

Shmanners 223: Rummage Sales

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Travis: Whoa, I just found a whole box of old podcasts!

Teresa: Anything good in there?

Travis: Aw, this one! 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: [soft voice] For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear. Why are you holding your finger in your ear?

Travis: 'Cause it's another episode of *Shmanners: Late Night*.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: The—we—[stammers]

Teresa: Not—not too late.

Travis: We've put the kids to bed—well, for us? 8:15.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [cackles] Oh. You know, sometimes you can get it in at naptime. Some days you gotta wait til bedtime... and then it's 8:15, and you're all full of cauliflower pizza and—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —[sighs] drunk on life.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Um—

Teresa: And booze.

Travis: Well...

Teresa: No, not really.

Travis: We've had one beer each.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I don't think that counts.

Teresa: No, it doesn't.

Travis: We are fully grown adults. Now, let me ask you a question, my love.

Teresa: Mm-hmm?

Travis: Are you... a garage sale person? Like, do you like attending them?

Teresa: Um... let me think. I think that the answer is I have enjoyed attending garage sales.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, but I more enjoy thrift shopping.

Travis: Yes. Now—okay. Here is—here's my theory on this. This is the reason I ask, 'cause I know that that's true.

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

Travis: I think it is reflective of our personalities. Because I would prefer, like, a yard sale, garage sale, rummage sale, whatever. Because I am a gambler.

Teresa: Mmm, yeah.

Travis: I'm looking for that big find. "Oh my God, I can't believe this is here. This is amazing."

Teresa: You also like to peruse.

Travis: I do. I mean, yes. Where I think with thrift shopping, as you like, it's a much more patient game. You find thing—you find more average qual—like, I don't mean average quality. I mean, like, you find a lot of good things that you like. Whereas I'm lookin' for that one big thing. "Oh my God, I can't believe—"

Teresa: Oh, the diamond in the rough.

Travis: Yes! That's what I—

Teresa: That's what you're looking for. Okay.

Travis: —and so that's why—that's what you're always looking for, I think, at a rummage sale, garage sale, yard sale thing. Because you're looking for, like, "Oh my God, they didn't even realize how important and cool/awesome this thing is that they had."

Teresa: I see. Now, see, I like thrift shops. One, because they're inside, mostly. [sighs] And because, um, I feel like... just the—the virtue of it all being, like, displayed and out is a lot easier, because—

Travis: It's just too—but, like, that's a store! It's so—ugh.

Teresa: But I don't like to dig for things. I do not—I cannot go to those thrift shops that, like, just put things in a bin that you have to dig through.

Travis: Oh, yeah, no, I don't care for that.

Teresa: No. Do not like. Do... not... like. I like things organized. I love it when a thrift store organizes things by color. Mmm, amazing.

Travis: That is fun. I do like that. Going through t-shirts separated by color—

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: —is incredible.

Teresa: So great.

Travis: But I will say that I know something you and I both like, which is, like, the flea market—

Teresa: Oh yeah.

Travis: —the Rose Bowl.

Teresa: Oh, that was so fun!

Travis: That one. And then I feel like there's other big ones. I—I've been to a couple, 'cause I— Jesse Thorn also loves them.

Teresa: Did we go to—we went to one in LA, didn't we?

Travis: Oh yeah, that's what I'm saying! That was, like, the Rose Bowl in Pasadena or something, right?

Teresa: Yes, yes, that's where it was.

Travis: Where it was this huge one every Saturday and Sunday. And that, I think, is a combination of our two loves, where they have all this vintage clothing, but also, here's a big case full of stuff, make me an offer.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And I go, "Yeah yeah yeah!" So we're talking about... let's just call it "sales" at this point, 'cause I hate saying garage sale, rummage sale, yard sale. Whatever. And I think that they are unique to the flea market or the thrift shop experience, because it is a much more, like—I had—we did a lot of them growing up.

Teresa: Oh yeah? I remember my mom doing, like, one or two. We didn't have a lot of through traffic on my street, so it was difficult to, like, advertise it enough to get people to come that weren't our neighbors, and it just felt really weird selling your old junk to your neighbors. [laughs]

Travis: See, our house growing up was on a—not, like, the main strip to get to the park, which was, like, the big—you know, the big park in town, Ritter Park. But, like, we had traffic that passed by constantly and it was, like, a big neighborhood.

Teresa: And if you put a sign in the park, people could probably walk to your house.

