

Shmanners 205: Steve Irwin

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Travis: See you later, alligator.

Teresa: After a while, crocodile.

Travis: 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: [inhales] You know, goin'!

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: We're all—we all just keep on truckin'.

Travis: For the time being. [documentary narrator voice?] Both of our children are asleep for now—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —[documentary narrator voice?] which means it's time for us to record a podcast. Let's see how long this lasts.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: [distantly] Woo!

Teresa: Well.

Travis: It's a thing. Man!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know, and yesterday, last night, there was, like, tornado warnings here in Cincinnati. And, like, now in our neighborhood, like, whole trees were uprooted last night.

Teresa: And a trampoline!

Travis: A trampoline was blown, like, two blocks.

Teresa: [holding back laughter] Into a tree!

Travis: Into a tree.

Teresa: This is not funny. But it is...

Travis: A lot.

Teresa: ... a lot. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. It's not funny so much as it's just so much so that you kind of have to process it by laughing, right?

Teresa: Chekhov. Chekhov. said, "If we don't laugh, we'll cry." So.

Travis: Well, Chekhov said a lot of things.

Teresa: That's true.

Travis: "Here's my gun. Remember this."

Teresa: [through laughter] Okay.

Travis: Yes. That's—

Teresa: [through laughter] He also said—no, wait a second. Did one of his—I think one of his characters said that. That's the thing, right?

Travis: Well, the Chekhov's gun I think comes from *The Seagull*, right? Where it's just like, "Oh, and did I mention? I just got this gun." Remember that. If they mention it, it's gonna come back. That's the idea of Chekhov's gun.

Teresa: Right. But they—if we don't—well, is "If we don't laugh, we'll cry—" is that in *Uncle Vanya*?

Travis: I think it's—it's probably *Uncle Vanya*.

Teresa: Aw, we both did it then.

Travis: Okay. Fair enough.

Teresa: [laughs] He didn't say either of those things. His characters did.

Travis: This is not germane to this topic, but it is one of my pet peeves when people, like, credit, like, quotes of characters to the writer.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Where it's just like, "Shakespeare didn't say 'To be or not to be.'" Right? A character he wrote who had some mental stuff going on wrote that. That wasn't like Shakespeare, like, "Hey, everybody. Just wanted you to know I feel this way."

And I know that you could say, like, "Well, but the writer wrote this really beautiful line." Absolutely. But, the character said it, and—it's not important.

Teresa: Oh, it's not important.

Travis: That's just my own little pet peeve. Mostly to do with Shakespeare.

Teresa: Let's—let's walk that tangent back.

Travis: Okay. So, this week we're talking about pet peeves—

Teresa: No. [laughs]

Travis: No! No.

Teresa: [laughs] This week we're gonna talk about Steve Irwin.

Travis: Now, this is interesting because when you told me you and Alex had had this idea—

Teresa: It was before—we had this idea before *The Tiger King* happened on Netflix, by the way.

Travis: But when you told me this, my first thought was like, "Oh, what—what—is he, like, an etiquette person?"

And then you guys made the very fair point that he has become this cultural figure, right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Who—who impacted the zeitgeist in such a way, much like when we talked about, uh, like Bob Ross, right? Where it's like, yeah, you know what? He might not have directly done it, but it became synonymous, right? With, like—

Teresa: Right, with the way that nature shows are now filmed and thought about, and the way that people think about conservation and just his kind of general demeanor, I think. His kind of boyish excitement. Um, being, like, the way that people relate to animals in the world.

Travis: Right. And, I mean, I think that goes for not just Steve Irwin. I think there are figures like that. Uh, your—your Jacques Cousteaus, your Jack Hannas, your—for me personally, and I think that this might be generational, but Jeff Corwin.

Teresa: And the Kratt Brothers.

Travis: The Kratt Brothers. But this idea of, like, here are these beautiful creatures who can be scary, and also that you may want to, like, hug, right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But they are both—like, here are both side of this, right? Where yes, this is a beautiful creature. Leave it alone. Or this is a—

Teresa: Right. One of a—

Travis: —scary creature, but it's not trying to hurt you.

