

Shmanners 268: Barbara Gittings

Published July 2nd, 2021

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[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: I'm working on my diction.

Teresa: Hmm!

Travis: My pronunciation.

Teresa: Well... okay.

Travis: [awkward pronunciation] Pronunciation. The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue.

Teresa: Yeah, but pronun—

Travis: [awkward pronunciation] The rain in Spain falls mostly on the plain?

[pause]

Teresa: Are you done?

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: Okay. [laughs] [pause] What was that all about?

Travis: I don't know.

Teresa: [laughs distantly] [clears throat]

Travis: Sometimes it's just for me. [laughs]

Teresa: Sometimes, yep.

Travis: Sometimes it's just for me, you know? The kids are talking now, a lot.

Teresa: Oh, yeah. Dot is—

Travis: And I'm trying to get Dot—yeah.

Teresa: —is talking circles around us.

Travis: Oh my goodness. Bebe was a really late talker, and Dot is a very early talker, and she's started to develop... thoughts, and emotions!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And preferences.

Teresa: Sometimes the emotions really take over and she doesn't speak words that we recognize. She just says a whole paragraph.

Travis: Yeah, and the intonation and delivery is like she's delivering a speech, right? She's like, "[unintelligible baby talk]." And all you can do is go, "Okay. Yeah, yeah, alright."

Teresa: "Okay." [laughs]

Travis: She has also started doing this thing where she'll just loudly announce, like, "I wanna see! I wanna see!"

And you're like, "What do you wanna see?"

And then she puts her fingers to her lips and goes, "Hmm... " [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And it's like, "Okay, so you didn't have something in mind."

Like, Bebe does the same thing where Bebe will sometimes just say, like, "I wanna tell you something."

And you're like, "Okay, what?"

And she goes, "Uhh... "

And it literally is just, "I wanna tell you *something*. I haven't decided what yet, but I definitely want to tell you a thing. Give me a second."

Teresa: Yeah. Anyway, we digress.

Travis: Hey, that's just—that's just a little Our Kids Corner.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We don't talk—we don't talk enough about ourselves and our life. We give so much back.

Teresa: Okay, anyway, um, I would like to say to all of our fanners out there, happy Pride Month! I know that it was over, but Pride's all-year now. I've decided.

Travis: Lowercase p, you can be proud all year, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And Pride is a very special event that is a month long, right? I don't wanna dilute it. You can be proud all year. Is that—you know, it's like how Christmas starts in, like, August now?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: No, you can be proud. I saw somebody tweet the other day, like, "Pride is almost done. Next, Wrath."

Teresa: [laughs] Love it.

Travis: Yeah, it was great.

Teresa: Uh, but we would like to round out our Pride Month celebration here, really. Um, with one last bio episode: Barbara Gittings.

Travis: I thought of a name for these, by the way, 'cause we often talk about people that you should know about and don't. And I'm thinking, "Bi-oh!"

[pause]

Teresa: [gasps] Ohh!

Travis: Yeah. Yeah, what do you think?

Teresa: I love it.

Travis: Bi-oh!

Teresa: I love it.

Travis: [laughs] That's dumb. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It was very dumb.

Teresa: But it's perfect. It goes with *Shmanners Fanners*, and...

Travis: I guess.

Teresa: And *Shmanners*, get it?

Travis: Bi-oh my! What about that?

Teresa: Bio-mio.

Travis: Bi—no.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Bi-oh my, oh my. [laughs quietly]

Travis: Bi-oh my, oh my. Bi-oh my-oh Cincinnati, Ohio.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Go on.

Teresa: Oh man, this is gonna be a long show.

Travis: It's gonna be one of those days, yep!

Teresa: Okay, so... Barbara Gittings was born—

Travis: I love that name, by the way, Barbara. It was my grandmother's name, it's Bebe's full name. I like it.

Teresa: Yeah. Uh, was born July 31st, 1932 in Vienna, Austria.

Travis: Ohh!

