

Shmanners 143: Christmas: BANNED! (Plus, our Christmas Memories!)

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Travis: The war on Christmas is over! We won!

Teresa: It's *Shmanners!*

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I am 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: As *soon* as we started recording the cat jumped into our—

Teresa: Yes, look who has come to visit us.

Travis: How—why—it—what—podcasting: it brings cats in.

Teresa: I haven't seen her in days.

Travis: I know! I know! "But what's this? Podcasting? Ooh, I'd better come—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "—and rub against—" Teresa was sitting in that chair for, like, 15, minutes. Nothing. And as soon as we started re—like, it's like she heard "It's *Shmanners!*" and was like, "Oh, I love *Shmanners!*" Okay. She's our biggest fan.

Teresa: She does love *Shmanners*.

Travis: Hiii!

Teresa: Hello.

Travis: Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, Joyous Candelights to all. Um, and I know what you're saying. "But it's not... that yet." You're absolutely right. It's still about two weeks away. But, um, for this episode—

Teresa: We're really gettin' in the spirit of things.

Travis: We sure are! Um, you know, we built a gingerbread house, we had some wassail, um, we decorated the Christmas tree, we watched... the movies, we—

Teresa: Some of the movies.

Travis: Well, more than most people watched. I mean, we're up to about, I think, 40 at this point that we've watched. We've done pretty good. Our shopping is done. The mistletoe is nowhere to be seen—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —'cause that's a weird, gross tradition. And, um, you know? I wanted to, this year—for this week, um, the topic was my idea, but I still made Teresa research it 'cause I was sick. And—

Teresa: I was also sick.

Travis: We took turns. Being sick. Not researching.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And this year, I brought a bit of knowledge. I took a class in—in college that was US History Pre-Civil War. And one of the books that we had to read for it was a book called *The Battle Over Christmas*. I think that's it? And it was all about the war on Christmas, or when Christmas was outlawed.

But the—the information behind it may surprise you. Come on in! Join us, won't you?

Teresa: [laughs] Well, so... the war on Christmas goes all the way back to the 1600's, when the Puritans in England overthrew King Charles I in 1647. Um, and pretty much right after they chopped his head off, they banned Christmas.

Travis: What?!

Teresa: Um, because Christmas at the time was... I don't know. There was a kind of contempt for it among the Puritans. Um, for a couple reasons.

Travis: One: they were Puritans and they had contempt for everything.

Teresa: Yeah. Is it fun? Puritans don't like it.

Travis: I think there's a kids' show that we very much enjoy, so maybe it's not a ki—maybe it's an all ages show—called *Horrible History*.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And they... talk a lot about the Puritans throughout it, and basically if it was fun—drinking, dancing, singing... I don't know, any—like, anything.

Teresa: Colors.

Travis: Yeah! Even—even fun that is not—like, that we would traditionally say, like—like spices in your food. Like, salt was not okay? Anything like that, the Puritans were against.

Teresa: Um, and so their—right after, like I said, the new Puritan Parliament decreed that December the 25th was instead now a day of fasting and humiliation for—meaning, like, self, kind of, uh, flagellation. Like, repenting, things like that.

Travis: Prostrating yourself.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: *Prostrating*, excuse me.

Teresa: Prostrating.

Travis: Prostrating. Without that other "R" in there, that's weird. [laughs]

Teresa: Um, because in the 16th—

Travis: [through laughter] Don't prostate yourself. That's not what I meant.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Glazing right over that. Because at this time in history, it was often referred to, instead of Christmas time it was called Foolstide.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Right. Um—

Travis: 'Cause you act a fool?

Teresa: Well, 'cause it was, you know, full of rowdy celebrations. And lots of things, um... a lot of the traditions at the time, and even some now today, were co-opted from pagan celebrations, and we've talked about this a little bit. Um, but the one that was specific to this time period was Saturnalia, which was a Roman holiday of lights marked with drinking and feasting, that coincided with the winter solstice. So there's even some kind of, like, Celtic druid in there type deal, the winter solstice.

