

Shmanners 168: Rules of the Road

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Travis: Drivers, start your podcasts! On your mark, get set...

Teresa: It's Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, Internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: Well... Well...

Travis: Recovering?

Teresa: Yeah. I'm still—

Travis: Got a little sick?

Teresa: —still a little salty about it.

Travis: Got a little sick. Uh, Teresa was unable to go onstage in Indianapolis due to illness. Um, but she's feeling better now. Been a couple days. You've recovered.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: Um, so do you want to tell everybody about this episode and why we're doing it?

Teresa: Yeah. Well, uh, because this was the show I planned for Indianapolis.
[laughs]

Travis: Uh-huh, yes-yes-yes. So, why let all of that research go to waste?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: We should—I wanted to just do it, uh, because I, you know, researched and stuff.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So, here's the thought process. I was like... I was gonna be like, "Hello, Indianapolis!" And then they would like, scream and stuff.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: And I'd be like—

Travis: Do you want—let's try it again. Say, "Hello, Indianapo—"

Teresa: Okay. Hello, Indianapolis!

Travis: [quiet shouting?] "Yeah, Teresa! We love you! Ahhh!"

Teresa: I hear you guys... like racing cars.

Travis: [quiet shouting] "Yeah? I mean—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [quiet shouting] "—you know, we do. Not us—not us specifically?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [quiet shouting] "I mean, maybe one of us is a race car driver, but we do enjoy watching it! Yay!"

Teresa: [laughs] Um, so, the Indianapolis 500 is like, a big deal, I'm—

Travis: [quiet shouting] "Yeah, it is!"

Teresa: —I'm pretty sure, yeah.

Travis: Should I stop doing the audience?

Teresa: Yeah, you can stop being the audience now.

Travis: Okay. I'll stop being the audience.

Teresa: Um, it's a pretty big deal, and cars in general... If we think about the grand scope of human existence, cars are a relatively new technology. They really are.

Travis: Yeah, only like, 15 years old.

Teresa: [imitating buzzer]

Travis: More than that?

Teresa: More than that.

Travis: How many?

Teresa: A lot—a lot more.

Travis: 20?

Teresa: Um—

Travis: 30 years?

Teresa: The—the first motor wagon, um, appeared in 1893. And when I say appeared, I mean was invented. [laughs]

Travis: Okay, I was gonna say, that's a great way of like... "Hey, did you put this in here? No? How about you? We should make more of these!"

Teresa: So here's the thing, though. Way, way back in 4000 BCE, the early roads in Mesopotamia probably started, right? But here's the thing.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: A road is more just a clearing, and they really didn't start to get paved until the 1800s, right? So basically, you just needed a path clear of vegetation and buildings, right? To be a road.

Travis: Yeah. Well, yes. It's really hard, uh, if you don't remove the buildings.

Teresa: [laughs] A road is more like an absence of things.

Travis: Yes. Empty space.

Teresa: Empty space.

Travis: Yes

Teresa: Than it is anything else. Um, so what happens is... Like, we have these clearings that people walk down and take their wagons and horses down, and like, that's it. That's what we have.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Until like, the 1700's, when two engineers from Scotland create a technique for paving, using layerings of different types of stones. Um, and they actually started thinking about things like street traffic patterns and the way a road should be graded to help carts and things turn well.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And you know, a lot of times this is something that we don't notice until it's wrong, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Where you are taking a curve, and sometimes it feels just so hard. It feels hard to make the turn and it doesn't have to be a steep turn, but if the road isn't graded so that the inner side of the turn is a little, like, dug out a little more—

Travis: Yeah! It's—I think, you know, I'll keep referencing back to racetracks, but if you look at a racetrack, when you get to those big turns, they go up a little bit, right? So—

Teresa: Right. The outer corner goes up and the inner corner goes down.

Travis: So that way as you come around the mom—like, you're—I ima—listen. I'm not an engineer.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I don't know if y'all know this, but I imagine it's to balance out the force of like, wanting to push you up as you turn, because your—the force wants to keep going forward, and you're turning. So to balance that out, you grade the road a little bit, and that, uh... You get it. You get what I'm saying.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah. And like I said, you really don't—

Travis: [laughing] I'm sorry if I got a little technical there, with all my science lingo.