Teresa: —one of Steve's catchphrases was, like, "Do not do this at home!" Right?

Travis: Yeah. Okay, so let's talk. Tell me... about a young Steve Irwin. A young Australian boy.

Teresa: So, most people know him as, like, the TV personality.

Travis: *The Crocodile Hunter*.

Teresa: Exactly, *The Crocodile Hunter*, which ran on Animal Planet from 1996 to 2004. Um, but he was heavily involved in animal welfare and, uh, rehabilitation and conservation and all this kind of stuff from birth, basically.

Travis: I mean, not literally, though.

Teresa: Well—

Travis: He, as a baby, was not like, "[baby voice] Leave animews awone!"

Teresa: He was born in Australia to wildlife enthusiasts.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: So kind of as a baby.

Travis: He came by it honest is what you're saying.

Teresa: He did! He had a deep love of animals from a very beginning, and he is said to have caught his first snake at four years old and his first venomous snake at six. Uh, which was a python that he named Fred.

Travis: That's way more believable than, like, some kind of, like, Pecos Bill thing of like, "At six months, he rode a rattler!"

Teresa: [laughs] Um, it's said he was often late to school because he would convince his mother to pull over on the side of the road to rescue lizards and snakes and anything that was—that was in the road.

Travis: Now, that's completely believable, and I believe that that is true and factual. But doesn't that also sound like the kind of thing that you say about somebody once they have, like, reached the pinnacle of their career? It's—I think Eddie Izzard had a joke where it was like—you know that scene where it's just, like, you see John Lennon as a young boy, like, standing in front of, like, a pawn shop window looking at a guitar—

Teresa: [through laughter] At a guitar, yeah. [laughs]

Travis: —and you're like—and you as the audience are like, "[gasps] I get it! [laughs] I know what's gonna happen, 'cause that's—yeah!"

Teresa: Sure. But factually—

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: —uh, when he was eight years old, he and his two sisters all moved to—and his parents [laughs]—moved to Queensland.

Travis: Oh thank God.

Teresa: [laughs] To open up the Beerwah Reptile and Fauna Park. Um, and so by nine, he was already helping his dad with the animal kind of maintenance, including catching crocodiles.

Travis: Is—is—and it's—listen, folks. It's easier than you think. Uh, you just message them on some kind of social media—

Teresa: Ah.

Travis: —and you pretend to be another crocodile, and then they come meet you, and boom, you got—no, sorry. That's catfishing.

Teresa: That's catfishing.

Travis: That is catfishing.

Teresa: Um... crocodiles are kind—

Travis: You know what you call catching a catfish, what it's really called? Noodling.

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: Do you know what you do?

Teresa: What.

Travis: You, like, stick your arm down, like, a catfish hole in the mud or whatever and what for 'em to kind of gum on your arm, and then you pull 'em out.

Teresa: That sounds like one way to catch a catfish.

Travis: Well, I'm sure there are other way—yes. [holding back laughter] There's more than one way to catch a catfish, that's what I always say.

[pauses]

Teresa: So, crocodiles.

Travis: She laughed. You couldn't—it probably didn't play into the microphone, but she laughed at that.

Teresa: Uh, I sighed.

Travis: Uh, you chuckled.

Teresa: I laugh-sighed.

Travis: You chuck—I saw your body shake a little bit—see, you're doing it now! And you're shaking your head, but you're smiling, but you're smiling, and then I've got her. Okay.

Teresa: Generally crocodiles are solitary creatures, and they like it that way.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, but if they become accustomed to people who maybe are fishing or swimming where they live, uh, they become labeled as, quote, "problem crocodiles," which is strange to me, because it's like—here, I'm going to come into your house and do my thing, and now you're here, so I—you—you gotta get out! This is mine now.