Um, and so it wasn't even until the 4th century AD, by papal decree—and the Puritans *hate* the pope— um, by papal decree that they even decided that Christ was born on the 25th of December.

Travis: Mm-hmm. Took 'em 400 years to check their calendars.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Ugh. Come on.

Teresa: Um, and so really everything—

Travis: So did people just not get out of school during the Christmas break then, or?

Teresa: No. Schools were—were not closed, businesses were not closed, and churches *were* closed.

Travis: Oh, sorry. I meant in 4th century AD.

Teresa: Ohhh.

Travis: There probably weren't schools. Is the reason. Maybe—

Teresa: I mean, there were schools for a few people.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, but almost everything had to do with it. Uh, so the feasting, the drinking, gambling games, um, and even—at this point in the 1600's, there was this thing called, uh—well, I'm not exactly sure what it was called. But it was kind of like trick or treating!

Travis: Okay. Wa—wassailing.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah.

Travis: Or—or—caroling, right?

Teresa: Caroling, sort of. Um, where—

Travis: We've talked about this before, because we talked about the "Bring us some figgy pudding—"

Teresa: Right.

Travis: "—and we won't go until we get some," and... we've talked about that specific issue before.

Teresa: People would dress up, um, and they would go around and demand, from the doors of the prosperous people, that they feed them the food from their own table. So not, like, "We just want a handout." Like—

Travis: "Bring us some figgy pudding. [imperiously] Now bring us some figgy pudding!"

Teresa: "Not just some, but bring us *your* pudding."

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: We don't want anything from your larder. We want you to serve us from dinner.

Travis: It was like the purge, you know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, people were just purging left and right, folks.

Teresa: And then if you didn't comply, these mobs of people turned nasty and would often, like, commit vandalism or other acts of violence—

Travis: Push you out of the way, go into your house and just start stealin' stuff.

Teresa: Yeah. Um... so then once the monarchy was restored in England in 1660, the Yuletide ban was still going strong in the colonies.

Travis: Yeah! America! USA!

Teresa: [halfheartedly, through laughter] America!

Travis: USA! USA!

Teresa: Um, and in the colonies, the thing about the Puritans was they really, really took the whole, uh, "If it's not in the Bible, we don't do it" kind of thing super, super, like, 'cereal'.

Travis: Almost religiously so.

Teresa: Yeah! Um, and so they didn't even... celebrate the birth of Jesus, because, like, there wasn't—

Travis: There wasn't a date in the—

Teresa: There was no date, and, like... there was no scriptural basis for it, according to them.

Travis: Nobody told them to, and so they didn't.

Teresa: That's it. Um... so, once again... this was made illegal, but it wasn't, like, the secret police were going after people. They weren't peeking into windows or, like—you know, like, listening for people praying or singing carols or whatever. It was mostly about—like I said, the kind of rowdy drunkenness out in the street, you know, committing violence things that—that weren't appreciated. And if you were caught doing that, you could be fined five shillings. Guess how much five shillings is in today's dollars.

Travis: How much?

Teresa: Fifty bucks.

Travis: [sighs] That's... I mean, I guess—yeah, that's a lot, right?

Teresa: I mean, but—it's not a *ton*, but it's a lot to be annoying.

Travis: Yes. Okay. It's not nothing. But, like, here's the thing: when someone says "And you could be fined—" the answer is either way more than you think or way less than you think. And if you had said, like, a thousand dollars, I'd be like, "Holy—for just bein' out there and havin' some mulled wine? A thousand—" but fifty dollars is like, "Hmm, maybe it's worth it [holding back laughter] to go out and steal from the rich. We'll see."

Teresa: Um, so then the official ban was lifted in 18—in, sorry, 1681. Um, because, mostly, of the French Indian War.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, because more and more Catholic, French Catholic were settling in the area, and because of the revolution on the horizon, we needed to have the French on our side, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So—against England. So we couldn't really—you know, the Puritans couldn't go after the Catholics the way they used to, *and they used to*, by the way.

