

Wynne Leon (00:02)

Welcome to the Sharing the Heart of the Matter podcast. Join us as we celebrate the brilliance of authors, storytellers, and creators.

I'm Wynne Leon and in this inspiring episode, Vicki Atkinson and I are talking with author Bob Conlon. Bob has written a fantastic book, Celtic Knot, featuring the story of his grandfather, Tim Conlon. With Chicago as the backdrop, we get to follow Tim's life after he was orphaned at age eight. Tim's pluck, smarts, and ingenuity will hook and amaze you as you follow along with his progress.

We asked Bob about how he researched this book that brings so many historical events like the Chicago fire and Eastland boat disaster to light. Bob tells us how his career as a lawyer helped him to write this book. We get such an incredible sense of family and community in Celtic Knot and talk with Bob about how important that was to his Irish immigrant family and the community overall.

You will love this book for its roots in history, the ingenuity of the main character, and the way Bob has paid homage to family, love, and a life well lived. Join us for a fascinating episode featuring a fantastic author writing about family, history, and secrets. We know you'll love it.

Vicki Atkinson (01:50)

Hello, Bob Conlon.

Bob Conlon (01:53)

Good morning. How are you Victoria? Good to see you.

Vicki Atkinson (01:57)

We're

good. Wynne and I are so excited. We've had this scheduled for a few weeks, but we're so excited to talk to you about your brand new book, Celtic Knot. It is beautiful in so many ways. In our pregame, we've been talking about what a page-turner it is. Before we jump into all of that, we would love to know from your

brilliant author's perspective. Tell us about the story about writing this book because it's largely about your grandfather's life, but there's so many other elements. So how would you describe it?

Bob Conlon (02:35)

Wow, thank you for your kind comments and also good morning, Wynne. And yeah, no, it all started, it's been a lifetime of stories. The Conlons come from a great line of storytellers. You know, I just remember as a little boy, we would have big family gatherings on Sundays typically with aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents.

Siblings, first cousins, you know, just a massive group and you know, the drinks would be pouring that for me because I was a youngster. And, you know, what was lovely about it, there were just, you know, artists,

singers, dancers, it was just alive and people would love to perform and the younger kids and do little dances and whatnot. And then there come the time, Grandpa, tell us a story. And he was a quiet man.

not a braggart at all and he hated people who did brag. But if you got him going, he could talk and he could talk and talk and talk and talk. So I heard all this wealth of just wonderful, lovely stories. And his story began, if I could just give you a little bit of a reference here. He was born in 1877 and sadly became an orphan at the age of eight in 1885. And Chicago,

Vicki Atkinson (03:51)  
in Chicago.

Bob Conlon (03:53)

Boy, boy, what a town that was. It was in a transition ~ post Chicago fire and during the great rebuild to ultimately make it one of the greatest cities in the world. And it was a wide open town. It was a dangerous town. And he, again, just woke up one day and was stuck in an orphanage in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago.

I changed the name to protect a really nice orphanage that is still here today. I didn't feel like I needed to, to roll that out from an old, old story, but, ~ he wasn't an orphanage and there was an ill-intending priest. Was part of that orphanage. And at the age of eight, he had the, the smarts and the guts to, to escape with one of his buddies. And he returned to the city of Chicago, the only town he knew and loved.

Vicki Atkinson (04:33)  
that that

Bob Conlon (04:46)

and left all his family and friends. And, ~ he, he lived on the rough and tumble streets of Chicago in 1885. And what that, what that man went through to survive on a daily basis, I don't know that we'll ever know, but I tried to capture all that. And then as time went on and he survived and grew up, his life intersected with so many important, historical events, which

~ I incorporated into the story, but, back to your question, Victoria, I, this wonderful story needed to be told and age wise, I statistically will be the last person alive who actually met him. yeah. So.

Wynne Leon (05:25)

mean, that's a burden for you to carry, not to put that on you, but I'm so glad that you've written what you have because it was kind of your obligation,

Bob Conlon (05:34)

I sure felt it was. did. felt and it's interesting, Victoria, that I just immersed myself in his life for better part of a year, reading and researching and writing it. And I, when it was over, the writing part,

and then we went to the business end and got it published, but I missed them. missed.

talking to him, you know, it felt like to not get too out there, but I felt like the ghosts were, you know, talking to me. And I really got close, probably closer than I ever have to the family. anyways, so that was the motivation and really wanted to, I hope people who read that are inspired to do the same. And you don't have to write a book, but record it.

