

Shmanners 354: Family Trees

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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: I'm doing fine. How are you?

Travis: I'm doing good. Doing good.

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Been doing some gardening.

Teresa: Yes, that's true.

Travis: And that always [sighs] invigorates my spirit.

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: Um, this wasn't meant to be, uh, a sequitur...

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: You know, the opposite of a non-sequitur.

Teresa: A sequitur.

Travis: Anyways, into our topic, but, uh, we've got— I planted a Magnolia tree—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... in the front that I'm very excited about. Um—

Teresa: We'll have matching trees with our neighbor. Our neighbor also has a Magnolia tree.

Travis: Yeah, but ours will probably be better 'cause I'm better at it.

Teresa: I mean, it's smaller. It's definitely smaller than theirs.

Travis: Now— for now.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: But when I chop theirs down out of spite.

Teresa: Oh! Okay.

Travis: No. I would never do that. If that happens, it wasn't me.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: It wasn't me. But, uh, you know it's Spring. Spring, I think, has more or less fully sprung.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And I was talking about this the other day `cause I was driving Bebe home from school. And it always seems to me, like, I never notice the budding leaves and stuff. And it's, like, barren, barren, barren, pfft! Green!

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah.

Travis: And, like, everything— it always feels like overnight all the leaves come out.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: It's always very surprising, but I think that has to do with a lack of attention to detail.

Teresa: I think so.

Travis: Okay. So, what are we talking about this week?

Teresa: Ah, something that is actually fairly detail-oriented.

Travis: Oh, no.

Teresa: Family trees!

Travis: Okay. Like the trees the family have in their yard?

Teresa: No.

Travis: No. I know what a family tree is.

Teresa: I know you know what a family tree is.

Travis: I know what a family tree is. What's the— what's the— is it Chapin? What's the family tree song that Bebe likes?

Teresa: Yeah, Tom Chapin.

Travis: How does it go?

Teresa: [singing "Family Tree"] "We're a family and we're a tree. Our roots grow deep down in history. From my great-great-grandmother reaching up to me. We're a green and growing family tree."

Travis: Beautiful. That was lovely.

Teresa: Thank you.

Travis: So, a family tree is like genealogies— a way to like track—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: ... who you're related to.

Teresa: Right. So, okay. It's a chart, right? That represents family relationships over the course of many generations. Um, and today we'll be talking mostly about family trees relating to *people*, but this kind of structured diagram is used in fields of medicine, and social work, and botany, and zoology. And in those cases, family trees are typically referred to as genograms and can track, like, hereditary medical conditions or, you know, dog breeding for Queen Elizabeth.

Travis: Right. Okay. See that would be very useful because now as parents there's a lot— and, you know, just general human beings going to the doctor, where people are, like, "And is there a family history of this, and this, and this?" It's like, "I don't know, man." And, like, I'll call my dad and be like, "Dad, is there a family history of this?" And he's like, "I don't know, man."

Teresa: Well, I mean, I guess at that point, if we're filling out stuff for, like, say our kids. If it's something that we have—

Travis: Well, we shouldn't be filling it out for other people's kids. I mean, that would be wild.

Teresa: I mean, [chuckles] instead of ourselves.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: If it's stuff that we have or that we know our parents have, that counts, but farther back than that, I don't know how—

Travis: We're not worried about if, like, great-great-grandad had tuberculosis or something?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Tuberculosis is a communicable disease, not a hereditary disease.

Travis: Yeah, communicable from parent to child.

Teresa: Nope. [laughing]

Travis: It's terrible. It's terrible the way it works.

Teresa: Not that way.

Travis: [sighs] Ugh.

Teresa: It's not hereditary.

Travis: Yeah. There's a, um— there's a history of tuberculosis in my family and I'm—

Teresa: [snickering]

Travis: It's terrible.

Teresa: [giggling] Yeah, 'cause it's not true.

Travis: What?

Teresa: That's a lie. Is that why it's terrible?