Travis: Yes. It's almost like the way we treat animals is not great! [pauses] It's almost like we like to impede into their homes and then treat them like they're the bad guy. I've just recently—as long as we're talking about animal conservation, I have noticed as we've been watching more, like, Disney movies with Bebe—Disney, listen. In a lot of way, love Disney studios. But they have a strong anti-wolf bias!

Teresa: They do!

Travis: Like, they make wolves the bad guys in, like, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Frozen* and, like, all these movies.

Teresa: And they're just trying to eat.

Travis: Right?! And, like, wolves were, like, so over hunted by human beings because it was like, "Oh, they'll come in—" and it's like, "Hey, dude. You're all up in *their* business."

Teresa: Exactly! And wolves are an apex cre—predator that keep the other animals that, like, destroy things, like deer—keep them under control. So, like, don't even.

Travis: I'm sayin' wolves—they're mostly—they're more afraid of you than you are of them. At least they were when people were over hunting them to almost extinction. I'm sayin' leave the wolves alone, *Disney*. Make more—hey, Disney. What if *people* are the monsters. Okay, go on.

Teresa: Okay. You are—you're drivin' down all the tangents this morning. This afternoon. Wherever we are.

Travis: Listen. I know barely anything about Steve Irwin.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I have very little to contribute beside tangents.

Teresa: Alright. So, uh, Steve would accompany his dad and round up these, quote, "problem crocodiles," um, so that they could be re-released at the wildlife park.

Travis: Cool!

Teresa: Here comes another one of those, uh, John Lennon guitar moments.

Travis: Uh-huh, yes.

Teresa: Uh, the—the legend is—

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: —that as a nine year old, he would jump on the alligator's back and wrestle them back to the boat that he and his dad were in. Um, and then baby Steve and his dad would take these crocodiles away, right?

Travis: Okay. You know what? Here's the thing—

Teresa: Well, but he—no, no, no. *Here's* the thing.

Travis: I believe it. I believe it.

Teresa: Alex googled it, and a small crocodile is probably still close to 500 pounds, and a big one can get up to 2200 pounds. So your average nine year old boy weighs about 60 pounds? And the odds that a 60 pound year old nine year old—a 60 pound...nine year old boy—

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: —could wrestle a 500 pound alligator... eh... eh...

Travis: Listen, you know? Judo—

Teresa: Pushin' it.

Travis: —is about using your opponent's weight against them. No, here's the—
here's what I do believe. With help, maybe.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Because, like, I—I can't remember if it's alligators or crocodiles or both. I'm gonna go with both for now. Um, and listen, people. You're gonna be so eager to tweet at us about corrections about alligators—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —this isn't an episode about crocodiles or alligators. This is about Steve Irwin! Anyhoo, that a lot of their muscle in biting comes in the chomp, and they're actually fairly weak as far as opening their jaws back up.

Teresa: That is what I've been told.

Travis: Yeah. So you can, like, hold their jaw shut with your bare hands.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, this fascination and passion for reptiles in particular—

Travis: And wrestling them.

Teresa: —[through laughter] is really what Steve Irwin is famous for, right? Um, so in the 80's, before he had started his TV show, he spent months living in the remote areas of the Australian outback.

Travis: Thank you.

Teresa: Uh, catching—

Travis: Thank you for not doing an accent. I saw in your eyes that you wanted to do it.

Teresa: Do you want me to do it?

Travis: Uh—yeah, you know, now that I mention—

Teresa: [bad Australian accent] The Australian ac—acback. The Australian Outback.

Travis: Now say "No rules, just right."

Teresa: [bad Cockney accent] No rules, just right. [drops the accent] No, it got—

Travis: [stammers] That was Cockney.

Teresa: It got a little Cockney! They're very—

Travis: Little British in there.

Teresa: —they're very close.

Travis: [bad Cockney accent] Hello, hello! What's with all these crocodiles, then?

Teresa: [laughs] They're very close in my mouth.

Travis: [bad Cockney accent] Oh, Bob's your uncle! Alligators and whatnot.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [bad Cockney accent] Apples and pears.

Teresa: [laughs] [pauses] Oh, no.

Travis: I think I nailed it!

