

Audio file

[HoTM episode 68.m4a](#)

Transcript

Wynne Leon

Welcome. The sharing the heart of the magnified guess where we honor the storyteller in his all I'm Wynne Leon. And in this episode Vicki Atkinson. I are with Blogger, author, retired elementary school teacher and great storyteller Pete Springer. Pete storytelling is fantastic and the fun twist with this particular story is that the story I told in episode 66 about trying to rescue Buttercup the Bunny is what prompted Pete to volunteer to tell us about the great adventures of class. Pets. That's the connective tissue of stories we tell a story, and it takes the listener someplace, hopefully someplace worth going. Pete also shares with us the impact he's seen for storytelling across the generations. Regardless of age, there's an intimacy when we dare to utter our personal narratives. So please join us for the scenic and beautiful places we go when we share the power of story we know. You'll love it. Hi, Pete.

Pete Springer

Hi Wynne. Hi, Vicky.

Wynne Leon

Hi we are so excited to see you again.

Pete Springer

Really good to see you guys too.

Wynne Leon

It's always fun to come together. We love all of your stories and I love that you volunteered to tell us a wonderful story about classroom pet.

Pete Springer

Yeah. So I really the way this came about is I read your post about rabbits and animals passing and immediately I connected with that because my own experience is as a teacher. I I often had pets in the classroom, which is a lot of fun, but it also involves a certain degree of risk and, you know, dealing with elementary kids. Second grade through 6th grade is what I taught so.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Pete Springer

You know, knowing that depending on the age, some of them have probably never experienced death before. So you know you have, of course that's in the back of your mind and then knowing how to handle those kind of situations, it's not like I've got had a lot of expertise.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

That I've had examples of of kids come in and they're upset and you, you know you what's wrong? And then ohh my you know we had to might we had to put our dog to sleep and so you give him a hug and you're trying to be kind and compassionate and. And then, you know, they'll often say, well, can I tell the class about this? And so, you know, it's like, ohh gosh, should should we go down this Ave. Well, it's probably, you know, therapeutic for him and maybe it maybe I should. But but I've got. I've also gotten into trouble a couple of.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

Times with that because they'll start telling a story, and then that almost immediately leads to other kids wanting to share. And then, you know, sooner or later you've got somebody in tears which leads to more kids. Upset. And you know you're in the middle of this and you're thinking, why did I ever even consider this? But you know, it's it's like being a parent. You do the best you can as a teacher, and most of the time, I think you get the decisions right, but not always so.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, I think of that as being some of the best teaching though, because it, you know, as when wrote in in her post that, you know, created this spark and this synergy. It's a developmental milestone for every kid in that community response where kids say, me too, I've had that you're doing good work. This goes far beyond the curriculum. It's it's, you know, it's important.

Pete Springer

Oh, absolutely. I I really. I really think that's probably equally if not more important. You know, when you when things don't go well as a teacher and that happens all the time. Just like you know, as a parent you you've got all these plans and then something goes amiss. And and you're frustrated and you think, well, I can't blow my top here. What's the what are what? What, what? What would I be

teaching the kids? You know? So, I mean, there's plenty of plenty of examples like that and and certainly with technology, which is not my Forte. And so I'm. I'm.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Pete Springer

Yeah, I was humble enough to realize if I got stuck. You know, hey, who knows how to solve this problem? So, so more than once, I would have a 4th or 5th grader come up and and help me. Sometimes they think they know and they don't really know. But you know, that is what problem solving is. Right. You try something and sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

Vicki Atkinson

Down.

Pete Springer

But.

Wynne Leon

Right, yeah.

Pete Springer

Anyway, so I I've got three stories. I'll try not to go too long, but. So along the lines of having class pets, rats I had rats in my room for a long time, which a lot of the kids first impression of. Who wants? Who wants every?

Vicki Atkinson

Right, right.

Pete Springer

Kind of class pit is. That right and so but.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Pete Springer

Just like you would imagine for most of them, it takes all of about 10 minutes to start bonding with them with them when they see how cute they are and they hold them and they realize you know that they're not so bad after all.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

But. I I I had, I I lucked out for the first few times, cause rats don't have a particularly long life. They only lived 22 to three years, and so the and I would always get a pair and and not make sure I get.

Wynne Leon

MM.