Travis: Excuse me! How dare you?

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: How dare you impugn my honor?

Teresa: Okay. So, family trees.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: In the world of, like, noble families and, like, ruling dynasties, you can imagine that record keeping is pretty, like, important, right? Tracing bloodlines, yeah.

Travis: Sure. I've seen *A Knight's Tale*. I know exactly. Yeah. You need to be able to compete in the joust.

Teresa: So, there's evidence from ancient Egyptian ruling dynasties, that they recorded from the beginning of the Pharaonic Era. So, that's 3000 BCE to the end of the Ptolemaic— Ptolemaic, uh—

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: ... kingdom in roughly 30 BCE. That sounds impressive, right?

Travis: But...

Teresa: But we're gonna get to why it may not be exactly.

Travis: Oh, my. Okay.

Teresa: So, Roman clans and family lineages were also very important because they dictated your place in society, right? So, it wasn't just about bloodline. It was about social status as well.

Travis: Caste.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: The caste system.

Teresa: Yeah, kinda like that. Um, and there are lots of, um, different areas that have, like, an oral tradition. That you can, you know— for example, members of the Keita dynasty of Mali learned to recite their oral pedigrees since the 14th century.

Travis: Too long.

Teresa: So, it's like way back there.

Travis: That's too much.

Teresa: And, you know, if you've ever been to— maybe you've been to a church service that uses the Bible genealogy.

Travis: Like the "begat" stuff?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: The begats?

Teresa: Exactly. So, that's usually when they take Jesus' family and they trace it all the way back to King David, right?

Travis: Sure. Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: King David begat such and such and such begat such and such. Blah, blah, blah, blah, Jesus.

Teresa: Exactly. Exactly. But here's the thing, right? They're not always very accurate.

Travis: No!

Teresa: It really depends on who was in power, and who was writing it, and who they wanted to decide they were linked to. And, you know, the idea of, like, even oral traditions get, like, telephoned over the years, right?

Travis: Well, so, the— I think the thing is, like, there's two different ways it's inaccurate, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: The inaccuracy of, "Oh, it changed over time and warped, and maybe this—" But then there's also like straight up and down, as you were saying, the people who were like, "We don't want this guy to be king anymore, and we want this guy to be king now."

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: So, we, like, made up he's— like, he's the second cousin once removed to this lineage, so he has a claim to the throne.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Anyways, we've killed the king and now he's the king. Don't worry about it. It's totally fine.

Teresa: Yes. And also, records can be incomplete. The Romans took a big break for record keeping especially at the end of the classical antiquity period, right?

Travis: They were tired. They needed a vacation. They were like, "We don't want to write stuff. You know how hard— we had to carve stuff into everything."

Teresa: [giggling]

Travis: “This is really hard you guys. We don’t want to write *everything* down.”

Teresa: Right. And then also, there are, like, hostile takeovers. Where one of the things that you could do if you were taking over someplace, is to burn all their records.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: The— Was that the Library of Alexandria that was a big thing?

Teresa: That was a big thing. That was a big thing.

Travis: That was a big thing. What a reductive statement I just made.

Teresa: [laughs lightly]

Travis: You know the burning of the Library of Alexandria? Yeah, that was a thing, right?

Teresa: It also happened during the American Civil War.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: A lot of the records in the South were burned. And so, it’s not always— you need to take these things with a grain of salt—

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: ... is what I’m saying.

Travis: Like when my dad tells me that we are related to Herbert J. McElroy, the Purser on the Titanic.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yeah. Sure.

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: He's not allowed to say McElroy— chances are— who knows? Right? And it's like, yeah, we could probably trace that back, but you know what's more interesting? The story. Now, here's where it becomes a problem.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: It becomes a problem when someone, uh, claims access or relation to, uh, a, let's say, a marginalized group without any actual documentation or testing or roots.