Travis: And I can say where my house is now. I don't care. None of us live there anymore.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But it was, like, right on 10th street, and Huntington—most of it is a grid? And so it was, like, going out from that. Like, there were tons of people. So we used to do 'em all the time. And it is—it's—okay. For me, the reason that they are so great... is because one, I think they represent the, "I don't want this, but maybe somebody does?" of recycling. And also when you're a kid, maybe some money. Even if it's just like, "I got a dollar for all these old toys! Yeah! I couldn't spend the toys, but I can spend this dollar."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Now, are they... a—like, a recent thing?

Teresa: Okay. So—

Travis: I used to try to guess.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I have no idea anymore.

Teresa: Alright. The 1800's. The early 1800's.

Travis: Okay. See, I thought you were gonna, like, surprise me with, like, "The Ancient Romans!"

Teresa: [laughs] Well, alright.

Travis: "Flavius, I will give you one dinar for the—"

Teresa: Okay, here's the thing. As long as people have had extra junk and they wanna sell it, that's, like, a yard sale. But a lot of people didn't have a lot of extra junk. Like, the consumerism is fairly recent.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But the roots of the yard sale go back actually to the shipping yard.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: I expected more of an "Ahh."

Travis: Oh, because it had yard in it?

Teresa: Yeah, a little bit.

Travis: Okay, but, like...

Teresa: Okay—

Travis: Sure. A yard's a yard. I've always said that.

Teresa: You've always said that.

Travis: A yard's a yard.

Teresa: How many—you've only said that, like, twice now.

Travis: How many times do I have to say it before it's an always thing?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Is it constantly?

Teresa: Alright. So, in the early 1800's—

Travis: A yard's a yard!

Teresa: —shipping yards—[sighs] would sell unclaimed cargo and leftover warehouse items.

Travis: Like *Storage Wars*!

Teresa: At deeply discounted prices!

Travis: Well, not exactly like *Storage Wars*, then.

Teresa: Well, I mean... you can get it at a deep discount if nobody else wants it.

Travis: I mean, sure—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —but you're still... *Storage Wars*, if you—like, if you think about *Storage Wars* for one second too long you're like, "Wait a minute! This is very horrifying and morbid, this thing that they're doing!" You're trying to buy people's things for pennies on the dollar 'cause they couldn't afford to pay their rent, or maybe they died!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yayyy!

Teresa: Um, so these dock sales were often called rumage sales, and over time became known as rummage—

Travis: [simultaneously] Because you would rummage through things to find what you wanted?

Teresa: —because—

Travis: Wait, what were they called? Ruma—ru—

[static]

Travis: Okay. Folks, I just looked it up. I did 30 seconds of research. That's why you heard that static sound, 'cause I didn't want you to have to listen to me google. Okay. This is very interesting to me, because I've always assumed rummage sales got the name because you rummaged around, right?

Teresa: And the word is that it did get that, in a way.

Travis: Well—so it's kind of the other way around—from what I can tell, here's what's up. Rummage comes from rumage, comes from arrumage, like an old French word, arrumage, which means something like a mixture of miscellaneous items, that came to be used for stuff in a cargo hold.

Teresa: Ahhh. So rummage as a noun, not as a verb.

Travis: So then, it was arrumage, which then the English shortened that and stole it and just said rumage, right? That then became rummage.

Teresa: Love it.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, these sales were super popular, and began to spread away from the shipyards, because everything awesome spreads real fast, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Uh, and, you know, they went through a couple of different, like, metamorphoses. Sometimes these sort of things were, like, masqueraded as charity bazaars and things like that. Um, because a lot of social spaces like churches and charity clubs and stuff would hold them outdoors, uh, to raise money for various causes.

Travis: Right, yeah. I can picture that. I've never participated or, I think, been to one of those? But I have seen those in, like, TV shows and movies and stuff where people, like, set up their own tables, like, in a church, gymnasium or whatever.

Teresa: This is something I definitely have a lot of experience with.

Travis: Really?

Teresa: So, the church that I grew up attending had a Christmas bazaar every year. Um, there were two areas—no, I guess I should say three areas. So, the first one was in the school gym attached to the church, 'cause this church has a school with it. So, in the school gym it was like you said, lots of different tables. Like, tables covered in books and ornaments and handicrafts and, you know, all kinds of stuff. And then the second room was the kid's Santa shop, so more like the little junk, right? Like, for a quarter and stuff, so kids could actually buy their parents something, I guess?

Travis: Oh no, we did that at my school, but I don't think it was like, through—there was just a rumor where it was like, "Do you wanna buy—" I remember buying my mom a candle that said "Joy," and it was pretty. But I was like, "Mom likes candles!" But it was, like, very specifically a Christmas candle? But then it did become part of our Christmas decor every year, so I think I kinda nailed it. Swish!