Pete Springer

Two nails we didn't. I didn't need to start having sex education in second grade. No, no. Yeah. Anyway, so you know the first couple of experiences it all went well. A lot of it was related to trying to teach kids responsibility. I like to have fun, but it was it was a a lesson too. It was teaching acceptance about how the idea.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

That sometimes we can make an assumption about something and we find out, yeah. Yeah, you know and then so yes, you and and of course you try to relate it to people too, right? And your different color of your religions different, you know, we just should accept if that's anyone. And so there was a.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Pete Springer

Lot of that. Anyway, so the first couple of years. I I I lucked out and. When the rats passed, they happened to pass in the in the summer time and I didn't have to deal with that issue even though it was always there in my mind. And so, so, and but around the 3rd or 4th year.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Pete Springer

Coincidentally, I had rap problems at home.

Vicki Atkinson

Ohh.

Pete Springer

And so here I am. You know, we're all being all gentle with the rats and loving. And meanwhile at at home, I'm trying to get rid of rats. So. So my wife and I just laughed so much about that. And the way I discovered that I had rap problems, I didn't even know I had rap. Problems and one day I'm driving home from school my. Ones in in fifth grade, we're riding in the car and it's just going down range

sheets of rain and we're on the highway and you know how you get that feeling when you get next to a semi and it just throws a feed of water across your windshield and you have the split second.

Wynne Leon

She.

Pete Springer

Where you can't see while all of a sudden my wipers just quit working right in the middle and they're on high high. Feed and so I'm like, what the heck? And you know, he's just. I'm going fast. I'm. I'm on the highway and so I can't see. And I, you know, eased off to the side of the road, got off and, you know, and I'm not particularly mechanically inclined, but of course I did to get under the hood. Thing. Anyway, get back in the car and and Ryan. My son is very concerned about, you know, I gotta get to basketball practice, you know, and and your your kids are at this at this age when you know when they want, when they need to be somewhere that's that's what's on their.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

Mind.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Pete Springer

Yeah, so so. I'm like ohh gosh, I'm on the I'm we're probably 2 miles from home. I only have to a little bit further to get up to the exit, but my wipers are. Aren't working, and so. Yeah. Oh, Dad, we got to get there. If I don't. If we if I don't make it to practice, I can't. Play in the games. And all of that he's he's putting the he's putting the screws to me. And so so I, you know, it's one of these things you do as a parent and you think boy I I'm.

Wynne Leon

Right, right.

Pete Springer

Either the world's worst parent here or I'm a great parent. I stick my head out the side of the window. I'm getting stoked and I'm driving down the road trying to get home. And you know, if I had a long, long drive, I I would have just said no, we can't do it. But.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, yeah.

Pete Springer

Sure enough, we, we we end up making it home and I, we gotta get him to practice. And then I when I get the vehicle in through the mechanic. The mechanic says Ohh jeez you you know you got rats because they they built a nest and your engine block and they then they chew through the wires and that's. That's how I found out I I. Yeah. So.

Wynne Leon

Oh my gosh.

Vicki Atkinson

Pete, I can't help but think that, like word got around in the rat community. The well here for classroom rats started talking to the wild cousin, saying that's Springer house. That's the place to be. Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

Exactly. Exactly. My wife, my wife is like, you know, maybe you can round them up and they can be your new class bed there. So.

Wynne Leon

I think so.

Pete Springer

Anyway, then the second one. One day I'm coming in to so, so the. Rats in the classroom was a class job, and so every time was a big, you know, put the kids to work right. And. And so one of the. Kids each week. Would be in charge of feeding and giving them water and changing the cage. And they're all kinds of jobs in my classroom. Which is just something I really believe in. I think it's. Really. Good to teach kids some responsibility. So I come to work one morning and I'm getting. I happen to be getting evaluated that day, which happens about once. A year for a teacher. And my principal it was going to be coming in, oh, about an hour and a half into the day. And I opened the classroom door and the rat cage is open and I'm thinking ohh gosh, it's not that this has never happened before, but the timing was. The timing was terrible. One of the, you know, one of the kids didn't get the.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Pete Springer

The cage shot it was. It happens, you know.

Vicki Atkinson

On evaluation day, right. You're you're being observed, yeah.