Um, you know, I got a lot of stories from my mother who passed away a year and some change ago at the age of 93. And, uh, she just had, she, she loved and had a great relationship with her in-laws and it was just a wealth of information. And thankfully I was blessed to be able to, you know, my weekly trip out to the, uh, retirement home out in Algonquin uh, we would sit and talk and.

Then, you know, we'd spend 15, 20 minutes talking about my grandfather, her father, and it was great to record all that. And boy, at the end of the day, reflecting on it, and I don't know that I appreciated it when I started to embark on this ladies was the debt of gratitude. I think all of us owe to our ancestors and the sacrifice and resilience they undertook.

to make a better life for themselves and their family.

Wynne Leon (07:17)

It's amazing. Tim only had a second grade education. mean, and his self learning his I mean, resilience, as you just said there, it's just so inspiring.

Bob Conlon (07:30)

Right. Well, thank you. Yeah, I, I, I agree. And, you know, he was blessed with, high intelligence, ~ and, and, again, reflecting one of the burning questions I had was how the heck did he make it through, you know, all this, and if you forget, you know, I have a seven year old granddaughter, you know, an eight year old, you think.

Wow, how did he do it? And I think it was, to answer that, think it was his, is what you're alluding to, when he was just blessed with a high IQ. I think his chops really got him through a lot.

Wynne Leon (08:08)

street smarts and yeah you know then he did all the reading and

Bob Conlon (08:13)

Yeah, he kept up. He really did keep up. And that was an interesting, know, after the fire, the Chicago Public Library, was was formed. really after the fire, the the the not only the other parts of the country, but other nations were so supportive. And through all these.

Volumes and volumes of books and they were the guys in Chicago like what the heck do we do with this and they created the Chicago Public Library Lucky for him and he did keep up but the other part just beyond street

smarts that he got just being a street, know a Chicago kid running around and that was fun to write that part to just before he was in the orphanage he and his gang And I don't mean it in a gang gang way, but just a group of friends

And ~ so I did, I do think he got a little bit of street smarts, that might, whether that's nature or nurture, who knows. But I also think he was a tough ombre. He was, he just, you know, not everybody's like that. He just rolled with the punches every day of his life. And when he had setbacks and lost loved ones, his wife of decades and decades and his children that passed before him.

He never really cried in public. He just moved on and that's just how he was wired. And I think that helped him go too.

Wynne Leon (09:39)

What's so, I think, remarkable, I think, for Wynne and I both, and I love that you said that you kind of had this vacant spot in your heart when you stopped researching him, that he became more distant because you'd pulled him close. And then there was that separation. But there were so many things in the book, Bob, where Tim's personality came through. And it seemed to me as I was reading that he was

he just had a really good internal compass about where to put his time and energy. And he didn't waste time on things that he somehow knew weren't going to benefit him or the people that he loved. And he was an inventor and like Wynne said, he was just very wise about the world. But then he also had this, and I'm curious about your thoughts about his

like soft and mushy exterior as a poet, because some of the things that you included in the book, you know, there's one, you know, and it's such a story about how your, you know, grandma ended up in California, but, you know, writing to her then, and then, you know, when she passed away, you know, the poetry and letters, but he had this like super soft exterior, but it seemed like he was very judicious about how and when and where he shared that.

Bob Conlon (11:00)

No, that's really quite insightful for you to pick up on that from reading the book. I really appreciate that. And yes, I appreciate those nice thoughts as well. Yeah, that was, you know, I had heard and I heard him read some of his poems by memory.

That was another thing he was blessed with that photo. my gosh. He just he could rattle off some of it because a couple of those poems go out a little bit. they're beautiful. You know, I would say to be as objective as I can be. I think the poems were really good and amazing when you have the backstory. They weren't great. They weren't, you know, Robert Frost, but they were.

They were wonderful, know, plain speak. anyways, I had heard about it. And then my cousin who is in her 80s who knew him quite well, her name is Sue Lawrence, Sue Rogers. And she was the archivist for the family, thank goodness.

Vicki Atkinson (12:04)  
She gave.