Teresa: Well, her father was a US diplomat, and they moved back to the states when World War II broke out.

Travis: 1930's—yeah, I was gonna say, 1930's in Austria. Rough!

Teresa: Yeah, that's a rough time. She and her siblings had a very religious upbringing. They attended Catholic school and went to church often, as you do when you're Catholic.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Um, and... here's—

Travis: How many times a week, would you guess?

Teresa: Uh, you can go to church up to three times a week.

Travis: Yeah, my family often went twice. Three, if we nasty. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs] Oh my goodness. That's interesting, I just had a thought. Catholics believe in the Eucharist, communion, right? Weekly. I wonder if you can do that three times. I don't think you can.

Travis: No, you'd fill up.

Teresa: [clicks tongue] Maybe.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Uh, but she has said that she always knew she liked girls, but as a kid she thought she'd just be a nun.

Travis: Aw, man. That's a bummer. To think that that's your only option. But I bet... you know? Especially in the 1930's, but even now, I bet there are a lot of kids raised in religious homes that see that as, like, "Well, if I can't—I know what I'm attracted to, I know who I want to be with, I know who I am. But, I feel that that is wrong. I've been taught that that is wrong, so my only option is celibacy."

That is not great, to put it mildly.

Teresa: Yeah. But, uh, in her college years, she attended Northwestern, where it was rumored that her close friendship with a girl was sexual.

Travis: Good. Good for her!

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, and once the rumor went around and came back to Barbara and her friend, her friend drifted away from her, which—

Travis: Oh no! It wasn't real? Wait, it wasn't—[stammers] or it was just—we're unclear if it was true or not.

Teresa: We're unclear if they were romantically or sexually involved, but their friendship slowly dissolved.

Travis: Because the—okay.

Teresa: Because of the rumor.

Travis: Because of the public, like—okay. Got it, got it.

Teresa: Right. Uh, back in this day they were still, quote, "diagnosing" people with sexuality.

Travis: [sighs] Gross.

Teresa: Homosexuality, excuse me. And they offered to, quote, "cure" her.

Travis: Gross!

Teresa: Gross. But her father refused to pay, thinking that Barbara just needed more church.

Travis: Okay. Alright! Okay.

Teresa: There are goods and bads to that, right?

Travis: Well, I mean, listen. You can do the right thing for all the wrong reasons.

Teresa: Yeah, that's it. That's what it was.

Travis: [crosstalk] Yeah, that wasn't her father being like, "No, we're not going to do this 'cause it's wrong." It's "We're not gonna do this [through laughter] 'cause I'm cheap and pious!"

Teresa: [snorts quietly] I think that's it.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah, you're right. Um, and so Barbara did something that I, too, often do. Instead, she began researching anything she could find on the gay experience.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: That's what I do when I encounter a problem. I—

Travis: Knowledge is power, yeah!

Teresa: Knowledge is power. I find everything I can find. I often get, um... in trouble...

Travis: Well, okay. Now, hold on.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Si—okay. Okay. Okay. If we're gonna go there, we're gonna go there. The reason you get in trouble is because sometimes if you go into research mode in the wrong frame of mind, you are not researching with an open mind. You are researching for the worst possible thing that could possibly happen. [laughs]

You said to me the other day, "Do you think that Dot slept on her pacifier funny, or [holding back laughter] has ringworm?"

Teresa: She had a very distinctive circle on her face.

Travis: And so did you get on your phone and search "What does it look like when my child sleeps on the pacifier funny" or did you research ringworm?

Teresa: Ringworm.

Travis: Okay. Okay.

Teresa: [laughs quietly] Anyway, the library was not helpful to Barbara at all.

Travis: Yeah, I can't imagine.

Teresa: Everything about homosexuality was either described as deviant and perverted in medical and psychology textbooks, or the literature perpetuated weirdly specific stereotypes? For example, gay people can't whistle?

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: And every gay person's favorite color is green.

Travis: Huh. Weird.

