The Storying Project, a Sparkle Stories Workshop

Mick Sullivan – With empathy comes connection.

David:

I feel like there's a story right there that you just beamed over towards me, “but many of whom…” Would you like to mention a few of those?

Mick:

I would love to. Yeah.

David:

Hello there. This is David and welcome to The Storying Project, a Sparkle Stories Workshop. We are so glad you've come to visit this podcast, where we delve into the process of creating a Sparkle story. What you are going to hear is a conversation between me, our chief storyteller here at Sparkle, and a special guest.

Our guests are people from all walks of life, some you may know and others you might not, but all are conscious of the stories we tell our children and their impact. I ask all of our guests, "What do you think children need to hear right now?" And then we have a conversation that will ultimately lead to a produced audio story for children. And we are going to share a bit of that story here after the conversation.

So today, I will collaborate with Mick Sullivan. Mick is a self-described history advocate. And as such, is the host of the wonderful podcast for kids and families, The Past and the Curious. Mick is also a musician, a museum educator and curator at the Frazier History Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, and the author of the children's book, The Meatshower, a mostly true story about the March 3rd, 1876 Kentucky meat shower.

Thank you so much, Mick, and all of you listening for joining us, and we hope you enjoy the conversation and the process. And be sure to listen to a special message from Lisabeth of Sparkle Stories at the very end. Now, here is our conversation.

David:

Hey, Mick Sullivan, welcome to podcast. It's really great to have you here.

Mick:

Hey, it's really great to be here. I appreciate you inviting me on. I've been looking forward to it.

David:

Yeah, me too, oh for so many different reasons. But I'm really looking forward to your answer to, what do children need to hear right now? But before we get there, I'm feeling like we have an opportunity to really delve into something that I know only as much as is relevant to my craft as a storyteller, which has context. And sometimes I use the word container. But for what you do, as a storyteller, as a curator, as a historian's advocate, context is pretty important to you. I'd love to know how you understand context and how it factors into your work.

Mick:

Yeah. Lucky for me, what I get to do is share moments and people from the past that are important and that have shaped our lives today in a lot of cases. And to understand why that's so important, you have to understand what was going on in the world around them. And to me, that's everything. No one is born in a vacuum. No one does anything in a vacuum. And sometimes there's a perfect storm around that person to create a perfect reaction or a perfect action in a perfect moment. Or sometimes somebody rises above the circumstances around their life and make something remarkable happen out of the blue. And it's two completely different contexts, but I think that helps you understand what any given person has done and has accomplished in such a more meaningful way. And I think it helps you understand how it could potentially impact you today, yourself. I'm always looking backwards.

David:

Yeah, completely. And so, I have a new appreciation of context with reviewing work that I've done a while ago, works that were historical events. We did a series of stories about a story from each state. And you and I have at least one, probably several stories in common.

Mick:

Mm-hmm. Yes.

David:

And one of them is Sybil Ludington. I didn't realize that you had done an episode on that. And then I just listened to it. Mine is missing a lot of things that yours has. So, I told the story from the bits of information that I had, and you were very clear in your episode, there are no primary sources.

Mick:

Yeah, that's right. It's such a wonderful story and we love it. And I don't want to take anything away from that. In fact, in the episode itself, and for those people who aren't certain of who Sybil Ludington was, she was a young woman near the New York, Massachusetts border, Connecticut border, around the Revolutionary War. And her father was an officer and had to muster his troops in the middle of the night because the British were storming on Danbury. And she took it upon herself to go round up the troops who had gone back to their homes. So, she made this incredible ride through the rain. And there were British centuries that she came upon along the way.

Yeah. But we don't know how much of that story is true. I mean, we know that she was a real person. There's no question about that. And we know her father was... All that was real. He was an officer and he had to muster troops. But no one really wrote down her story, off the top of my head, I'd say like 50 years or something, which is a lot of time for a story to snowball or lose steam. You never know.

