

Shmanners 296: Advice Columns

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Travis: [singing] Happy shm-irthday to you, happy shm-irthday to you, happy shm-irthday, shm-ear *Shmanners*...

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Happy shm-irthday to you!

Teresa: It's *Shmanners*!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, Internet. I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: See, it's funny when you put the shm—h sound in front of it.

Teresa: Yeah, but shmear?

Travis: Shmear. [sings] Happy birthday, shmear *Shmanners*— Just it's *Shmanners*— Like "dear."

Teresa: Right, yes.

Travis: But not like "shmear" like...

Teresa: Like the cream cheese.

Travis: Oh, I guess it does sound like the cream cheese, doesn't it?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Well, it's our sixth birthday!

Teresa: It is!

Travis: It's our sixth anniversary— Our oldest child. It goes *Shmanners* and then Bebe and then Dot.

Teresa: That's right.

Travis: Um—

Teresa: Well, technically, it goes Willow, then...

Travis: Willow is our roommate. Willow is not our child.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Cats are— I'm about to anger some people. I see cats as roommates.

Teresa: What do you see dogs as? Children?

Travis: Children. Well, children that don't ever learn to drive a car.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Unless you train them really well, I guess. The children that you never expect to pay their own bills.

Teresa: But it's true. We did— We started *Shmanners* shortly before I became pregnant with Bebe.

Travis: January 2016. She was but a twinkle in our eyes.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And then we birthed *Shmanners* through our mouths.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Oh, boy. Oh, boy.

Teresa: That took a really gross turn, real quick.

Travis: It did. And you know what? I saw the turn coming and I tried to slow down, but the road was icy and I just turned into the skid.

Teresa: Hey, we have our regular show scheduled in a moment. But Travis, I'd like you to reminisce a little bit about your favorite *Shmanners* shows.

Travis: Wait, we're going to reminisce first?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay. You know, I was looking back over— First of all, we've done a lot of episodes.

Teresa: We have!

Travis: I didn't realize, it's quite a few.

Teresa: Good for us.

Travis: Um, so I wanted to go back through and look at some of my favorites to remind myself. So I would say one, early days, one of our first, if not our first biography episode we did was Evander Barry Wall, the King of Dudes.

Teresa: Oh, yeah! That was a good one.

Travis: Which is still fun to me, a dude who basically seemed to make a living out of being notably overdressed at every occasion and, like, won the title King of Dudes by changing his clothes the most times in one night until he collapsed in victorious exhaustion, which is great.

Teresa: That's a good one.

Travis: But I would say my two favorite and like, to the point where I'm not going to lie, I was reading the transcripts of them. They're two live shows. I was reading the transcript and like, laughing to myself. And it was Pirates Live...

Teresa: Oh, I forgot about pirates!

Travis: Yeah, that we did in Orlando and Mr. Rogers Live that we did in San Jose. Pirates Live is just a fun one throughout because is like, I love pirates and just the very discussion of them was great. But my favorite part, there's a part in the Mr. Rogers one where I ask you what year he was born, and you looked at your notes and you just said, "Oh, no." And I said, "What?" And you said, "My notes say 1998 and there's no way that's right."

Teresa: [laughing] Yeah.

Travis: And we had to yell off stage to have Paul tell us the year was. And you got so embarrassed that you had the year wrong.

Teresa: Well, because I had the typo. It was— What was it? It was, 19...

Travis: 28.

Teresa: 28.

Travis: But it was just so funny. We were like, "I know it's not 1998, but like, that idea of, like, Mr. Rogers being born in 1998 is so— it tickles me so much. I, also at one point in that episode, posited that he was married to a puppet. And then I felt bad because he's a hero and I was saying he was married to a puppet, but it's still really funny to me now.

There's also a moment in there where you talk about this new invention that showed up in his house, and I go, "a puppet!" I was talking about a puppet appearing before him, saying, "I'm your future friend." And it's just— It's just a weird one. There was a lot of energy in that episode I really, really enjoy it.

Teresa: Another weird one was Pizza Live.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I love that episode. We did it in Chicago because there's the whole thing about Chicago pizza. Is it really pizza? How do you eat pizza? How do you eat Chicago pizza?

Travis: Versus Oregon pizza.

Teresa: No, New York pizza.

Travis: The two famous— Wait, New York has pizza?

Teresa: [laughs] Yes.

Travis: Oh, I got to try that someday.