Teresa: [laughs] Um, and then the third room was—was the cafeteria setup for, like, little snacks and whatever.

Travis: Got it, got it, got it. Okay.

Teresa: Um—but, like, we went to this every year. There were lots of raffles and stuff. My dad won a Christmas tree one year. He won, um—we've talked about this.

Travis: Your dad tends to win—yeah, your dad tends to win raffles.

Teresa: He's pretty good at raffling.

Travis: I don't know how that's a skill you can develop, but seems like he has!

Teresa: Anyway... so, when did the garage sale, yard sale, rummage sale... become the American tradition we all know and love today?

Travis: If I had to guess—can I guess?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: 1950's.

Teresa: Yep! 50's and 60's!

Travis: [clicks tongue] Nailed it. I figured it was after World War II. People were back home, they bought homes, they filled it with stuff, and then they were like, "Aw man. New, better stuff is out."

Teresa: That's right!

Travis: "What do I do with all this old stuff?" Right? Because before then, if you're thinking about—hey, young people. If you're not old like me, I'm 96. But, there was a time where the things people had in their home was only what they needed.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: And then, you know, you go through the depression, you go through World War I, you go through rationing—

Teresa: Well, okay. Second—second thought is, during the Victorian Era into the Edwardian Era, well-off people always had extra things. Like curio cabinets and things like that.

Travis: But you had space at that point to put it, you know? Like, if you were that well-off, you could put it in storage.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? But that's what we see, is these people who came home from war, bought houses, got married, had kids. There was the middle class for, like, the first time in America, really? And it was like, "I'm buyin' stuff! I'm puttin' stuff on these shelves! Look out, world!"

And then like, "Oh. A new blender, you say? Ooh, what do I do with this old blender?"

Teresa: Exactly. Um, so, they only ramped up in the 70's and 80's, because again, consumerism ramped up, right? Um, and people would start—at this point, you had to reach a wider audience, right? You had more stuff to sell. Everybody had stuff to sell, so you had to start putting out ads and flyers and cardboard signs and stuff.

Travis: I—I—I remember [holding back laughter] looking in the classifieds in the newspaper—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: —for a nearby rummage sale, and putting ads in there. Like, buying—'cause, like I said, we used to do it all the time. And, like, buying ad space in the classifieds to list your rummage sale—

Teresa: Totally. Um, and so this is probably, you know, doesn't need to be said, but lets say it anyway. You're buying other people's junk, right? So the drawback—

Travis: [high pitched] Well—

Teresa: [high pitched] Well, well, well—

Travis: —[simultaneously] one person's trash—okay.

Teresa: Yeah. So the drawback of these kind of sales is, like, there's no way to look up authenticity, or search by an item, or anything like that.

Travis: This is the best—this is the thing with—this is why I'm saying it's a gamble, 'cause you see a painting and you're like, "I think that's a famous painting!" And you pay a hundred dollars for it and you get home and you're like, "This is not a famous painting. It is not worth a hundred dollars—" or whatever.

Teresa: Yeah. And also, the other downside is that they're typically outside, right? Unless you have a school gym or whatever. Um, so you can't really do them year-round. But... yes you can.

Travis: Oh, you left out another downside, too, which we'll talk about in a bit. But, go on.

Teresa: Enter...

Travis: I thought you were gonna say because it was outside, you can't plug stuff in to test it. We'll talk about that in a little bit.

Teresa: We'll talk about that later. I'm gonna say, enter eBay.

Travis: Uh-huh!

Teresa: So, once we all got on the world wide web—

Travis: Well, you know what? Let's talk about this in a second. But first, how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

Teresa: Okey doke!

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week, we want to send a special thank you to DoorDash, not just for sponsoring our show, but for helping to keep restaurants in our area safe and open. The way that it works is, DoorDash allows you to order your favorite dishes from your favorite local restaurants without ever having to set foot outside of your house. You go on the DoorDash app, you choose the restaurant and the food you want, then a DoorDash driver safely picks it up, brings it to your house, leaves it safely outside your door, and then they text you to say, "Hey, your food's outside your door."

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And right now, our listeners can get \$5 off their first order of \$15 or more, and zero delivery fees for their first month when you download the DoorDash app and enter code "shmanners." That's \$5 off your first order and zero delivery fees for a month when you download the DoorDash app in the app store and enter code "shmanners."

Don't forget. That's code "shmanners" for \$5 off your first order with DoorDash!