Teresa: Yes. And also, we'll get into that a little bit later.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, so—

Travis: One time my grandmother—

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: ... on my mom's side said that we were descended from King Henry the Eighth.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: And I have no idea if that's true or not. I mean, I have no idea. But you know what? It doesn't matter. You know? Occasionally I'll bust it out, but yeah, my grandmother told me that. Never once have I been like, "So, it's time to buy a ticket to England."

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: Stake my claim.

Teresa: Stake my claim.

Travis: It's time to get over there and be like, "Hey, I'm not saying I should be King, but I'll take Duke, uh, I'll take— I'll just take a lordship. If you guys just want to give me a nice room in the castle or whatever."

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: "That would be fine." I would never do that. I mean, I would do it for— if someone paid me, and I filmed it.

Teresa: [continues laughing] As like a— as like a punk'd?

Travis: As like a— no. Punk'd? No, it's true. My grandmother told me. Why would she lie?

Teresa: [through laughter] Your grandmother told you. Okay. So, really there's no evidence to show when the first historical family tree was created, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: But most historians agree that the *image* of the tree has origins in medieval spiritual artworks.

Travis: Yeah, that makes sense.

Teresa: So, they were all over the— those medieval kids—

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: ... they loved the tree as a symbol.

Travis: They loved symbolism in general in their art.

Teresa: Indeed. Which they borrowed from the pagans. Duh. One example being the Norse Mythology Tree, right? Is a very famous genealogy tree.

Travis: Yeah, the— well, then there's also very prevalent in Norse with like, I believe it was Odin was, like, crucified on a tree or something.

Teresa: Something like that.

Travis: His blood fed it and that kind of thing.

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: The Tree of Life is another one.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: Yggd— Yggdrasil, I think it is.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: If I remember correctly from *God of War*.

Teresa: That is correct.

Travis: The tree of the universe.

Teresa: You got it. The tree of the universe.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so, in the later medieval period, this is when nobility started adopting the tree as the symbol of lineage, right? Using branches of the tree to record relations, and by the 18th century—

Travis: Well cos it got wicked confusing.

Teresa: Yeah, definitely.

Travis: It was, like, "Wait, hold on. Who married who?"

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Wait. Their cousin? There are those branches who just kind of wrap them around each other for a while 'cause their cousins and they got married. So don't worry about it.

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, and by the 18th century, these family pedigrees were absolutely referred to as family trees, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: They appear in titles of paintings. And in, you know, needlework, naming it as a family tree.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And things like that. But a lot of people would usually just, kind of like, write it down in the family Bible, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: The first couple of pages.

Travis: Also, where they put shopping lists?

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: No. Probably not.

Travis: Secret recipes?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yeah, okay.

Teresa: Maybe those. Maybe those. And so, you know, there's different ways of doing the family tree. You can— you can definitely do a tree-like symbol, but also charts count as trees, right?

Travis: Yeah. You can do brackets.

Teresa: Brackets.

Travis: Have them compete against each other to see who's the best one.

Teresa: [laughing] Maybe not.

Travis: No? But the fun thing with the tree is all the jokes that it provides, like, "Yeah, my family tree has some bad apples." Right? Something like that. You know?

Teresa: Oh, yeah.

Travis: Yeah. Okay, I feel like you didn't *really* appreciate that. I feel like that was—

Teresa: [laughing softly] I felt like that was rather low-hanging fruit.

Travis: [gasps dramatically] Ah! Oh!

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: That's why I married her, folks! That's my wife! She made a worse joke than I made. And she's so pleased with herself just like I am! Ah! This is why I married her. I love her so much.

Teresa: Okay. Back to the show. [laughs softly]

Travis: I don't want to anymore. I just want to talk about the joke that you made—

Teresa: [laughing loudly]

Travis: ... and how proud I am.

Teresa: Okay. So, just because your family tree isn't a hundred percent accurate doesn't mean it's not meaningful. I don't want to insinuate that to anyone. But a lot of the things that you see that maybe *are* inaccurate, it would be— it's very interesting to figure out, for example. Why is this name spelled differently from the other names?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Why is this person crossed out, right? Um, and that's— that is part of the family history that isn't necessarily written in the family tree but is really great to find out.

