven years of his life. And so he kind of fought against my mother about me going to church. But my mother always insisted that, that my sister and I attend church and she taught us the right way to do. But when I became a teenager,

10:32:06:20 I was rebellious and I got involved in, in a rock and roll band back in the sixties. I had a band called the Sonics that we called ourselves the Supersonics, by the way, that was in the early days of the Space Age. So we, we call ourselves the Supersonics and got involved in, and some of the things that our men that come to the mission were involved in, not drugs. Drugs was not a big deal when I was growing up, but alcohol was. And it was after, after I got married, I married a very godly young girl and she said,

10:32:41:07 if you're gonna live with me, you're gonna go to church with me. And so I accepted Christ as my savior and have been serving the Lord for all of these years. And been in ministry about half a century.

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10:32:52:09 [Tom Kohler]: Unbelievable. And then, let me ask the Supersonics, now, did you start that band before or after The Beatles played the Ed Sullivan Show?

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10:32:58:22 [Larry McDaniel]: We were way before the Beatles. We were in the Elvis Presley area... Era.

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10:33:05:09 [Tom Kohler]: Okay. Oh my gosh. Are there things that you wanted to make sure to talk about today that you don't feel like we've have been able to give you a platform for? Or do you feel like you've been able to help us understand the work that you have been doing through the mission? Or... I'll leave it at that.

Larry McDaniel

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10:33:27:12 [Larry McDaniel]: Couple of little things that I have not mentioned about our work. The last dormitory that we built was called our Fresh Start Dorm. We have three dorms, and the second story of our building, the first one is we call our Friends and Neighbors dorm. That's for our overnight guys. We don't refer to them as vagrant or homeless people. We, we treat everybody with dignity. These are our friends and our neighbors. And so that's a large dorm. Then we have dormitory rooms for up to 28 men that are on our program. The last dorm that we built has 10 rooms that has 22 beds in each room. So we have room for 20 men. This dorm was

10:34:02:11 built for men who have come to faith while incarcerated. We have prison chaplains and wardens who will call us, say we got a guy that he's about to be paroled.

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10:34:12:00 [Larry McDaniel]: He's a good guy. We've been watching him, but he has no family and he has nowhere to go. And if we put him out on the street, he'll be right back here. Can you take him? Our policy is yes, we will take him at no cost to him for 90 days. He's got free room and board. If he wants to eat with us, the only thing we require is he has to give us proof that he's going to job interviews. After three months, if he doesn't get a job, he can't stay. We're not a flop house where men can just come and live on us. After three months, if he doesn't get a job, we're sorry.

10:34:45:13 You gotta move on. If he gets a job, he has to bring his pay stub to us. And we take 30% of his pay for his rent, and he can stay there. Most of them stay about a year. The average rent is anywhere from 600 to \$800 a month. They have their own laundry facility. We don't launder their clothes for them like we do our overnight guests or our students, they have their own showers and restrooms there. We have a, a place for them to park

10:35:12:00 their car. If they have a a place to, to park, they have a car to park. And so that's an important part of our ministry. Also, we, we work very closely with the courts. We have our district attorney's office. He knows about us and really cares about what we do. And they will call and say, we got a guy who is a nonviolent offender, but he's facing three or four years in prison. But we're gonna give him a choice. He can either go to prison for his three or four years, or he can go to the old Savannah City Mission for

10:35:42:08 13 months. Now, most of them will choose to come to us for 13 months. And it generally works out quite well because if they stay for the 13 months and graduate, then their record is cleared. If they stay 12 months and leave, they go back for the three or four years. So it's a good motivation for them to do right. We

Larry McDaniel

don't have many of those two or three at a time, is what we'll generally have from the courts.

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10:36:09:03 [Tom Kohler]: And we talked about this earlier, just as a personal point, the, the, the, the, the relation of the Stiles family to the mission. I'm just personally curious about that.