Um, so they officially lifted the ban, but even still it was pretty a hos—a pretty hostile environment. Um, there was a governor who attended Christmas Day

services in 1686, and he had to do his kind of, like, praying, flanked by redcoats.
[laughs]

Travis: Wow.

Teresa: Because the anti-Christmas sentiment was still super, super high. Um, and so well into the 1800's, businesses and schools in Massachusetts remained open on December 25th, and the churches stayed closed.

Travis: I see. Huh. Hey, do you wanna talk more about this, but first maybe write some thank you notes to our sponsors?

Teresa: Yeah!

[theme music plays]

Teresa: *Shmanners* is sponsored in part this week by Sun Basket! Now, we have been receiving Sun Baskets, and let me tell you why I love them.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: It is so easy to open the refrigerator, grab a Sun Basket, because it's all very easily packaged in its own little bag. Everything is labeled. Um, if it is a, uh—a meal containing meat, I do often have to defrost the meat, but it is just so nice to pull out the recipe card and just a bag of ingredients. Um, making it easy and convenient to cook healthy and delicious meals at home!

They ship fresh, organic produce and responsibly raised meat and seafood directly to the door, which can be prepped and ready to eat in around 15 minutes.

Travis: And listen, that is not an exaggeration, you know what I mean? That's not, like, 15 minutes with an asterisk. Like, 15 to 20 minutes and you will have, like, a fresh, you know, from your refrigerator, like, you made it yourself meal.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Um, and we really enjoy 'em. We enjoy those meal services, folks!

Teresa: And it's not like the same six, seven meals over and over again, 'cause they have so much to choose from. They have paleo, gluten free, vegan, even diabetes-friendly, which I think is a really great idea.

Um, so our *Shmanners* listeners can get \$35 off their first order at Sun Basket when they go to sunbasket.com/shmanners! Once again, for \$35 off, go to sunbasket.com/shmanners.

Travis: Now, listen, folks. It's the holidays, and maybe there's someone on your list where you're like, "Hm. That one per—I don't know what to get them. They have everything!" Well, you know what I bet they *don't* have is a beautiful CanvasPeople print from a shared memory betwixt the two of you that you pick out, have made for them, and get to them for the holidays. What do you think?

Teresa: I bet they don't have that.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: But they should.

Travis: Yes. Because CanvasPeople will do that. They'll take that memory, and they'll turn it into unique works of art that add a beautiful touch to your home. Griffin and Rachel have one of these of their beautiful son, our nephew Henry, and it is gorgeous.

And you know what? It's fine to have beautiful framed photos. I have them around me right now. I'm looking at them, and that's great. But sometimes you have a memory where it's like, "This is stand out. This—this thing that you and I did together—this—this moment from my life, from your life, from our lives—this means something more. And you know what? So I took the time. I had it made onto canvas, and now it's a beautiful piece of art that you can hang in your home."

Um, and it's great for decor or prints. It's amazing.

So, for a special, very limited holiday offer, canvaspeople.com is offering their popular 11 by 14 photo canvases for free. That's right, free! These normally sell for 69.99, but for this week only, you'll pay nothing. Just cover shipping and handling.

To get your free canvas, text "shmanners," S-H-M-A-N-N-E-R-S, to 797979. Just pay shipping and handling. This offer won't last, so text "shmanners" to 797979. That's "shmanners" to 797979. Message and data rates apply.

Lisa: Hey, if you like your podcast to be focused and well-researched, and your podcast hosts to be uncharismatic, unhorny strangers who have no interest in horses, then this is not the podcast for you!

Emily: Yeah, and what's your deal?

Lisa: [laughs]

Emily: I'm Emily.

Lisa: I'm Lisa.

Emily: Our show's called *Baby Geniuses!*

Lisa: And its hosts are horny, adult idiots. We discover weird Wikipedia pages every episode.

Emily: We discuss institutional misogyny!

Lisa: We ask each other the dumbest questions, and our listeners won't stop sending us pictures of their butts!

Emily: We haven't asked them to stop, but they also aren't stopping.