Travis: Well, and so, this is the thing, to go back to what I touched on earlier. It's what I think family trees are great for stories, right?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: And this is the thing if like looking back and being like, "Oh, what went on there?" And, "Oh, this was connected to this." Right? And I think everybody always has a moment when they're doing any kind of genealogical research, where they find out they're related to, like, Teddy Roosevelt or whatever.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And they're like, "Whoa!" Right? Great for stories, not for entitlement, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Like a family tree to be able to say like, "Ah. So, now because I had a relation who was a person of color, now I have access to such and such." It's like, "No, no, no."

Teresa: No.

Travis: You still don't have that life experience. You still don't have that thing going on. That's not how that works.

Teresa: But *for* marginalized groups, it is a really great thing to be able to use, like, these websites, right? Like the Ancestry.com, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Or the DNA test kits.

Travis: You got to be careful with that.

Teresa: You do. You do. But I'm saying, for purposes of learning. So, these websites have really bloomed in popularity over the last—

Travis: Bloomed?

Teresa: Ah! [through laughter] Over the last 10 to 15 years. And so, it *is* really interesting to— maybe your family was relocated *forcibly*, right? Um, and you don't know where your ancestors come from. This is—it's a really great tool to be able to place physically, right? Where the people come from. It doesn't give you a lot of opportunity as far as, like, cultural representation, but a lot of places you can physically, to a region, figure out where people come from.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And also, people reach out to Ancestry.com and those other things, like I said, to find maybe medical histories. Um, or maybe, like you said, potential historical connections that they didn't know about.

Travis: Exactly.

Teresa: So, the internet is full of stories uncovering people and their family stories that they would never have found otherwise. For example, you can discover that your great-great-grandfather started a school for orphans.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Or that, you know, somebody has Celiac disease in your family.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: That is something that is very important to you now, right? So, there are lots of different reasons why people do it.

Travis: I would love to find a family tree of my family in— like in the 1820s be like great-great grandpa, uh, you know, Travis McElroy the First, or whatever, wrote, “I don’t like eatin rolls. Makes my tummy rumble.”

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: It would make me *so* happy. That would make me wicked happy.

Teresa: Oh, it would?

Travis: Yeah. I don’t have that problem, so to know how much my family’s grown [chuckles] and overcome hardships, like, “Rolls make his tummy rumble.” To know that we’ve gotten stronger over time and no longer— well, except for Griffin. I don’t know what Griffin’s got going on.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: He— Griffin took on the burden of any dietary issues so that Justin and I could thrive in the world. That’s how I see it.

Teresa: But— but do you?

Travis: Pretty much, I mean, more than Griffin.

Teresa: More than Griffin.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But you all— you McElroy boys can make questionable food choices.

Travis: That's different! Questionable food choices is a damage I'm inflicting upon myself.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: It's not my insides rebelling against me.

Teresa: Oh! Okay.

Travis: It's my insides doing the best they can with what I've given them.

Teresa: So, um, in a minute, we're gonna talk about myths and misconceptions, if you want to start researching *your* family genealogy.
[chuckles]

Travis: Sure. But first, I want to say a thank you note to our sponsor.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Teresa, when we get married again.

Teresa: We're getting married again?

Travis: I don't know. Who knows? The time is cyclical. Time's a flat circle. I mean, that when this universe restarts, right?

Teresa: Oh, yes! Of course.

Travis: And, eventually, it comes back around, and it's us 2.0. I, uh— I say that who knows how many cycles we're on now, right? We don't need to get into that. When we get married again—

Teresa: [giggling] Okay.

Travis: This time we should use Zola.com.

Teresa: Oh, yeah!

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: That would be much better. Do you think our former selves will remember all the trouble that we had without Zola?

Travis: I think that if we think hard enough about it on our deathbed, we'll remember. We'll carry that with us, right?

Teresa: Okay. Carry it with us.