Teresa: That was a really good episode. I talked about eating pizza with a fork and knife. Really fun.

Travis: Monster. Did you do that?

Teresa: No. My dad does, though.

Travis: Well...

Teresa: I talked about that in the episode. And it is recommended because Chicago deep dish pizza is more of a casserole, but you can eat it with a fork and knife. You should. Anyway, I also really liked Pregnancy Live.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: That's early days as well.

Travis: Well, they— Because you were pregnant within nine months of starting *Shmanners*.

Teresa: Indeed. And I also love how we did a whole Pregnancy Live. And then I think it was... Was it Candlenights that year?

Travis: It had to be. I think that's the only one that's lined up. Because you didn't do a Candlenights when you're pregnant with Dot.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Because you were so pregnant with Dot.

Teresa: So— Like any second.

Travis: Well, yeah, because Dot was born like the first week of January and Candlenights is like the last week of December, so.

Teresa: Right. And so I remember reading in the newspaper, the local newspaper, how enormously pregnant I was on stage.

Travis: It literally said, quote, "enormously pregnant." Like, it was like a review of a theatre production you're putting on and they were commenting on your pregnancy, like fake belly or whatever. Like, "she was enormously pregnant." What are you trying to convey there?

Teresa: I was like, "This is bad. Don't do that."

Travis: Don't ever do that.

Teresa: You can state the fact that a person is pregnant.

Travis: But as soon as you add an adverb in there— Adjective? Adjective.

Teresa: Adverb.

Travis: Unless you were pregnant tremendously, yes, it was an adjective.

Teresa: I think that the one that is very dear to both our hearts is Emily Post.

Travis: Yeah! That, to me, I think I mentioned a biography and you mentioned a biography. Some of my favorites— And I mentioned Mr. Rogers, too, because without fail, there's interesting stuff when we talk about, like, accessories or we talk about, like, traditional stuff or we talk about historical stuff. But there's always something about a biography episode to me where there comes a moment where I realize, "Oh, wait, this person is way cooler and way more interesting than I thought."

Teresa: Or, like, there's so much more to know about this person than I know about this person.

Travis: Or just that, like, I thought I knew about this historical event, and I had no idea that this person had such an impact on it. That kind of thing.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Like, I think it's the one for all the etiquette stuff and, like, social stuff we talk about. I think it's the biography episodes is the one where I come away like a better educated person because we do it sometimes about people we have heard of, like Mr. Rogers, right? But sometimes we'll talk about, like, Maria Tallchief, for example, right? It's just like, "Okay, great. That was not a household name to me that I knew off the top of my head. And now I feel like I have a deeper understanding about this aspect of the arts."

Teresa: Exactly. Of culture in general.

Travis: Right. And that to me, I think it's not to go out on a weird limb here, but is kind of very indicative of what we go for on *Shmanners*, which is like, it is not a— We're not here to tell you what you're doing wrong. We're here to say, like, "You might not know this," right? Because the thing is, is like, I

think it's too easy to fall into thinking about manners and etiquette as a way to judge other people, as opposed to, like, do you feel like your best self, right? And I think when I—

Teresa: Or these are the tools that can help you feel like your best self.

Travis: Exactly. That's what I mean. Like, this is going to help you navigate these scenarios where you might feel uncomfortable or you might feel out of place, some of these things. And I think I feel more like my best self when I learn about people's lives and impact that they had on my life that I had no idea, like, how much they had done for me.

Teresa: I think this kind of feeling of camaraderie...

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: ... really helps segue into the real topic of our show today.

Travis: The secret, real topic. You know what? Before we do, just for a smooth transition. But first, how about an important message?

Teresa: Ooh!

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Travis: This is a message from Guillam. Guillam wants you to search for Cyberpunk Noir on Kickstarter and consider contributing. This is what Guillam has to say. Everybody listen! Guillam has something important to say.

Teresa: We're listening!

Travis: Okay. "I've written an original tabletop RPG set in an original Cyberpunk universe, and I'm raising money to publish it. The game is called Cyberpunk Noir." I'm already way into that. That's a Travis McElroy editorial. "And features 28 weapons, 58 cybernetics, unique mechanics, and dozens of

pages of lore. For \$5, you gain access to the rulebook already written and compiling eleven years of work. Everything you need to play immediately. Money goes towards getting the rulebook professionally edited and illustrated."