Lisa: Join us on *Baby Geniuses!*

Emily: Every other week on MaximumFun.org.

[music plays]

[gavel banging]

[music plays]

Jesse: I'm bailiff Jesse Thorn.

John: And I'm Judge John Hodgman.

Jesse: If you live on the west coast of North America, we're coming your way.

John: That's right! *Judge John Hodgman* is taking justice to the west coast on tour!

Jesse: Starting where? Vancouver, British Columbia, January 15th. Then to Seattle, Washington on the 16th, Portland, Oregon on the 17th, San Francisco, California on the 18th, and Los Angeles, California, the city of angels, on January 22nd. Tickets are on sale now. you can find links to all of the shows at Maximumfun.org.

And, if you're gonna be in one of those cities and you have a dispute we can try onstage, send it to us! Just go to Maximumfun.org/jjho, or email hodgman@maximumfun.org.

John: I'm ready to judge you, on the road.

[gavel banging]

John: Take that, Jack Kerouac, author of *On the Road*.

[music plays]

Teresa: Okay! So we're back, but here's the thing.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: I want to paint a mind picture for you.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: Of a Puritan Christmas. Are you ready?

Travis: Wait, hold on. Now I'm ready.

Teresa: Okay. So, today is December the 25th.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: What were you doing yesterday? You're gonna do that again today.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Uh, so... if you went to work, you're gonna do that, too.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Uh, if you were cleaning or, I don't know. What do Puritans do? Making cheese? You're gonna do that, too.

Travis: Okay. I don't think just Puritans make cheese, though. I think—

Teresa: I mean, you know what I mean.

Travis: —that's probably something that they do. Butter.

Teresa: Butter.

Travis: Maybe cows are in their somewhere.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Chores.

Travis: And—yeah, slop—slop that pig?

Teresa: That's right.

Travis: Gotta slap it—no, slop it! [through laughter] Don't slap the pig!

Teresa: But when you open your eyes and start to plan your day, do you know what you see around your room?

Travis: I'm going to say—can I guess? Nothing.

Teresa: Nothing, because... Christmas trees—

Travis: Oh, I thought you were gonna say "'Cause it's still dark outside and I haven't lit a candle yet."

Teresa: Oh, no. I was gonna say, because any kind of inside greenery?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Those are pagan.

Travis: Ooh. Okay.

Teresa: 'Cause it celebrates the winter solstice.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, so Christmas trees are out. Wreaths are out.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, they don't believe—Puritans did not believe in the extravagance of giving gifts, so no presents.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Also, didn't like sugar, so no candy.

Travis: Hmm, bummer. Okay. Alright.

Teresa: Um, so then you're gonna—you're gonna get dressed, you're gonna—

Travis: You watch the Santa Claus, or perhaps the Grinch?

Teresa: No. Because they don't have TV. But, you go to eat your breakfast, or at least to get your, um—your breakfast... pail, or what—to take out to the fields with you.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: What's in there?

Travis: Now, when I was growing up, for Christmas we would have, like, cinnamon rolls or... uh, you know, like, orange rolls?

Teresa: No. Because yeasted breads... take a lot of time, so you probably didn't have that in the morning. You probably had, like, an oatmeal. But if you were expecting, like, a mince pie? Nope.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Nope. Outlawed. Can't have mince pies.

Travis: [horrified] They outlawed mince pies?!

Teresa: And... Christmas puddings.

Travis: [gasps] They outlawed Christmas—was it 'cause there was booze in them?

Teresa: Uh, no, 'cause they had to do with Christmas.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: So no steamed pud, no mince pies, no candy. Um, and then you went out and you did your work. Maybe... the fields?

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Or... you know, the barn?

Travis: On Christmas?

Teresa: On Christmas, and if you, um—perhaps today you are selling your eggs at market.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Everybody's there. It's a usual day. Because we don't celebrate Christmas. [pauses] So you're gonna go home.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: And... you know—

Travis: Now—

Teresa: —wash your face.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Right? And then go back to bed, because... it's—it's, uh, it's dark and you can't do any more work. Um, and today was a day just like yesterday, and it'll be a day tomorrow. Oh, and I forgot: in there, you prayed a lot.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So when you said you were gonna describe a Puritan Christmas, it was kind of a trick, wasn't it?