But the point that I made in the episode is that we don't have the facts. Even when she applied for a military pension, she didn't mention that, which is probably something that you had mentioned. So, I thought there was pretty clear evidence that maybe the story was made up or maybe it was just inflated, whatever the case. That's not necessarily an issue, because we tell the stories that we want to hear. And in some cases that's not always great. You can misuse a story for sure. But this was something that people, it's a tale of inspiration. It's a tale of heroism. It's a tale of a young woman who rises to the occasion, of which there weren't a lot of those stories in the historical record from around that time period, primarily because of who was keeping record at that time period. It wasn't people looking to uplift a 17 year old girl per se.

David:

Right. Right.

Mick:

And so yeah, I mean, it's hard. I love stories. And so, I wanted to tell that story. I had to share that story. But being so married to history and worried about primary sources, and all of that, it had to come with the understanding that we don't know how much of this is true, and here's the story. Here's some evidence. You can make up your own mind.

David:

Yes, yes. That process has made me look at history differently quite honestly, was noticing how my interest in the story and ability to fill in the details, I wonder how much of history was done the same way, of certain things being repeated over and over again, because it fit within a really nice story. And did it happen?

Mick:

Yeah. Yeah, totally. And conversely, think of all of the stories that are lost, that didn't get told.

David:

Yes. Right.

Mick:

I mean, for every one of them that got reprinted in books, I'm sure there's dozens or hundreds that did not. I mean, everybody has got a story, but some people have done some remarkable things, maybe we can still find them. Maybe we still can find their story somehow by combing through oral histories or anything like that, or maybe nobody will. I mean, I think that's why history is so fascinating.

David:

It's the best stories. They're all the best stories. And I'm curious about, because of course, there are so many different ways to tell a story. There's what we do on our podcasts, but there's also what you do for Frazier Museum. I'd love to hear a little bit more about the process and where you see the overlap with your work, with The Past and the Curious, and as a curator with Frazier Museum.

Mick:

Yeah. So, I work at the Frazier History Museum, which is in Louisville, Kentucky. And it's a relatively young museum. It's only been in existence for about 20 years. So, I've been there for about half of it. And up until the last year and a half, my main job has been working with kids like field trip groups and primarily summer camps. We have a really robust and thriving summer camp program.

And then in addition to that, as someone who just is driven with a passion for this sort of stuff, I've been a part of the curatorial team that developed like the Lewis and Clark exhibit that we have. So, that's how I happened to glean so much information about Lewis and Clark. I spent two years knee deep in that.

But now, so my role now is the curator of guest experience. So, it's really more of a public thing. We were trying to figure out how to take all of these stories and this approach that I had created for the classroom and for kids, which was really why the podcast happened. That was an offshoot of that, my own personal project, The Past and the Curious.

But so now, we have some really interesting and vibrant galleries that we are trying to use and offer daily experiences. So, they're really storytelling based tours. I'm actually, twice a day, I'm going to be in the galleries, telling stories related to what people are able to look at.

And then one of my colleagues who is also a really great storyteller, Brian West, and then a couple other folks on the team, we're going to spend time in the galleries, talking to people and telling them stories. And it makes all the difference in the world because the object that you're looking at, or the picture that you're looking at, that's just an augment to what you're really there to get, which is an experience, and to walk away really knowing something, and maybe hopefully, being moved by something that you didn't know or didn't expect to be moved by when you walked in the door. So, it's been really great. And there's just some fantastic stories that we get to tell.

We're focused on the State of Kentucky. So, it's nice to highlight some people from the state through several different time periods, many of whom, impact our lives significantly still today.

David:

I feel like there's a story right there that you just beamed over towards me, but many of whom... Yeah. Would you like to mention a few of those?

Mick:

I would love to. Yeah. So, one of the ones that I really like to hit on early is these two sisters from there from Anchorage, Kentucky, which is nearby my hometown of Louisville, where we are. And they were born in the mid 1800s. And their father was an educator, and he was one who really wanted to make sure that his daughters received the same education that his sons did. He was progressive for the 1800s.

And so, one of them became a musicologist. Her name was Mildred Hill. And she published a paper. She had to publish it under a man's name, actually. But she published a paper that she was working in several African-American neighborhoods, and she would hear like pushcart vendors, singing songs, and then she would ask people. She started to collect work songs. She made notations of these and published them in a studied to paper. She had to publish it under a man's name and the 1890s. And it supposedly wound up in the hands of Antonin Dvorak. He actually had a copy of it. And some of the melodies that she collected, you can find them in New World Symphony, which was his famous piece about America.