Pete Springer

I'll evaluate today so. So I start scrambling around and I had this kind of arrangement with the kids that, you know, this is my time to work before school. And like, I kept the classroom door. Or shut so that they didn't come in and out, you know. And when they showed up and so they would just put their backpack outside the door, go on the playground and play. And then when the bell rang, OK, come on in. And I would usually, that's the time. We'd have 5 minutes. And I'd usually put the rat cage.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, right.

Pete Springer

Out had this double Decker. You know the the Rolls Royce of Rat Cage is and kids would watch him playing and you know he's got the exercise wheel.

Vicki Atkinson

Like a penthouse, even, yeah. Yeah.

Pete Springer

Ohh and and so rats are like, yeah, they're like a lot of animals. If they have an audience, they'll they'll perform and and do a lot of and be very active. Well, anyway, back to this particular morning. I'm looking around and I can't find them anywhere and I I you know, I know kids. I know I can. I couldn't find. I couldn't find either of them at first. And and I know kids I can just picture what's going to happen.

Vicki Atkinson

And you can't find either one of them. Both of them are gone, right? Yeah.

Pete Springer

Because if they know the rats are loose, then that's what's going to be on their mind. You know, screw. Math. Who cares about that? I just want to find out where the rats are. So. So I end up. I'm. I. I've got like about 1/2 an hour before school starts. And I find one of them. And I was able to catch them that the kids name the rats we had that year.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Pete Springer

We had. Snowball, an all white rat and and Oreo who is a black and white rat. Hot. And so I round up a snowball and and Oreo is still on the Lam. Somewhere in the room, you know, like I like to say, tasted freedom. And and that was it. He wasn't giving it up easily. Well, I can't find him. I'm getting. I'm. I got to get ready for the day. And the evaluations, in my mind, all this is kind of going on. I'm thinking about the kids. And the bell rings. It's the first bell rings. So I so I meet them outside the

classroom and I say, OK, here's the situation. And anytime it's something new. Well, you got kids hooked, right? Especially this. It's like I'm deputizing them or something as as sheriff's. And we're gonna spend, we're gonna spend 5 minutes, kids, we're gonna spend 5 minutes and then and then if we can't call.

Vicki Atkinson

Yes.

Pete Springer

Hot we haven't caught Oreo in that time. Then we're going to have to give it up. And so sure enough there, you know, they just love this whole thing and we're we're all over the place and we actually we actually saw him a couple of times and then he'd run under something else. And so. 5 minutes are up. We haven't. About him. And I'm like, I can just picture this scene where I'm like, on the ground, crawling around. And my principal walks in or something. And what are you doing? Right. So yeah, so I just, you know, I'm making a judgment. I guess we better get back to work. And I realize, oh, there we go.

Wynne Leon

Ohh hi.

Pete Springer

11 recess break before she comes. And of course you know, it's exactly like like you like you imagine. They the kids are hardly paying attention to the language arts lesson or whatever is going on and. You know, and they're just. Like that's. That's what their mind is on. And and and anyway. So then of course you get the kids that want to offer to stay in at recess to help you and you realize, you know, this is probably more trouble than it's worth. So now you go outside anyway. Luckily, I end up catching the rabbit at recess. Put them in the cage. And the principle is never the wiser. And this was one of my best evaluations ever.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, because you didn't have time to overthink it. You spent all your.

Pete Springer

No, no, no. But I mean it just inside your and and my principal was very she was.

Wynne Leon

Time. Yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

A. She was. I work for some really great people and some average and some even not so good, but this was one of the best and she would have. I'm sure she would have just found the whole thing comical. But you know when you're like, oh, I'm being evaluated, I want to put my best foot forward here, right? Not not. I'm not have any of my.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Pete Springer

Audience paying attention to me. So, so finally the last one has to is is really similar to your story when because one day it happened. So the my routine.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Pete Springer