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10:36:16:19 [Larry McDaniel]: Okay. I was the pastor up until I turned 70 years of age at the Old Savannah City Mission. I mean, at the Sanctuary of Savannah. I was still the president of the corporation and chairman of the board of the Old Savannah City Mission. While I was pastor, the Stiles became members of our church. Jim Lewis, who used to be the director at the Los Angeles Mission later became the director of the Old Savannah City Mission. He stayed with me for nearly 10 years. When he retired, I

10:36:48:16 appointed Bill Stiles, William Stiles, to be the director of our mission. And he stayed as the director of our mission. And we hired his wife, Connell. In fact, we hired Connell before we hired Bill. And she was our development director. She's the one that started our thrift stores and many other ministries, brilliant woman and godly woman. He was a very successful businessman and did a wonderful job as our executive director. At the end of his life, he became quite ill. And so we let Bill retire. I had retired

10:37:21:21 from active pastoral duties, and I decided to come down and be the director of the mission. So I replaced Bill and about a year after he retired, he passed away. But the Stiles family's a wonderful, wonderful family and contributed to this community.

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10:37:41:10 [Tom Kohler]: I'm asking, it's, it strikes me that in this conversation we're talking about people of all stripe, I mean people of all colors, people of, I mean, in a community that can be pretty socially segregated. I mean, it, it sounds like this is the opposite of that almost?

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10:38:04:14 [Larry McDaniel]: Well, you know, sin doesn't discriminate. It, it, it reaches all of, all of our cultures no matter what kind of background we have. And the people that come to our mission, they're like the old song we used to sing in Sunday school, red and yellow, black and white. They're precious in his sight. And we, we don't, we don't check anybody's background to see what their religion was. We

Larry McDaniel

don't check what their sexual preference is. We did... If if they're just needy and they're lost and they prove to us that they're mature in their ministry, then we

10:38:36:01 welcome 'em into our program. And if you walked into our mission right now and, and just looked at our students, they mirror the community in general. It's not all one color, not all one culture. We have guys that come through our mission that come from very upscale homes. They were raised by parents who were college educated and business people, but they got involved in drugs. And then we have some that come from the poorest sections of our country. We have guys that come from Appalachia.

10:39:05:04 One young man that just graduated, came from the mountains of Tennessee, ended up on the streets, young white boy. And he came to the mission looking for a meal. And when they told him about the program, he said, I wanna be a part of that. He graduated from our program, was an employee for a while. Now he's married and doing well and living in another state. But we have guys come from all over like that.

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10:39:28:00 [Tom Kohler]: Well, I know the word Rolodex got a chuckle outta you, but I'm gonna use it again. It sounds like you have a, a big Rolodex, but also maybe one of the most diverse Rolodexes in Savannah.

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10:39:41:18 [Larry McDaniel]: Oh yeah.

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10:39:42:14 [Tom Kohler]: I can't think who, I can't think of anyone who might have a more interesting Rolodex. I would say,

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10:39:49:23 [Larry McDaniel]: For example, if we need a new truck in my Rolodex, I've got a good friend that owns a big trucking company and he'll find me one if he doesn't give it to me. It gives, it gives it to us at his cost. Recently there was a young... A need for a bus and we bought a, a used bus. And I called a friend of mine who was in the aircraft business. He makes parts for Gulfstreams and stuff like that. Called him on the phone and said, Joey, I need a, I need a bus. He said, how much is it gonna cost

10:40:20:03 us? About 30 grand. He said, check will be there tomorrow. And there are people that are in industry like air conditioning, people that have our AC breaks down. They send somebody out and they fix it and donate their time. So we have lots of friends.