Teresa: [amused] Yes, it was.

Travis: Because... there—it sounds like there is no such thing!

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: Okay. Ugh, goodness. So, uh, I just wanted—before we wrap up *this* segment of the show, I wanna say, uh, the name of that book, if you want to check it out, *The Battle for Christmas: a Social and Cultural History of Our Most Cherished Holiday s* available on Amazon. It's by Stephen Nissenbaum.

Um, and I—I just remember finding the whole subject fascinating, 'cause when you think of Christmas now, right? We think of it as—well, in two ways. One, as being incredibly protected by, you know, the religious, uh, of those among us. And, like, that idea of, like, we talk about now, like, that there are some that when the Starbucks coffee cup—

Teresa: Yes!

Travis: —comes out that it's like, "This is a war on Christmas!"

Teresa: Remember? It was crazy.

Travis: And the thing is is like, there was a time where Christmas was outlawed, and it was outlawed by *the church*. The church outlawed it. That's so fascinating and interesting to me, but also when you think about Christmas now, we think about it in the very, like, PG, even G version of it. Uh, where, you know, we're thinking a lot about, like, Victorian Christmas and these very, like, family-centered—the Pepsi-Cola Santa and, you know, this kind of, like...

Teresa: I thought he was the Coke Santa.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Whatever.

Travis: Coke. The Coke Santa. The Coca-Cola Santa. Of, like, these very... Normal Rockwell-ian—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: —kind of images. And it's like, "Well, actually, there was a big period of time where it was very kind of debaucherous and everybody was drunk, to the point where it had to be outlawed." That's just so... that's so fascinating to me. That there was basically, like, a Prohibition on Christmas.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Ah! Um, so I thought before we wrapped up this episode, since we're kind of chugging towards the holidays, I wanted to talk about some of our, like, holiday traditions growing up!

Teresa: Oh, are we gonna paint *real* mind pictures?

Travis: Now we'll paint *real* happy—we'll end on a happier note.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Of our actual, like, childhood Christmases. So what was, like, a Christmas morning like in the Wellman household?

Teresa: Well... um, let's see.

Travis: What time did you get up? Let's start there.

Teresa: Well, my sister—my older sister and I, um, would usually wake up first, and we would wake up probably around 7:30.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And we would go downstairs and empty our stockings without our parents.

Travis: [gasps] What?!

Teresa: And then put everything back... [holding back laughter] and then wait for our parents to get up and bring down—

Travis: You demons!

Teresa: —[through laughter] Elizabeth, our little sister.

Travis: What?!

Teresa: And then we would open our—I mean, if anything was *wrapped* inside the presents—inside the stockings—like, I think my—uh, I think that *Santa...* got really, uh—really smart, got hip to this. Because if something was wrapped inside the stockings, we didn't open it.

Travis: [simultaneously] You couldn't open it, yeah.

Teresa: Because we had to keep up the illusion—

Travis: You would get caught.

Teresa: —that we hadn't been there. But if things were unwrapped, then we could see what they were. So then once my parents got up, we all did the stockings as if for the first time!

Travis: See—now, in my house, one—this will surprise no one. I would have trouble sleeping and, like, I would wake up early, 'cause I—I had a lot of insomnia issues when I was a kid.

Teresa: Sometimes you would never go to sleep.

Travis: This is true. Um, and—so especially any time where I was, like, anticipating something, anxious about something, or excited about something, like... sleep was not a question.

Teresa: So every other day for you?

Travis: Yeah. I remember once being, like, 12 years old, and Griffin and I had bunk beds, and I was laying on the bottom bunk just, like, staring at the top bunk thinking, "How hard would I have to hit my head against the upper bunk to knock myself out so I can go to sleep?"

Teresa: Oh...