Teresa: Weird.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And... most importantly for Barbara, the whole thing was focused on the male experience, which she did not identify as. And so, she failed out of Northwestern, 'cause she was spending too much time lookin' up stuff.

Travis: Yeah, it seems like she wasn't, uh—you know, she had more important things to do.

Teresa: That's right. More pressing matters caused her to miss her classes.

Travis: Good.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I mean, not that there's anything wrong with getting a college education, but if that's not what you want to learn about, some things they can't teach you in school.

Teresa: That reminds me also a lot about me, because my first freshman—

Travis: Yeah, but you didn't fail out.

Teresa: No, I didn't, but, I mean, every... I think that every collegiate career has a little bit of a curve of, "I have to go to class every day?"

And then you figure out that you don't really ever have to go to class?

Travis: Oh, then mine was a flat line. What are you talkin' about?

Teresa: Well, I—so I started out, like—I had, like, 22 credit hours and I was like, "Yeah, we're gonna get this done, get goin'."

And I went to every single class, and I was like, "I'm payin' for it! I need to get my money's worth!"

And then I figured out that a lot of classes was just lecture on the reading that I had already read, and if I could just keep up with it I didn't have to actually go to class, and then I joined the student theater group, and then I stopped actually going to class and started taking really easy classes?

Travis: Yeah. Oh, so what you're saying—

Teresa: And then I transferred out of that college. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, so you started, um, not in a theater program.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: See, I started in a theater program, so the only classes I went to and did the reading for were theater classes, and every other one, if they took attendance, I felt slighted.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] "How could you? Don't you know I could be sleeping?"

Okay, so back to Barbara.

Teresa: Back to Barbara. She, like I said, failed out of Northwestern and returned home, but kept at her personal research, and really, like, got... kind of found herself in lesbian literature.

And, um, her father found something else in her bedroom called *The Well of Loneliness*. And told her to burn it.

Travis: So, I assume that was a—a book?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay. Not, like, a literal well of loneliness?

Teresa: No, no, no. A book.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It was a book. It's a—

Travis: 'Cause that's some weird enchanting stuff.

Teresa: It's a novel from 1928 about an Englishwoman who knew that she was a lesbian, but the only sexual references at all are these two lines.

"She kissed her full on the lips as a lover," and, "And that night they were not divided."

That's it! There's no explicit sexuality, no X-rated descriptions. They kiss and they cuddle. And the entirety of the British government was like, "[gruffly] Absolutely not!"

So in England, an enormous morality war broke out over this book and its defense of, quote, "unnatural practices between women." [laughs quietly]

Travis: Boo.

Teresa: Uh, and the book actually survived legal challenges in New York State and in customs court, and it was often some of the first references of lesbianism that young people could find in the US, even though it has debatable issues in it, as all, you know, aged works of literature do, the book has a long and storied history that maybe we could look into.

Travis: Maybe!

Teresa: Uh, she took an abnormal psychology class, hoping to get a little more information on her sexuality. Uh, but instead, she met her first girlfriend.

Travis: Oh, nice!

Teresa: Yeah! Uh, I mean, it was not a long-lasting relationship, but it did help her continue her, you know, self-discovery.

Um, and at 18, she left home for Philadelphia.

Travis: Good. Get outta that house.

Teresa: Yeah, get outta there.

Travis: We're gonna talk more about Barbara. But first, how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

Travis: First, we want to write a thank you note to Function of Beauty. Mango, rose, pear. Are you eatin' these, you ask? No, no, my friend!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I mean, I guess you could. Those things I just listed. But what—okay. In association with, I'm talking about Function of Beauty. Customized shampoo, conditioners—those are some amazing scents.

Teresa: So don't eat the shampoo and conditioner.

Travis: No. No. Don't eat the shampoo and conditioner. But you can customize it.

Teresa: Yeahh.

