

## Shmanners 300: Paul R. Williams

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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:** How... are... you?

**Teresa:** Well, I have to say...

**Travis:** Uh-huh?

**Teresa:** You— you may not know much about meteorology, but the micro climate around here is... the pits. Because— see, what's happening is yesterday it was 60 degrees, which is a little warmer than is normal for this time of year. But there is a low pressure system coming up with a dip from the Arctic air, Arctic winds coming through. We are supposed to get freezing rain all the rest of the week. Today was 30 degrees, was the high.

**Travis:** Let me ask you something. You've known me for 13 years now, since I was 25.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And you sound like you were uncertain whether I know anything about meteorology or not. I don't have many secrets left, baby. You— like, I think at this point—

**Teresa:** No, I know that you don't.

**Travis:** But you said "You may not know." I think at this—

**Teresa:** I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt.

**Travis:** There's no doubt left! We've been together 13 years.

**Teresa:** Listen, the barometric pressure is—

**Travis:** [simultaneously] I want you to right now— no, stop.

**Teresa:** —so low right now.

**Travis:** Right now, scale of 1 to 10. Where am I at on meteorology knowledge?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Is 10 the most or the least?

**Travis:** Obviously 10 is the most.

**Teresa:** I don't know.

**Travis:** Is 10 more than 1?

**Teresa:** Maybe it's golf rules.

**Travis:** Oh my God.

**Teresa:** [wheezy laughter] It's like 2. It's 2.

**Travis:** Yes, thank you. I know where the rain comes from.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I know... it comes from the sky. When the angels cry. [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** Uhh... anyway.

**Travis:** And thunder is the angels bowling!

**Teresa:** So if anyone else in the Ohio valley woke up with a thundering headache, like I did...

**Travis:** Speaking of meteorology, thundering. Ehh?

**Teresa:** Yeah. It's because the barometric pressure has, like...

**Travis:** I hate it.

**Teresa:** ... dropped.

**Travis:** Every year— so, I go through this every year. Um, when the season—

**Teresa:** Oh, the spring and the fall.

**Travis:** —when the seasons change. But also, like, if the weather, like, fluctuates rapidly like that, it really messes with me. And yet every year I also go like, "What is wrong with me? What's happening?! Oh, right." And I have to remember every year that I— that there's some kind of malfunction in my sinuses that makes it go, "I don't like this change. [grumbling]."

So, what are we talking about?

**Teresa:** Here comes a segue! Here it is! Did you know a long time ago, people used to think that moving would improve your health— moving to a different climate would improve your health?

**Travis:** I do know this.

**Teresa:** Especially if you had TB.

**Travis:** Uh, I know it, one, from *Tombstone*.

**Teresa:** Uh-huh.

**Travis:** Because Doc Holiday talks about it a lot. I also know, like— I listen to a lot of, like, Victorian mysteries and turn of the century mysteries, and people are always holidaying for their health.

**Teresa:** They are!

**Travis:** We just listened to one where someone went to take the waters a place.

**Teresa:** Indeed. So, Paul R. Williams was born February 18th, 1884, to Chester Stanley and Lila Wright Williams.

**Travis:** Well, we're pretty close to his birthday! Let's see. When this comes out it'll be what, the 25th?

**Teresa:** Yeah, ish.

**Travis:** It's only a week— like, a week off.

**Teresa:** Um, the couple had migrated to Los Angeles from Memphis in 1883 with their older son, Chester Jr., in hopes of starting a fruit business and... because they both had tuberculosis.

**Travis:** Ah, for their health.

**Teresa:** And they were told that a warmer, brighter sunshine—

**Travis:** Drier.

**Teresa:** —drier climate would assist with their recovery. Unfortunately, they did not.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So...

**Travis:** They continued to have tuberculosis?

**Teresa:** They— I mean, until... until the end. So, here's the thing. Los Angeles at this time was a city on the grow. In fact, California was actively participating in a massive PR campaign to get people to move west.