That sounds so cool. And believe you me, anyone who knows *Adventure Zone*, I've tried my hand at some original mechanics. It ain't easy. And the fact that Guillam has done eleven years of work on this and is ready to have you play this game is incredible.

Teresa: It sounds nothing but thorough.

Travis: Yes, indeed.

Teresa: If not thorough. Nothing if not thorough is the idiom.

Travis: The campaign for Cyberpunk Noir ends March 20, so do not wait. Go search Cyberpunk Noir. That's N-O-I-R. Just in case anyone was unsure on Kickstarter and contribute.

[upbeat music plays]

Ellen: Hey there. I'm Ellen Weatherford.

Christian: And I'm Christian Weatherford.

Ellen: And we've got big feelings about animals that we just got to share.

Christian: On *Just the Zoo of Us*, your new favorite animal review podcast, we're here to critically evaluate how each animal excels and how it doesn't, rating them out of ten on their effectiveness, ingenuity, and aesthetics.

Ellen: Guest experts give you their takes, informed by actual real life experiences, studying and working with very cool animals like sharks, cheetahs and sea turtles.

Christian: It's a field trip to the zoo for your ears.

Ellen: So if you or your kids have ever wondered if a pigeon can count, why sloths move so slow, or how a spider sees the world, find out with us every Wednesday on *Just the Zoo of Us* in its natural habitat on MaximumFun.org.

Christian: Listen and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts.

[music ends and lion roars]

[mysterious music plays]

Speaker 1: Somewhere between science and superstition, there is a podcast.

Speaker 2: Look, your daughter doesn't say she's a demon. She says she's the devil himself.

Speaker 3: That thing is not my daughter! And I want you to tell me there's a show where the hosts don't just report on fringe science and spirituality, but take part themselves!

[cheerful music plays]

Ross: Well, there is. And it's *Oh No, Ross and Carrie* on Maximum Fun.

Carrie: This year, we actually became certified exorcists.

Ross: So, yes, Carrie and I can help your daughter.

Carrie: Or we can just talk about it on the show.

Speaker 1: *Oh No, Ross and Carrie* on MaximumFun.org.

[ad break ends]

Travis: Okay. We're talking about the advice column.

Teresa: Indeed, the birth of our genre, if you will.

Travis: No, I actually was thinking about this. I didn't think about it until literally today. But *Shmanners* is an Internet advice column.

Teresa: Yes, it is.

Travis: Right? But also, I might extend that to be like it's almost like an Internet magazine a little bit, because we have articles about people. We have, like, what you didn't know about napkins. And then we also have sections where people write in and say like, "Hey, how deal you deal with this?" And then we answer their questions.

Teresa: Listeners, if you are interested in learning more about this topic, you can go to an incredible medium article written by Joanna Scutts called *The Evolution of the Advice Column*, where a lot of this information is located.

Travis: Yeah. Or if you don't feel like reading, you can also just stay here.

Teresa: Just stay here.

Travis: But stay here and then also go click on the link for that column so it gets, like, those page clicks. But if you're like me and you're like, "Oh, no, I can't read anymore I'm too old and I get bored too quickly." You can just listen to us talk.

Teresa: Okay. So if you are unfamiliar with the form of the advice column, it is quite literally a column of a newspaper or magazine written in question and answer format.

Travis: So it'd be like if I wrote into Ms. *Shmanners*.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: And I said, "Ms. *Shmanners*, my best friend came over to my house and ate my mattress when I wasn't looking. But I still love him very much, but I do want to address it with him. What's the best way to talk to your friend about the mattress they ate and perhaps getting reimbursement from it?" And that is from *Mattress Munching Menace* in Milwaukee.

Teresa: [giggles] Perfect. Exactly, exactly. And so it can be anything from... mattress troubles?

Travis: I doubt that has ever been— Maybe.

Teresa: To romance, to general etiquette help, to family issues. All sorts of things have been published at once at different times.

Travis: We've talked about this a little bit, too. We talked about like Ms. Vanners and Amy—

Teresa: Um, you asked me too quick.

Travis: I know.

Teresa: She's not on my list to talk about today, but we do have a biography in our feed.

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: So here's the thing, right? Obviously, many, many, many more letters are received than are addressed in the column, right? And if you send in a question to an advice column—

Travis: She was— Amy was a columnist. I don't know if she had a question to answer one, but...