David:

Wow.

Mick:

Yeah. So, but the cool part is her older sister Patty, she was one of the leading proponents for kindergarten in the United States. So, this was right when kindergarten was becoming a thing, because before that, it was straight into academics. And there wasn't really much value or emphasis put on the value of play, like how much playing and cooperation, and socialization is work and part of learning. Right? So, she had gone to Germany and learned from Friedrich Froebel, and had gone to Switzerland or Sweden to learn with Maria Montessori.

David:

In Italy.

Mick:

So, she kind of like was part of this group that all of... Oh, Italy that's right. And put all of this stuff together. So, she was one of the leading voices. And in fact at the 1893, World's Fair in Chicago, which is where people would go to see like, it was the first time you rode on a Ferris wheel or the first time you tasted cotton candy. So, it's like this big place where everything is new and amazing. And you would pay a ticket and spend days there walking around and seeing everything. She was actually there doing demonstration kindergarten classes for people to see, because it was so remarkable.

David:

Oh man.

Mick:

But together, they published a book for kindergarten teachers or kindergarten teachers to be, to use in the classroom. And they liked to use music. And so, there was a song in the book called Good Morning to All, and the kids would sing it, everyday. They'd stand up and they'd sing, and they'd repeat. It's a call and response. But they'd changed the words. And so, as the story goes, they were at somebody's birthday party, and they changed the words to, happy birthday to you.

David:

Yeah. Yeah. Right. But great reveal.

Mick:

I mean, stuff like that. Yeah. Right?

David:

I love that.

Mick:

But happy birthday is enough, but all that other stuff, you're like, "What?" That's amazing.

David:

Well, there there's the constellation. I mean, that's history, isn't it? It's so delightful to make one connection. So, you have this great story, and then you realize, "oh my gosh, it's connected to this other story over here. Oh my gosh, it's connected to this story."

Mick:

But yeah, that sort of stuff is fascinating. Anytime that you can see, just the fact that a person could from history, cross paths with, I don't know, like Muhammad Ali meeting the Beatles, like to me, that's amazing.

David:

Right.

Mick:

It's amazing. I love that stuff.

David:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, there we are. There we are with context and connection, these moments that connect people together. And what is a story? But it's a series of images that are connected. So, I'm very interested to hear your answer to what do you think children need to hear right now?

Mick:

I think children need to hear and need to understand, and be given information that shows that people are all the same and people all want the same things. They just go about doing it different ways. And sometimes they go about doing it the right way. And sometimes they go about doing it the wrong way. But at the fundamental core, people want basically the same stuff. People want to be accepted. People want to be loved and people want to take care of the people that they care about.

And the people that I like to highlight on the show are prime examples of people do it the right way, or attempt to try their best to do it the right way. You can't always be in control of the world and the fates that surround you, but you do the best that you can.

David:

Yeah. Oh boy. And the people who go about it the wrong way from a storytelling standpoint that often shows up as our foil, our villain, the people against which our heroes and heroines are operating. And yet from what I'm hearing from you, when we pull back how it's exercised, the motivation is universal.

Mick:

That's what I believe. Yeah. Yeah.

David:

I'm right there with you. I believe it too.

Mick:

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think that. I don't think you could point to many people from history and not get a very clear understanding that, if you look far far enough back or you understand enough about that person, you get enough context about that person, you'll understand why they do what they do. And hopefully, you would never make those decisions. There's something to be learned from that too.

David:

And to be able to, from a story standpoint, see the moment in which the fear began, in which the pain began.

Mick:

Sure, sure.

David:

The causes for their behavior and through empathy, be able to not condone their behavior, but able to understand it a little bit better. And what a great lesson for a kid that before they do something that they know they shouldn't do, to actually see examples of that.

Mick:

Yes. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. History is full of consequences.

David:

Well, let's look at your history. I'm curious about where this came from, this interest in history, but also your answer to the question of what children need to hear right now. Can you think of stories or moments in your own biography that were instructive and brought you to this perspective that we're actually more connected than we think. It's just for different reasons, we may behave differently.

Mick:

Sure. Yeah. One thing that we haven't brought up yet is that I am a huge, huge... Music is a huge part of my life.