Bob Conlon (12:05)  
And she said, you know, he, I got all those poems that I almost fell out of my chair. so I this box of, know, and read through it and it was great. It helped me navigate because some of them were dated. Some of them weren't, but it helped me with the chronology and helped me get into his head of what he was thinking. For example, the dated, it was actually dated the poem that he wrote after the Iroquois theater about being mad at politicians and what scumbags crooked politicians are.

You know, talk about, you know.

I guess. it was, my head exploded. I go, oh my God, that's exactly what he's talking about, you know? And so it was fun to be able to, you know, mine that and then intersperse it. And just an interesting aside, I think, before I even, I was still working and then, you know, it was just a thought about writing the book. My oldest son was married.

Whatever, I'm terrible at that. Maybe five, six, six or seven years ago. And one of the poems, because my sister was the officiant, there's a beautiful wedding out in, know, Deer Valley, Utah, but an outdoor. So just a beautiful setting. My sister read a poem about the California poem when they were separated. And that part, think the love and how he missed her.

He picked up her picture and he kept it in her pocket. The whole thing is in the book. But my son, who was a lawyer working in Chicago at the time, it wasn't ideal, my daughter-in-law was in California in medical school. So it was, or actually in her residency. And so they were apart and would see each other and it was really challenging, but it was just so.

Wow, you know, that's exactly what he was living through at the time. Sorry for the detour there on a very personal story, but it maybe got my wheels spinning a little bit like, wow, there is something there.

Wynne Leon (14:08)  
Yeah,

well, and imagine what Tim is feeling, right? Taking that and bringing him into the present, you know, with family that he will never meet. But funny how circumstances in life repeat, right? Right.

Bob Conlon (14:21)  
I totally agree. If you don't mind, a perfect time to talk about what the Celtic knot means, I think, to your point. That's the symbol on the book. lot of people, Victoria and Wynne yeah, there you go. You've probably seen that, would be my guess. A lot of people are like, yeah, I know that. ~ A lot of people know it as the Trinity knot.

Vicki Atkinson (14:43)  
Hey

Bob Conlon (14:46)

The ancient Celts called it the triquetra. Um, and I researched the heck out of that thing and that was found in caves, 2000 BC. I mean, it's been around forever. And then St. Patrick being the clever guy that he was when he was on his mission to convert people to Christianity. And, uh, I think it four, 400s, 500s. He wanted to use a symbol that these people would be familiar with. So they could say, Oh, okay. And of course he.

The three prongs are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And the ancient Celts, which not many people know, but there you go. what that is, it's a continuous symbol, which is really important. And they viewed it as the three phases of every being's life, whether it was a deer in the woods or a person or a rabbit.

There's birth, there's life and spiritual afterlife and the big circle is everything and everyone is connected and I just think that's beautiful and that's really what the story is about and you know, I then you know at one point in my life I read quite a bit about the Zen religion, you know, I'm a proud Roman Catholic and

and a believer and all that. But I did read quite about Zen and there's some beautiful writings there. And it's just so interesting. You know, I have the whole analogy about waves in the ocean and how some waves are big and dramatic and some you barely detect. they all are individual and unique in size and scope and how dramatic they are. And they have a beginning and an end.

And when they end, don't disappear. They go back into the water and reconnect with all the water molecules and form another wave. And so that's what Zen believes. And I'm thinking, wow, that's certainly what the ancient Celts were, I think, trying to say. Maybe not as beautifully as that. It's just kind of interesting. And to your point, we are all connected. And as generations move on, it's nice to remember where you all came from, right?

Wynne Leon (16:51)

And we just did a podcast with someone recently, Danny Miller, who wrote the book, which was The Way of the Wave, about going with the flow, which is to talk about everything being connected.

Bob Conlon (17:02)

I would love to read that and I hope I did. Yeah, my dissertation there on Zen. Somewhat accurately.

Wynne Leon (17:10)

No, it was perfect and it fits, know, with everything that you wrote because you were on a mission to make sure you were honoring all of that, but also keeping so many things alive.

Bob Conlon (17:22)

Yeah,

that's nice to hear. Thank you.

Wynne Leon (17:25)

I

love the wisdom that Tim uses, especially as he goes into Little Cheyenne. ~ Things that he got from his dad and a few of them. Never trust anyone you meet after midnight. Right? Never play with cards with a guy named Doc. Never eat at a place called Ma's

Bob Conlon (17:40)

Isn't that hilarious? Yes.