Travis: Yeahh! Based on a short but thorough quiz, you can customize Function of Beauty products to give your hair everything it needs to look and feel its best. Every product is sulfate and paraben free, vegan, and cruelty free. And Function of Beauty fans are absolutely *wild*—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —about the fragrances. And for good reason! [quietly] I'm trying to do a [unintelligible]—

Teresa: I know!

Travis: Okay. Try Tropical Mango, Sweet Peach, Crisp Pear, subtler scents such as Lavender, Rose, and Eucalyptus.

Teresa: Okay, alright.

Travis: Okay. If fragrance is not for you, that's okay. You can get unscented as well. I, right now, have some Function of Beauty in my hair, 'cause my hair was feeling just a little dry and crispy.

Teresa: Ooh.

Travis: And so was my scalp, you know? So I did the oil, uh, to feel, I don't know, a little slicker, yeah? It smells great. Smell it.

Teresa: [sniffs] Smells nice. Can confirm.

Travis: Yeah! See? There you go. I've got the shampoo, I've got the conditioner, I've got a leave-in conditioner, and I have an oil. I love it.

So, go to functionofbeauty.com/shmanners to take your quiz and save 20% on your first order. That applies to their full range of customized hair, skin, and body products. That's functionofbeauty.com/shmanners to let them know you heard about it here, and get 20% off your order. [Functionofbeauty.com/shmanners](https://functionofbeauty.com/shmanners).

Teresa: *Shmanners* is also sponsored in part by Made In!

Travis: That's like M-A-D-E space I-N.

Teresa: That's right.

Travis: Not like Maiden. We're sponsored by: a maiden.

Teresa: [wheezy laughter] No. Made In.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: We've been cookin' a lot of meals at home.

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: And we recently had to actually get rid of some of our cookware because our nonstick, well-loved, Teflon-coated cookware had small scratches in it, and you have—you can't use that anymore.

Travis: Yeah, 'cause the Teflon get in your food!

Teresa: That's right! So, we were very happy to try Made In, which has both quality and craftsmanship. Um, it's cookware and kitchenware that works with renowned chefs and artisans to produce some of the world's best pots, pans, knives, and wine glasses.

Uh, they source the finest materials, and they partner with renowned craftsmen to make kitchen tools available directly to you without the markup. Uh, we got a frying pan.

Travis: Oh, I love it. What I love about it—one, it has a great, like, quality feel. You know how sometimes—I remember back in college having some pans, pots and pans that I'd pick up, and they were so light, right?

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: That I was like, "There's no way this was designed for human usage. This is like a doll's plate!"

Teresa: There is something satisfying about a hefty pan.

Travis: A hefty pan, and it's got a smooth, uh, pretty finish, and it's got a great design to it. So you're gonna look great using it, and you're gonna feel great using it, and they have 28,000 five star reviews to prove it.

So, right now Made In is offering our listeners 15% off your first order with promo code "shmanners." This is the best discount available anywhere online for Made In products, so go to madeincookware.com/shmanners and use promo code "shmanners" for 15% off your first order. That's madeincookware.com/shmanners, and use promo code "shmanners."

[music plays]

Justin: Hi, everybody! My name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: We're both doctors, and—

Sydnee: Nope! Just me.

Justin: Okay, well, Sydnee's a doctor, and I'm a medical enthusiast—

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: —and we create *Sawbones*: a marital tour of misguided medicine.

Sydnee: Every week, I dig through the annals of medical history to bring you the wildest, grossest, sometimes dumbest tales of ways we've tried to treat people throughout history.

Justin: And lately, we do a lot of modern fake medicine... because everything's a disaster. But it's slightly less of a disaster every Friday, right here on Maximumfun.org as we bring you *Sawbones*: a marital tour of misguided medicine. And remember:

Sydnee: Don't drill a hole in your head.

[music and ad play and end]

Travis: Back to Barbara.

Teresa: Oh yeah. We have moved into her young adult years, and this is where she starts to really find herself. I feel like she's been looking everywhere, and she finds it in New York City.

Travis: Wow. So many of us have, you know?

Teresa: So many.