Was that I had, I would have the cage out for 5 minutes before school started. We had two bells and kids. Would often go. Over and depending on their mood, just just spend time watching and then if we had on the rare occasion that we had time at the end of the day. I can get the rats out of the cage and anyone that went wanted to hold them and you would pass them around, talk, talk to him a little bit and such and and. Anyway, but then when the second bell rang in school starting OK, I I we can't just leave them because I you know you if you put even if you put them on on a cabinet or something as soon as they start running on the exercise wheel you've got kids laughing and and. And so, well, I learned that you just gotta kind of put them out of sight. And so I put them in the back of the room and they're not. Rats are nocturnal, so they would just go to sleep. And it was a piece. Hey. And so. So one day I'm in the middle of class and one of the kids happened to walk back into that area, probably just sharpening his pencil. I don't. I don't remember what he was back there for. He wasn't doing anything wrong. But yeah, from the top of his lungs he yells up. And so as as you can imagine. It was just like bees to honey. It all just rush over there. Yeah, and and we're talking, you know, this is second grade now this year. And so I, you know, I even though I knew it was a possibility that it would happen, I just I I probably panic more than anything and I I go into full cover up mode.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

And it's clear the rat is not alive. But I, you know, I and I start telling him. Ohh. Maybe I'll take it. I'll. I'll. I'll take him to the vet after school. So I throw his I I throw a she. Over the cage and I just have to get them back on track. And you know, I can't let this disrupt the day. And and I'm also thinking of, you know, as I'm teaching and having some.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. Yeah.

Pete Springer

Break time. I'm like, how, what am I gonna do in this situation? And so anyway, I finished the day out and. And the kids leave and they haven't been asking about him all day, so that so that part works, even though it's, you know, I know. And sure enough, I lift up the sheet and confirm.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

Not living. And so I'm. So I I'm thinking what do I do? Well, I'm going to call the counselor and see if she has some advice. And I had a great. We had a great counselor that year and she says Ohh, I've got the perfect. The perfect book. It's regarding the death of a pet and if you have to, you know, if you have to put a pet down, just different scenarios. And I said thank you. This sounds great. So she's and I, you know, do you have any other suggestions? Well, she's, why don't you just kind of feel it out? And well, do I talk to them about this? What do you think? Well, you know, you just gotta have to get a feel for it. And of course, it wasn't fair to, like, just put her on the spot. Either anyway, so it kind of.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Pete Springer

Make the this plan for the next day. OK? The the beginning of the day. I'm gonna tell him. Yeah, it's it's. I have to tell him the truth. That the rat is is has passed. And then I was gonna go into a reading the story. Well, that. Night, the night that the rat had passed away, it just happened to be a. Acquire performance at our local junior college that some of the kids were going to sing in this it was around Christmas time and I'm I I like to go to things like that and and the kids see you out of context and that means so much to them.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

My teacher cared about me enough to come so I so I get there a few minutes early.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Pete Springer

And and then and here leads into my faux paw here. So I I go backstage and I. Yeah, I really should have been thinking about that this would happen. But I I I thought their their minds are going to be on this performance they're excited to sing for their parents. And one of the. Little girls in my class, you know, comes up to me and I'm hugging them and. And, well, well, what happened to the rat? She says. And. And so. And in retrospect, I should have just kept my white lie going. But yeah, I

decided to choose that moment, to be honest. Ohh, it's I don't think he's gonna make it. And which was the just. Yeah. Not not the right thing to say. Hey, well, she gets weepy right immediately, and I realize, Oh my gosh, what did you do? So I it's it's about 5 or 10 minutes before their performance and I'm thinking ohh she's, you know, I know she's upset now, but.

Wynne Leon

Hmm.

Pete Springer

After a few minutes he's he seals shake it off. Well, sure enough there, the, the they pull the curtains off. I'm sitting back in the audience and there's probably 50 kids in this choir standing on the rafters.

Vicki Atkinson

She'll shake it off. Yeah, yeah.

Pete Springer

You know, they're singing these joyous, joyous songs and just belting it out. And there's one little girl, as you can imagine, who's who's in still in tears. But the poor thing is just she's still trying to sing.

Wynne Leon

No.

Pete Springer

And she's crying. And I mean, I just feel like a complete schmuck and. Course no one else in the audience knows what's going on. I'm sure her parents were mortified. What's going on? Or maybe, you know, maybe this little girl's gotta go to the bathroom or something and she's upset. Who knows? I just felt so, so bad about it. Well, anyway, I I did get a chance to.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Pete Springer

Talked to the parents afterwards and I explained the whole thing and they were very cool. But the following morning, OK, it's it's D-Day here. So the kids come in and I explain the situation and I.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Pete Springer

So I you know, I've got this story I want to read to you can I can I share that with you? And they were all they wanted. They wanted to hear the story and they were sad. But it was, you know, it was just kind of somber. And so I read the story and then and I don't. I wish I remembered. That the book.