Teresa: [laughs] You really don't even notice it unless it's bad.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, and so this is something that was put forth in what is boasted as the first modern road in Paris, the Champs-Elysees, in, um, 1824.

Travis: [wistfully] Ah... the Champs-Elysees... which, if you had asked me 10 minutes ago I would have said was a river. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [laughs] Oh, boy.

Travis: Oh, boy, indeed. Ah! So beautiful, made of stone and/or water.

Teresa: So, I talked about the first motor wagon in 1893.

Travis: Yes?

Teresa: When I say that, you know, "car," who do you think about?

Travis: [sighs] I know this, because I feel like we've talked about it before. We did an episode where we talked about like, inside the car politeness, like when you're on a road trip, and I know I'm supposed to say Ford, Henry Ford, but I know that that's not the first one.

Teresa: Oh my gosh, what a smarty pants you are!

Travis: Yes. I know that Ford was just the first mass produced.

Teresa: I was trying to trick you.

Travis: I know.

Teresa: And you sidestepped that.

Travis: Ford was the first mass produced, because of the assembly line.

Teresa: Right. But, Charles and Frank Duryea, I believe it is pronounced, um, invented the first motor vehicle in 1893, but they only made 13 of them. Uh, so that's probably why the whole company failed.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Listen. I'm no business expert. I don't know if you all know this, but you need at least 14 of any product—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —to succeed.

Teresa: Okay. Well, we'll keep that in mind.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, needless to say, though, yes, the invention of the Model T Ford in 1908 was much better marketed and made on a mass scale. But here's the thing, though. You have these cars, which are suddenly... The weight distribution is a lot different from a horse or a horse-drawn cart. Um, the wheel manufacture is a lot different to support the weight.

Travis: Have you ever seen a horse draw a cart? They have really a hard time filling it in and staying inside the lines. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: Oh, man.

Travis: Get it? 'Cause it's like drawing?

Teresa: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Travis: 'Kay. [pauses] I'm a dad.

Teresa: So, people—[laughs] Yes, yes you are. People in the US suddenly were like, "Hey—"

Travis: Oh wait! I can—I have a better punchline.

Teresa: Okay, all right.

Travis: Okay. Have you ever seen a horse draw a cart? They have a really hole time—hard time holding the pencil. That's a better punchline.

Teresa: Ah, that's a better one. That's a good one.

Travis: Yeah. Okay.

Teresa: Um, they wanted roads. They wanted better roads, and the slogan really was, "Get the farmers out of the mud."

Travis: Huh. Okay.

Teresa: Because the roads weren't paved.

Travis: Oh, I see. That wasn't—okay. So it's—that's not like, a slight against farmers.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: It was saying like, "Hey, farmers are trying to drive to town. Get us out of the mud!"

Teresa: Yep, yep, yep.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, in 1916, the Federal Highway System was started, but like, paving roads turned out to be just one part of the problem. Um, street signage... So like, now that people had cars, they were capable of long distance travel at fast speeds, but you didn't always know where you were going, because if you didn't live in the town, you didn't know what streets were called, so you really couldn't get around there.

Travis: Oh, man! See, when you said street signs, I was thinking of like, "Stop," and, you know, "Yield," and stuff. I wasn't even thinking about, like, labeling streets.

Teresa: Both of those things!

Travis: Yeah...

Teresa: All of those things. And of course, you might get the town signage—you know, I always think about that, um... Is it in M.A.S.H? Where they have that long post that's like, "Hawaii, so many miles that way."

Travis: Oh, I know what you're talking about, yeah.

Teresa: "Paris, so many—"

Travis: You see it mocked in a lot of like, kitschy restaurants and stuff.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah. And that is what comes to mind when I think about street signage like that. Um, also, with the advent of cars and paved roads... I talked

about the clearing of space, the idea of the emptiness being what makes a road a road.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: You know what it also makes it? Fun to play in.