We also want to send a special thank you to Quip! Once again, not just for sponsoring the show, but for keeping my pearly whites so shiny brights!

That's right. My teeth wouldn't be what they are without Quip. You know, for a long time I had dentists say, like, "You need to get an electric toothbrush." But I always thought they were so clunky and bulky, and they just never felt right. Well, Quip takes care of that. It's a compact design, gentle vibrations, and it's effective.

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my favorite. The mint is one of my favorite toothpastes I have ever had in this world. And they now have scaled down electric toothbrushes for kids. It helps you.

It's got internal vibrations and an internal timer that keeps you to that two minute recommended time, that none of us are brushing our teeth long enough. So Quip helps you take care of that.

And like I said, you get that brush head, toothpaste, and floss refills automatically delivered every three months for just \$5. And if you go to getquip.com/shmanners right now, you'll get your first refill free. That's your first refill free, at getquip.com/shmanners. It's G-E-T-Q-U-I-P.com/shmanners. Quip! The good habits company.

Allie: Hi! I'm Allie Goertz.

Julia: And I'm Julia Prescott, and we host—

Together: *Round Springfield!*

Allie: *Round Springfield* is a *Simpsons*-adjacent podcast where we talk to your favorite *Simpsons* writers, voice actors, and everyone who's worked on the show, to talk about shows that aren't the *The Simpsons*!

So we're gonna be talking to people like David X. Cohen, Yeardley Smith, Tim Long, about other projects they've worked on, sometimes projects that didn't go well.

Julia: Hmm!

Allie: Some failures.

Julia: Yeah?

Allie: Some rejections.

Julia: Some failed pilots.

Allie: [laughs]

Julia: Some... failed life events? [laughs]

Allie: Yeah! We just talk to all the failures of *The Simpsons*.

Julia: Yeah!

Allie: So if you really love your *Simpsons* trivia and want to get to know the people who have worked on *The Simpsons* a little bit better, come by *Round Springfield*.

Julia: Every other week on Maximumfun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts!

Travis: Okay. Now, you mentioned something about an electronic bay of some sort?

Teresa: Exactly. A virtual yard sale.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Known as Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, eBay.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, so here's the thing, right? If you have to categorize something on the internet, it becomes easily searchable. You are able to figure out and cross reference how much things are worth. [pauses] What?

Travis: You just a little bit of the [unintelligible]—

Teresa: You look so disappointed!

Travis: It's just you're losing a little bit of the magic for me, a little bit of gamble! 'Cause now someone could see it and you're like, "Ooh, I'm gonna try to buy that

for 50 cents." And someone else comes in, like, "That is worth a hundred dollars!" Like, and then they start buying—I also—I will always, always, always have a distaste in my mouth for eBay because of Beanie Babies.

Teresa: Ohh.

Travis: I think, like—I think Beanie Babies were what they were—and listen, this is not me saying "Boo, Beanie Babies, gruuuh!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I am saying that, like, the actual truth about Beanie Babies if you, like, do a little bit of research into how that, like, boomed, right? It was all inflation, basically, and it was all because of things like eBay becoming prevalent as, like, Beanie Babies were becoming prevalent, and the market just—like, there was a huge [holding back laughter] Beanie Baby bubble. Ah, that is the way to say it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So I will always feel weirded out about eBay because of that.

Teresa: Okay. Well, it's not the only site you can go to. Today, there are lots of global tracking sites like yardsales.net, um, that can take you to any sale that's listed, really. Um, so why is it so important in our culture? Important enough that there is a national yard sale day, the second Sunday of August?

Travis: That was—wait, that was this week, right?

Teresa: It was this week!

Travis: So that's why we're doing this episode. Now I get it, okay.

Teresa: Yeahhh. Here it is. The historic highway 127 yard sale.

Travis: What?

Teresa: Um I hadn't heard of it. But our researcher, Alex, has been there.

Travis: Whaaat?

Teresa: Yeah! Um, so it's 690 miles of bargains, hand-me-downs, and one man's trash is another man's treasure, along highway 127. Um, it starts in Addison, Michigan and ends in Gadsden, Alabama.

Travis: Whoa.

Teresa: so, thousands of vendors take place all weekend, all along the road. You know, could be massive community parks or churches or even just people's homes. Um, and apparently that's where Alex got a lot of her school clothes every year.

Travis: Huh! That is cool. See, now this is what I'm saying, right? Because this is why I scoffed when you said you're buying other people's junk, right? Because I think of it more as... we all—okay, I'm not gonna say that. I'm gonna say a large chunk of at least the US population has more than we need.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? And so there are things that—okay, look at it this way, right? Blender, right? Say, "Aw, but I wanna get a blender that has eight speeds, and this one only has five speeds, but it works perfectly well." Right? And so I know I'm gonna buy that eight speed one.