Was called, but I don't. But anyway it was very tastefully done and very. You know it it left in a it like I'm in a pretty good place. And so then I'm like, OK, well now what you know you don't just like. OK, now back to that.

Vicki Atkinson

Right, right.

Pete Springer

So I I I I. I you just kind of have to use. Your judgment and. In situations like this, so I I thought to myself well. Well. Maybe we should have some kind of like a downtime here and I suggested what? What do you guys think? Would you like to draw some pictures and or write about, you know, your memories of the rat? Ohh yeah. They really like that idea. So I I I put on some music and.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

And they're drawing and I'm drawn. Flying and and everybody seems pretty content, they the atmosphere is really super quiet, but no one's super upset and I'm feeling like, oh, this is this is OK. I think this is going pretty good. Anyway, one of the kids comes up and you know, the kids start finishing and and of course they want.

Wynne Leon

MHM.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Pete Springer

To show their drawings or whatever they're working on. To me, I'm what? Ohh, this is really nice and all. It's so that's so sweet. And so I'm telling him, you know, offering my comfort to them. And. And then another one gets the idea.

Wynne Leon

Hmm.

Pete Springer

What if we get the what if we get the the other rat out and and we present the cards to the to the other rat and so again you know the wheels are going. Hmm. How's this going? To play out and so.

Wynne Leon

Ohh my gosh.

Vicki Atkinson

Sympathy cards for a rat? I mean, it's just like the best right and yeah.

Pete Springer

Exactly. Exactly. So I think yes, I think this is the right thing. It feels right. So sure enough.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

You know, we bring the cage out and it's it was one of the sweetest moments of my career. These kid after kid gets up and they they they, you know, they hold their card open. If they wrote some words. I'm gonna miss you. You are the best rap ever and.

Wynne Leon

Hmm.

Pete Springer

You know, and so they're reading, sharing these in front of the other kids, which of course then encourages other kids to share. It's it was just part of their necessary grieving. And we get right, we get right near the end. And and this is perhaps as sweet as anything in the story.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Pete Springer

You know, we're just about wrapping it up and I have a couple of kids get come up to me and well, we made cards for you, Mr. Springer. And I'm like, oh, my gosh. And it's just it was like I am, you know, here I am so worried about them and how sweet. Is that that they they care to? Now you know they're thinking about me at the same time and it it. I mean, I like the rats. But, you know, I'm not, like, attached to them like my dogs or something like that. But, you know, it's one of those beautiful. It's the thought that counts. Moments. So.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Vicki Atkinson

But I always think you can't, but you can't give it. If you'd ever got it. So I I love that about the kids. They got all of that from you and they were able to give it back in kind. Sorry for talking over you.

Pete Springer

That's that. And when I heard your story about. No, I'm just. I'm talking too much here. But I I just.

Wynne Leon

Ohh no no.

Pete Springer

You know, when I read wind story, that's immediately what I thought because that's that is tricky ground for a parent and children and and and of course not not all children are wired the same. So there's not one solution fits all for for everybody.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. MHM.

Vicki Atkinson

Hey.

Wynne Leon

Right, right. Oh, that's such a dear story. That's so good and.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. It is and and I wanted to say to you one of the things I always love about listening to your stories about teaching Pete is that. Teaching is such an isolated thing sometimes where you just you don't have, you know a lot of opportunity to connect with anyone else and you have to kind of rely on your instinct and you do that so well or did that so well. And the storytelling about it is really impactful to hear.

Wynne Leon

Teach. MMM. That's true. Yeah, but you're a big believer in the power stories. And just even like.

Pete Springer

Yes. I am I I am. I mean, let me this is a perfect example, but.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Pete Springer

And I may have shared some of this with you before on, you know, podcast that I did with you before. I don't recall the old memory bank is not. What it used to be? But you know I. I I know that I I think I've told you that I read to seniors and I I miss reading the children. It's that it's ever tired. I think at the right time. I I it did this job for 31 years and I went out. I feel like at the right time. I still loved what I did. But I retired really for health reasons to start taking care of myself. Yeah. And but I miss being around kids and and particularly reading to two kids. And then that was all all around the time of the pandemic. And so I was, I did go back into schools and volunteer some, but.