Travis: Because Zola has free planning tools. And they're there on all of our most important days showing you where to start, uh, planning every step along the way. They have venues, vendors, "Save the Dates" and invites, free wedding websites, and amazing registries. All designed by wedding experts for couples like us or you at home. And the Zola community is a place to share, celebrate, and vent with other engaged couples. They know exactly what you are going through, right? So, they can relate to you. And it's just an amazingly convenient and helpful experience you go through.

Teresa: So, if you want to, you can do like us and keep all of your information in a tattered spiral notebook. *Or* if you want to, you can have an easier time and go to Zola.com. [laughing]

Travis: And it wasn't tattered when we bought it. I can't stress that enough. We didn't buy it at, like, an old magic shop, and it was mysterious or whatever. It was a *new* notebook when we bought it. Anyways, for "just engaged" to the only thing left to do is say "I do," Zola is here for all the days along the way. Just go to Zola, and it's [Z-O-L-A.com/Shmanners](https://Zola.com/Shmanners). One more time, [Z-O-L-A.com/Shmanners](https://Zola.com/Shmanners).

[music plays]

Tre'vell: Hey there, beautiful people. I am your favorite author, it's Tre'vell Anderson of *We See Each Other*, a black trans journey through TV and video.

Jarrett: You know, this is supposed to be a promo for our show, *FANTI*, and not your book, right?

Tre'vell: It's called multi-tasking.

Jarrett: I can't with you right now. [chuckles]

Tre'vell: [giggling]

Jarrett: Tre'vell and I have an award-winning show called *FANTI*, that we *both* host. And it's a podcast where we dig into the complex and complicated conversations—

Tre'vell: Mm-hmm.

Jarrett: ... about the gray areas in our lives.

Tre'vell: Perhaps there is a public figure of some sort and you're like, "Oh, that person is so smart and so charming." But you're also like, "Uh, that person gets on my nerves!"

Jarrett: Okay. Okay. You can catch us every week right here on MaxFun or wherever you get your slay-worthy audio.

Tre'vell: And you can watch us on the YouTube every Friday!

Jarrett: That's *FANTI*. F-A-N-T-I.

[music fades away]

[upbeat music plays]

Speaker One: Since we reached our highest milestone during the MaxFunDrive, we're creating a MaxFun Foley Library full of sound effects from your favorite hosts. The whole MaxFun community will be able to use it. So, what would you like it to feature? People high-fiving? Walking through mud? Chicken clucking? Jazz kazoo?

Head to Maximumfun.org/Foley. That's Maximumfun.org/F-O-L-E-Y and submit your ideas. We're excited to make this silly thing together and even more excited to see what you all create with it. And thank you again for a great MaxFunDrive!

[music fades away]

Travis: Okay. Tell me about these misconceptions and myths.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: [speaking formally] Myths and misconceptions.

Teresa: Indeed. The magazine, *Family Tree Magazine*, put together some really great and helpful tips and tricks. So, here are a few of those: "Don't believe records just because they are printed."

Travis: Okay. I don't believe anything.

Teresa: Of course, you don't. And you shouldn't.

Travis: I don't believe you. Are you there? Who knows?

Teresa: [laughs softly] So, certain court records—

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: [chuckles] or you just—

Travis: I reached out and touched her. She's still here.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: She's real.

Teresa: [through laughter] That was strange, and your fingers are cold.

Travis: Are they?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Certain court records or other registrations are going to be very old and they're incomplete research. You know, they could have inaccurate sources or human error. Or, you know, you don't want to go on a wild goose chase after your great grandma's hidden pearls that don't actually exist, right?

Travis: Oh! But don't you? Wouldn't that be fun? As long as you realize that the real pearls are the friends that you make along the way, then it's okay.

Teresa: Oh? Then it's okay. So, keep in mind who was the author, when and where was this work published, and are there any sources cited.