Teresa: Uh, you—

Travis: [bad Australian accent?] Throw another shrimp on the barbie!

Teresa: —you nailed somethin'.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. So, he would—

Travis: [bad Australian accent] Bloomin' onion. [laughs]

Teresa: Okay. Are you done?

Travis: [through laughter] Okay, I'm done. I'm done now. Bloomin' onion is actually Cockney rhyming slang but I won't tell you what for, because it's *very* explicit.

[pauses]

Teresa: How about now? Are you done now?

Travis: Yes, now I'm done

Teresa: Okay. They—he and his dog, a Staffy bull terrier named Sui, would stalk the waters for problem crocs to capture them. And this is where he perfected his crocodile capture and management techniques. The one that you were talking about, right? Kind of like jump on their back and hold their jaw shut type deal that's now, like, the world standard.

Um, and he was still working at his parents' reptile and fauna park, caring for wildlife and maintaining the grounds, and this is where he first got his start with his, quote, "film appearances," through their home movies and kind of, like—you know, just, like—I don't wanna say documentary, but the documenting material for their park.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So in 1991, he officially took over the parents' wildlife park and went... buck wild trying to improve it and expand it and, you know, conservation was so close to his heart. Um—

Travis: I love that description. He went buck wild with improvements!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "I'm fixin' everything!"

"Whoa! Slow down, Steve!"

"No!"

Teresa: It sounds like something Steve would do, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And that was the same year he met his wife, Terry Raines. Um, who coincidentally appeared on the show with him many years later. And instead of a honeymoon, this was, like, their first, like, documentary [holding back laughter] that they went and filmed on.

Um, and that's how *Crocodile Hunter* started. Their honeymoon, they filmed documentary together about wildlife and submitted it as a pilot for *Crocodile Hunter*.

Travis: That's great, and I can't wait to learn more, but first, it's time for thank you notes for our sponsors!

[theme music plays]

Travis: We want to write a thank you note to Nextdoor. Listen, staying connected is now more important than ever. Nextdoor is helping by offering a great way to keep in touch with your neighbors and get local information from your community. There are so many ways our neighbors can help us. We just need an easier way to connect with them.

Nextdoor is a free app that connects you to your local community, so you can talk to your neighbors and tap into trusted local knowledge right from your phone.

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So, what are you waiting for? The app is free. Go to nextdoor.com/shmanners, that's S-H-M-A-N-N-E-R-S, to sign up and see what's happening in your neighborhood. Be sure to use the link from our show to sign up so they know that you support our show! That's nextdoor.com/shmanners.

We also have a special message for Chloe and Spencer, and this is from Matt. And Matt says:

"Thank you for being my dear friends. This was sent during the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope after all this is over, the two of you have a fantastic and inspirational choral season with the best choir on the East Coast. Your kindness and love and artistry are so inspirational to me, and I thank you for introducing me to Max Fun and the McElroys."

Oh, that was lovely! That was—thank you!

Uh, we also have a message for Jess from dot dot dot... you know. [laughs] Uh, and the message is:

"I extend my deepest regrets for knocking your toothbrush off the counter into the trash and putting it back on the edge of the counter without telling you until it was too late and you used the dirty toothbrush for... a while. I thought having this apology in your favorite manners-based podcast might make it hurt less. Stay frosty!"

Okay. Well, I guess that's a brilliant, nice apology, and I hope that Jess can forgive you. Back to the show!

[static]

Speaker One: Welcome back to Fireside Chat on KMAX. With me in studio to take your calls is the dopest duo on the West Coast, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes. Go ahead, caller!

Speaker Two: Hey, uh, I'm looking for a music podcast that's insightful and thoughtful, but, like, also helps me discover artists and albums that I've never heard of.

Morgan: Yeah man, sounds like you need to listen to *Heat Rocks*. Every week, myself, and I'm Morgan Rhodes, and my co-host here, Oliver Wang, talk to influential guests about a canonical album that has changed their lives.