Wynne Leon

MHM. Yeah.

Pete Springer

I was looking for. I missed that and and so I don't know. At one point I.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

My mom was at the point where. She was she had Alzheimer's, and I was I'd come in to visit her and it was getting harder and harder to connect with her. And so. But I would come in and I would tell her stories about my day. And she she always loved hearing about the kids and the funny things that happened at school and. I don't know. One day I just tried this one. I'm going to try something else. My mom was always a writer in terms of writing everything down, and she had journals. For everything and and so I bought one of her journals and I started reading from her journal to her and I truly was. You know, I like to say I'm full circle moment. Here I am reading reading to the person that used to read to me and you know most of it's just mundane things that are, like, not particularly stimulating.

Vicki Atkinson

So beautiful.

Pete Springer

But I think my idea is she was doing this to kind of like keep help her keep track of the events in her life. Today I went to the dentist, got a feeling, you know, those kind of things. But she was hanging on when I'd share that. I I could almost I I could feel a connection and and so that idea.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. Yeah.

Pete Springer

Stayed with me for. Yeah, yeah. After my mom passed. And I don't know, at some point I approached the. The owner of the assisted living, who I had actually taught two of her children years ago and my first my first and yeah there. Well, there's a lot of them running around.

Vicki Atkinson

Of course you did. Of course you did, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Pete Springer

Anyway, so it's like the it's like you're the Godfather or something. You're you got. Anyway. So I approached her and asked her about that. You know, what do you think about me coming in and reading to people? And so that idea was born and. And so, because I believe in the power of stories, everybody likes a story and it doesn't matter what age and and then of course that was tricky because I don't. I want to find something that's that's not condescending, but something they can follow. And of course.

Wynne Leon

MHM.

Pete Springer

You know you're dealing with people at very different cognitive abilities. But anyway, settled on on middle grade stories, the kind that I'm writing. I've kind. I've read a lot that I know, I know really well. And you know where the red Fern grows and all these these stories I've read the children and and sure enough, they love them. And but it's the.

Vicki Atkinson

Mm-hmm.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Pete Springer

The story of the way I like to say it, the stories are what bring us together. Other. But the real power is in the of human connection, because after I'm done reading, you know, sometimes something in the story will trigger a memory or, you know, maybe there's something about, let's say, pets. Well, have any of you ever had and can you tell me about your favorite pet and ohh yeah.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Pete Springer

Lots of times they that just leads to natural conversation. And and so and and you know and. And while they enjoy the stories, I I can feel the real pay off is the time afterwards when when we're talking and connecting and. It's just that. Feeling of somebody's here to listen to me and.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Pete Springer

You know? And so there's been a few times where I've gotten down to only two or three people coming and I think, well, this maybe this thing's kind of run its course and then. Something will happen a couple of new people will come and they're just they're so they're so engaged. They're so fun to talk to. So.

Vicki Atkinson

Well, and Keith, didn't you recently wrote about a situation where you'd forgotten your glasses and it was such a human moment because, you know, we all need that correction. Right. But you were sitting, you know, with your, your listeners ready to tell a story. And and I may be getting this a little wrong, but you all went up the book and had one of those.

Pete Springer

So that's that.

Vicki Atkinson

Kind of ohh **** moments where you knew you weren't gonna be able to, like, flub your way through it.

Pete Springer

Oh yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

But I love that story, because you were so human. And didn't you get a pair of borrowed like fancy cat eye glasses from one of the ladies to wear?

Pete Springer

Yeah. Right. Yes, exactly. So I opened the, there's my glasses case. I go nowhere without without my glasses, which fortunately are on my head right now. But I open my I'm sitting down, I'm ready to start reading. I open my case and my and my case is empty. And I'm like, Oh my God, no. And so I start to thinking.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Yeah. No, no, no.

Pete Springer

Well, I'm going to tell him I'm sorry. I'm. Not going to be able to read to. Because I I cannot read without my glasses and so but ohh you know? Ohh you know they're they're kind of. They're disappointed. Clearly. Yeah. Well, I'm going to try. So I get my lookout and I'm. I mean it it is so choppy.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Turn it. Yeah, right.