Travis: We go there with—bright lights, big city. We have dreams. And that Big Apple, we just wanna take a big ol' bite out of it, and hope there's no worm, and eat that city to the core, and then grow a new... tree, like Johnny Appleseed, so that other folks can come and eat the apples, and then the trees will keep growing and take over the city, and then the trees will rise up to defeat their human overlords. I've lost the plot.

Teresa: Absolutely. So, she would hitchhike to New York City while living in Philadelphia, and the reason why? She wanted to go to gay bars.

Travis: Hm!

Teresa: She was trying to find her community. Um, but, you know, as is someone who has been told that their whole life is not right, it was hard. It was hard to find herself. And so, for example—

Travis: Can I just say, though, I love how proactive she is about all this.

Teresa: Yeah, totally!

Travis: You know what I mean? That she's like, "Well, I can't find the information, so I'm gonna look at different places. But I can't find it there, so I'm gonna go out to places in the world and ask and be there and experience it and, like, be proactive about this, and not wait for the information to come to me."

I think that's really, really cool.

Teresa: She was a real go-getter. "Go and get it," she said.

Travis: Yeah. She went and got it.

Teresa: Yes. For example, she wasn't quite comfortable with it, but she would dress in drag, because she thought that presenting as, in her words, as butch, was the only way to communicate her sexuality to the world. Um, and so... like I said earlier, she was way into research, right? And she needed more information. So, on the advice of her friend, Donald Webster Cory, she decided to visit California.

Travis: That's a long way!

Teresa: Yeah, but it makes a lot of sense, right? Those coastal areas tend to be gathering places for like-minded people.

Travis: Yeah, no, def, I'm just sayin'. It's a long way.

Teresa: It is a long way. But, you know, when you're determined, it's—it's just a trip. It's just a little—

Travis: It's just a trip!

Teresa: —just a little trip.

Travis: It's just a trip.

Teresa: She lived in California in 1956, to visit an early gay support network called ONE Inc, and during her time there, she also met Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, who were the co-founders of the first lesbian political and civil rights organization known as the Daughters of Bilitis.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Let's take a little sidestep about the Daughters of Bilitis.

Travis: Yes, who is Bilitis?

Teresa: So, Bilitis is a, uh, minor character in some literature that takes place on Lesbos.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But the name is pretty obscure, right? And when Barbara first went to a meeting, she said that it was impractical. It was difficult to pronounce, to spell—the character they were referencing wasn't even a lesbian. They identified as bisexual. And so, like...

Travis: They needed to rebrand.

Teresa: They needed to rebrand, and Barbara was ready to spearhead that at that point.

Travis: So proactive!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I like—I think Barbara and I would be friends.

Teresa: I think you would.

Travis: If only because a bonding where I respect her, and I don't know, I have a car, so I can drive her to California.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Yeah. I think that would be pretty much what I could contribute.

Teresa: So when people would ask about the Daughters of Bilitis, they would pretty much say that they were a poetry club, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and they were very careful. Their goal really wasn't based on any kind of, like, gay liberation, but—

Travis: It was support, right? Yeah.

Teresa: Sure. More—uh, a little bit. It was really based on the idea that straight people would accept gay people as long as gay people didn't upset mainstream, straight society.

Travis: I see. Okay.

Teresa: Yeah... but—okay. At the time, any conversation on the gay experience was better than no conversation.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Sure. But she also served as their first New York City chapter President, uh, from 1958 to 1961. And 1961 was the year that her life completely changed.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: She met photographer, activist, and writer, Kay Tobin Lahusen, who she would spend the rest of her life with.

Travis: Aw.

Teresa: As activists and romantic partners.

Travis: Yeah! Love it. I like when people find a partner. Not that you need a partner to be happy—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —it's just narratively satisfying for me because these are the stories that I've been raised with. Go on.

Teresa: Her relationship with Daughters of Bilitis was, mmm... tumultuous.

Travis: So, I'm not surprised by that. Can I guess why?

Teresa: Why?