David:

Yes.

Mick:

I've been a musician for a very long time. It's has been probably in terms of the timeline of my life, it's been the most dominant thing in my life. I've been an active musician and still am in it. Our house revolves around it, for sure. All my kids love to sing and play, and all that. Yeah.

And so, one very pivotal moment that I think about very often in my life involves that. And it was, so when I was in the second grade, so I was young, I had a favorite band, which I don't know why a second grader in the world would have loved the Western swing band, Asleep at the Wheel.

David:

Oh, Austin. Great. Yeah.

Mick:

Totally. They were absolutely my favorite thing in the world. Right? So, I couldn't wait to get to fourth grade because I wanted to play saxophone, which I did for about six months. It was obviously not the instrument for me. But I wanted to play saxophone cause I wanted to be like the saxophone player in that band. His name was Michael Francis. But the band in general was just great. Everything about it moved me. I didn't understand improvisation. I actually grew up and got a degree. I got a scholarship for jazz guitar and I got a degree in jazz guitar.

David:

Oh man.

Mick:

So, improvisation, which that sort of music completely thrives on, and it's all of the energy that that music has, is built around that. And that's what I did, that's what I chose to do for a large part of my life.

So, anyway, I was at the second grade, just absolutely enamored with this band, wore out the records, like actual LPs and everything. And we had a music series here in Louisville at the Kentucky Center for the Arts called Lonesome Pine Special, which was broadcast actually all across the country and internationally too. It was a really cool show. But there was a live audience. And so, as soon as we found out that Asleep at the Wheel was going to be coming for a show, my dad got tickets.

David:

Oh my gosh.

Mick:

Yeah. And I got to go. And I mean, it was like a school night. So, I was out late. And I was just beside myself with joy. And it was so much fun. The band was super great. This huge band, they're like eight people in the band, and they got all the gimmicks like the piano players, like totally wailing and runs out of space, and starts playing the high notes with his toe of his boot. I'm just like, "This is awesome. It's so great." And there's a dance floor down there, so there's people dancing, whatever. And it's great. It's amazing. I loved it. And I could've gone home after that and been fine.

But my dad was like, "Let's go wait outside." So, he and my aunt, and I went around and waited at the tour bus, and sure enough, along comes Ray Benson, who's like six foot six, just enormous, super deep voice. And my dad stops him and says, "Hey, my son is a big fan." And he stops. And he talks to me for 10 minutes. And then gets every band member off of the band to come out and talk to me, and sign up their press photo or whatever. So, I have it. It's right there. I have it right over my desk.

But to me, it was like was the moment where I was like, this person who meant everything to me, and was I mean, literally a giant because I was tiny, but also a giant in my mind's eye too, and he was not just like, "Oh cool." But he was like genuinely kind to me and went out of his way to make an incredible experience, but also to be like, "Yeah, we're just all people. This is what we do." A couple of them have kids, so they're like, "Yeah, I have a kid your age." Or whatever. It was just a moment where it was like the walls were broken down, so I could see that they were real people and I could be like that.

David:

Yes. And they saw you. They really looked at you. They really listened to you.

Mick:

They did. They did. And they were flabbergasted that I knew as much about them as I did too. I'm sure they were probably like, "Whoa, cool."

David:

Right. And had Ray not paused, and left it with a just, "Hey, keep playing kid." Or whatever, and then hopped on the bus, who knows what effect that moment had on him?

Mick:

Totally. Totally. Totally. And I mean, it's the same sort of thing, you see people say it all the time, it's like kindness doesn't cost you anything, all at all it takes is your time. And it makes a huge difference. I mean, I can point to that moment as like a formational experience. I was like, "I'm now on a path to do something that this set me on."

David:

Yeah.

Mick:

And part of that was music, but also part of that was being kind to kids. It's like, if he can do it-

David:

Have you taken up music or a musician, I'm not thinking of anything at the moment, but with The Past and the Curious?

Mick:

Oh, done a story about some music. Yes, I have. I did one recently about Django Reinhardt, who was-

David:

Oh yes, I did that.

Mick:

... the Romani guitar player, who lost three of his most important fingers for playing guitar in a tragic fire. And then became the greatest guitar player after that. So, I did one about him.