Teresa: Thank you for that. So it could take days or weeks between the time that the questioner submitted their issue and the publisher would give them a response. And you would have to hunt through the paper, obviously, to see. They didn't send you personalized correspondence.

Travis: I've also always wondered about that. Of like, if you got a bunch of questions that were all kind of on the same topic and worded differently, I wonder if they ever amalgamated them and like...

Teresa: I mean, it's possible.

Travis: ... said, like, "Okay. We're going to generate a new question that basically sums up these 30 questions that we got so we can answer everybody's at once."

Teresa: Sure, it's possible.

Travis: Sounds like fraud to me. I trapped you! Call the police!

Teresa: At this point with the Internet, there are lots of different places that you can go to for advice, like our podcast.

Travis: Also a lot of crowdsourced places, which...

Teresa: Right? Absolutely.

Travis: Whether you use it or not. Reddit does this a lot, people on Twitter do this a lot. I've used Twitter for this with like, gardening stuff where it's just like I don't know the right wording for this question. That is, by the way, just a little side advice here. If you ever want to ask a question on a social media site, it should be something that you don't know how to Google, right?

Don't just say, like, "What year was this person born?" You can Google that. But if you're like, "I'm trying to find a solution. And here's kind of what's happening. And I don't really know why." If you can't figure out the right way to word your question, that is a good time. And then also be ready to ignore 90% of the stuff where it's just like, "Did you try [gibberish]?" And you're like, "No, of course I didn't put peanut butter in my computer or whatever."

Teresa: Because if you do that, you're going to get a lot of responses, right? And here's the thing about the advice column specifically. It's probably not great for practical advice, right? Because, especially, if you need an answer right now.

Travis: We've run into that with *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, where it's just like "I'm sitting in the drive through and this just happened." We're like,

"Okay, you sent this a week ago. I don't know what to tell you. I hope you're not still there."

Teresa: But the thing that makes an advice column different is it's about the readers, right? It's about voyeurism and moral theorizing. And unlike a self-help book or a therapy session, it's a public conversation, right?

Travis: Do you think— Can you see a kind of, like, DNA chain from those advice columns to shows like *Jerry Springer* and stuff like that?

Teresa: Absolutely I can.

Travis: Yeah, where it's just like, here's my problem. I think that it's— I will say this. I think the big difference to me is the loss of anonymity, is like when someone has written a fake name on their question, and it's like, "Well, this could be from anyone," versus like, "they're sitting here on stage and you're looking right at their faces." That's where it starts to get low skeev-o for me.

Teresa: Well, but it's supposed to be relatable. It's supposed to show you that your problem is present in a lot of other people's problems. And so it's not just about that one person on the show. It's about how they move through... Maybe it's trauma, or maybe it's like, move through their question in a way that can also be helpful to you.

Travis: Well, I'll tell you, the absolute genius of an advice column is the psychology of it is very interesting to me, right? Where if it was just a, like, article telling you what to do, it's easy for that to be a turn off to a reader, right? Of like, I don't want to sit here and be lectured at.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But when you see someone else's questions being answered, you can absorb the information without realizing that you're getting instruction in an issue you might be having. Like, I see this a lot now, which is really great, where sometimes the questions are about parenting, and sometimes those parenting issues have to deal with children, like having a child who is LGBTQIA+, and it's a parent going, "I don't know what to do with this, why

I'm so inexperienced and different," whatever, and the advice column is giving them advice on that.

Whereas there might be a parent out there who, if the article was titled, like, *How to Be the Best Parent You Can for Children*, you would be like, "I'm not gonna— This is so preachy," and just turn the page. But reading someone else asking that question?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, the birth of this medium is largely traced back to 1691.

Travis: Get out of the town!

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: I would have put a bajillion dollars that it would be something like 1890.

Teresa: So this was in a brand new magazine called the *Athenian Mercury*, and it was basically a bunch of dudes, right?

Travis: Can I—

Teresa: [crosstalk]

Travis: I'm just thinking about, and I don't know exactly his lifespan, but more or less, the advice column is as old as, like, Shakespeare plays.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It's twisted my noodle, it's braiding my brain all up. I'm like, I never would have guessed that. I never would have guessed that in a million years.

Teresa: So this group of publishers and writers and contributors to this magazine were ready to answer basically anything. People wrote in about questions about the shape of animal poop and the afterlife of the soul. They wanted to know abstract philosophy, like, what is time? And there was such a depth of questions...