Travis: Oh, yeah, okay. Yeah! Oh, me and—me and the other kids would play stick ball, and... stick puck, and stick hoop, and... stick... blade.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Stick blade was a dangerous one. Don't—

Teresa: Yeah, sounds like it.

Travis: Don't—listen. Kids today? Don't play stick blade. I lost a lot of good friends. I lost... Pete—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —and Big Pete, and Medium Pete. All at the same time. It was one horrible Pete massacre.

Teresa: So, children often played in these newly paved streets, ball games and such like this. Um, and at first, it really wasn't a big problem, because there were so few cars on the road. Um, by 1909, the Automobile Club of America recorded that there were 200,000 motorized vehicles in the United States.

Travis: Wow.

Teresa: And that's just the ones that the Automobile Club of America recorded, right? So let's probably double that number. Um, and so they had a hard time trying to communicate the idea of speed, um, and how speed complicates driving, because, you know, there weren't like, driver's tests. A lot of the people who were driving cars, you know, self-experimented to get them to go, to do the things that they wanted to do, or—

Travis: That's terrifying.

Teresa: Or, they were given, you know, just start up and turn off instructions by the people who sold them the car. "Here's how you turn it on. Here's how you move the wheels. Here's how you make it go, and here's how you make it stop."

Travis: Oh boy!

Teresa: Right?

Travis: Oh, goodness gracious.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, so not only were accidents very common, these automobiles were new, they were loud, they scared horses that were also on the road, um, and the often didn't understand how to take corners at the—at the speeds they were going, so more often—

Travis: You gotta gun it.

Teresa: [laughs nervously] More often than not, these cars completely flipped over. They called it "turned turtle."

Travis: Turned turtle. What a cutesy name, for a dangerous act!

Teresa: So—

Travis: "Aw, did you hear about Doug? He turned turtle!"

"Aw, how cute."

"He's dead. [laughs] He is—he is also quite dead, so he is both a turtle, and dead."

"Ah, bummer. I liked Doug."

Teresa: Um, that same year, 1909, the Georgia Court of Appeals was busy trying to handle this idea of the legal ramifications of things such as speeding, um, what a street could be and could not be used for, the rights of pedestrians and unprotected children in the streets, um, and it was talked about, is the automobile the new evil, right?

Travis: Yes. Next question.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Who needs it? That's what I say. Give me a velocipede!

Teresa: A—what?

Travis: I think it's a bike. [laughs]

Teresa: Oh, I see. Um, to make matters even worse and more complicated, streetcars, which were—you know, started out mostly in the early Victorian era, ran up and down the middle of the streets, usually, and they were becoming a very dangerous place for pedestrians to disembark and get on, right?

Travis: Oh, right, right, right.

Teresa: Um, because all of this new traffic, fast-going traffic, would just plow right through a pedestrian who stepped off a streetcar.

Travis: Oh, goodness.

Teresa: This whole thing just—just really, um, solidifies in my mind this idea of, you know, technology developing before the world has the coping mechanisms for that technology.

Travis: Well, yeah. That's true of a lot—I would say a lot of technology-like, this happened with computers, right? Of like, computers were invented and developed and mass-produced and sold, and now we're trying to figure out how to use them responsibly. Like—

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: You know, you start to limit and like... "Whoa! I didn't realize this thing could do all this stuff! Huh." It's that Ian Malcolm of "You were so busy thinking about if you could. You didn't stop to think about if you should."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's that kind of deal.

Teresa: So in 1911, uh, Detroit, the Motor City, leads the way, uh, as the first city to successfully experiment with one lane streets. So, um, not only did they do the one lane street, they also did the, uh, center lane highway, right? So you have that amount of time, amount of space in between the two cars, and just like, driving right next to each other.

Travis: Hoo, boy. Now, here's the thing. I... When we went on our honeymoon to Scotland... Scotland has many, many wonderful things that I loved so much. One of them was, uh, stall doors on the bathroom that went floor to ceiling, and had little things on the side so that when you closed the door, you were just in your own closet, and I loved it, and no one—you didn't have to see other people walking by. There was no fear of like, "Hey, what's goin' on in there?"