I did one about Sonny Rollins, who is actually the only person that I've done an episode about that's still alive. But I did an episode about Bridges. So, every episode is two different stories. So, I did an episode about Emily Roebling, who did the final engineering bit on the Brooklyn Bridge. And then Sonny Rollins, in the 1960s, early 60, he was like the young star. And he was like, "I don't like this." And he checked out and just spent a year walking to the Williamsburg Bridge and just playing for himself, just to find himself and get comfortable in his own head again. And so, I told that story too. Yeah, I've done several. There's few others.

David:

Well, okay. So, that image seems really important to this conversation, this bridge. I'm feeling like a bridge might be an interesting place for us to explore with a story together. Is that resonating with you?

Mick:

Sure. Yeah. Yeah. That's always been an image in my mind.

David:

All right. So, if we're going to actually land in an image to start with, there's the physical bridge that you walk across. There's this connector between the chorus and between the verse. And this, I guess, is it fair to say, and can we call it unexpected, or is there actually an algorithm that for musicians they will expect it?

Mick:

No. I think if it's a good song, you don't expect it.

David:

Okay, cool. I just wasn't sure if I was missing the party or something.

Mick:

Yeah. No, no, no, you're right. All right.

David:

Okay, great. So, here we are. And I love to just honor things that pop into our head. So, where are you right now? If we're going to tell a story to children, to remind them that before all our behavior is a very similar place, that we actually have more in common than we think, and that we all want to be loved. We all want to love. We all deep down really do want to be kind. And then for some reason, something happens where can move forward in a way that strengthens kindness or in a way that is connected to pain or fear, whatever it is that make people behave badly. Is there an image that's beginning to bubble up of an environment, of a person, of a central character?

Mick:

Well, if we could back up just a second, do you typically treat these like as complete fiction?

David:

So, you're having a historical moment. You're thinking of a historical moment.

Mick:

Exactly.

David:

Okay. So, we're going to give ourselves permission to start where you just were, and then if we need to tell a historically accurate story, so be it, but let's start there and see what happens.

Mick:

I'm not married to that by any means.

David:

I know. I know, but I think we should start there. Right.

Mick:

Okay.

David:

Tell me what you're thinking.

Mick:

Well, I mean, I really think Django Reinhardt is an incredible story. And we just talked about him and I've been thinking about music a lot, and I was listening to him last night. So, I mean, he was at a crossroads of, "How do I go on?" Is that enough context?

David:

I want to hear more. I want to hear about this moment. Fill out that moment a little bit more.

Mick:

So, he's on top of the world. He's 18 or 19 years old. Everyone's like, "Man, he plays the best guitar ever. He's incredible. And he comes home one night, and he's part of the Romani community, and he lives in a, essentially a mobile home, but it was a horse-drawn wagon. And his wife was preparing for a funeral the next day. And so, she was making little fake flowers, and they were made of celluloid. And celluloid is very flammable. And when he walked in, he thought he heard a mouse. And so, he lit a candle, and the wick from the candle fell onto one of the flowers. And in the blink of an eye, his home was an inferno. And his wife got out, because I think he covered her in a blanket or something. But his arm was completely destroyed, but not completely, but I mean for a year, he couldn't use it. And only two of his fingers on his left hand worked at that point.

And so, everyone in his community, all of his friends, everyone, all of these people thought, well, that's it, that's the end of his career. And I'm sure that he did too for a period of time. Until one day while he was still recuperating in the hospital, one of his friends brought him a guitar. And I think it sat there in the corner for a while until he finally picked it up, and then started to relearn. And I'm sure it could have gone either way.

David:

Gone either way. So, there it is. Okay. So, the bridge might be that friend. Do you know who the friend is?

Mick:

I don't know who the friend is. I don't.

David:

Okay. So, maybe that's a little freedom for us. Maybe it's just Dave and Mick. We're just spinning a story here. It's not history. It's about a friend of Django Reinhardt. And so, if you wanted to, we don't need to, we could just keep calling this friend, but if a name pops up, you'll let me know, not accurate, but just some like a potential name.