Travis: You know what this reminds me of? That one scene in *Parks and Rec* where Ron goes on the *Joan Show* and she, like, passes out, and then he's just answering everybody's questions. They call in about everything.

Teresa: Yes, exactly. And so this, quote, "athenian" society, right? Which is what the publisher, James Dutton, how he nicknamed his columnists...

Travis: Very fancy.

Teresa: ... Was not exactly a highly qualified group of brilliant individuals.
[laughs]

Travis: Oh, sure. What are they going to do? You can't fact check that in 1690. If you ask me what animal poop looks like, you clearly don't know. So whatever. It's a weird swirl with a happy face in the middle. Now buy a paper.

Teresa: [laughing] It was—

Travis: What are you going to do, Google it? No!

Teresa: ... himself, his two brothers-in-law, and an unnamed man who may or may not have been a doctor. [laughs]

Travis: There you go. But to be fair, in 1691, everyone may or may not have been a doctor.

Teresa: That's true.

Travis: I mean, just day to day, depends on how you're feeling, I guess.

Teresa: And so the paper itself wasn't anonymous, but they chose to keep the writers, the people who asked questions, chose to keep them anonymous, so this is why...

Travis: Because of all their bad advice.

Teresa: [laughs] No, this is why that is the form of the advice column today. You were talking about that earlier, Mattress Muncher in—

Travis: Mattress Munching Menace in Milwaukee, I believe...

Teresa: Exactly, exactly.

Travis: Came up with that on the spot. Thank you very much.

Teresa: And they dabbled in making a, quote, "female centric" version. Double your profits if you can sell both men and women.

Travis: So they just, like, published it on pink paper? What were they doing? And then they charged 20 cents more.

Teresa: No, I think that what happened was the turn of the 18th century, London had an emerging press culture that was so, so, so dramatic, it was, quote, "unscrupulous, opinionated, and locked in competition for cash and eyeballs."

Travis: I'm so glad that it's different nowadays that our journalism is that everything is so fact checked and... Okay. Go on.

Teresa: So the success of this original magazine, the *Athenians*, inspired a wide array of parodies and copycats. A notable one in 1704 was a public affairs journal entitled *A Review of the Affairs of France*.

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: And there was a lighter section, a fictional society called the Scandalous Club, which was dedicated to answering the public's questions.

At this point, 40 to 50 letters a week arrived for the advice on this fictional club, which is quite a lot.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And was it so popular they couldn't keep up with the printing, they had to take it into its own separate paper entitled *The Little Review* and it spawned numerous upon numerous upon numerous places where you could go to find the same thing. It may have come from masculine beginnings. You know, all the four dudes in the room answering questions they know nothing about.

Travis: One of which may or may not have been a doctor.

Teresa: Exactly. But eventually it evolved into something more traditionally feminine. Love and relationships, specifically.

Travis: Well, so this actually— I was thinking about this as you were talking about the original one, right? Where they were covering all these topics where I'm willing to bet that it has something to do with as, one, literacy increased and reference materials, you know, encyclopedias, dictionaries and everything became more commonplace, you could look up specific things.

But if you had a nuanced question, like interpersonal relationships, which is like, "Yes, but this factor is at play and this factor is at play," once again, like I said, that— I don't know how to Google this, right? There's a very specific and nuanced question. You need a person to answer that.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: So it makes complete sense why relationships, be it romantic or friendship or partner, like business or whatever, would begin to dominate advice columns.

Teresa: And this is why we have this shift into these personas that are classically women tropes, right? So you mentioned *Dear Abby*. Did you mention *Dear Abby* earlier?

Travis: I'm sure I did.

Teresa: I'm sure you did. *Dear Abby...*

Travis: [crosstalk]

Teresa: ... Miss Manners, all of these different things because relationship advice, whether romantic or otherwise, was traditionally women's emotional labor, right?

Travis: Yeah. And it also, man, is one of those things that, like, on into nowadays, there is something about being taught that it is easier for a man to ask advice from a woman. Like, and a lot of romantic comedies...

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: ...right? If you're going to have that moment where the guy finally is like, "I don't know what to do, he's talking to a female character, female best friend, or the female best friend of the love interest, right? Where the dudes are like, "I don't know, man. I'm just here to play basketball with you and yeah. It's kind of weird for us to talk about this relationship stuff, but give it a shot. Beers?"