But rather than just, like, throw away the five speed one, I'm gonna sell it to somebody for five dollars instead of them going out and paying 50 dollars for a new blender. Right? That's why to me garage sales and rummage sales and stuff are—are... magical?

Teresa: I mean, it's part of the reduce, reuse, recycle, like, bliss, right?

Travis: But also, in a weird way—and I'm not speaking hyperbolically—it's kind of a redistribution of wealth.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: In a way of, like, "Hey, you couldn't afford to buy this blender new, and you need a blender, and I don't need this blender anymore, so I'm gonna sell it to you—" okay, so here's why—a good example of this, right?

For a while, and we are seeing a drop off of it now, but for a while places like Gamestop had this weird stranglehold on the secondhand video game system, right? You would take your video game into Gamestop to trade it in for money, and they might, if you're lucky, give you five dollars for a game. And then they'd turn around and sell it for 45 dollars. Still cheaper than if you're buying it new, but a huge markup, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And so that is why I don't like this middle man kind of thing, because the whole point of it to me is like, "Well, I beat this game. I'm not playing this game anymore. It's taking up room on my shelf. I want money to buy new things. I will sell it to *you* for a cheaper price, right? For ten bucks, and I get ten bucks back, and you get the game for ten bucks." Right?

And so then when you introduce this middle man who's like, "I'll give you five bucks for it, and I'm about to make 40 dollars off that sale." That—anyway, listen. Here—I know I'm on a tangent.

Teresa: If it's for charity... I think that's fine.

Travis: No, I'm—this is what I'm saying! Yes, for charity or whatever. Or if you're just, like, selling it in your yard! But as soon as you say, like, "I don't wanna have a yard sale, so I'm just going to give this to you, and then you sell it," and that person's like, "Cool, I'm gonna mark this way, way up and make a ton of money off of your old stuff."

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: That's consumerism that I don't care for, that I don't *care* for. And they're buying it, [claps] and they're selling it, [claps] and they're slapping it on a lunchbox.

[pauses]

Teresa: Alright. Speaking of—

Travis: Hey, sorry. I just—I just ranted there for a little while and I apologize. Okay.

Teresa: Let's—let's turn this a little bit. Take a little bit of a right turn, here.

Travis: I'll take some deep breaths.

Teresa: Let's talk about some accidentally discovered fortunes.

Travis: Yes, please!

Teresa: So, in 2012, a man—

Travis: This is why we watch *Antiques Roadshow*, right?

Teresa: Yes! Of course it is!

Travis: This is why any human being watches *Antiques Roadshow*. 'Cause it's like, "Uh, I bought this pot for, like, [laughs quietly] 50 cents."

"Oh, did you? 50 cents. Well, it's interesting you would say that. This is worth—"

Teresa: "[simultaneously] This pot was—" [laughs]

Travis: "—a million dollars! [laughs] This is—Louis XIII—"

Teresa: "It's from an ancient Chinese dynasty."

Travis: "—like, peed in this pot. It's worth a lot of money."

Teresa: [laughs] So, in 2012 a man bought a sketch at a yard sale for fiiiive dollars.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Turned out it was an original Andy Warhol worth two million dollars.

Travis: Get *out* of the town.

Teresa: I know. Another person in 2008 bought a five dollar box of old documents, only to discover an old Coca-Cola stock certificate worth... [pause] 130 million dollars.

Travis: [chokes] [laughs] This is what I'm saying! This is the gam—you're talking to me and it's like, I'm itching to go to a yard sale right now. I'm like, "Let me buy all your old stuff, and let me see if any of it's worth 130-some million dollars."

[pauses]

Teresa: Here's one more.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: A man named Richard Norsigian bought 65 peculiar little glass plates at a rummage sale in 2000, only to find that they were original photo negatives taken by Ansel Adams.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: He paid 45 dollars for something that was later appraised for 200 million dollars.

Travis: This is what I'm saying, folks!

Teresa: Yeah, but, like, these are three examples.

Travis: Okay?!

Teresa: Let's think about maybe—okay, let's say that, like, maybe ten people a year end up with something like this. But, like, not—like, over 600,000 people go to yard sales every year!

Travis: But this is my point. But this is *my* point, Teresa. Teresa? Teresa? Can I make my point, Teresa? Can I say this? Can I say one thing? Please. Please, Teresa? Can I say one thing? One thing?