**Travis:** What year was this?

**Teresa:** 1883.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and so they were attempting—

**Travis:** Can I—

**Teresa:** What?

**Travis:** I'm realizing now that there is a solid, like, 40 years of American history, I would say from— no, maybe 50. From, like, 1850 to 1900, where it seems like a lot happened, but all I can think about is the Civil War, right? And it's just like, what was California doing during— wait, was California around during the Civil War? I have no idea! [laughs] Go on.

**Teresa:** Well, it actually was a newly minted state, and needed to gain traction to bring American people west. Um, and they also needed to bring, you know, commerce and the railway and everything. In this massive campaign they had, um, big, beautiful posters. And you can actually see some of these if you are an *Antiques Roadshow* fan.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** Um, you can see these—

**Travis:** I am.

**Teresa:** —in the posters that they often do, like where you can see, like, the big palm tree boulevards and, you know, beautiful luscious oranges, and the Pacific sunset, and the mountains sometimes in the background. It's amazing. You should look these up. But also, part of this campaign was the general kind of wellness statement, right? That the southern California air was good for what ailed you. In fact, this would be come to known as the health rush time period.

**Travis:** Like the gold rush!

**Teresa:** Like the gold rush.

**Travis:** But for health! I put it together! I solved your riddle.

**Teresa:** You did.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Like I mentioned, the family moved there, but was quickly disbanded when both Paul's mother and father died within two years of each other.

**Travis:** Bummer.

**Teresa:** Um, he was an orphan at only four.

**Travis:** Ooh.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Um, there was a, um— a sort of foster community, and they lived just outside of LA's new and bustling downtown. Um, and his older brother Chester was actually old enough at the time where he could actually keep in touch with his younger brother, but again, Chester would succumb to pneumonia and pass away in his early 20's.

**Travis:** Wow. Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and so he was raised for a majority of his life by a couple named Charles and Emily Clarkson, who changed his life completely. I mean, changed not only his immediate life, but the trajectory of his life.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And I still haven't told you what he does.

**Travis:** No. But I am waiting for the big reveal.

**Teresa:** Good. Um, and he lived in a small African-American community, and he already, being in California, was a leg up over what his parents had come from. So, they had moved from Memphis, and just being away from, like, the violent turbulence of the south at that time, he was able to go to a predominately white school, because these schools had already been integrated. He could— Black people could buy property at the time, own businesses, and, you know, like I said, attend school with white children. Um, and under Emily's wing, he became a fantastic student and a great worker. He even got a job as a paper boy. Um—

**Travis:** Okay. This is feeling like an inventor biography, or some—

**Teresa:** Little bit, little bit.

**Travis:** Okay, go on, okay.

**Teresa:** In 1908, he was 14 when he was accepted into the highly selective Los Angeles Polytechnic High School.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** This is still in operation today. It is a famous high school. It has people— famous actors and athletes and journalism tycoons, and even a Nobel Prize winner through its doors. Um, it was a very, very big deal.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** This is where he hits his first blank wall of disappointment. He confided in a teacher that he was interested in studying architecture, but was told, "Nuh-uh. You can't do that."

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** He recalled, "He looked at me as if I had suggested a rocket trip to Mars, and exclaimed, 'Who ever heard of a Black architect?'"

**Travis:** Okay. Alright. Okay.

**Teresa:** He used a different word. But... he went on to become an architect. When he graduated in 1912—

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** —he went forward with his dream, and he went through, I mean, really every avenue you could to become an architect. You could get a degree from a university or a correspondence school— did both of those. He studied at the Los Angeles School of Art and Design, and at the Los Angeles branch of the New York Beaux-Arts Institute of Design. You could also get an apprenticeship, right? And he did that. He worked as a landscape architect, and went on to earn an additional degree in architectural engineering at the University of Southern California.

**Travis:** He sure sounds qualified to me.

**Teresa:** And the big break came with architectural contests.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** So, it's like a writing competition, right? Where, you know, you send in plans for buildings.

**Travis:** You said writing, right?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Not riding.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** You're not, like, hopping buildings over jumps, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs] No. Writing.

**Travis:** Okay, great.

**Teresa:** With the pen, my friend, or the typewriter? Yeah, they had typewriters.

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Teresa:** Um, and so he won several contests over and over and over again, so his name was being put out there in these architectural, you know, like, digests. Um, and no one knew the face that went with this prolific name, so it didn't matter if it was— it didn't matter if anybody who won was Black or white or rich or poor or old or young until well after they were established. Um, and so not only did he find that he measured up to his contemporaries, he was found to be something of an architectural genius.