But what they did not have, at least where we were, was any kind of divider in the highway, so people were just like, going like, 60, 70 miles an hour, side by side, going opposite directions. It's terrifying. [laughs]

Teresa: Yes. Um... [clears throat] So let's talk about the idea of litigation of the roads.

Travis: Well, let's, but first, how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

Travis: Shmanners is sponsored this week by Quip? [laughing] I don't know why I said it like that, but I enjoyed that.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Quip? Here's the thing. We love Quip. This is a Quip household, now.

Teresa: That's right! I took my toothbrush with me on the road, I love it.

Travis: Yes. It's—here's the thing about Quip, right? I, uh—listen. I've had some dental issues before, I'm sure I've talked about it on this show, and I've had multiple dentists say to me, over and over again, "You should use an electric toothbrush. It's better at cleaning, it's better for you." But I never liked 'em, 'cause they were so bulky, and I never—like, I was always so afraid of like, the charge running out, or what do I do when I have to travel? All that stuff.

But Quip solves for all of that. It is, like, 1% bigger than a regular toothbrush. You don't have to worry about charging it. Every, like, three months, they send you a new brush head, and you switch out the battery, and boom, you're done. Then you don't have to worry about it again.

I'm a huge fan of them. They're sleek, excellently designed, and it also is—even though it's a great vibration, it's a gentle vibration—

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: —so it doesn't feel like it's gonna like, shake your teeth loose or anything.

Teresa: Or rattle your brains.

Travis: And they come in a, like—already in a travel case, so you don't even need to worry about that. And they have a new brush head for kids.

Teresa: Ooh!

Travis: It's the same as the original version, just like, tweaked down. And they have a timing mechanism—all Quip toothbrushes have a timing mechanism—

Teresa: I wanna get one of those for Bebe. I think she'd like it.

Travis: Yeah, I think she would dig it, too.

Teresa: She is deep into toothbrushing at the moment.

Travis: Yes. Um, there—like I said, they're, uh—they send you new brush heads on a scheduled three months for just five dollars, which is a great price for basically a new toothbrush. Uh, and that timing function, by the way? It has revolutionized the way that I brush teeth, 'cause I've always thought, like, "I am definitely brushing long enough." And when I started using that timing function, I realized, like, I was not.

Um, and it's one of the first electric toothbrushes accepted by the American Dental Association. With over 1 million happy, healthy mouths that love Quip, why are you waiting? Go now. Uh, it starts at just \$25. If you go to getquip.com/shmanners, you'll get your first refill pack for free! That's your first refill pack free at getquip.com/shmanners. Go check it out, and get Quip!

Jill: Hi, I'm Jill Firestone!

Manolo: And I'm Manolo Moreno.

Jill: And we're the hosts of Dr. Gameshow, which is a podcast where we play games submitted by listeners, regardless of quality or content, with in-studio guests, and callers from all over the world!

Manolo: You could win a custom magnet.

Jill: A custom magnet!

Manolo: Subscribe now to make sure you get our next episode.

Jill: What's an example of a game, Manolo?

Manolo: Pokemon or medication.

Jill: How do you play that?

Manolo: You have to guess if something's a Pokemon name or a—

Jill: Or medi—

Manolo: —medication.

Jill: —medication?

Manolo: First time listener, if you want to listen to episode highlights and also know how to participate, follow Dr. Gameshow on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Jill: We'd love to hear from you!

Manolo: Yeah, it's really fun.

Jill: For the whole family! We'll be every other Wednesday, starting March 13th, and we're coming to Max Fun!

Manolo: Snorlax.

Jill: Pokemon?

Manolo: Yes.

Jill: Nice!

Ross: Hello, listeners of Maximum Fun. I wanna tell you about our newest podcast that tells you all about the truth of the flat earth.

Carrie: Have you been lookin' out over the horizon and you've been thinkin', "Wait a minute. This doesn't look round, I've been lied to my whole life!"

Ross: What is NASA doing with 52—

Together: —million dollars a day?

Carrie: Uh, uh, come on. We explode the myths.