Oliver: Guests like Moby, Open Mic Eagle, talking about albums by Prince, Joni Mitchell, and so much more.

Speaker Two: Yo, what's that show called again?

Morgan: *Heat Rocks*: Deep dives into hot records.

Oliver: Every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[static]

Travis: Okay. So, when we last left off, the hunters had become the hunted. No, that didn't hap—

Teresa: No, no, that's—

Travis: —well, I mean, I guess in the fact that people liked the show.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: So it's like they were, like, hunting for more of them I guess? But nobody was—nobody was hunting Steve Irwin.

Teresa: No.

Travis: At least not as far as I know. I'll have to look into police records to see if there were any issues, but I don't think anyone hunted Steve Irwin.

Teresa: Um, so one of the things that made the show in particular very riveting to watch was he had this kind of, like, stuntman attitude about it, right?

Travis: Oh yeah. When I think of Steve Irwin, the thing I picture is his body posture of, like, crouching, like—like at any moment he could spring into action and, like, that it—it—it—with—it was always interesting, because his attitude was not one of, like, being afraid of the animal.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But his poise was like, "I am ready in case anything happens."

Teresa: Absolutely. His whole brand was about, "This is what you're not supposed to do, and let me show you why," right? And it wasn't—it wasn't the same documentary style that we're used to, or even had been used to up to that point, right? Where it was kind of like a point and shoot with, like, um, you know, voice over?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: And when I think about, like, a Nova special right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I think about beautiful big wide shots, and then smaller shot kind of like spliced in, with the voice over in the background, very kind of muted and hushed and things like that. That was *not* his style.

Travis: No. I also when I—when I picture, like, um, something hosted by, like, a—like, an animal expert, right? I picture, like, the animals in the background, right? And they are a safe distance away addressing the camera, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Where when I think of Steve Irwin, he was, like, two feet away from whatever he was talking about. Like, "See this?" [laughs]

Teresa: And his style was very catch and release, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So he would catch something, kind of handle it, talk about it, talk to it, usually calling it, like, a sweetheart, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: [laughs] And then release it back and run away.

Travis: Right. I mean, that—his thing was crocodiles, but I remember specifically watching the Jeff Corwin show where his thing was, like, snakes.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And, like, that stuck with me where he had this, like, kind of almost question mark shaped, like, pole that he used to catch sna—and I think that's the thing that's always most fascinated me. 'Cause there was a time where I wanted to become a host like this. And listen, it's not too late! If anybody's listening to this and they think "Travis has a great energy, he would be great hosting an animal show," you're right. I don't have any expertise whatsoever, but I can learn.

Uh, but anyways, I watched those all the time and the thing that always, like, struck me was their, uh, skill—like, their knowledge, but also, "I'm—I'm going to show you, like, these beautiful but terrifying animals that you will never get the chance, and you shouldn't, attempt to encounter," right?

Teresa: Right, you really shouldn't.

Travis: Like, if you see one of these—like, for example, Jeff Corwin really—[laughs] the weirdest lesson that always stuck in my mind was when identifying a snake that if you see a snake with red stripes next to, uh, black stripes, it's red to black, friend of Jack. And if you see red stripes next to yellow stripes, it's red to yellow, kill a fellow. [holding back laughter] And get away from that snake.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. That's a useful piece of information.

Travis: Sticks—sticks with you.

Teresa: Absolutely. Um, so here's the thing about Steve. He was never to really cut the show, uh, when he got hurt. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It was one of those things that he was constantly showing animals biting him, getting scratches, bleeding all over the place. Um, and although he was never, like, seriously injured, he would always kind of talk through it as if, like, "This is something that you never want to do. I have a lot of experience. This really hurts."

Especially—uh, he's kind of famous for getting bit by parrots.

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: Like, that parrots in general didn't like him at all? Maybe he was kind of, like, too boisterous and energetic for them. But he's constantly getting bit by parrots!