**Travis:** Okay! I can't wait to learn more about him, because you told me before we started, "When I tell you what he did you're gonna, like, smack your forehead." But—



**Teresa:** Yeah, you're gonna know.

**Travis:** But first... a thank you note for our sponsors.

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** We want to say a thank you note to Policygenius. You know, Teresa...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm?

**Travis:** Recently it has come to my attention that there is a slim chance that I might not live forever.

**Teresa:** Oh, no!

**Travis:** Yeah. I don't believe it either. I'm firmly, uh, in denial.

**Teresa:** What is it you say? Just because everybody has died doesn't mean that everybody will die?

**Travis:** Correct. It is merely a theory of death.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** It is impossible to test. But... you know, I— I understand now that I have a wife and I've got children, uh, that depend on me.

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

**Travis:** And, you know, it's a risk that I might. Slim chance. And so I have, uh, taken care of it and done my life insurance.

**Teresa:** That's right, we have. Now, it did take until after you were done being up on 10-foot ladders every day.

**Travis:** That is true, yes.

**Teresa:** We didn't—

**Travis:** You sound regretful that there's less of a chance of me dying now.

**Teresa:** [laughs] I'm just saying!

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs] It was— it felt a lot more imminent when you were working with heavy machinery and—

**Travis:** Imminent?! Excuse me? Okay, let's focus on the ad copy here. Wow! Sorry I wasn't insured when I could have died easier!

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**Janet:** Jameela Jamil.

**Jameela:** I watched television probably every waking hour during that time when I [censor bleep] faced on medicine.

**Janet:** And Dave Holmes.

**Dave:** We talked and talked, and then everybody left and it was just us two and I was like, "I love you."

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[ad ends]

[thunder and rain]

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[music and ad end]

**Travis:** Okay. So, we're talking about Paul R. Williams.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** And this is the— was this the big reveal?

**Teresa:** Um, it is.

**Travis:** We're getting there.

**Teresa:** We're getting there. We're so, so close. Okay. He caught the eye of Reginald Johnson, who was a hotshot in Los Angeles architecture at the time. He designed the Hotel Valencia and the Four Seasons in Santa Barbara and, you

know, a bunch of residential buildings. But the thing that really worked for Paul R. Williams was all of the Hollywood elite that Reginald Johnson introduced him to.

**Travis:** Can I say, it's really messing with me, Teresa, because Reginald VelJohnson played the dad on *Family Matters*.

**Teresa:** Oh, no.

**Travis:** As well as the police officer in *Die Hard*.

**Teresa:** Uh-huh. Different guy. [laughs]

**Travis:** And it's all I can picture now, though! Okay.

**Teresa:** Different guy, for sure.

**Travis:** Okay. But then you— then I'm like, "Oh, that's wild." But then you're like, "Hollywood elite," and I'm like, "Wait, hold on."

**Teresa:** "Wait a minute."

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, these were high rolling, high paying customers who would just love to have a brand new house built for them, and Johnson introduced a young Paul to some of his contacts while he was finishing up his architectural degree.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, it was also during this time that Paul Williams fell in love with a young woman named Della Mae Givens at a church youth group, and Della would later become his wife.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, the pair would marry in 1917 and go on to have two daughters and loads of grandchildren who simply adored them. They had a really great partnership, and if you have the time you should— our listeners, you should look up their love story. It's very charming.

**Travis:** Okay, what building did I design?! I don't care about his grandkids!

**Teresa:** Just a second.

**Travis:** [laughs]

**Teresa:** In 1921—

**Travis:** I bet his grandkids were great. Sorry. If you're listening, grandchildren, I'm sorry. I bet you're great.

**Teresa:** In 1921, Paul Revere Williams became a certified architect in the state of California. He was the first certified Black architect west of the Mississippi, and he was in exactly the right place at the right time.