They bought those things 'cause they liked them, or because they were interested in them or 'cause they wanted to check them out, right? And then they ended up being worth money. They did not know that those were, like, photo prints of Ansel Adams. They did not know—

Teresa: No.

Travis: —that that was a sketch of Andy Warhol. I'm saying—

Teresa: No!

Travis: —you go to a rummage sale, you see something you like, you buy it, and maybe you get it appraised.

Teresa: You—I just feel like you have this—this treasure hunter instinct—

Travis: Of course I do!

Teresa: —and I'm saying that the odds of finding that are remarkably slim!

Travis: Well, yes. But that's what makes it [whispers] so delicious. [chef's kiss]

Teresa: Alright. Hey, let's do some etiquette.

Travis: Okay. I have questions. Do you wanna do questions, and then we'll talk about etiquette in between?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Okay. Anna asked:

"How do you stand your ground on prices? I know it's important to haggle/negotiate, but how do you politely put your foot down when you know the value of your items?"

Okay. This is my feeling on this, and then Teresa, you tell me if I am wrong. I think that haggling and negotiating are a thing, but not when you know the value of something, right?

Teresa: Well, sure.

Travis: I feel like that's the dif—like, if you—if you put, let's say, a lamp up for sale, right? And you know you bought that lamp for 40 dollars, you've had it for three years, now you're gonna sell it for 10 dollars, right? And you're confident in that price. And someone goes, "Ten dollars? I'll give you two."

And you're like, "No."

Like, I think—

Teresa: And I think that's all there is to it. Like, it's not—if someone offers you something that you are not willing to accept, you just have to say, "No thanks, I'll wait for somebody who wants ten."

Travis: I think it is also a thing we talk about a lot, which is it is the way you say it.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: "Uhhh, noo... " makes it sound like you wanna negotiate.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: If you're like, "No, the price is ten."

Teresa: Here's an etiquette "do" that you can think about, as far as this goes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: If something has a price on it, probably not negotiable.

Travis: That's fair.

Teresa: If something does not have a price tag, price sticker, isn't labeled with a price, I think that they'd be willing to negotiate.

Travis: I would also be so—go so far as to, like, if you find a box of, for example, records, right? And it's like, each record is a dollar, and there's 60 records in the box, and you say, "I'll give you 50 for the whole box."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like, that is something that I think—

Teresa: Quantity definitely requires a little bit of leeway.

Travis: Right. Because they probably expecting to sell all the records, 'cause that's a—okay. Here's the one thing, folks. If you want—if you wanna haggle, you need to go at the end of the day.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, that's another "do."

Travis: Because that means that they, like—they don't wanna take that stuff back in. And this is—I also—I bring that up because I wanted to tie in to this question. Tyler asked:

"Is it rude to ask someone to hold an item for you if you might come back for it, or is it okay to hide something away amongst other items and come back for it?"

No, and no!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Thank you for asking.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, holds are something that you have to do if you are absolutely certain you're gonna come back for it, and as a seller, I would recommend that if you are asked to hold something, you ask for payment to hold it.

Travis: Yes. At least a deposit. Even if you're like, "Oh, I wanna buy this but I don't have the cash to pay for it."

I'd be like, "Okay, well, give me ten dollars now and, like, your phone number or something, and then you come back."

So that way if somebody comes and says, "I wanna buy it right now," they can call you and say, "Hey, are you coming back? 'Cause I have a buyer here right now who wants this thing."

Teresa: Right. I think that the payment is key here, and... here's the thing about hiding something, right? Like... if you're not gonna come back for it, that's kinda... kinda shady.

Travis: Yeah... yeah... yeah.

Teresa: I would say—I would say... if you can't buy something right now, and you don't have the money, what are you doing at a garage sale? [laughs quietly]

Travis: This is true.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: This is an excellent point. And, like I said, the problem here is, like, to ask somebody to hold something is, like, they're not a store—and even then, you wouldn't go to a store and be like, "Can you hold all this stuff for me? I *might* be back later."

Teresa: Even with layaway, you have to put money down.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, and so, like, I totally understand if, like, something up your—the way of your thinking happens where, like, you find this giant treasure, right? This, like, huge standing mirror, right? And we don't have room in the car for this huge standing mirror, so what would happen is I would pay for the mirror and say, "I will be back with a van by 4 o' clock."

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right? So that's what you need to do in order to facilitate goodwill, you know? Um, so... in the same vein, facilitate some more goodwill, and don't be early to garage sales.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: If the flyer, whatever, says "Starts at 8," don't show up at 7 expecting someone to open up their garage sale for you when they're not ready.