Ross: [laughing] Just kidding! We're Oh No, Ross and Carrie! And we investigate extraordinary claims.

Carrie: That's right! We investigate extraordinary claims firsthand. We go undercover in fringe groups. We get alternative medicine treatments. And we hang out with people who have unusual beliefs, like flat earthers, 9/11 truthers—

Ross: We do ghost investigations, we've joined Scientology, and we got baptized in the Mormon Church!

Carrie: If it goes bump in the night, then so do we.

Ross: [laughs] Hmm.

Carrie: Why don't you check out Oh No, Ross and Carrie! At Maximumfun.org.

Teresa: So, let's do a quick recap of the things that we should have had for cars before we put them on the road.

Travis: Speed limits.

Teresa: Okay, yeah.

Travis: Guard rails.

Teresa: Yeah—[laughs]

Travis: Curbs.

Teresa: These were the things that—

Travis: Sidewalks.

Teresa: —that didn't exist yet, in the early decades of the 20th century: Stop signs.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Warning signs.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Traffic lights.

Travis: Mmm.

Teresa: Traffic cops.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Driver's Ed.

Travis: Ooh.

Teresa: Lane lines.

Travis: Eugh...

Teresa: Street lighting.

Travis: Oh boy.

Teresa: Brake lights.

Travis: Oh, no.

Teresa: Driver's licenses.

Travis: Oh, goodness...

Teresa: Or posted speed limits!

Travis: Uh-oh... Oh boysie.

Teresa: Also, drinking and driving was considered, whatev's!

Travis: Oh, no! [laughs] That was—wow! All bad! All that's bad!

Teresa: All that's bad. All that's bad. Um, leading the way, though, um, was Detroit.

Travis: The Motor City.

Teresa: The Motor City. Maybe we should have saved this for Detroit. Do we go to Detroit? Maybe not.

Travis: Ah, who knows.

Teresa: Eventually.

Travis: We've been there before. That's where the, uh, infamous "My Brother, My Brother, and Me Star Wars" show was—

Teresa: Ah, that's right.

Travis: [laughing]—so I think we owe them a make-up sometime.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, like I said, Detroit was the first—among the first, second only to New York City, to have a dedicated police squad for traffic control. They also started using a tennis court line painting device to mark things like pedestrian zones.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: And parking spaces. Which—

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: —I should have included on the list of things that we didn't have yet.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: People—listen. I saw some pictures. People just leavin' their cars in the street. They just—if they wanted to go into a shop or go to work, then there's no parking. People just...

Travis: Just stopped the car and got out?

Teresa: Stopped the car, got out.

Travis: Oh my goodness.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I... wow. Wow!

Teresa: Here's something also interesting about Detroit: the first ones to use stoplights. But not really the way that we think of them? So, the stoplight that was first erected in Detroit was electric, but it needed someone to continually switch the colors of the lights. So, there was like, a pole with the light on it, and above it was like, a crow's nest. I imagine cup and ball? [laughs]

Travis: Uh-huh, yeah! I can picture that.

Teresa: Um, with a police officer standing in the crow's nest, all day, all night, I guess...

Travis: Who do you have to frustrate to get that job?

Teresa: Who would manually switch the lights from red to green. There was no yellow, but the only warning that they would give that they were switching the lights was a police whistle.

Travis: [pauses] Okay, so not the most efficient system.

Teresa: No. Nnno.

Travis: Although, once again, I think this was either in London or this was in Scotland, uh, and maybe the rest of England too, I just haven't been outside London... Uh, that there was...

So here, in the US, we have the green light, and then a yellow light when it's about to turn red, right? And then the red light, and I have seen other places, I don't know where, that then there is another light, like, it's about to turn green. And, mmm, love that. So it's like, "Hey everybody, be ready to go, please! It's about to turn green!" I like that. I wish we had that.

Teresa: Okay. So, seven years after our last Automobile Club of America records, we're in 1916, and 2.25 million motorized vehicles are in the US.

Travis: That's a lot. That's a lot.

Teresa: That is astounding to me!

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: What is the—how many percentage increase from 200,000?