The added bonus was that the city couldn't turn him away for discriminatory reasons. They needed someone with his skills, and beggars can't be choosers. So, in 1922 he opened up his own firm in the stock exchange building in downtown Los Angeles. He was only 28 years old, exactly ten years after his high school teacher had told him, "What? Architect? You? Meh." Right?

**Travis:** Nana nana boo boo. Stick your head in doo doo.

**Teresa:** And—

**Travis:** That wasn't a quote— I just want to make cle— that wasn't a quote from Paul R. Williams. That was a quote from me. Okay, go on.

**Teresa:** Oh, right, right, right. His first big professional break came in the form of a housing development called Flint Ridge, which was built by former senator Frank Flint, who Williams had actually delivered his paper as working as a news boy. Um, and he went on to design several houses throughout the upscale neighborhood. And now, after he had these relationships, he ended up doing homes for people like the mega wealthy horse breeder Jack Atkin.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Okay? You don't recognize that.

**Travis:** No, I don't know that name.

**Teresa:** That's fine. What if— about... I say—

**Travis:** Excuse me?

**Teresa:** [wheezy laughter]

**Travis:** What was that series of so— "What if about?" Okay. Sorry, go on? It was confidence with which you said it that I loved and will carry with me for the rest of my life. Now go on.

**Teresa:** Do— would you recognize this home if I said several episodes of *Murder, She Wrote* took place there?

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** Or one of the *Rocky* movies?

**Travis:** What?! Okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah, it was featured in there. And by the 1920s, Paul Williams was designing all over the wealthiest neighborhoods in California. Um, and I do want to say, just because he was a hotshot architect and everybody wanted him to make their houses doesn't mean discrimination magically disappeared. Um, he was worried that especially his white clients would be intimidated to meet him and see his designs, and he didn't want them, you know... imagine coming to sit down next to your architect and exposing yourself as a racist. [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And then you don't get paid, because the people you're designing for are racist.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** So what he did was— this is one of his claims to fame. He learned to draw upside down, so he could sit across from the client and draw upside down to show them the home that he could design for them, and he wouldn't have to deal with anybody, you know... being upset that he was a Black guy, right?

**Travis:** Okay. I mean, listen. That all sucks, but it's an amazing solution that you're just like, "I'm just gonna learn how to be amazing at this upside down," is incredible.

**Teresa:** Exactly. So now, Williams described it that they could be a full partner in the birth of the room without having to worry about any of the kind of, like, turbulent and dramatic politics.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Here are the names. Here are the names that you'll recognize.

**Travis:** This is the big reveal?

**Teresa:** He went on to develop homes for... Cary Grant.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Desi Arnaz.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Lucille Ball.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** William Holden.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And Frank Sinatra.

**Travis:** Wow!

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Wow!

**Teresa:** So this is a really fun thing. There's a tour that Frank is doing on *Person to Person* with Edward R. Morrow, and he shows this beautiful Japanese modern aesthetic, and he apologizes to the audience that they can't see the beautiful vibrant red of his unique fireplace, because the picture's in black and white.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** Um, here are the things that Paul R. Williams began to be noted for. Uh, mid-century modern, sure, right? That's kind of the time period. But also, he was willing to design in any style. So, you think about people like Frank Lloyd Wright, right? He's got his own deal. He designs a house. You take it or you leave it.

**Travis:** Listen, I have strong feelings about Frank Lloyd Wright. Um, the one being— and I've said this publicly before, this isn't a secret— everybody compliments Frank Lloyd Wright. But you should be complimenting the workpeople who, like, came up behind him and he would hand 'em this thing and be like, "Yeah, no walls!"

And they were like, "Phew! Okay, Frank. [groans]."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "[unsteadily] Alright, man. I f— I'll figure out how to build it, I guess." Anyhoo.

**Teresa:** So, Paul R. Williams was very into exactly what the client needed. He would— he wanted them to be a partner in the building process. He would ask them things like, "Do you need a room for your housekeeper? Do you have children? Do you want a walk-out kitchen?" Like, all this kind of stuff, right? Which was unheard of at the time. I mean—

**Travis:** "Do you want an upside-down room so you can walk into it and pretend like gravity's flipped and you're stuck on the ceiling?"