Travis: Hmm. Interesting. Also, you got to be careful about names. I'm sure that you have this.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But, like, John McElroy, right? To be, like, "Oh, it's the same last name." It's like who knows, man?

Teresa: Yeah. Remember that not all of it will be online. Because online sources are extremely helpful, that doesn't mean that they're the only source of information for your family or that they are true. So, it might be a good idea to actually visit someplace. Maybe a courthouse of your hometown or maybe even, like, go to an actual library and try and find books.

Travis: Or you can go through the microfilm of newspapers.

Teresa: Microfiche.

Travis: Like for— micro— uh, there's gotta be a difference between microfiche— microfiche are tiny fish.

Teresa: Fiche!

Travis: Okay. And go through the old newspapers for, like, birth announcements and death announcements and stuff like that?

Teresa: Exactly. And then here I something that you eluded to earlier. Um, your— there are not great grandmothers out there who were (quote) “Cherokee Princesses,” okay?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: For starters, no indigenous nations, especially in the Americas, had royalty, okay?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It’s a very harmful myth that comes from the rebranding into Pocahontas, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Being touted as a quote “Native American Princess” to the Europeans.

Travis: Okay. Got it.

Teresa: And just because they called her a princess, doesn’t mean that she wasn’t an important person, right? It was a mistranslation kind of deal.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Because she was certainly an important person in her tribe, but not a princess. It is possible that people have indigenous blood that is not recorded, right? We’re not saying that people don’t. What we’re saying is there’s no indigenous royalty.

Travis: I will stress enough though, that if you find out that somewhere down the line you had an indigenous family member that you did not know

about and has not been a part— or whatever, that does not suddenly grant you access to every, like, hardship—

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: ... and every life experience and every opportunity that people who have experienced those hardships, have experienced that kind of stuff— It's not something like, "Oh, my great-great-grandfather was indigenous." So, from now on, like, no, don't do that. Don't do it.

Teresa: No. And that's completely separate from indigenous populations who were subjected to, um, like, schools or whatever, that, like, took away their culture. Um, next.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Next is, if someone told you— like, for instance like we talked about earlier. The courthouse was burned in the Civil War or whatever, right? And it's true. There were a lot of places that have been destroyed by war, especially like I said in the American South. It was one of the tactics, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: If you dig a little, you might find that those records were reconstructed. Or reconstituted, is what I wanted to say. [chuckles lightly]

Travis: Sure. Either one of those works.

Teresa: For example, there was a riot in 1884 and a fire that destroyed Cincinnati's own courthouse. But—

Travis: [gasps] But that's where I live!

Teresa: That is where you live.

Travis: Ah, man.

Teresa: But after that, citizens showed up with their deeds and marriage certificates to re-register a lot of their things, right?

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: And so, there might be other ways to uncover what it is you are looking for.

Travis: Got it.

Teresa: Um, for example—

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: ... if you're looking for a birth record maybe that doesn't exist, but maybe there is, like, a baptismal record at a church nearby, right?

Travis: Sure. Sure, sure. Okay.

Teresa: Here's the next one. You probably don't actually have a family crest.

Travis: What?

Teresa: The term crest is used interchangeably with code of arms, but crest is actually part of the coat of arms. Neither, however, belongs directly to a surname. Instead, the right to *use* a code of arms is granted to an individual and passed down to the legal male line descendants.

Travis: Ah, but then how do you explain the McElroy family crest on my right shoulder blade?

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Hmm. Hmm-hmm.

Teresa: I explain that as a fun picture, that you relate to. [chuckles]

Travis: Yeah. No. This is the thing that I will say. Once again, right? It is a picture that I relate to that is not representative of me thinking I have any actual claim on that.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But more of just like, you know, I wanted— all of my tattoos tend to represent things. And that for me was, like, I want a representation of family that's not like pictures of them or names or whatever. I wanted something more, uh, abstract than that, right? So, the family crest— dad likes to do a lot of research into, like, "Oh, what the Scottish McElroy thing? What's the Irish McElroy thing?"

