

September 25, 2026

So I'm a Banker, Arrest Me!

I'm a banker.

There. I said it.

Depending on who you ask, that confession may rank somewhere between admitting you're an IRS auditor and saying you actually enjoy going to the DMV.

Funny thing is, I never grew up wanting to be a banker.

When people asked what I wanted to be, I said a preacher, police officer, firefighter—and I even made an early attempt at becoming a city alderman when I was barely 18.

Banker? I don't remember that ever making the list.

But life has a way of taking us places we never expected.

Friends and neighbors chose different professions—teachers, nurses, first responders, business owners, factory workers, farmers and so many others. Becoming a banker doesn't make me better than any of them.

Actually, I'm indebted to them.

And despite what some may believe, I don't sit on a throne of judgment looking down at someone else's financial decisions.

I've felt the sting of financial difficulties, too. I know what it's like to worry, and I know what it's like to feel forgotten.

Maybe that's why I see community banking a little differently.

When you walk into a room to talk with me, I don't want to sit on the opposite side of the table.

I want to sit beside you.

I don't want to battle with you. I want to embrace what we can do together.

Imagine if more conversations happened that way. No dividing aisle. Just people willing to listen and learn from one another.

Why should banking be any different?

Behind every loan application is a person. Behind every business financial statement is somebody who took a chance on an idea. Behind every mortgage is a family trying to build a home.

Those aren't account numbers.

They're people.

And sometimes people need more than an algorithm. They need someone willing to listen to the whole story and help find a way forward.

That doesn't mean a community bank can always say yes.

It means we should always be willing to listen.

Technology has made banking faster and more convenient, and that's a good thing. But convenience should never replace relationships.

We want you to know your bankers.

More importantly, we want your bankers to know you.

Silence is an enemy to mutually beneficial relationships.

So let's talk.

Maybe that kind of banking sounds old-fashioned. We intend to prove it's anything but obsolete.

And next week, I want to introduce you to a very special Cullmanite who has inspired those who know her—and strangers who don't—to fight, believe and face life with courage.

Her story is a reminder of what community really means: standing beside one another.

So yes, I'm a banker.

Arrest me.

You'll know exactly where to find me.

At a Bank Within Reach.

- Thomas W. Russell, President