Travis: Because she seems very proactive, and from everything you've said so far, they don't seem like a very proactive group?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: She became the editor of their magazine, called *The Ladder*. Um, and, you know, like you said, they were trying to remain apolitical, and not to rock the boat, as it were. Um—

Travis: But if the boat's goin' the wrong way, you gotta rock it!

Teresa: I know.

Travis: You gotta rock the boat sometimes.

Teresa: They even went so far as to publish opposing views, maybe written by people who believed homosexuality was deviant and curable.

Travis: Now, I will also say, just to—because of my privilege in so many ways, I will also say—privilege of time period, privilege of being a man, being straight, all those things. I also recognize that in this time period, it must've been incredibly scary for them. And the idea of rocking the boat was, like, "We are putting ourselves in danger. We could lose our jobs, our lives, our—like, a lot."

I totally understand. I have the benefit of hindsight of, you know, the modern age and privilege to look at it that way. It's just I—you know, I guess more than

anything, I feel bad that they had to deal with that and feel that way about themselves, because that was how they felt that they could, like, cope in society, and that is not good! And I mean, it's also still ongoing.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: I think it's one of those things where—yeah, like, once again, privilege of hindsight, privilege of my own stuff, it's easy to sit here and be like, "Man, if it were me," right? But even now there are people, you know, who have to kind of, like, quote, unquote, "play by the rules" and maybe lay low a little bit because they would risk danger and worse, you know?

Teresa: Yeah, their livelihood depends on it.

Travis: Even now. Even in this day and age, yeah.

Teresa: Well, Barbara did not like the idea of shaking hands and honoring voices of people who are constantly telling her that the way she loved was sick, right? Um, and at a convention in 1963, she was in the audience, and listened to Dr. Albert Ellis say that the, quote, "exclusive homosexual," end quote, as he termed it, was a psychopath.

Travis: Whoa!

Teresa: Right?

Travis: I was about to say how I kind of enjoyed the term "exclusive homosexual," 'cause it makes it sound like, I don't know, like almost a cool club. [laughs] But then...

Teresa: Well, once again, this is classifying it as an illness, and there's nothing wrong. There's no illness.

Travis: Yeah, even go so far as saying psychopath. Oh, man!

Teresa: Right. Um, and they would talk about a cure for an illness that doesn't exist. It—it... it's very strange. But, luckily, right after Dr. Ellis spoke, the gay activist Frank Kameny also spoke, and he countered Dr. Ellis by saying that it was useless to try to find cured and causes for homosexuality, because there is no valid evidence that it is an illness.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, and Gittings was deeply impacted by his speech, and she and Frank would become close friends.

Travis: Good.

Teresa: And co-activists, for, you know, pretty much the rest of their lives.

Travis: Cool. I also—I think that's it, I think I like stories of people finding, like, their team.

Teresa: Yeah, totally.

Travis: Putting a team together. I like that. That is very nar—oh, I like it. It's like *Ocean's 11*, you know? It's very satisfying to me to see a team come together.

Teresa: Uh, this is where she started to use *The Ladder*, that magazine from the Daughters of Bilitis, to start pushing and publishing more gay-friendly content, right?

Travis: Good.

Teresa: Um, she would put photographs of actual lesbians on the cover, uh, and she got six different bookstores to carry it, and she added provocative headlines. Um, and this was really dipping her toe into protest work, and soon—

Travis: It's like protest and activism is proactive.

Teresa: Whoaaa!

Travis: Do you get it?

Teresa: She took part in some of the earliest LGBTQIA+ protests, such as the 1965 rally at the White House, the Senate department, and Independence Hall. The group was protesting the fact that people could be fired from government jobs simply because of their sexuality.

Travis: [sighs]

Teresa: Yeah. Protest that, because that's not cool.