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it's just like, "Okay, great! This is a thing that is important to my dad, so I will get a tattoo of this." Once again, not gonna roll up to like I think that there's a castle in, like, Ulster, or something in Ireland that was, like, the McElroy— I'm not going to roll up and be like, "This is mine now! Check the shoulder!"

Teresa: [laughing] If you are interested in a family crest maybe that your family has told you, you are a part of, you can actually learn more at the website for the College of Arms, which is the heraldic authority for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland where a lot of these origins come from for family crests and coats of arms.

Travis: Or just make up your own. Who cares? [chuckles]

Teresa: Yeah. And there are lots of places that will talk to you and draw some for you. I mean, they cost money, right? So, don't get— don't get suckered into believing that this is, like, the one thing about your family.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because, like, you can go and talk to them, and they'll design one for you.

Travis: And, frankly, much more interesting, I think, to research the sym—the symbolism. The symbology? I don't know.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Of coats of arms. They're very interesting.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Plus, you get to say the phrase "rampant on a field" quite a bit, which is just fun.

Teresa: [giggling] So, how do you read a family tree?

Travis: Left to right!

Teresa: No.

Travis: Up and down.

Teresa: It— okay. [chuckles lightly] So, here's what you should do, right? You should start with a person that you know, okay?

Travis: Like you.

Teresa: For example, yes. If you start with yourself, start with yourself as the *roots* of the family tree, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And then, go up backwards in time to the branches. You know what I mean? So, like, you know you and you know your parents, and you probably know your parent's parents. So, you start—

Travis: Now, wait. I'm confused. I thought— okay. Hmm. If I'm the trunk, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Yeah. You're the starting point.

Travis: And then roots going down would be the family before me.

Teresa: Okay. That's—

Travis: And a trunk going up—

Teresa: That's too much because you can do it either way. You can do it forwards in time or backwards in time. So, let's try another one.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Let's start with Shakespeare, right? So, if we start with Shakespeare then we—

Travis: You mean the myth that is Shakespeare, right, right, right?

Teresa: Ah.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: Then you can do— you start with Shakespeare at the bottom— bottom.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And then you can do Shakespeare's wife and children going up, and then their children going up.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And then, their children and their children. You can do it that way. That's a great way to do a family tree if you know all those pieces.

Travis: I'm just saying, I like the image of if I'm the trunk, right?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And going up is everybody that comes after me. And going down is everyone that comes before me. And then you turn that on your side and it's a bracket like we were talking like, "And who's that winning in the middle?" It's me.

Teresa: I see.

Travis: I'm the one remaining in the middle. It's me. Hi, I'm the winner. It's me.

Teresa: [through laughter] Okay. Okay. But my— my point is, that you can start it either way, and it's best to start it with the one person that you know for sure.

Travis: Me.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: I know I exist, and I'm related to me.

Teresa: [through laughter] You do know that.

Travis: I *know* it.

Teresa: Here is—

Travis: If anyone tries to tell me I'm not related to me, they better have some strong proof to prove it.

Teresa: Here's a helpful hint. Here is something called the "G-rule." And here's how the G-rule goes. So, the G in a relative's name can be used to decipher how many generations you are. For example, grandparents, that word has one G. So, there's one generation between you.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Great-grandparent, right? Two G's. Two generations. Great-great. Great-great-great, right? It goes up and up like that.

Travis: Now what if I call them Gran-gran? Huh? Huh?

Teresa: Hmm. That's a nickname.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Anyway, and grands and greats get tricky with siblings, okay? For example, there is *no* such thing as a Great-Uncle. Its—

Travis: They're called a Gruncle.

Teresa: It's technically a grand-uncle.

Travis: What?

Teresa: Yes. Because the siblings of your grandparents— *grandparents* are your grand-uncle, grand-aunt.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Okay. And so, because great is above generationally grand.
[chuckles]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because you have great-grand.

Travis: Everything you're saying makes sense. You're saying the words too much and they're losing meaning for me.