Travis: You know, I've never thought of this before, and perhaps no one ever has, but he's kind of like the Jackie Chan of, like, animal handling shows? Where it's like, "I'm gonna show you me getting hurt. I don't want you to think I'm a superhero, because I don't want to downplay the danger of these animals or that I am somehow invulnerable and that's why it's okay for me to be doing this," that it's all about knowledge and safety and precaution, and sometimes accidents still happen.

Teresa: Right. Um, and all of this could kind of come off as a little bit callous, or maybe as a—as a showman, right? On TV. Uh, especially when he went on things like Jay Leno and Oprah, and television shows like that. But everyone was always saying about how he was exactly the same off camera as he was on. It was just this general, like, exuberance about animals, about life, about conservation, and that energy was always the same.

Um, he's quoted as saying: "I laugh when I see myself on the telly. I think I'm kind of a knucklehead, but I suppose people like it."

He went on to say: "I can't stop, mate. I wake up in the morning on fire and I just can't do enough. It drives me crazy that I gotta go to sleep. Can't I film things at night, too?" [laughs quietly]

Travis: Oh, Steve.

Teresa: [laughs] That makes—that makes perfect sense, uh, for someone with all of that kind of boundless energy.

Travis: And I think that that was one of the things that made him so incredible to watch is, like, sincerity that—and, you know, it's something that, like, very few people have, right? And when we talk about, like, Bob Ross or, like, Mr. Rogers. These kinds of characters where it's like—or people, I shouldn't say characters. I think of them as characters, right? Because they're so important.

But, like, that they weren't trying to be something? They were just kind of being themselves. And they weren't performing. They weren't putting on a show. They were just being themselves, and that kind of sincerity made them so enjoyable to, like, see into their world. It's that thing of, like, when you see someone and you're like, "I think I would be friends with that person."

Teresa: But that kind of sincerity also lends itself to ridicule and, uh—and parody.

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: Um, he was attacked by PETA for—and accused of exploiting animals for fame. Um, and there were many Australians who didn't like him because they felt that he perpetuated a certain stereotype about Australia and Australians.

Travis: And he was also just—you talk about parody. Like, when you think of parody, you know, I'm sure with very little googling you could find, like, *SNL* sketches and—

Teresa: And *Simpsons*, and *South Park* episodes, and—

Travis: *MADtv*. Like, anything where it was like—because he was such a character that, like, he was just recognizable, right? And so it's like everyone did, like, impressions of him and every—and I would not call them flattering impressions, so I would say most of them were not done in the spirit of, like, laughing with someone, right? But I think that it was a level of sincerity that, as you said, was easily mocked, but was also inspiring.

Teresa: Certainly. Um, and he was never one to turn down appearances. He was also in the, um—the Eddie Murphy *Dr. Dolittle 2* movie.

Travis: That makes sense.

Teresa: Basically playing himself. Um, and because of all of this, this fame and notoriety, he did make a lot of money. Um, but again, one of the cool things about Steve was that he didn't want to spend money on things like flashy cars or like vacation homes or—or anything like that. He always spent all the money he could to buy real estate for this, uh, Australia Zoo, this wild park thing.

Um, and he said that. He said, "Every single cent I make goes straight into conservation. I don't give a rip whose money is in it. I'll use it and I'll spend it on buying land."

Um, and, I mean, he really did. He—he expanded the park, I mean, exponentially, right? Um, he—let's see. I had the—the figures on it.

[pauses]

Uh, I—I believe that the park now is over 80 acres.

Travis: Oh, wow.

Teresa: That's a lot. A lot, a lot, a lot. And, I mean, when you think about it, that saves it from, um, being turned into—like, deforested, right? Uh, saves it from being, um...

Travis: Hunted.

Teresa: Hunt—yeah, it's protected land because it's privately owned. Um, we can't—we can't talk about Steve without talking about his untimely death.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, and he was, like we said, he was never one to shy away from wildlife. He looked at dangerous crocodiles like they were adorable kittens.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, he was doing what he loved doing. He was, um... [pauses] uh, he was killed by a stingray off the coast of Queensland on September 4th, 2006. Um, but he was doing a diving exposition—expedition. Um, having it filmed of course.