Those were the three big rules.

Wynne Leon (17:45)

And this one, look for the man the world calls wise and hold on to him with a grip of steel. yeah. ~ And it seems like what you've done in this book is do that. You've held on to Tim's wisdom and.

Bob Conlon (17:53)

Isn't that something?

I sure hope so. Thank you for saying that and thank you for lifting those. ~ Yeah, those are great. They're funny, but there's a kid, know, ever eaten a place called Ma's How he came up with that, I don't know, but I gotta tell you that bit about not trusting anybody you meet after midnight, I could have used that wisdom a few times.

Wynne Leon (18:14)

Yeah.

think

so. And we love when we're reading something and they're heavy knots, right? Smiles and heavy knots. You're like, oh yeah.

Bob Conlon (18:33)

Yeah, he had so many of those and some that I really couldn't say. They're a little bit more than PG, so we'll just leave it ~

Wynne Leon (18:43)

Yes.

my goodness. Well, I wanted to touch on not just the enriching of family, but community. You said something in an interview recently with your publisher, Rick Kaempfer at Eckhartz Press. You said, Conlons grew up with hundreds of neighbors living on top of each other in Chicago.

with rows of modest homes situated five feet on the other side. Everyone knew everyone else. If a neighbor saw someone's children in trouble, they drop everything and help them. The neighborhood gave everyone a sense that they were part of something larger than themselves. And then you go

on to say that fully embracing America, but never forgetting Irish roots in your family's case. And right now there seems to be such a...

a nostalgic and necessary yearning for community and safety and all of that. So when we lift your book up, Bob, to be an example of you can do that, you can have that agency, you can do that too, is that a little overwhelming for you because you were just writing about the Conlons It is an important message right now.

Bob Conlon (19:52)  
It

really is and and I tell you it's really an important message and near and dear to my heart and I wish I really wish we could get back there and and I know we can't right ~ you know I I it starts with I'm sure you're all familiar with Maya Angelo and her

Vicki Atkinson (20:14)  
what is it called?

Bob Conlon (20:15)  
the human family, I noted this down. And in the poem, she says, we are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike. And that ties into the Celtic knot. We're all connected. We really are. And we all come from immigrants. nobody's family other than, well, even the Native American Indians. We all came from somewhere.

And, and, know, with immigration, again, we talked about crooked politicians, can't pick up a newspaper without getting overwhelmed with, with people, very emotional on all sides, talking about issues presented with immigrants. And, I think indisputably, it made our country what it is today. And it started with.

And I tried to do it justice, Victoria, that you hit the perfect part from the book to introduce this subject, which is when my ancestors left from Ireland, and you can fill in the blank, when my ancestors left from somewhere in South America or Central America or anywhere in Europe, now the African Americans, they didn't come here.

on their own volition, they got here. And then once we're all here, they missed their, can you just think about, you know, upping and leaving from, you know, Wynne's in the beautiful town of Seattle, just getting up and leaving in a pretty quick fashion. And not that you had a choice and everybody you knew and everybody you loved.

family and friends, you just get up with your core family and leave and jump on a boat and go to a place you've never been before. And by the way, all you could bring is one steamer trunk of chattels and things you wanted to bring along. That is just astonishing to me. And so what people did, and I'm probably stating the obvious here, but they wanted to hang on. They wanted a lifeline to their...

to their country they miss so much. And so that's why they would, you know, embrace the culture, keep the culture alive through songs and art



and stories and heritage and live with people that shared that because they wanted to, okay, we're not in Ireland, we're in the West side of Chicago. And that's great. And the beauty of it was the people, instead of missing their home that they

abruptly left. They're part of something that's certainly bigger than them and they wanted to make not only their family proud but their neighborhood proud. And this isn't just you know all the good old days. Look the good old days had all sorts as we're talking about they had huge problems but that was a fact. If you knew if your kid was out doing something stupid and the neighbor saw it

They grab them by the nape of the neck and say, don't do that. And they may or may not tell your parents, but they would just, they would regulate. But on the other hand, if one of the kids, you know, got in a play or was a good athlete or got elected to something, they would, they would be as proud as if it was, was them or their family. And so, ~ you know, we, we became a great country because all of the wonderful qualities and cultures.