Travis: And vice versa. If it says it goes til, say, 3, don't show up at 2:59 and start browsing.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know what I mean? Like...

Teresa: Although, I do believe that at the end of the day, people are a little more lenient with that. But, like, if I am at my kitchen table drinking coffee and someone's beating down my door saying, "[muffled] Hey, I'm early for the garage sale!"

I'd be like, "Hey, go back home!" [laughs]

Travis: Yes. Completely agree. Uh, this is from Bloop the Bee.

"How would you accurately price something? I have old things that I don't remember how much they were. I wouldn't want to overprice it, but I need to make a profit. What is appropriate?"

Well, profit is—I don't think people make a profit on a garage sale. I don't—so, I think how much the thing was... doesn't necessarily always factor in.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Unless it was, like, a super expensive item and you're trying to recoup some of that expense. My advice would be sort of a Mari Kondo kind of thing,

where you wanna look at it and think, like, "If I let go of this right now, how much money would I want to be in my hand—" you know what I mean?

Like, it's gotta be like, "Do I feel comfortable giving this—" because what you don't want to do is say, like, "Well, it's three dollars." And then the next day someone's like, "I'll give three dollars for it." And you're like, "Uh, that doesn't seem like enough."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "I don't know, how about five?" And like, "But the sticker says three!" And you're like, "Yes, but I'm kind of reverse haggling."

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. I think what you need to do is you need to consider how much you paid for the item divided by how old it is, the condition its in, is it something that people—that, like, a lot of people would want?

So, if it's something highly specific, let's say a pair of super small boots or whatever. Like, these were fairly expensive, they fit your feet, but they're size four, so not a lot of people are gonna fit in it. You've worn them a lot. They're pretty worn down.

So even though you paid 80 bucks for it, maybe, like, five dollars is what you should ask for it. Because it was an expensive luxury item that you have enjoyed, and not a lot of other people will enjoy.

Conversely, something like maybe—I'm gonna say, like, a painting, right? Uh, some paintings can be hundreds of dollars. If you're gonna sell a painting at a yard sale, I mean... that's—you're probably not gonna get as much for it as you bought it for at a yard sale. Um, but it's not something that depreciates in value with use. Like, it doesn't wear out as you look at it, so you could charge more—

Travis: Yes, unless you look really hard.

Teresa: [laughs] So you could charge more—

Travis: How hard—if you are looking close and your eyelashes are brushing against it—

Teresa: [laughs] You're too close.

Travis: —they're too close.

Teresa: Uh, and maybe it has mass appeal, you know? So you can ask for a little more because you think that a lot more people will be interested in it.

Travis: The thing I think you need to decide before you start pricing things is, what is your goal? Are you trying to make money or are you trying to make room, right?

Teresa: Mmmm.

Travis: And I think if you're trying to make money, you're trying to price things in such a way that you will make money and feel good at the end of the day, right? If you're trying to make room, you wanna price things to move, right? And so, like, everything on this table's a dollar, right? And it's like, I don't need money for this, I just have too much stuff, and I know if I take it to this place—you know, like that kind of thing.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: I also—I wanna say, now, um, we—Teresa and I, we don't do rummage sales now, because when we have stuff we don't need, we'll donate to somewhere that, like, either disperses it to people or resells it to raise money for charity, right?

And I think you see people doing that more and more, as donation drop offs are getting easier and easier. And so, like, you know, I just wanted to throw that out as we are aware that these things are, like—you could donate them as well.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Um, let's see. Here's a question from Sasha.

"Can I host a garage sale in an apartment complex, or is that rude to my neighbors?"

Teresa: Um, in an apartment complex...

Travis: I mean, step one, I'd ask your landlord.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: The owners of the building or whatever.

Teresa: Um, the thing is, I just don't think that it's worth your time, because the foot traffic is probably not very heavy. People are, like, parking and going home.

Travis: Unless... unless you live in, like, a big city. Like, if you're an apartment in, like, New York, right? Then, like...

Teresa: Yeah, but you're out front, like on the sidewalk. Right?

Travis: Ehh, that's fair. I mean, yeah.

Teresa: I guess when I'm thinking about, like, a yard or rummage sale in an apartment complex, I'm thinking about, like, parking lot, and then, like, outdoor stairs to a bank of houses or whatever, right?

Travis: Yeah. If you were going to do it, I would first talk to your landlord and say, like, "Is this even cool?"

Secondly, maybe talk to the other people—like, as much as you know and say, like, "Would you want to also set up a table?"