Mick:

Well, I mean, I guess, in the interest of sometimes like when they're fictionalizing a story, they'll often like make a composite of characters, so they can squish them together and use several of those. So, he had a brother named Babik. So, I think it would be fair enough to use a brother. I feel like a brother would do something like that for you.

David:

Okay. All right. Can we just use the name Babik for now?

Mick:

Let's use that.

David:

Okay. And let's actually explore Babik, independent of Django for a little while. And you can think with your historical mind, piecing together bits of information that you know, or you can incorporate your imagination or a combination of both. But before Babik heard about this fire, before any of this took place, is Babik also a musician?

Mick:

Yes. Yes.

David:

Okay. A particular instrument?

Mick:

I think most of the people in that community were string players, at least the people that were around him. So, I think he played guitar also.

David:

Okay. And was it a different kind of guitar, a different size or shape?

Mick:

I don't think so. I think it was really second fiddle, if you know what I mean. Right?

David:

Right.

Mick:

Like he was a backup.

David:

Yeah. Yeah. Like a rhythm kind of scenario.

Mick:

Let him do the fancy stuff.

David:

Right, right. So, I'll be back here. And I wonder if Babik had faced a challenge as well. I wonder if Babik met with something and was faced with a bridge, whether to go this way or that way as well.

Mick:

But you know what I'm thinking, I don't know if this is too contrived, but reading all sorts of narratives about that time period and about him in particular is that he, Django, just sucked all of the attention because he was all that anybody noticed, all that anybody cared about, all that anybody wanted to see. Everyone else was just, could have been anyone. Right?

So, I could imagine someone like Babik, maybe choosing to be jealous and angry about the fact that his brother was getting all of the attention, as the best and the flashiest, and the most impressive, and technically proficient

David:

When Babik could very well have been at least in his eyes and maybe a few other people's eyes equally proficient.

Mick:

Probably so, yes.

David:

Okay. So, we have a person who is embedded in being essential and is not getting attention, and potentially is at a point where, maybe from other people in the family or Babik's own friends, just like, "You should do your own thing." And so, maybe around this time is met with a decision of to continue on being Django Reinhardt's nameless rhythm guitarist, just playing...

Mick:

Right.

David:

Or maybe trying his own thing, stepping forward doing his own thing.

Mick:

Which would have been an admirable thing to do. Right? I mean, at least everybody has got to shoot their shot. Right? So, I mean, who knows? In this story, things could've worked out splendidly for Babik, or he could have regretted it immediately and found himself not able to feed his family.

David:

Yep. Right. So, are we thinking in this fictional imagination that Babik, actually decided to move on this or was still in the process of considering?

Mick:

I think he was still in the process of considering. I think he was weighing his options and was growing increasingly unhappy with a lack of time in the limelight, or not even that, but just always being compared to someone who he's not.

David:

Right. Golly, I think that that is a place that a lot of kids find themselves, that comparative place of, "I'm good at this, but I'm not getting noticed. And my friend is good at that and is getting all the attention. Should I stop doing what I'm doing and do what they're doing? Should I find fault with my friend, so that maybe..." I'd remember that personally.

Mick:

Me too. Of course. I remember that very clearly.

David:

Yeah. Yeah. And so, getting back to your, what children need to hear right now, is... Am I thrusting this on this, but I'm feeling like it's an invitation to empathy. It's an invitation to actually seeing that we're all standing on the same ground. Is that fair?

Mick:

Yes, absolutely.

David:

That's okay.

Mick:

That's a beautiful way to put it. Yeah. No, absolutely.

David:

Okay. I like this story. I like this. I think this would be fun to tease out. And we'll do it, ladies and gentlemen, in a way that meets Mick Sullivan's standards of historical integrity, which might mean that we completely change everybody's name, and just make it a complete work of fiction, which is what it is.

Mick:

Totally, beautiful.

David:

Yeah. But I would like it to remain connected to your episode around Django. This is going to be fun. Yeah. I'm looking forward to collaborating on this with you. So, Mick, people can find you of course, over at The Past and the Curious Podcast.

Mick:

That's correct.

David:

And if they're driving through Kentucky, they can go to the Frazier History Museum and-

Mick:

That's right. We're on Main Street in Louisville, Kentucky.