Wynne Leon (23:18)  
Yeah.

Bob Conlon (23:44)  
that came from literally all around the world are all here today. And it would be wonderful if we could get back to that, not pockets and ghettos of,

Vicki Atkinson (23:53)  
All

Irish and we only deal with the Irish and the Italians and the...

Bob Conlon (23:57)  
Whoever such, but make it more of a national community. Look, we have such a horrible state of affairs, so divisive. And I really believe not, and I'm not getting political, but to your point, I think if you have the top 20 issues and you draw a bell curve,

I would say that 80 % of the people are basically on the same page on 80 % of the issues. And then you got the outliers here and the outliers there. And look, the outliers, we're, we're in a country, which is great. You could be an outlier and I respect both opinions as opposed to becoming tribal. it's like, if you're here, we hate you and vice versa. that's, all don't like it, but we have it in us. I still have faith in our, in our.

in our country and our community that we will get back there. Because we're all part of something that's fantastic and we really, I hope, carry down that path.

Wynne Leon (24:55)  
But I think what you've written invites us to reflect on our, for so many of us, our immigrant ancestor stories and that peaceful coexistence is

possible. Like you said, in those rough and tumble communities, life wasn't perfect. No. But food and family and safety and shelter, all of the immigrants had common bonds and concerns.

I think so much of what you've written, you also do such a great job, Bob. I swear you were like a historian in another life. I'm not sure how many lives you've lived. When you bring, we were talking in the pregame about some of the historical events, but you do such a good job in the book, putting the reader in the time and place when things weren't perfect, horrible things happened, but those resilience threads.

How did you do all of that? Because you're still telling the story of the Conlons but within a backdrop of things that were real and true and obviously beautifully researched. That's a lot of work.

Bob Conlon (26:02)

Wow, thank you. I wanted to do it and do it right, so I did spend, and my personality is just, I used to drive my partners nuts and pay attention to details, but it really, I mean, it stems from being a lawyer and...

Yes, I was in civil litigation, is kind of an oxymoron. Yeah. was in commercial litigation where, you know, companies fighting one another over money, but, you would have incredibly sometimes complex set of facts and you, know, the one side would take this vision of what happened and the other side would take another. And so it was always good to try to.

start with, okay, clean slate, what the heck happened? And it would take a lot of time looking through documents, talking to people and researching, et cetera. And then coming up with the story and then trying to put your client's position within that story. And, you know, took my job and my profession quite seriously. You can't make stuff up. You get in big trouble.

~ You know, we always would I would always tell the lawyers coveted You know facts are facts. We don't bury facts. We deal with the fact and try to make the best argument with that fact But you know you can you can have really dire consequences for yourself professionally and for the client if you make stuff up so I was always able to research, know legal research I would be horrible at it right now the young the young folks with

Technology can do it way better than me. But, you know, at a time when, when I was growing up through the profession, we really rolled up our sleeves and dug in there. And so that part was, you know, really enjoyable for me and really fun. um, and I found myself, um, again, just like I tried to describe, um, you'd look at, uh, you know, who, for example, the Eastland disaster, how did that happen? Well,

You know, there's a whole host of things. at this time now have a personal view of what the heck happened, but there's a lot of theories of why it happened, how it happened.

Wynne Leon (28:23)

our listeners and viewers about the Eastland disaster for those who haven't read yet. ~

Bob Conlon (28:28)

Yeah,

absolutely. It was a horrible, horrible event. And my grandfather, the connection to the story was he worked at Western Electric. Actually, he was in a research and development area. As I think when mentioned, or you did, Victoria, he had 22 patents with a second grade education. You know, just wow, I don't I don't think that happens anymore in this world. that kind of great.