Travis: Uh, I was very fru—but! That's the night *before* Christmas. So then Christmas morning, Griffin and I would wake up early. And once—after—for a while Justin would too, and then after a certain while, once Justin became a teenager, and then eventually I became a teenager, Justin stopped wanting to be woken up at 5 o' clock in the morning by Griffin and I?

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: My parents, somewhere along the line, started this tradition—and God bless it, it worked. They would take a piece of ribbon, like, you know, that you would tie up a gift, and tape it across the top of the stairs with, like... "Don't go downstairs" written on a note on it or something.

Teresa: So you had to be able to read.

Travis: I guess? But, like, Justin and Griffin and I would, like, sit at the—and we never—I don't remember ever, like, disobeying that. And, like, we would just kind of—

Teresa: 'Cause the anticipation is part of the fun.

Travis: Yeah! And then, like, we would, you know, eventually around about, like, 6:30 or 7:00, wake up mom and dad. And then *they* would go downstairs ahead of us.

Teresa: Ohh!

Travis: And now *I*, as a kid... like, I don't know what I thought they were doing. The answer is probably finishing touches of stuff, but the answer is more likely enjoying one—*one* moment of quiet.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Where they—they—

Teresa: The first sip of their morning beverage.

Travis: Yes. They weren't coffee drinkers, so they were having, like, Diet Coke. It was the 80's and 90's. They were havin' Diet Coca-Cola, and just saying, like, "Are we ready for this? Can we handle it?"

So then there's the, "You can come downstairs!" And then Griffin—Justin, I, and Griffin would come down, in that order, in age appropriate order, and then we would see what Santa had left us. Um, and there would always be, like, one big thing—or, like, one main—whatever. Like, "This is the big surprise present!"

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: You know, it might be, like, we got a Super Ninten—or a—well, we got lots of game systems throughout the years of, like, uh—I remember specifically the Nintendo 64 being a big one that was like, "This is for a little three of you." There was one year where it was, like, bikes for all three of us, that kind of thing. And then we would, like, "Ohh, whoaa!" And then it was just like, "Okay, time out."

And then mom would go put in the, like—the Pillsbury cinnamon roll—

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: —and orange rolls from the cans?

Teresa: Mm-hmm, my mom did that, too. She also would make, like, a—a Christmas casserole, like, a breakfast casserole that had, like—

Travis: With strata?

Teresa: Sure! It had eggs and sometimes sausage and hash browns and stuff on it, so it's kind of like—just all of the things for breakfast in one casserole. With cheese.

Travis: And so then, um, once—and I think, like, Justin and Griffin and I would each have, like, some hot cocoa or, like, some—well, we called it rocket sauce, but it was, like, this instant... tea cider-y kind of thing that my mom made? A mixture that had, like, uh—

Teresa: You guys can't see my faces, but I have tried rocket sauce and it is really weird.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Teresa doesn't care for it. I care for it a lot. Uh—

Teresa: Okay, so here are the things in it. Um, instant tea.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Tang.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Uh... like, cider spices.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And sugar.

Travis: I think there's, like, cinnamon and—sugar, yeah. There's a lot of sugar. Um, and—and *I* think it's great. But then—then the present would begin, the present exchange, and—

Teresa: Well, we—we did something similar. So, we would eat a little breakfast and then we had to go, um—in our older years, we had to go get dressed, because at this point there was, like, after—after this break, there was no more stopping. So if we didn't get dressed now, we wouldn't get dressed until, like, 2 o' clock in the afternoon.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: So we had to go get dressed, and then we could start in on the rounds of presents from families.

Travis: Um, and so we would—so you guys did rounds. This is a thing that since I have been with your family is—is very different. Here's the thing about McElroy family gift exchange—not so much now, but for a long time—it takes *for ever*. Because everyone gets—like, you hand one present to someone, and then we all watch them open it, and they hold it up and they're like, "Oh, grea—aw, thank you! Oh, this is from you? Aw, thank you!" And then—and then we do the next gift. And so—

Teresa: So one gift at a time.