David:

Excellent. And what we didn't talk about, but we need everybody to know about is there is a book that people can get that you wrote about a meat shower, and that is not a metaphor.

Mick:

It's not a metaphor. That is a very real thing. Yeah. Yes, I wrote that book. It was published in 2019. It is called The Meatshower.

David:

And how will people find your music?

Mick:

It's all on Spotify.

David:

Okay, great.

Mick:

You can find Fire the Saddle or Squeeze-bot. And also, I did release an album of music from the podcast that I create.

David:

Oh great.

Mick:

So, that's found by searching Mick Sullivan and Friends.

David:

Great. Mick Sullivan and Friends. And any other places that we want people to be able to find all the many wonderful things that you do?

Mick:

I think you got it. Yeah. The museum, the podcast, the book and the music, that sums it up.

David:

Excellent. I am so looking forward to this story that we're going to flush out. So, I'm really looking forward to continuing to be in touch with you, Mick. We touch base on a regular basis and we'd like it to be even more regular.

Mick:

Me too. I always have a great time talking. It's awesome.

David:

Yeah. Yeah, for sure. Well, thank you, Mick.

Mick:

Thank you, David.

David:

Hey, David here. And this is a snippet of the story that came from my conversation with Mick. And wow, this was a completely different experience for me. So, I have written historical fiction before, but somehow on the heels of this collaboration and conversation with Mick, I felt a different standard to the process.

So, I did a bunch more research and I found some things out that changed some of the main characters as you will hear, but the thrust of the story is still the choice that we really have in every moment, which is, which way do I want to go? Do I want to go toward the love or towards something else? So, I loved doing this. And thank you, Mick, for your partnership. So, here is a snippet of our story.

The Bridge Also Brings You Back.

Henri, or Bear Cub, as he was known in the French Romani community outside of Paris, stood by the front door of his uncle's home and considered what he was about to do.

Henri's biological father, Django Reinhardt died nearly a year before in May of 1953. Django had been the most famous musician in France at the time, and certainly the most famous Romani musician of all time. Everyone knew Django, and the world grieved his passing.

Henri was 24 years old, and had been Django's chief rhythm guitar player when his father died. He was in awe of his father, and motivated not only by his artistry and skill, but his ability to overcome the adversity common among the Romani people in Europe.

Even though Django was celebrated around the world, there in France, he and other Romani people were commonly called names and treated roughly and considered second-class citizens. They were all reasonably safe while playing in clubs and on stages. But the moment that they left that stage, they all knew anything could happen, even to a celebrity like Django. This is why many Romani families preferred living in homes with wheels, small houses that could be pulled by a horse in the olden days, or more recently by cars or trucks. If things got too difficult for them in one town, they could up and move to the next.

For musicians like Django and Henri, however, the closer they lived to Paris, the better. Paris was where all the music clubs and fans were located. It was in their best interest to stay put.

It had been a challenging year for Henri to be sure. He had not only lost his father, but he had lost the most consistent opportunity to play music as a member of his father's band. The band had split up, and its most famous musicians had moved on.

Henri was respected as a decent rhythm guitarist, but he was still young and had years of practice ahead of him. He was not his father, a musical genius, nor was he his younger brother, Babik, considered the most musically talented of Django children. If he was similar to anyone, it was probably his uncle, Nin-Nin, whose home he was now standing outside.

Lisabeth:

Hi, this is Lisabeth of Sparkle Stories. What you just heard was a snippet of the full collaborative story that David and Mick created together. To hear the entire story, as well as over 1300 other original stories, visit us at sparklestories.com.

The stories from the podcast are all free to listen to and can be found on the browse page at sparklestories.com. And while you're there consider subscribing. You can start with an extended free trial of 30 days when you use the code storying, S-T-O-R-Y-I-N-G.

The Storying Project, a Sparkle Stories Workshop was produced by Marjorie Shik. The audio editor is Nate Gwatney. Theme music composed by Angus Sewell McCann.

If you'd like to know more about Mick Sullivan and The Past and the Curious Podcast, be sure to head over to thestoryingproject.com for many useful links related to this episode.

We are so grateful to Mick for joining us. I really enjoyed listening to David and Mick's conversation, two storytellers talking shop. It was really engaging. We hope you enjoyed it.