Larry McDaniel

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- 10:40:36:02 [Tom Kohler]: Well this has been a delight and just really an absolute delight. All three of us who are in the room right now have learned a ton. And I will never look at the Old City Mission when I drive by it, which I do every day with the same eyes. I just won't. And we appreciate your time very, very much.
- 10:40:56:18 [Larry McDaniel]: As a footnote, this is one thing I probably should have said earlier. The appeal that we make to people to give us money deals with people who are hungry. Not necessarily people who are addicted to drugs. The average person out there, they don't have a whole lot of sympathy for a guy that chose to do drugs and live on the street. Those guys are the way they are because of bad choices. But if the appeal is to feed people, and that's what we do. I mean, they, they, they first come to us because they're hungry. And it's not just men. We have women
- 10:41:30:04 that come who are hungry. We have women who come with their children and we feed them in one of our meals a day out of our kitchen. We provide about 300,000 meals a year. Our kitchen is as big and as well equipped and modern as any hotel or restaurant in this town. We have three meals a day that are served in our kitchen, but we have a food giveaway program where we give families boxes of foods, food that if say there's a family of four, we will
- 10:42:02:21 give 'em enough food for the next two weeks. All they gotta do is show up.
- 10:42:08:12 [Tom Kohler]: And this springs, if this, the, the root of this is the Coastal Cathedral locally?
- 10:42:19:11 [Larry McDaniel]: Yeah, that's, I was, I was at Coastal Cathedral as pastor. Yeah. When I first learned about the mission ministry. Right. The church itself was not involved. And now the Sanctuary Church, The Sanctuary Church, the Sanctuary of Savannah on Whitfield Avenue, they're the ones they put about three quarters of a million dollars into our ministry.
- 10:42:39:22 [Tom Kohler]: So that's the taproot right there.
- 10:42:40:23 [Larry McDaniel]: Yes. But we, the Old Savannah City Mission is a separate 501 C3. It's not owned by any church.
- 10:42:48:07 [Tom Kohler]: Right,
- 10:42:49:00 [Larry McDaniel]: We have lots of churches. Savannah Christian's been a great donor. Calvary and all of the churches in town have been, you know, good donors for us.
- 10:42:56:23 [Tom Kohler]: Right. And that goes back to this idea of sort of inter-denomination. But there are many different ways for people to contribute. Yeah. Great. Gentlemen, behind the cameras is our, are there questions that you

Larry McDaniel

want to make sure get asked? Is there anything that you feel like we need to definitely kind of strengthen or, or go back toward?

10:43:18:05 [Eric Darling]: I think good. Yeah. That's a really, it's really wonderful.

10:43:23:03 [Larry McDaniel]: A a common question that we get that you did not ask is what about women who are drugs addicted and homeless? It, it's impossible to house women in the same facility with men. We just can't do that. But we've been donated five acres of property out in the country, about 12 miles out from Savannah. We're in the process of developing that now. And we're gonna build a series of cabin for homeless women. When I say cabin, don't think some little dinky thing. These will be like log homes.

10:43:54:17 Each home will be about 3000 square feet. And we'll be able to house 16 to 24 women in each of those houses. And we want it to be out there in a pastoral setting to get women away from town, to get women away from the drug pushers, get women away from the people that are wanting to harm them.

10:44:16:15 [Larry McDaniel]: There are as many homeless women in Savannah as homeless men, but you don't see them. The reason you don't see them is the reason that they are homeless. Men are homeless because of bad choices that they've made. Rather than work they would rather play and do drugs and, and drink and what have you. Women are homeless because of something that's been done to them almost always by a man, a father, a stepfather, a husband, a boyfriend. Most of the women who are homeless in Savannah,

10:44:47:07 almost all of them have been physically abused. Almost all of them have been sexually abused. And many of them are living in abandoned buildings or in cars or vans. And they have children with them. We have 800 children in our Chatham County schools that have no permanent address. They're homeless. And so we want to have this property developed where women can go there and live for a temporary time till they get on their feet, a place where they can live with their children and get their children enrolled in

10:45:18:19 schools out in the county. And we will be able to take care of them for an extended period of time.

10:45:24:19 [Tom Kohler]: Is there a timeframe on this?

10:45:26:20 [Larry McDaniel]: We are working on that now. We are raising money for that right now. Each one of these cabins will cost about 400 to 500,000 to build. We want to build three of them.

10:45:36:09 [Tom Kohler]: Well, that's, that's great to hear. And again, it's just information that, of what 99.9% of the people in the community would have no way of understanding. No way of seeing what's really going on. Well again, thank you. This has been staggering, quite frankly.

Larry McDaniel

- 10:45:54:11 [Mickey Youmans]: Yeah. This is wonderful.
- 10:45:55:19 [Larry McDaniel]: Yeah. Well, thank you. Yeah. I hope that I answered all the questions correctly.
- 10:45:59:19 [Tom Kohler]: There's no, there's no right and wrong. I mean, but but again, the phrase faith in action is very, very muscular in this particular interview.
- 10:46:08:14 [Larry McDaniel]: What do you do with this?
- 10:46:10:14 [Mickey Youmans]: It's property of the city of Savannah Municipal archives. Okay. And ultimately Eric,
- 10:46:17:06 [Eric Darling]: Well, we will be also producing. So it goes, let's cut 'cause we don't need to record all this. So it goes to.