Travis: It's, uh... Well, it's 10 times, or 11 times.

Teresa: Yeah, 11 times.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's amazing.

Travis: So 1,100%?

Teresa: [laughs] Um, and here's the thing. Now it's really getting to be a problem. There are more cars on the road, more people, um, who are uneducated about driving, driving on the road. And during the 1920's, 60% of automobile fatalities nationwide were children under 9.

Travis: Oh, bummer! Hey, sorry, everybody! Hey, that's a bummer! [sighs]

Teresa: And the reason that was blamed for a lot of these—these accidents, was excessive speeding.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, some places even put the pace as low as 5 miles an hour to try and prevent a lot of these fatalities, but... Here's the thing. A lot of these cars stalled out at 5 miles an hour, so people were not going 5 miles an hour. And also, I was thinking. How—unless—okay. Nowadays we have speed guns, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: So it—

Travis: How did you track 5 miles an hour?

Teresa: How do you track someone—I mean, I guess if you did... So if you timed someone from point A to point B, you could figure out how fast they were going, but you'd have—

Travis: Nobody did that.

Teresa: But—yeah, I mean, you'd have to have like, a "Ready, set, go," and you'd have to like, have the measured out distance, and the math involved does not make so that it's fast. [laughs] You know?

Travis: It seems probably much more like, "Hey. You looked like you were going 6 miles an hour. Were you?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: "Be honest."

Teresa: Yeah. Um, so... Here's the thing. They didn't—they didn't really know what to do about this. Um, so a lot of things happened as far as, like, derogatory names emerged [laughing] for road... for bad drivers.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, inconsiderate drivers were dubbed fli—flivverboobs.

Travis: 'Scuse me?

Teresa: Flivverboobs.

Travis: Flivverboobs! Okay!

Teresa: Um, hit and run was coined during this time period.

Travis: Another bumper.

Teresa: Joyriders was coined during this time period, people who stole these cars that people [laughing] just left in the streets.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Uh, road hogs, speed maniac, Sunday drivers. All of these things began appearing in print.

Travis: Now, how come all of those—all of those I've heard, except for flivverboob. How did joyrider continue—that's fine, okay, I get it—but not flivverboob? Ugh.

Teresa: Yeah. And remember how I mentioned that, um, cars often plowed through groups of people getting on and off the, uh, streetcar?

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Those people were called juggernauts.

Travis: Oh! Okay, listen. A terrible act. Super cool name.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, so this is when they started having public awareness campaigns about driving, and about the dangers, and about, you know, "watch out for kids" type thing. Um—

Travis: Yeah! That's—hey! Good rule!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Watch out for kids!

Teresa: Um, so held in Washington DC and New York City and all of these large cities around, uh, where there were bunches of cars, they had safety parades.

Travis: [softly] Alright.

Teresa: Uh, which were... I mean, usually more scare and guilt tactics. Things like children dressed as ghosts—

Travis: Eugh! Okay. Hey, listen, you know. If it works.

Teresa: Uh, and rows and rows of grieving young mothers.

Travis: [dry heaves]

Teresa: Eugh...

Travis: Okay...

Teresa: Yeah. Um, so let's—it's definitely a powerful statement, these safety parades, but there really didn't start to be any kind of like... What do I want to say? Uh, constructive, like, preventative... I mean, it was all like, "Bad stuff happens when you go fast in a car!"

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But it wasn't like, "Hey, let's all agree to go 25 miles an hour."

Travis: It seems like there was a lot more, uh, kind of negative rather than like, positive, like, "Let's all be cool, huh?"

Teresa: Right. Right. Until Herbert Hoover formed the US Secretary of Commerce.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, this is when, uh, they finally got automobile manufacturers to improve reliability and adopt safety measures. Things like turn signals.

Travis: Oh, goodness! Yeah!

Teresa: Brake lights.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Headlights.

Travis: Wha—there weren't headlights?!

Teresa: Not on all cars. It wasn't required.

Travis: Oh, goodness. Okay.

Teresa: Um, and then this is when the states even started to require drivers to take tests and be licensed.

Travis: A—a good call, I think.