Pete Springer

It sounds like I'm a beginning reader and Bob went through the. Grocery, you know. And I was trying so hard, but it was. It was so pitiful. But they were just so encouraging. Ohh, it's OK. You keep going and. And so, right. Right around then. One of the workers walks in.

Vicki Atkinson

But you were trying, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Pete Springer

You know I'm there to supposedly reading to them, and I mean you can't. Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

It's.

Pete Springer

Really funny. And so I'm she. I wanted to explain to her. I really do know how to read. Go without missing.

Vicki Atkinson

Maybe no.

Pete Springer

Without missing a beat, and she's probably around my age without missing a beat, she says. What, you wanna borrow my glasses? As Vicky said, they're the they're the kind of the old fashioned cat style glasses.

Vicki Atkinson

Here, put night on right.

Pete Springer

And I put them on and darn if I can't read you. Know and I know, I know.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Pete Springer

I look completely ridiculous. I just. But there's no, you know, I mean, what am I? Gonna do you know?

Wynne Leon

Yeah, yeah.

Pete Springer

I'm not gonna ask for. Hey, take me. Take a picture of me so I can blog about this later, you know?

Wynne Leon

OK.

Vicki Atkinson

Right. Great.

Pete Springer

But, but you know, they're not. They're the rest of the people are just the my listeners are just happy. They couldn't care less what I look like, even though and and as I say, you know, I'm 65. I don't my trying to impress my age about the way I look. So I just went with it.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Pete Springer

And and it was funny.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

So good, so good.

Wynne Leon

I love that because it's it's a humorous story that connects us, you know, I mean it it it we don't even have to be all these stories. They don't have to be serious or big or deep or anything. It's just connecting to the.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, yeah. And that combination that is so quintessential. With humor and humility together. Yeah. Whoa. So good, right?

Pete Springer

Yeah, I I think so. I think you know, and I just think. The kind of humor I find funniest is human nature. The things that happen to us because because we can all relate. I mean, I here, I, here I am. You know, I'm going to be a grandfather for the first time on Friday. And of course, what's flooding my mind.

Vicki Atkinson

Yay.

Pete Springer

But all of those early. Parent stories when you're just, you know you're you're thinking you're thinking to yourself as a parent boy. I'm sure glad nobody's somebody's not filming clueless.

Wynne Leon

Hmm. Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

It's yeah.

Pete Springer

And so, yeah, so I'm I've been writing some of those things down just to share with my son and and daughter-in-law because. You know you you figure things out and no one's perfect at this and still hear it at at at my age, I make mistakes. It's part of human nature. Right. And. And that's one of the things we can teach our kids right. When we when we mess up, how do we handle that kind of thing do you take.

Wynne Leon

OK.

Pete Springer

Accountability. Do you want do apologize? There's a right way and a wrong way not to make excuses, not to blame other people.

Wynne Leon

Hmm.

Pete Springer

So.

Vicki Atkinson

So good, so good. Planting those seeds for the future. And we know your grandson. Gun is going to be a lucky little dude. I hate to have you in his life.

Pete Springer

Yeah. I I'm so looking forward to not only my grandson, but seeing my son as a father and you know, we spent many a quality hour reading together. And I know he's gonna be the same the same way with his son so.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Pete Springer

Jack, Jack. Jack Willis. Springer is should be arriving Friday, so we're we're super excited.

Wynne Leon

Ohh good.

Vicki Atkinson

Ohh what a name. What a name? Well and and you promo. Photos. So we'll be that'll be so exciting.

Pete Springer

Ohh yes, yes I I I I said I will be that that person that's stopping strangers on the street and saying hey, have you seen my grandson? So.

Wynne Leon

Included in in this conversation that you've been working on some sort of middle year, not story.

Pete Springer

Yeah. Yeah. So I'm I'm kind of all over the map. In retirement, one of the I I never really did had done much writing, even though I enjoyed writing in high school and in the back of my mind when I taught, I thought ohh, I really want to give this a shot someday. Well, that some days here. So I found a. I found a writing group and and there's five people and four of them are retired. So. It's easy to get together and and we gather each week once a week and and. And so you know, you get. Not only am I invested in my in my stories, but I get invested in theirs too. And it's fun. You know, it's that whole community thing. You're you're helping each other, which reinforces the that good spirit. And so yeah. So I have one. That I'm I've started to query and I know the the odds of getting published. I'm a realist. I know it's slim to none, but I'm I'm also like, well, it doesn't hurt to try and so I'm and then I I've.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Pete Springer

You know the advice I've heard is. Yeah. How slow the the whole process is. So just keep writing. Is that what everyone says? And I'm I'm. I'm enjoying what I'm doing and I'm and I'm getting better at it. I'm not. I'm I'm no Shakespeare that's for sure. But you know it's. I I don't.