Travis: No. And—and... it is also one of those things of, like, the cyclical nature of these things where, like, I wish now, 50-ish years later, right? That that wasn't, like, a still going concern. Right? But there are still, like—I feel like the battle for, like, not getting fired because of who you are is still, like, ongoing, decades and decades later.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, however, the more political work she did, the more she... *The Ladder's* idea of an editor, right? They were not—they... their paths diverged in 1966.

Travis: Uh-huh. A differing of opinions!

Teresa: Indeed, indeed. Um, but now that she didn't have to remain apolitical, right? She could go and do whatever she wanted to do.

Travis: Now she's off the chain!

Teresa: That's right!

Travis: Look out! Look out! Nothin's holdin' her back! What'd she do?

Teresa: She and Kameny worked together as co-council in hearings at the Department of Defense, working to discredit any anti-gay, quote, "expert witnesses."

Travis: Nice.

Teresa: And continuing to advocate for job protection if you were gay.

Travis: Yes!

Teresa: Um, and here's one of the fun things.

Travis: Go on.

Teresa: As part of the protest, she would wear buttons that said things like, "Gay is Good."

Travis: I like that.

Teresa: That was the protest. The buttons.

Travis: See, listen.

Teresa: And she would make certain to shake—

Travis: Great slogan.

Teresa: —everybody's hand, so no one could avoid reading them.

Travis: That was a great—that's a great slogan, you know? It's got, uh, uh, alliteration. It's short. Uh, three syllables. Love it. Memorable. Love it.

Teresa: She made countless appearances as a speaker. She racked up *hundreds* of lectures on normalizing sexuality, and convincing hetero and homosexual people alike that being gay no longer needed to be classified as an illness.

Travis: I like Barbara.

Teresa: I do too! She has got it goin' on. Um, next on her checklist...

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: [laughs] In the 70's, Gittings decided to continue her search for gay library sources, and her hope was to create a collection of literature that addressed homosexuality in a positive and supportive way. She would go through libraries and secondhand bookshelves and, you know, just amass everything that she could find to put together this collection.

Um, and she became the coordinator for the American Library Association, and she pushed for more visibility for gay and lesbian people in the profession, often taking, uh, pretty zealous steps at the time to create media attention. At the convention for the American Library Association, she started a kissing booth [laughs] with a sign that read, "Hug a homosexual."

Travis: That's great.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I like Barbara.

Teresa: [laughs quietly]

Travis: I like Barbara a lot.

Teresa: But when no one took advantage of her stall, she and an author friend kissed in front of several television cameras.

Travis: Barbara? I like you. You're great, Barbara.

Teresa: I feel like every time—every time I look at you for an interjection, you're just her personal, like, cheering section.

Travis: I—listen! She seems cool. I like Barbara.

Teresa: Her and Frank Kameny teamed up again in 1972, and they started a panel with the American Psychiatric Association, to start a dialog about how homosexuality was classified as a psychological disorder.

Travis: Get that out of the DSM.

Teresa: That's right.

Travis: We don't need that.

Teresa: They found a gay psychiatrist to speak on the matter. He did say that he would only speak in disguise with his voice distorted, because he wanted to protect his identity, because he feared professional and personal ostracism, you know?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But we're very glad that he did, because the next year, homosexuality was removed from the DSM!

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: And it's no longer classified as a mental disorder.

Travis: Good!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Good!

Teresa: Uh, the *Philadelphia Newspaper* said, "20 million homosexuals gain instant cure."

Travis: [snorts]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's a pretty good headline.

Teresa: For a disease they didn't have.

Travis: Pretty good headline.

Teresa: [laughs] It's—it just really goes to show. Just, like... [sighs heavily]

Travis: How dumb it was?

Teresa: How dumb it was.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So dumb. But they still gotta sell those papes.

Travis: The newsies are out there workin' hard.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: They gotta get to Santa Fe! They gotta sell those papes! You know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Not everybody can have Teddy Roosevelt roll up and save 'em from wherever, or what. You know, I don't—it's been a long time—

Teresa: You haven't watched that movie in a while.

Travis: It's been a long time, but it's, uh, Santa Fe.