Teresa: Yeah. So another really famous one is Beatrix Fairfax.

Travis: Great name. Is that a real person?

Teresa: It was a pseudonym of a New York Evening Journal writer, Marie Manning.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: She debuted her *Advice to the Lovelorn*, it was called, on July 20th, 1898 to immediate success. The newspaper was swamped with so many letters that at one point they were contacted by the US Postal Service with an ultimatum. There were too many letters addressed to Ms. Fairfax and they refused to deliver all of them because it would take up too much of

their space and their time. So the Journal had to go and retrieve the letters in person.

Travis: Oh, wow. I wonder if that's still a move that, like, the post office could do today. Like, "I'm not gonna bring— Do you know how big this package is? Come here and get it."

Teresa: [giggles] Well, at this point in time, I believe all things can be had for a price.

Travis: Yeah. This is also probably a time, sadly, where the post office probably a little more integral than it is now and they could probably get away with that move a lot more now than if somebody— And was like, "No, I'm not coming to get it." I'm like, "Please?"
"No. Next time we'll send it with a different service."
"Oh, man."

Teresa: Another one—

Travis: "We have stamps!" Sorry, go on.

Teresa: Another one you might recognize is Dorothy Dicks.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And during the 1930s, her World War II column appeared in 273 newspapers nationwide and reached an estimated 60 million readers.

Travis: That is a lot of paperwork, a lot of people.

Teresa: That seems unfathomable for the time.

Travis: I mean, yeah. It's a lot of people.

Teresa: So everybody had their own kind of slant on their advice, some more conservative than others. And here's the thing, though, about Dorothy Dicks, although she may have been a little more conservative than the aforementioned Ms. Fairfax, she was pragmatic and staunchly defensive of

the women who wrote to her. Which takes another shift, right? So we're talking about the shift from four guys, one of which may or may not have been a doctor...

Travis: No one can say for sure.

Teresa: ... to a single journalist, usually either a female persona or an actual female writer, to a person who is in defense of kind of, like, the narrow box that females were placed in at the time.

Travis: I mean, and it must have been, you know, you got to think about the advice that was being asked for and given, early days there was probably a lot of like, "My husband isn't happy. How can I make him happier?"

Because I can guarantee you without having to look it up, even if the advice givers and writers of the columns were women, the bosses were dudes that they still had to, like, get approval from. And there was probably a lot of that stuff of like, "Yeah, give them advice on how to be a better broad or whatever."

Teresa: There was some of that.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, here's the next step. The next step to the modern advice column. The readers of the newspapers switched. So it used to be men who would read the papers because men were generally more educated, more outgoing, more, quote, "of the world," right? If there was something in the home after World War II, if there was something in the home that needed buying, the women were the one you had to convince to buy it, right?

So advertising takes a huge, huge step towards female purchasing power and thus the skewing of the newspaper to the female sensibility of the time. I'm using a lot of air quotes. And so everything from soap to clothing to appliances were catering directly to the female audience. And these advice columns were a really great way to draw the female audience in to read your paper and look at all of the adverts.

Travis: Sure. Sure, sure, sure. That and also all the great Marmaduke jokes.

Teresa: So many Marmadukes.

Travis: See, here's the thing. He thinks he's people! He sits in a chair, and you're like, "Marmaduke, that's not a chair for dogs! That's a chair for your owner! Oh, Marmaduke."

Teresa: So soon after Dorothy Dicks came at Dear Ann Landers in 1943—

Travis: Can I just say it makes me really sad to think that someday, maybe already passed, is this day, when I can make that Marmaduke "he thinks he's people" joke. And, like, there will be 18-year-olds who are like, "I don't know what that is."

Teresa: "I don't know what that is." I mean...

Travis: You think that's now?

Teresa: That is probably pretty close.

Travis: Aw, man. Yeah, that's true. Oh, boy.

Teresa: Wait until there's a movie remake.

Travis: There was! Wasn't there? There was! With Owen Wilson.

Teresa: No, no wasn't that— Was that Owen Wilson?

Travis: Yeah. Owen Wilson is required to be in most talking animal movies.

Teresa: I feel like— Okay, there was, uh, not too long ago, there was a Garfield remake that's based on the comic. There was Scooby-Doo. Not just recently— Oh, no. Maybe there's like, a Scooby-Doo...

Travis: No, it's Owen Wilson was Marmaduke.