Travis: Yes. And it makes it take forever, but it also is a very, like... "Hmm, we're here, we're very mindful, very present in the moment." And that's not to say yours doesn't work—

Teresa: I think that that definitely—that has its place, and I think that when there are not, you know, 15 people—

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: —that's probably fine. And I'm sure it is fine. We might do that this year. But at *my* house, there were... too many people. [through laughter] To do that.

Travis: We had the same amount of people, but go on. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [sighs] So... we would pass out a round of presents. So everyone has a present in their lap, and they all open it at the same time, and then we all hold it up, say "Ooh, ah, what'd you get?" That kind of thing

Travis: Yeah, I think that—I think is—I think we're talking about the same thing.

Teresa: So it's—it's—

Travis: I actually think that your method is better, but—

Teresa: Yeah, it's just—because the physical unwrapping of the present no one really cares about. It's the thing inside.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So when you do a round of presents like that, then it gets it—it gets it goin'. [laughs quietly]

Travis: I will say that this is a thing—I'm trying so hard right now not to sound like an old person who's like, "Ooh, back in my day..." But... I looove, like, online shopping. It makes it very easy to get stuff, uh, for Christmas.

But there's something to be said about remembering what it was like being ten and being like, "Where did you find—how did you get this?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know, that kind of thing. "When did you have time?" That kind of deal? Um, by the way, we—Teresa and I—I showed Teresa some of my home movies, my childhood home movies. There was a really great Christmas where my dad surprised my mom with a VCR.

Teresa: Ohh, yeahhh.

Travis: And, like, she's very surprised at a VCR, and he keeps saying to her, like, "Yeah, and that's for you. That's for you." And all I can think is, like, "Not for her, dad! Like, you used that to record *everything*, dad!" But did watch lots of movies on it. Um, let's see—and so then—we also had, uh, a behavior that I would say

maybe began around... ooh, Griffin seven, Travis ten, Justin thirteen, which is when we would finish unwrapping the gift, we would wad up the paper and throw it at my dad. 'Cause my dad would always hold the garbage bag to collect the paper?

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: And so in—in—in the guise of, like, "Put this in the garbage, dad." We would try to nail my dad with a big wad of wrapping paper.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And it was... so funny.

Teresa: That tracks for you guys. That sounds... that sounds about right.

Travis: It was so funny. Aw, and you know what? Dad loved it. Every time. It was great. I'm trying to think. What other things did we do?

Teresa: Did you have, like, a special—did you do Christmas lunch or Christmas dinner?

Travis: We did Christmas dinner.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: My mom—Teresa and I have talked about this many times, just not on the show, so I know that doesn't count for you people at home.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, but, like, my mom was a consummate hostess and, like, would bake all day. Oh, this is another Christmas tradition! So, the night before on Christmas Eve, my dad would take me and Justin and Griffin, taking us out of our mom's hair so she could, like, cook and stuff, and we'd go on a Christmas Eve walk. We still do. We do it now.

Teresa: Yes they do!

Travis: Um, where—and now we take our kids with us. Um, where we would walk around the neighborhood and talk about all the things that have happened.

Teresa: And not the wives.

Travis: Well—

Teresa: So we get to sit... and relax. [laughs]

Travis: Yes, so that you have time. Um, and—and so that—and we would talk about all the stuff that had happened in the year. Good things, bad things, important things, and stuff that we were hoping for the next year, and that kind of thing. Um, it was very nice. And you know, even the years when we haven't been together, we'll, like, call each other on the phone as we walk around. I did it one time just walking circles in Teresa's family's driveway while I talked to my family while they walked around.

Um, but yeah. So my mom would, like, make dinner—I wanna say ham? I wanna say that the given was ham? Um, I just like saying the word "ham?"

Teresa: You sure do.

Travis: Ham? Um, and, you know, mashed potatoes and—lots of desserts! That's the other thing is—

Teresa: Yeah, that's the thing, huh?

Travis: Whenever I get to host people are always like, "You made five different desserts?" Like, "Yes." Like, my mom would make as many desserts as she made other things on the table. And then, you know, also, like, the bacon wrapped—you know, little bacon wrapped weenies. And, like—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —uh, shrimp. So many shrimp.