Teresa: So much so, by the 1930's driver's ed was now required in order to, um, to drive your car. Here's—here's one of the things, though, that didn't get sorted out until later. The idea that a driver was licensed or that a car was licensed?

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Got kinda fuzzy between states. Some places had one or the other, and some places had both.

Travis: Like, one—wait. So you could get a car license and then anyone could drive it?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: So the car had the license plate, right?

Travis: Right, yes.

Teresa: Showing that it was registered. But registered to whom?

Travis: Huh. This is—okay. Hey. If you're listening to this, check back in with me. In LA—or maybe all of California, but I know for sure in Los Angeles, you have to get your car inspected for like, smog—you get a smog check, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: I remember when I was growing up in West Virginia, in Huntington, I was of the impression that your car had to be inspected, that like... And maybe I remember doing this, that like the windshield wipers worked, that the headlights would—like, that you had to get it... That it had to work properly and be in good condition to get it registered so you could keep driving it, and I can't remember the last time... I—this is one of those things. I don't know if this is a Mandela Effect thing. I feel like I remember doing that in West Virginia, and never again.

Teresa: I think that I've heard of that in—as far as like, if you buy a used car, for insurance purposes you often have to have it checked out, at like, a body shop or something.

Travis: But see, like, I remember going to the DMV, and someone coming out and like, checking the VIN number on my car, and like, checking the condition of it.

Teresa: Well, they did that for me when I took my driver's test. They made sure that the car was in working order then, but it wasn't for registration.

Travis: I'm saying, I think that we should bring that back, if not.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Because that's the thing is like, oh, you're a great driver, cool! But like, your turn signal doesn't work and your windshield wipers don't work and like,

your, like—I'm just saying. Maybe we should bring back inspections. Inspections! I feel like I had inspections taken!

Teresa: Inspections!

Travis: [sighs]

Teresa: So, 1934 is when General Motors completed their first crash test of one of their vehicles to test for safety. Let's think about that. The car was invented in 1908, and it's 1934, and they're just figuring out, "Hmm, maybe we should see if these are safe?" They were bad at it, though, uh, for a long time. We'll get back to that later.

[clears throat] Okay. Let's move on to the 1950's.

Travis: Okay. I've heard of them, yes.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, this is when scientists finally convinced car manufacturers that things like seat belts, and padded dashboards, and safety glass—

Travis: This is a big thing with Ralph Nader, right? Where Ralph Nader was like, pushing for seat belts and there were like, car manufacturers who attempted to discredit him with like, slander and like, trying to get, I believe, let's say sex workers, to try to solicit him to blackmail him or whatever to get him to quit pushing for seat belts. There was a whole Drunk History thing about it. Anyways—

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: Ralph Nader.

Teresa: Um, and then in 1959, that was the invention of the 3 point seat belt as we know it today, so that is the, um... The top of the shoulder belt is one point. The fixation point of the lap belt is the second point, and then as you cross it over your body to click it into the buckle is the third point.

Travis: Um, yeah. Ralph Nader wrote a book, I believe in 1966, titled Unsafe at Any Speed, uh, that—it prompted the passage of seat belt laws in 49 states, all but New Hampshire, um, and a lot of other things. So, if you appreciate the fact that there are seat belts in your car, thank Ralph Nader.

Teresa: What's the—the date on that?

Travis: What, the seat belt? Uh—uh, well, his book I believe was published... Let me see. It was published in 1965.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Um, it's "a book accusing car manufacturers of resistance to the introduction of safety features such as seat belts, and the general reluctance to spend money on improving safety." Um, and then it had a bigger impact in 1966, I believe.

Teresa: Uh, 1998 is when the federal government started their "Buckle up" campaign.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Uh, to drive home the fact that these safety belts, these seat belts, were in the car—

Travis: For a reason.

Teresa: —for the reason—[laughing] for a reason. And, uh, that it was... There were, um... Let me think. There were punitive consequences should you be without wearing your—

Travis: Click it or ticket!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: [emphatically] Click it... or ticket! [normally] One of my favorite little throwaway things in, uh, Bob's Burgers. [singing] Buckle it up...