Wynne Leon

Ohh.

Pete Springer

One thing I do well is I don't compare myself to other writers. I just. I just look at where I was and where I am now and I can see my improvement in that, that that provides encouragement. So I'm I'm in the, I don't know, I'm maybe 1/4 of the way through another story. And then. My just wants a, a little bit of a diversion. I've I've decided that I, you know, like the rat story. I've got quite a few of those anecdotes. And so I've been work kind of working on that and I don't know, I haven't decided whether I'm going to try to get that published or whether it's just something I'll share with my family.

Wynne Leon

mm-hmm

Pete Springer

Need but anyway, lots of irons in the fire blogging and keeps me busy so. And lots of.

Vicki Atkinson

But Pete, you're so you're skipping right over your book that I so appreciate it. Don't call me Mom so I could see, you know, your stories. Tales from the classroom being a sequel to. Don't call me mom, but for educators and for parents.

Pete Springer

Oh, thank you.

Vicki Atkinson

That is a beautiful. Beautiful book. You know, it's like a love story, you know, to the kids that mattered so much. And I know for those that you mentored along the way, you know, showcasing those relationships. So you sell yourself short, my friend. That is one beautiful book that you have already written.

Pete Springer

Yes. Yeah. No, that that was that was never part of the part of the plan. You know that just kind of after I retired. I realized, you know, you got a lot that you want to say and and in the beginning was just kind of journaling this kind of a what I call my debriefing period and I'm writing things down about my career and, you know, things that I'd like to see improve in education, but mostly just.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm. Yes.

Pete Springer

Happy stories, people I worked with inspiring people I worked with inspiring students, students that had every reason to fail in their life and somehow rose above.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

You know, so. And I thought, well, you know, after I started writing, she maybe there's a market for this out there. Not that I was ever thinking I was gonna make money off it and that's that's not why I did this. But I did. I had this desire to to pay back a profession that had been so.

Wynne Leon

Beautiful.

Pete Springer

Dear to me, that was that was always my motivation and so. And yeah, so and.

Vicki Atkinson

It's a beautiful book.

Pete Springer

It makes me feel good that I've contributed something and and I I have had. I was a what they call a master teacher, which is when you take student teachers kids from school that are are doing their practice teaching I I had four of those during my career and.

Wynne Leon

MHM. Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

And so there I I do know that some. Teachers have found value value in my book, and so they've given it to their their student teachers and I guess it's geared more towards young teachers. But even experienced teachers have told me that they they found things of use but and and and parents too because.

Wynne Leon

Hmm.

Pete Springer

Like I have chapters about discipline. You know something we all deal with. There's a right and wrong way to discipline. You know, kids, kids are learning all the time. And and sometimes we get it right and sometimes we don't. But that's part of being a human.

Vicki Atkinson

Right. Hmm.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. That's right. Well, you are a storyteller at heart. You are. And we're so grateful for you to coming on and talking to us about telling us your stories.

Pete Springer

Yes. Well, you, you guys, you know you have a natural gift yourself of putting people at ease. I mean, this is only the second time I've actually talked to you in person about it. You can just see you with. I have seen quite a few of your podcast.

Wynne Leon

Hmm.

Pete Springer

And and you know your natural way. You're just welcoming. And gosh, I really like what you're doing. And you know it in in your way. You're helping people connect because the stories that people come on and share, then someone else listening says, yeah, that.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Pete Springer

Reminds me which is how this this even happened today.

Wynne Leon

I know it's so good those connections that the human moments, as you said so.

Vicki Atkinson

Right. Yeah. Wow. Well, thank you. Thank you both. This was fun.

Wynne Leon

Thank you for listening. Our music is composed for sharing the heart of the matter by the exclusively talented duo of Jack Canfora and Rob Koenig for show notes and more great inspiration, please visit our site at sharingtheheartofthematter.com.