**Teresa:** Because basically you either picked out a set of plans from a builder, right? You know, one, two, three, or four. Or you could say, "Well, I like four, but can you flip it left to right?"



**Travis:** Or flip it upside-down.

**Teresa:** No. Not... not really. But— or you paid an architect to basically design a work of art without you there.

**Travis:** That's no fun.

**Teresa:** So he created this kind of consulting atmosphere, right? And—

**Travis:** It's wild to me that that had to be created.

**Teresa:** I know! I know.

**Travis:** That's so weird to hear. Like, "And yeah, his thing was he said, like, 'Well, what do you want?'"

**Teresa:** Uh-huh.

**Travis:** But I'm also not that surprised that he was so flexible. Like, if you think about the list of qualifications of, like, he studied at this place, and did the correspondence thing, and did internships, and did this, and did that. Like, he seems like he was making himself such, like, a multitool of, like, skill sets instead of just focusing on, like, one narrow path.

**Teresa:** Exactly, exactly. So he designed— and you can see these if you— you know, if you go into your search bar, you can see these all across California. Different styles like Tudor style, Spanish houses, Georgians, the mid-century modern of course, but also he published a couple books where he actually submitted— like, put out the plans so that you could take it to your builder and say, "I want this house."

So even though he didn't, like, design your home, you could still get a Paul R. Williams design for your house.

**Travis:** That's amazing. It's incredible. Also you've given me a great idea to open up, like, a bar for singles called The Search Bar.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** That's really good, right?

**Teresa:** His houses are known for the breathtaking views and the incorporating of nature, the front and backyards, like, the big windows, grand entryways, those kind of, like, slinky staircases that look like they're not supported by anything—

**Travis:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

**Teresa:** That's definitely one of the things that he did. It was clear that Williams held a love of these kind of beautiful spaces, but unfortunately, they were in neighborhoods that he would never be allowed in, right?

**Travis:** Oh, yeah.

**Teresa:** So he wrote in his memoirs: "Today I sketched the preliminary plans for a large country house, which will be erected in one of the most beautiful residential districts in the world. A district with roomy estates, entrancing vistas, and stately mansions. Sometimes I have dreamed of living there. I could afford such a home. But this evening, leaving my office, I return to my small, inexpensive home in an unrestricted, comparably undesirable section of Los Angeles, because I am Black."

**Travis:** Oof.

**Teresa:** Yeah. So.

**Travis:** I mean, it's one of those things where, like, what can you say about that? Like...

**Teresa:** I mean, there's— there's not a lot you can say. But I do know that the home that he lived in at this point in his life has just been declared a cultural historical monument—

**Travis:** That's good.

**Teresa:** —in Los Angeles. It wasn't designed by him, and a lot of his homes, you know, like, are big ticket— like, they have huge price ranges, and they have— they're hardly ever on the market, because people just love and hold on to these homes. The last one—

**Travis:** Yeah, they sound amazing!

**Teresa:** Yeah. The last one I think was sold after a person spent, like, 52 years there or something.

**Travis:** Yeah, it does— man, it does highlight— and even a thing that still goes on, you know, today unfortunately, of this, like, valuing of a skill set over a person. You know, we see it in artisans all the time. And, like, it just— I— I— we don't curse on this show. But I just almost did.

**Teresa:** Let me give you one of the most famous pillars of his career: the Beverly Hills Hotel.

**Travis:** Okay!

**Teresa:** In fact—

**Travis:** That one I know.

**Teresa:** —the sign out front that says "Beverly Hills" is in his handwriting.

**Travis:** Get out of the town.

**Teresa:** It's amazing that Williams, at the time that he designed it, would not have been even allowed to stay there, or even allowed to eat by the pool while he was working on site. In fact, if a high profile client wanted to have a meeting by the pool at the hotel, Williams would not sit until the appointment arrived, because a Black man sitting alone at the hotel pool would not be served.