Vicki Atkinson (28:45)

that ~

Bob Conlon (28:54)

But anyways, they had the yearly annual picnic from the Hawthorne works, which used to be in Cicero, west of the city. when Cicero is, you know, very blue collar town at the time, mostly Polish, but Germans and also, you know,

but mostly Polish and Germans. they had this Hawthorne Works with 20,000 people working there, three shifts, just massive. And it's all gone now. But they were the manufacturing arm of AT &T Bell companies. I don't know if they actually made telephones, believe it or not, but all the parts and the pieces. anyways, my grandfather finally decided to go. And one of five boats,

would take the year that it happened, if I didn't mention it already, July 24th, 1915. So the 110th anniversary of that awful event is right around the corner. But they were taking the people from the Chicago River by the Clark Street Bridge. They get towed out into Lake Michigan. And as the crow flies, go 38 miles to Michigan City, Indiana and have a lovely day with.

music and dancing and picnicking and events for the kids and so on and so forth and then come back. And that was a great, it was just for these people, they loved it and it got bigger and bigger every year. I think this was the fifth or sixth annual one and first, know, a couple hundred, then a couple thousand, then this time 7,000 people. So they had five boats and Eastland was one of them. And I go into painstaking deal.

detail, um, but at the, cut to the end of it, um, there were over 2,500 people on the boat, which was capacity. And it was in 20 feet of water and. Chicago river tethered to the more by the wharf, 20 feet away from the wharf. It tipped over and 844 people died. And, uh, just, you know,

Vicki Atkinson (30:54)

And.

Bob Conlon (31:09)

Just so sad on so many levels.

Wynne Leon (31:12)

And you compare in that, as you go through that, how many people died versus other disasters.

Bob Conlon (31:18)

Yeah, exactly. No, that, that. It really is when, um, just looking at my notes here, the Titanic, which happened, um, just a few years before, um, 829 passengers died. Now they had a massive crew of 694 who were people too, but I'm just saying as far as passengers are concerned, actually more people, more passengers died on the,

Wynne Leon (31:20)

significant.

Bob Conlon (31:46)

Eastland and then the other biggie was the Lusitania which happened Ten weeks before the Eastland we all know about the Lusitania was torpedoed in the Atlantic and 785 passengers died and Ted Wachholz who is just a wonderful man and he he is the head of the Eastland disaster historical society and

He provided a wealth of info, he and his website tremendous wealth of information for me and the book. His view is why nobody really knows about it and it's sad. It was because it was a bunch of blue collar people, nobody rich and famous.

Vicki Atkinson (32:11)

provided in

Wynne Leon (32:27)

No Vanderbilts.

Bob Conlon (32:29)

Right

exactly exactly no unsinkable Molly Brown or whatever. Yeah, whatever. Maybe I missed that babe, but uh Yeah, so that that part really struck and it's like wow now when it happened There were so, you know, there's a great outpouring from all around the world really but they're quickly forgot and and it was

Wynne Leon (32:52)

Not anymore.

Not anymore.

Vicki Atkinson (32:54)

Well,

that's why I'm trying to bring a-

Bob Conlon (32:55)

And

really one of the reasons why it was so top-heavy and just, you know, flipped over was because of the Titanic. There was, you know, lifeboats for all law passed by Woodrow Wilson that you had to have a lifeboat to accommodate 75 % of the people on the boat. you know, they retrofit it to comply with the law.

Nobody used, mean, there was, the boats were worthless and, they were real heavy and, ~ it didn't make sense. It was already unstable boat made it really unstable. And so just, yeah.

Wynne Leon (33:36)

ridiculous, you know, irony there. Yeah. Yeah, just awful. But one of the things that that, you know, we so love about your book is everything that you just described. Right. And digging deep, you know, because history is exciting and history is important. But you also said that.

Vicki Atkinson (33:40)

Isn't it? Yeah.

Wynne Leon (33:57)

In more than a few places, you sprinkled in some of your own imagination in order to tell this story. So your book is so unique in that way. know, when and I love it because you're balancing those two things, you know, a historical peak at things that were happening. But in order to tell this the story, you know, of the Conlons you allowed a little bit of that like Irish magic in.

Bob Conlon (34:19)

That's nice to say thank you. Yes, for sure. What I tried to do, you know, it's there's a lot of gaps from my research and there's a lot of gaps from the investigation, if you will, of ~

Vicki Atkinson (34:31)

of

looking at my grandfather's.

Bob Conlon (34:34)

poetry and letters to his wife and family and friends and the stories and then Interviewing everybody alive who knew him and his memory there are some gaps, you know, I wasn't there and So what I tried to do instead of just completely make up stuff completely out of nowhere I tried to use thing. I tried to keep it intellectually honest and

Use what I did know, plus what I knew about him and the characters to make sense to connect the dots. And so, and do it in a way that is interesting. So I think that's what I was referencing there.