There is footage of his death that has only been seen by his wife. Uh, rightly so. I don't think it should ever be televised.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, and here's the thing. It was such a freak accident, right? Only 17 to 30 accidents like this have been reported by people dying. That's... by—dying by stingray. That's not per year. That's *ever*.

Travis: If I remember, it was something about where he was stung and, like, how—like, a bunch of factors.

Teresa: Exactly. There are over 1500 stingray incidents in the US every year, but nearly all of them end with slight discomfort and nothing close to death. Um, he had actually swam with stingrays several times before, and in—he's—he's been filmed where they don't want to swim with him, and so they just swim away.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, I—I have to think that something about this stingray got spooked.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And thought that Steve was a predator, you know?

Travis: Gotta be—it's something, yeah.

[pauses]

Teresa: Uh, not only was Australia devastated by his death, so—I mean, practically the world mourned his death. The entrance to the Australia Zoo overflowed with flowers and gifts and notes, and news outlets made special, uh—special pieces about him, and almost 5000 people attended his funeral. It's estimated that 300 million watched the worldwide broadcast of it, and amidst a slew of these media tributes, one man stepped forward to tell a touching story about how Steve had actually saved his own—saved his life during a diving accident.

He was quoted as saying: "We'd love to go to Australia and tell his wife and his kids what a great man he is. He was a hell of an educator, from kids all the way up to old farts like me."

Travis: [laughs]

Teresa: "He was a hero." That's—I mean, if you think about it, anyone who championed with such exuberance, just the fact that these animals are doing what they do, they, uh—they need to be rescued and there needs to be conservation, and all of that kind of stuff. That would've been enough. But for him to be this kind of, like, bright television personality and to make so many millions of people think about these kind of things, it's—it's world changing.

Travis: And, you know, I think that he is a perfect example of when you talk about, like, being excited about something because the person telling you about it is excited, you know? It's like—it is one of those things of, like, making people fall in love with—like, with a subject, with material, because you love it so much. I think that's so rare, right? For it to be—like, the word I can't stop using to describe him is sincere, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Where he's not in it to make a buck and, like, he's not trying to con anybody into anything. He's just excited to tell you about it. He just is—is—was happy that he could talk about it with you, and I think that that's so, uh—like, that's so enticing. That's so incredible, you know?

Teresa: And it's really awesome, the work that they—that he and his wife did at their wildlife park to make it, um—to help learn about these animals. They would go through and tag their crocodiles. And according to the Smithsonian, uh, the project, which is still in operation, tells scientists now how deep crocodiles can dive, how far their habitats reach, and even more, like, complicated psychological information like social hierarchies and breeding schedules. And these are things that we just weren't able to observe before, 'cause we didn't have the data to see it.

Um, they launched another program called Crocs in Space. [laughs] Where—

Travis: [excited] Oh?

Teresa: —they were able to use tagged crocodiles—they were able to track them using satellites, which gave them even more useful data. Like, just—it—the—the reach and the... I don't wanna say just, like, the social implications, but the scientific implications of what Steve Irwin did and his foundation and his family continues to do are enormous.

Travis: Yeah, incredible.

Teresa: Um, there are talks now of his family doing another show. Um, and especially I believe, um, Bindi, his daughter, is often in the news, touting the same things. that her—her dad talked about. Conservation and, you know, habitat, uh... rehabilitation and animal rehabilitation and release and breeding programs and all that stuff.

[phone chimes briefly]

Sorry. [laughs]

Travis: That's alright.

Teresa: Um, so much so that November 15th is International Steve Irwin Day.

Travis: [gasps] Oh, wow!

Teresa: Um, and it is celebrated like crazy at the zoo that they have, the Australia Zoo. Uh, celebrations, talks on wilderness protection, and [holding back laughter] everyone who comes in is encouraged to wear Steve's trademark khakis.

Travis: Nice.