Together: [singing] Buckle it up, buckle it up or you'll die!

Travis: [laughs quietly]

Teresa: Okay. So, quick recap: 1908 is when Model T Ford came off the assembly line. 1998 is when we were like, "We've got this car thing down."

Travis: Meh, okay.

Teresa: Almost a century!

Travis: Yeah! And we're s—and you know what? I would argue, still figuring it out.

Teresa: Still figuring it out, with like, you know... What is—are they saying that like, automo—auto-driven cars—

Travis: Uh, self-driving cars.

Teresa: Self-driving cars.

Travis: Self-driving cars.

Teresa: [whispers] Wow... [normally] Right?

Travis: And you know, here's the thing.

Teresa: What was that movie with Will Smith and he had the car and he took it—

Travis: Oh, you're talking about, uh, I, Robot.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Um... I will say—this is my tiny soapbox. Let me hop up on this tiny soapbox. Um, we talked about on Trends Like These... We did a lot of coverage on self-driving cars because there was like, uh, the first like, self-driving car accident. And the thing was is, it was not, if I remember correctly, caused by the self-driving car.

And the thing is, is I think people are very afraid of the self-driving car, because they feel like they would be giving up control, but the fact of the matter is, is like, if you look back through all of human history coupled with car history when that began, as we're describing, humans are bad at cars!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: They're bad at it.

Teresa: I—I think that I have, uh, demonstrated through my hundred year timeline that, indeed, they are.

Travis: I very much look forward to when we have perfected self-driving cars. I think that it will be a lot safer, and uh, it'll just be a lot easier to take a nap in a car.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] Those two things. Um, so I think that's gonna do it for us. That's just some—

Teresa: Yes, thank you, Indianapolis!

Travis: [quiet shouting] "Ahhh, thank you! Thank you for coming out! Ahhh!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, let's see. What else? Uh, speaking of live shows, Book Two of The Adventure Zone graphic novel, *Murder on the Rockport Limited* is coming out, uh, mid-July. I believe July 16th or 17th. Uh, and to celebrate it, we are doing a book tour. Uh, Justin and Griffin are going to be in New York City on July 16th, and then in Austin, Texas on July 17th, and Carrie Pietsch will also be at that New York show.

Uh, and then Dad and I are going to Portland on July 16th, and Los Angeles on July 17th, and then all five of us will be back together in San Diego for San Diego Comic Con on July 19th. You can get tickets for that at mcelroy.family and click on "Tours," and the price of that ticket includes a signed copy of the book. Uh, and if you're not able to make it to those shows, you can go to theadventurezonecomic.com and preorder Book Two, and we hope that you do. It's really good and you're gonna like it.

Uh, we also have some other non-book show—live shows coming up. Oh, and at those book shows, I should say we're going to be doing live readings of scenes—

Teresa: Ooh!

Travis: —with the art projected behind us. Yeah! And we've got some incredibly special guests, uh, that are gonna help us read those, and you're gonna be really excited about 'em.

Um, but like I said, there's other non-book tour shows available there too, at mcelroy.family, click on "Tours." Uh, you can also go to mcelroymerch.com, and we try to put up new merch all the time, so if you haven't checked it in a while, go check it!

Uh, and make sure that you check out Maximumfun.org, uh, home to Shmanners, as well as a bunch of other amazing podcasts! What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Well, we always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are sold. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. You can tweet at us and when we put the call out for questions for episodes, that's where we do it, @shmannerscast.

Um, also, thank you to Keely Weis Photography. She took the picture that is the cover banner for our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners, and we encourage you to join that, if you like giving and getting excellent advice from other fans. Um, also, we are taking topic submissions! Please email us @shmanners.—no, wait—

Travis: At shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Teresa: Ah, there it is. Shmannerscast@gmail.com. Lastly, um, I would like to thank Paul Sabourin. Thank you for stepping in at the last minute and, uh, helping out when I was unable to perform in Indianapolis. You're a—you're a gem, Paul.

Travis: Uh, and that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week!

Teresa: No RSVP required!

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners...

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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