Teresa: Okay, I— Back on topic, please.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Then there was Dear Abby in 1956. Then—

Travis: And Lee Pace and Judy Greer— Sorry. Go on.

Teresa: Okay. I mean, even Emily Post had kind of a write in question and answer style at some point. So there were lots of places that you could go and find that kind of, you know, answer. I keep saying voyeurism, but I mean...

Travis: But I mean it is, right?

Teresa: It really is.

Travis: It's a public... I don't want to say therapy counseling session, but it kind of is like that, right? Where someone is saying, "Hey, this is the problem I'm having." And especially the thing about advice and these columns, right, is like, so much of it is "I don't have someone in my private life that I can ask this to. So I'm going to take this private question and publicly ask it."

Teresa: To someone who hopefully responds, you know, without those trappings of intimacy right? It's kind of freeing. Exactly like where you can get support and encouragement or even, like, practical step by step advice.

Travis: I said counseling, but, man, it ain't that far off, is it? Where it's just like, I'm having this issue. I don't know how to deal with it, and I don't have anyone I can talk to. Now, it's the least direct form of counseling, I think I can think of.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But I think at a time where it was a lot harder to convince someone to talk to somebody about their problems, to have a thing that was so publicly accepted as a way to ask, like, to say, "I'm having a problem," was

actually probably very beneficial for people's mental health as much as it could be, you know?

Teresa: I would like to leave our listeners with—

Travis: No, don't leave them! Come with us!

Teresa: ... with a condensed version of a question submitted to Dear Abby, which I think that everyone can get behind. Someone signed their letter Up in Arms, and the letter itself is a little painful, but basically a woman writes in complaining that her new neighbors across the street are presumably two gay men.

She complains about every single thing that they're doing, right? That they have all sorts of strange looking company, that they keep their shades drawn so they must be up to no good, and that she even goes so far as to tell Dear Abby that she's thought about calling the police on these men for no reason other than our own prejudice.

The letter ends with, "Abby, these weirdos are wrecking our property values. How can we improve the quality of this once respectable neighborhood?" And Abby's entire verbatim response is this. "Dear Up, you could move."

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I love it.

Travis: Yeah. Yep, yep, yep.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: All right, everybody, thank you so much for joining us here in our Internet advice column. I got some good advice for everybody.

Teresa: Oh, you do, do you?

Travis: Yeah. Go to McElroyMerch.com and see all the cool stuff there and it will make you happy. And that's just some great advice. The Pin of the

month is Everybody Has a Knife. It's one of the weird rules we made up in *Adventure Zone: Ethersea*. And by purchasing that pin, it benefits the Center for Reproductive Rights.

You also can find the Guppies Want Me, Blink Sharks Fear Me sticker there, which is another fun one from *The Adventure Zone*. You can also follow me on Twitch if that's a thing any of you are into. Uh, [Twitch.tv/TheTravisMcElroy](https://www.twitch.tv/TheTravisMcElroy).

Teresa: I sometimes tune in just for the fish tank view.

Travis: Oh, yeah, I do have a little fish cam on there that I think you'll enjoy. It's a very chill time, even though I've been playing Fortnite. Don't let that scare you away! Also, you can check out all the other McElroy shows at [McElroy.family](https://www.mcelroy.family). Check out all the Max Fun shows, [MaximumFun.org](https://www.MaximumFun.org) is our podcast home, so go to [MaximumFun.org](https://www.MaximumFun.org). It's right there in the name and check those out. 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. We also thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art that's [@ShmannersCast](https://twitter.com/ShmannersCast).

That's where we get all of our listener-submitted questions for topics when our topics call for that. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for our fan run Facebook group cover picture. It's called Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and follow that group.

Please continue to submit topics and idioms and say hello to our dear researcher Alex. Thank you, Alex, for all of your wonderful help. She hasn't been with us all six years but feels like family nonetheless. ShmannersCast@gmail.com.

Travis: Yeah. Thank you, Rachel, our editor. We wouldn't be able to make the show without you and I just had an idea. As a— If you're looking to give us a birthday present for the 6th year of Shmanners, maybe tweet [@ShmannersCast](https://twitter.com/ShmannersCast) what your favorite episode is, why you liked it, that kind of thing. Maybe, like, share the link to it on your Twitter and tell people to

go check it out. That would be super cool and a really great present. You don't even have to wrap it. Speaking of wrapping up, that's going to do it for us. Join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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