Because I think to Teresa's point, if you're gonna be successful for this to, like, work, it would need to be, like, a destination garage sale that maybe also other people in the apartment complex would, like, go to, and, like, buy each other's things, at which point you would need to make them aware of it ahead of time.

Teresa: And you want to think about, like, parking and space and being in the way of people. Like, you wouldn't want to set up on a busy sidewalk because people are just trying to get back to their homes.

Travis: Or set up in, like, a small parking lot where people in your apartment complex can't park.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Uh, one more question, here. And we kinda talked—we said we'd talk about it, so I want to. This is from Val.

"How acceptable is it to examine items for functionality, and how much examining is too much?"

Teresa: Um... yeah. We talked about this. As a seller, you might want to have an extension cord available to let people see if machinery works. You also might want to have some kind of, like... I don't know, like, PVC contraption for people to—like with curtains, like, to try things on if they wanna try things on?

Travis: Sure. I mean, if you—yeah, if you wanna go that far, sure. But I think to that point—

Teresa: If you wanted to move a lot of clothes, that might be a worthwhile investment.

Travis: Or the other side of it is, you price things lower, right? If you're trying to move it. And you're saying, like—

Teresa: Well, I don't have a place to try this on, but it's only a dollar!

Travis: Right. Or, one of the things that you will see at a lot of sales like this are the words "sold as-is."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And if that happens, it means... hypothetically, the seller doesn't know if it works or not. They just found it and put it right on the table. [holding back laughter] But it might also mean that the seller *knows* it doesn't work—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —and you are buying it without knowing whether it works or not.

Teresa: Right. So, I think that it is okay to inspect electronics and things like that for obvious defects, and I think that that can also factor into negotiations of price, right? Um, but what I don't think that you should do is—say something comes with—okay, puzzles, right? Puzzles are something that end up at yard sales all the time, and you can't go through a puzzle box [holding back laughter] to try and figure out if all the pieces are there.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: That—that would be bonkers. So don't—don't do that. But a lot of people, if you ask them, "Is this puzzle complete?"

They'd be like, "Hey, I don't know."

Travis: And then you could probably get some money off of it.

Teresa: Right. So if you see that the puzzle has been used, been opened, that's an appropriate thing to ask, instead of trying to put the puzzle together at the yard sale. [laughs quietly]

Travis: I think—there is a phrase that you hear a lot, and I think it applies to yard sales and rummage sales perhaps more than any other sale of any kind, and that is caveat emptor: buyer beware.

Teresa: Mmm.

Travis: Right? And so that is the trade off, right? I talk a lot about, like, treasure hunting and everything at garage sales, right? But the trade off is, if you, say, for example, see a drawing and you're like, "Maybe that's—[stammering] I don't know, [holding back laughter] Picasso or whatever."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And then you buy it and it's not, you can't go back to that person and say, "Oh, I—I want my ten dollars back." Right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Or if you buy a camcorder—I don't know. What year is it? And it doesn't work—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —you can't return it, right? Like, that—how old *am* I? If you buy, like, a VHS tape rewinder—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Ugh.

Teresa: A boom box. [laughs quietly]

Travis: If you buy one of those boomed box that all the kids are playing with—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —with their Talkboys and their Teddy Ruxpins—

Teresa: And a Walkman. [laughs]

Travis: Oh my goodness gracious. That's gonna do it for us, folks.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Oh, boy. Aw, beans.

Teresa: Hey, let's say our thank you's.

Travis: Okay. Thank you to Maximumfun.org, our podcast home. Thank you to everyone who is a Max Fun member for supporting us.

Teresa: Yes. We do appreciate—it was a lovely drive, and that's because of you.

Travis: Yes. Thank you so much. Uh, let's see. Thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we would not be able to make this show. Thank you to our children for sleeping, uh, eventually. [laughs]

Teresa: Eventually. [laughs]

Travis: Um, let's see. Who else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, which is where we get all of our listener-submitted questions @shmannerscast.

Um, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners, which you can join if you love to give and get excellent advice. Also, thank you to everyone who has been sending in topic suggestions to our gmail, which is shmanners... cast@gmail.com.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Sometimes I forget.

Travis: Listen, we've all been there!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We got a lot of email accounts bouncin' around, a lot of Twitter accounts.

Teresa: And keep sending us those idioms. We love it.

Travis: Yep! Uh, and that's going to do it for us.

Teresa: Join us again next week!

Travis: No RSVP required.

Teresa: [through laughter] Oh no, we did it backwards!

Travis: We did!

Teresa: [laughs]

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

Teresa: [holding back laughter] Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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