**Travis:** Oh my God.

**Teresa:** I know. This is kind of like— this is like a roller coaster ride. But I want to make sure—

**Travis:** No, but I mean, I think it's important.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Like, this is the context of this thing, right? Of this guy who was in such high demand, but also wasn't allowed to sit and eat by a pool. Like, it's— it's— I

think it's important, 'cause when we talk about these people throughout history that we didn't— you know, that we weren't taught about in school, that maybe aren't household names and should be, it's— yeah, they should be celebrated, clearly. Like, this guy has had a storied career it sounds like, and, like, done homes that even to this day are highly valued and prized. But also was treated like crap! Like, it's— yeah. Yep. Yep, yep, yep.

**Teresa:** As we move into the 1930's, his commercial design career took off and he designed the Knickerbocker Hotel, the Sunset Plaza Apartments, um, and... um, he was able to secure a position on the board for the commercial design of LAX!

**Travis:** Wow, okay!

**Teresa:** At the same time, he was continually designing for people of— we would say the lesser than the Hollywood elite, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** He designed a YMCA, and housing projects. He designed churches and restaurants and less famous hotels. Um, and after World War II hit, the government reached out to him for several contracts, including being— building the biggest naval air station in Long Beach, California.

**Travis:** Okay. High demand.

**Teresa:** High demand. Post-war housing was also in high demand in California. People coming back. You know, the baby boom happened all across the United States. And this is when he published his books, right? Because there— there was such demand that there were people, like, erecting tent cities, you know, reminiscent of the Hoover era.

**Travis:** 'Cause there just weren't enough houses.

**Teresa:** There just weren't enough houses being built, and so he published those books that had his own, like, architecture designs in it, so that you didn't have to pay for an architect. You get your hands on one of these books and you can just give this to your builder.

**Travis:** That's amazing. That's an incredibly, like, giving thing to do.

**Teresa:** Absolutely. Uh, and it— I looked it up. It's on Amazon for 25 bucks.

**Travis:** Huh!

**Teresa:** One of the books.

**Travis:** Wow. I mean, don't buy it from Amazon, buy it from somewhere else, but yeah.

**Teresa:** Exactly. Exactly. And then his career continued to flourish. All throughout the mid 20th century, he broke barrier after barrier, and constantly gave back to his own community. He was the first Black man inducted into the American Institute of Architects, and invited into the AIA College of Fellows. So he was on local, state, and national planning boards, and the first Black man to appear in *National Architect* magazines.

**Travis:** Okay!

**Teresa:** Um, he was commissioned to design the Golden State Life Insurance Company building, and he commissioned two murals to be included that depicted scenes of Black history in California. And when it was renovated in the early 2000's, they added a memorial to Williams to the space.

**Travis:** Oh, that's good. That makes me happy.

**Teresa:** So, Williams knew that the survival of the Black community depended on home ownership, and so he wanted to give that dream to his community when he opened the Broadway Federal Bank which, by the way, financed the Stahl House. Do you know what this one is?

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** So, this is the one— it is an all-glass mansion with a pool that overlooks Los Angeles. I mean, if you saw it you would see— here. Go ahead. Let's take a break and you google it.

**Travis:** Okay, yeah, I feel like I've seen this before, referenced in a lot of stuff.

**Teresa:** Oh yeah.

**Travis:** Absolutely gorgeous. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** You've definitely seen it. Um, and so Paul Williams' bank was the one that financed it, because most banks turned him away because it was— I mean, it was a completely non-traditional style of design, right? Up until then, who had ever heard of, like, a glass house? [laughs quietly] Other than the ones that you break. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah, don't throw— don't— don't throw stones.

**Teresa:** Not only, uh, did Paul R. Williams do so much for his own community, he also did wonders for children across America. He didn't often become friends with his clients, but he did become friends with Danny Thomas, and the two clicked and remained close throughout the rest of their lives. One day, Thomas approached Williams with an idea. He wanted to build a hospital in Memphis where children in the south, particularly Black children, who rarely got the medical care they needed, would be able to be treated for free. Guess what that is?

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** St. Jude's Children's Hospital!

**Travis:** Get out of the town!

**Teresa:** Yeah! He designed the hospital for him, for free.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So... by the time Williams retired in 1973, his work would be found from coast to coast, across the United States. He and his wife, Della, had experiences most people only dream of. They dined at the White House, they traveled internationally, they were hailed as brilliant on several national television shows. Um, and in the 1950's, he finally... designed a home for he and his wife.