Teresa: Uh, funny thing that Alex so—so cute put in here—November 15th isn't his birthday. His birthday is February 22nd, but he chose—not he, the Irwins—chose November 15th because it's the birthday of the Australia Zoo's most famous resident, a Galapagos turtle named Harriet who Steve had a particularly special bond with.

Travis: Aww.

Teresa: So that is Steve Irwin Day.

Travis: That's lovely!

Teresa: Yeah! Um, over 700,000 people a year go to the Australia Zoo, which hosts tours and shows and a variety of ways to help keep Steve's legacy alive. Um, and their website says, "Our vision is for Australia Zoo to be the ultimate global zoological destination, and in doing so act as world leaders in conservation, relating both to wildlife and their habitat."

I think that's amazing!

Travis: I think that's great. I think that he was an inspiration. Uh, and I'm glad we did this episode. There, I said it.

Teresa: We did it. Here are some... hot tips.

Travis: Hot tips.

Teresa: That you can use in your life to be just like [Australian accent] Steve Irwin.

Travis: That was pretty good!

Teresa: Did I do it?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Was that better? Okay. Always keep your cool. Even if you're being bitten by a snake, don't jump in terror. The calmer you are, the less affected you'll be. That makes absolute sense about how he lived his life.

Uh, use all of your senses. When you're with an animal, appreciate the way it moves, smells, and feels. Also, be comfortable with the fact that you might get pooped on. [laughs]

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Uh, put your education—

Travis: That's true with babies, too, yes.

Teresa: That's true. Put your education first. If you have an animal you really love, do it justice by learning everything about it that you can. In the same vein, your passion will make other people passionate, so don't hide the things you love under a bushel basket!

Travis: 100%.

Teresa: Um, coexist. This was one of the big things. Steve Irwin had the belief that humans deserve to be here just as much as animals do, and the idea that humans and animals can coexist and share the planet really makes his legacy continue.

And the last one I think is self-explanatory. He said it all the time. Don't try this at home! [laughs] Leave the wildlife where it is. Appreciate from afar. Don't be like Steve Irwin, but... be like Steve Irwin?

Travis: [simultaneously] Be like Steve Irwin.

Okay, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you all so much for joining us. Uh, this has been I think another wonderful episode. Thank you Teresa, for all your hard work.

Teresa: Thank you Alex, also, for all of your hard work. She is just—she's completely instrumental in the creation of this program at this time. Um, and she always finds really great facts and statistics and quotes, and thank you so much.

Travis: And thank you to Maximum Fun, our podcast host, our network ho—yeah, you get it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Uh, thank you to—uh, let's see. Everyone listening, thank you for telling friends, uh, sharing episodes you like. All of that stuff means the world to us. I—I had a lot of fun with this episode, uh, just hearing the facts and goofin' with my wife—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —so if you enjoyed it, please share it! Please tell someone and say "Hey, I think you'd be interested in this episode."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Who else—what else do we say?

Teresa: 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.

Twitter is where we get our listener submitted questions when we call for those, uh, @shmannerscast, so if we put out the feelers for a new episode, go ahead and check that out so that maybe your question will be featured on the show.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for our cover picture of the fan-run Facebook group, which is a really great place to give and get excellent advice. That is [amused] *Shmanners* Fanners. Very proud of that.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, and make sure you check out mcelroy.family for all the other McElroy shows. Uh, and I think that's gonna do it for us. [bumps mic] Oh!

Teresa: If you want to submit—

Travis: [sighs]

Teresa: —a topic—I was almost done. I almost [crosstalk]—[laughs]

Travis: [laughs] This is, like, three weeks in a row I blew that! Okay.

Teresa: If you want to submit a topic for our—for a show, please email us at shmannerscast@google.com.

Travis: @gmail.

Teresa: Oh, you're right.

Travis: Yeah, don't email us at Google.

Teresa: [through laughter] Not Google.

Travis: We don't... that's no—nothing. But! Yes.

Teresa: With our powers combined, we got that out.

Travis: We got there. Okay. *That's* gonna do it for us. Uh, join us again next week!

Teresa: No RSVP required.

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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