Vicki Atkinson (35:04)

Yeah

Wynne Leon (35:12)

But it's so good because I think, you know, we know that you will inspire other people, you know, to dig deep and try to find what they can, but

then consider who they're researching and the time and the place and their lives and connect things where you can in ways that are logical. So it's a little poetic license. Tim would be pleased. But you're doing justice and honoring, you know, your family.

Bob Conlon (35:38)

Thank you very much. mean, one story, and I didn't know how this would be received by the family, but it would, and fast forward, they love it. ~

Vicki Atkinson (35:48)

Thank

Wynne Leon (35:49)

Which is a huge concern for people that write things that are memoir-ish, right?

Bob Conlon (35:55)

and

in particular without giving away too much in the book but you know the ill-intending priest that was was very hot on his and his companion who he escaped with's trail and that's why they you know my grandfather was smart enough to try to go to a part of the city where no priests would be or cops you know were overwhelmed with other things so he

ran to the red light district and man man, I tell you to this day he talked about how a kind-hearted lady who ran a brothel and a kind-hearted saloon keeper, they kept him alive. They gave him a job, he didn't want any handouts ever and he swept up, he cleaned the place and at the...

The name of the saloon was Mushmouths Saloon and Emporium. And it was a real place and I found it in a map and put the map in the book, which again, that was another moment when where my head exploded. Yeah. It was like, wow, there it is. But they had bare knuckle boxing and my grandfather could sing and he would sing little Irish songs in between rounds and they throw pennies at him. That was his paycheck. And so part of that, he

He immersed himself and hid with sadly all the other orphans that lived on the streets. was an epidemic, not an epidemic, but it was a big, big problem at that time of the world and in Chicago. And what he ended up doing was staying there until it was time to move on. And part of it, here's a perfect example.

He was a 14, 13, 14 year old boy. And you know, not around school girls or school kids. And, know, didn't have, you know, fortnightly where we go to a dance and you can giggle with their buddies and, and, and the girls would giggle and, know, you throw a snowball and that's how you got people's attention or whatever. This poor guy was, you know, spending time in a brothel and I'm quite sure fell.

spell in love, whether it was love or not. And I told that story, just that's a human story. And that's my educated guess. And also was enabled, I was able to tell the story of the incredible sad story of the ladies

who were prostitutes at that time and how they were taken advantage of and

Just an awful thing, but that's, know, Chicago was known for that and during the Columbus Exposition, that was a regular stopping ground, you know, people would check it out and that's just the way of life and I wanted to tell a fictitious lady's story and get her perspective too that she was trying to survive herself and you know, we all judge, right, until you walk a mile in their shoes, right?

Wynne Leon (38:53)

Yeah, but you did that so beautifully, kind of, you you talk about it now like it was nothing, but that's really, you know, an incredibly difficult thing to do. So we're desperate to know what are you writing next?

Bob Conlon (39:07)

wow,

I got something awesome that I really. What? Yeah, I really am not there yet, but it's calling on my background as a lawyer. yeah, that's all we need, another lawyer story. But I am so excited about this. And I'll tell you guys at the appropriate time all about it. But yeah, no, I'm totally immersed on this and loving what I'm doing.

promoting this book now, but yeah, so I'm not done.

Wynne Leon (39:34)

I'm so glad to hear that. Yes, and you have to promise to come back when we're out of

Bob Conlon (39:39)

you got it. You

got it. Well, you guys are wonderful. And I really, like I said, I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you for all your hard research and prep on this. It's humbling to be in this position. This is all new to me and I love it. So thank you so much.

Wynne Leon (39:57)

Thank you so much for your time.

Bob Conlon (39:59)

Well, so great to meet you too. Hope to see you again soon.

Wynne Leon (40:02)

Wow. Next book. You too. Thank you, Bob. Bye.

Bob Conlon (40:05)

All

right, thank you, ladies. Have a great day.

Wynne Leon (40:09)

You too.

Thank you for listening. Our music is composed for Sharing the Heart of the Matter by the exquisitely talented duo of Jack Canfora and Rob Koenig. For show notes and more great inspiration, please visit our site at [SharingTheHeartOfTheMatter.com](http://SharingTheHeartOfTheMatter.com).

Bob Conlon (40:31)  
you