Teresa: So many shrimps.

Travis: Um... ooh, sausage balls? I haven't made those in forever.

Teresa: We did—we did Christmas lunch. Usually, like I said, around 2:00. Um, and my mom—because my mom for a very long time—and still does, actually—she sings in the Christmas Eve choir.

Um, they have a 5 o' clock Mass at my—at my parents' church. They also have, like, a midnight Mass. So she sings at 5 o' clock, um, which means when you get home at around 7:30, because Christmas Mass takes a very long time, uh, that there's not a lot of time to cook, so she usually just makes spaghetti. Um, so then the real meal is Christmas Day, and I always remember—it's always something, like... my mom doesn't like ham, I don't think. So we didn't do ham.

Travis: I—you know? I don't think our family did ei—I don't know why we kept eating it!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Justin didn't like it. I didn't like it. I don't know if my mom did?

Teresa: But my mom would always make some kind of, like, really... [sighs] just—just a really full meat dish, you know what I mean?

Travis: Of *beef*.

Teresa: Like a—like—yeah, like a roast or, like, prime rib, or something like that. It was usually—because we had turkey for Thanksgiving, she wanted to do, like, a meat.

Travis: Something *le boeuf*.

Teresa: Yes. For—for, um... for Christmas. But you know, I think that, um—I am, as I always have been, more interested in the mashed potatoes and rolls. [laughs]

Travis: Yes, that's it. The carbs. The carbs of it all.

Teresa: The carbs. The carbs. That's what I like.

Travis: Um, and then Christmas Day afternoon, evening, I think we would go, like, visit the family that we had in the area or have, like, people over to exchange some more. But a lot of it was, like, roundabout I would say 3 o' clock or—depending on how early we started or how late we started, we would then

kind of been given this, like, two hour window of, like, "Now go, play with your things!"

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: "Enjoy your time!" As I imagine mom and dad would just nap.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um... and yet—

Teresa: Or if you were still young enough, they would put together your toys for you.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: That's what my dad did. For hours, it seems. All those tiny little Barbie stickers my dad applied... bless him.

Travis: I could see your dad being very, like, calc—like, very careful about putting those stickers on, too.

Teresa: He was, yeah!

Travis: Um, yeah. So that was—that was, like, our Christmas Day!

Teresa: Not at all like the Puritans.

Travis: No, very different. Thank you so much, everybody, for joining us. Um, next week... let's see. Will we do an ep—we might have to miss next week. We'll see. It being the holidays and travel and all. Um... but then there will be an episode up Christmas week, because we'll have the—what we record at the Candenights show in Huntington, which we're excited to see you all there. Um, and yeah, thank you all so much for joining us, for being here, for being incredible, being nice. You're all great. And hey, as you celebrate the holidays this holiday season, please be careful! Be responsible. Don't drink and drive. Drink responsibly. Party responsibly, and be nice to each other.

Teresa: Be *excellent* to each other.

Travis: Indeed. Um, and you know what? If you're still looking for some last minute Christmas presents, maybe check out mcelroymerch.com. There's a lot of cool stuff on there, including some really cool *Shmanners* pin sets and a t-shirt, uh, designed by Kate Leth. You can find that at mcelroymerch.com. Um, and you can go to themcelroy.family to check out our snazzy new McElroy family hub website. Um, and—

Teresa: Exciting things on that site!

Travis: Exciting things, indeed! You can follow us, uh, on Twitter @... uh, @shmannerscast. I forgot which show I was talking about for a second.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And you can email us if you have topic ideas, uh, shmannerscast@gmail.com. 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 found. Um, also thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our beautiful Twitter thumbnail art, which he mentioned is @shmannerscast. And then thank you to Keely Weis Photography for the beautiful photograph, um, on the fan-run Facebook page, *Shmanners Fanners!* So if you're interested in connecting with other fans of the *Shmanners* podcast, please go and join that!

Travis: And I think 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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