**Travis:** Oh, good.

**Teresa:** Um, it was in Lafayette Square, which is a neighborhood in Los Angeles that was just starting to integrate at the time. And he spent the rest of his life in

that beautiful home, and when he retired he devoted all his time to relishing his kids and grandchildren and, you know, spoiling his wife.

**Travis:** What a cool dude.

**Teresa:** On January 23rd, 1980, Paul R. Williams died in Los Angeles at the age of 85, and his funeral was packed. Over 1500 former clients, friends, coworkers, family, and Danny Thomas gave the eulogy. Um, and this is where his daughter, Karen, began the work toward cultivating and preserving her grandfather's groundbreaking legacy. Uh, she is heavily relied on for the PBS documentary about Paul R. Williams, so if you would love to know some more about this very fascinating, extremely talented man, you should watch that documentary.

Most of his buildings still stand today, and they bring that mid-century modern flair to Los Angeles, and also, I mean, to, um...

**Travis:** The world?

**Teresa:** Palm Springs, sorry.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** It— I was blanking. I almost said Star Springs, and that's not right.

**Travis:** No. But I—

**Teresa:** Palm Springs. [laughs]

**Travis:** —that's fair. 'Cause man, I can't picture Palm Springs without picturing mid-century modern.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** It is so, like, intertwined to me. I've never been to Palm Springs so I can't really picture much of anything in Palm Springs.

**Teresa:** [laughs] But what you've seen.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Um, and one of the apartment suites at the Beverly Hills Hotel, which he would not have been allowed to stay in...

**Travis:** Just a reminder, yes.

**Teresa:** Just a reminder. Is now permanently named after him, and it's a favorite of Jimmy Fallon and Russel Crowe.

**Travis:** Okay. Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, so... before doing this, the show, I looked up. There are— oh my gosh. There's so many Pinterest pages dedicated to all of his beautiful designs. Um, if you do your search... I went to the image search, right? And it had all of these bubbles on the top. Like, it would be R— Paul R. Williams homes, Paul R. Williams architectural life, Paul R. Williams architectural achievements. Like, and it just went on and on and on. He was a very prolific artist, um, that most people hardly know his name. But you have seen his buildings on TV, and movies, and, you know, just— if you've ever been to California, you've seen one.

**Travis:** Thank you so much. Thank you, Teresa, for educating me about this. Thank you—

**Teresa:** Thank you, Alex.

**Travis:** I was about to say that!

**Teresa:** Oh, okay, sorry. I didn't mean to beat you to it, but...

**Travis:** [sighs] Thank you, Alex, our researcher, without whom we wouldn't be able to make this show. Thank you, Rachel, our editor, without whom we wouldn't be able to make this show, and thank you to you for listening, 'cause we could make the show without you, but why?!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, thank you to Maximum Fun, our podcast home. Thank you— I was about to thank the McElroy family, of which I am a part.

**Teresa:** [laughs]



**Travis:** But yeah, you know what? Thank you for your support, extended family. You can go check out all the McElroy projects at [mcelroy.family](http://mcelroy.family).

Speaking of, we've got a virtual *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* live show this weekend if you're listening to this on Friday or Saturday. It's Saturday night, uh, the 26th, at 9 PM Eastern Time. Um, tickets are just \$10. It's *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* with *Sawbones* opening. And even if you miss it and you listen to this after the 26th, it will be available video on demand for two weeks after, so you can still go get tickets at [bit.ly/mbmbamvirtual](http://bit.ly/mbmbamvirtual). Go get those now. Don't forget! Get them now. Join us live or watch it video on demand for two weeks afterwards. [Bit.ly/mbmbam](http://Bit.ly/mbmbam). Let's see. What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, @shmannerscast. Um, when we're done with the biographies, we often ask for listener-submitted questions of our topics, and that is where you can submit your own question, @shmannerscast on Twitter.

Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the picture of the fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. Uh, if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, follow that group today.

And, we are always taking listener-submitted topics and suggestions. You can email us, [shmannerscast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerscast@gmail.com), or you can just say hi to Alex. She reads every single email. Thank you, Alex.

**Travis:** 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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