Teresa: Do you think that Bebe would like that movie?

Travis: Yes. Uhh, may—

Teresa: It's got a lot of boys in it.

Travis: Lot of boys in it.

Teresa: She's—she's really into girl power right now.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. Okay, so in 1999—

Travis: Although she has recently—so, there's a song from *My Little Pony* that's "Hearts as Strong as Horses."

Teresa: Oh, yes.

Travis: And for a long time, she would change it to sing "Hearts as Strong as Womens," and now she just says, "Hearts as Strong as Persons."

Teresa: Okay!

Travis: Which is great.

Teresa: You know, we—we are constantly evolving. Love it. Okay, in 1999, she was honored for her contribution to the community at the 7th Annual PrideFest America in Philly. Uh, the organization described her as the Rosa Parks of the gay and lesbian civil rights movement.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which is a bold statement.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I have learned a lot about Rosa Parks maybe being the face of the movement, not the originator of the movement, but still, that is a very high honor.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Uh, two years later, the Free Library of Philadelphia announced its Barbara Gittings collection of books dedicated to gay and lesbian issues. Now there are more than 2,000 items in the collection, making it the second largest gay and lesbian collection of books in the United States.

Travis: Wow.

Teresa: We've talked a lot about her political activism and her journey to self-fulfillment, right? But I also want to state that she was very dedicated to the simple joys in her life. She was an avid music lover. She especially loved classical music, and she sang in choral groups for almost all of her life, spending 50 years as a member of the Philadelphia Chamber Chorus, and she also loved to be outside, hiking and canoeing, um, and she very much loved her lifelong partner, Kay. They met at a picnic in Rhode Island in 1961, and they hit it off immediately. Uh, Gittings said that she flew to Boston and got off a plane with a big bunch of flowers in her hand. "I couldn't resist. I do not care what the world thought. I dropped the flowers, grabbed her, and kissed her."

Travis: Nice.

Teresa: How sweet. Inevitably, Gittings passed away in Kennet Square, Pennsylvania, after a long battle with breast cancer, but Kay was right there until the end, and the pair had been together at that point for 46 years.

Travis: Wow. Wow!

Teresa: One last quote from Gittings. In 1999, Gittings said, "As a teenager, I had to struggle alone to learn about myself and what it meant to be gay. Now, for

48 years, I've had the satisfaction of working with other gay people all across the country to get the bigots off our backs, to oil the closet door hinges, to change prejudiced hearts and minds, and to show that gay love is good for us and for the rest of the world, too. It's hard work, but it's vital, gratifying, and it's often fun."

Travis: Well, thank you Barbara, and thank you everybody for listening. We hope that you have enjoyed this episode. Maybe you've learned something. Maybe you can tell a friend to check this out so that they can learn something. Thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we would not be able to make this show. Thank you Max Fun, our podcast host, for having us. Thank you to everybody.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Everybody listening, you are great. Go check out mcelroymerch.com to check out all the new stuff there, because it is a new month, so we got new stuff there. Uh, you can go to mcelroy.family to check out all the other McElroy projects there. Uh, let's see. Teresa, who else do we thank? Oh! I should say, if this is a thing any of you are into, I do some streaming on Twitch. Uh, usually Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Uh, you can check it out at twitch.tv/thetravismcelroy, *the* Travis McElroy, if you're into that. That's a thing. Okay.

Teresa: [laughs] Alright. We also like to thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. We also wanna thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. @shmannerscast is where we get questions, listener-submitted questions for our topics. Um, so follow us there, and keep a lookout for our—beckon, beckon and call—

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: —for the—[laughs] for topic questions. Um, also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. Go and join that group if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans.

And, topic suggestions and submissions, you can send to shmannerscast@gmail.com. We are always taking topic suggestions, and we are

always taking idioms. Please send in those idioms. We wanna do another couple editions of that, and we love that.

Travis: If it were up to me, we'd never stop doing idioms, but we'll try to pace ourselves a little bit more.

And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*! Get it!

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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