Teresa: I am. Yeah. [laughs] Okay, okay. Um, okay. So, then it's the same thing about your nieces and nephews, right? Your mom's sister is your aunt.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Your grandma's sister is your great-aunt. And your great-grandma's sister is your great-grandaunt.

Travis: Wait, so my grandma's sister is my grand-aunt, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay. And then, there's great-grandaunt.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Got it. Okay. And how do you get cousin's once-removed work?

Teresa: I'll go into that.

Travis: Oh, boy.

Teresa: So, if your nephew has a daughter, that kid is your grand-niece.

Travis: Great. Uh-huh.

Teresa: And then if they have—

Travis: No, I shouldn't say "Great." That's confusing. Understood.

Teresa: If they have a kid, that's your great-grand—

Travis: Sure. Okay.

Teresa: ... niece.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So, it goes— it goes like that. Okay? So, cousins.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: So, we— well, let's start with your aunts and uncle's children are your cousins.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Okay. And then, [pause] their children are your first cousin— uh, your second cousins.

Travis: Okay, great.

Teresa: Okay. The children after that are third, right? So, that's how that goes. With the *removed* that means, um, that— okay.

Travis: It's confusing.

Teresa: Just describes how many generations *apart* people are. So, let's start at the same point. Okay. You have grandchildren and also, great-grandchildren.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Your granddaughter is your great-grandson's first cousin once removed because she is the first generation of cousins, and your great-grandson is one generation away from her. Therefore, she's his first cousin once removed. So, if you are talking about your progeny—

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: ... there's no removing.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It has to do with a generation over.

Travis: Okay. Sure. That sorta makes sense.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: There are lots of charts and software that you can download online—

Travis: Ah, thank God!

Teresa: [chuckles] ... to help you properly track and figure out who is who in your family.

Travis: I'm still me though, right?

Teresa: Yes, always. You are *always* you.

Travis: Thank God!

Teresa: So, do you have any true stories to share?

Travis: I don't know, man.

Teresa: About your genealogy.

Travis: I don't know, dude. Uh... the person on the Titanic.

Teresa: Nah!

Travis: I mean, honestly, that's the best I got.

Teresa: Well, for example, I know a lot more about my mother's family than I do about my father's family. Simply because my father, I would describe as a stoic, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: He doesn't really tell many stories about that.

Travis: I would describe him as a stork.

Teresa: [giggling] Hmm.

Travis: He's very tall and lanky.

Teresa: [snickers] Anyway, uh, so I know that my mother's mother, which is my grandma, was a first-generation German immigrant. So, her parents came over on a boat from Germany, and she was born in the US.

Travis: Cool.

Teresa: I know that, about my grandfather, so my maternal grandfather—I know that there was some, um, restructuring of surnames because at one point, somebody got in trouble.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: Either with the law or with their community, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: So, I know that there is, like, a hiccup in there because they needed to get away. [chuckles]

Travis: Hmm. I like to live in the now. I don't really care about the past. Uh, it doesn't have any effect on me. Uh—

Teresa: [laughing] Okay.

Travis: You know? It's like, who cares? Like, what am I doing?

Teresa: Play this game with me.

Travis: I know the answer is like— the answer is, is that I don't know a lot about—

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Like I— grandparents—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... some about great-grandparents that I met, and past there I don't really know.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Yeah. There's just a lot of separation from that generation. Like, from, uh, like the— like, I know my great-grandmother on both sides, I met them.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But I didn't know any of their siblings, right? I didn't know beyond that.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: They just didn't really, uh, associate with them or communicate with them. I don't know why.

Teresa: That's part of your family history too.

Travis: I guess.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I just, I like to live in the now. Ehh... I don't know much. But you know what? Speaking of the now, now is the time when we say "thank you" to everybody.

Teresa: It is the time.

Travis: I want to say "thank you" to our researcher, Alex, without whom we would not be able to make the show. And I want to say "thank you" to our editor, Rachel, without whom we would not be able to make the show.

And I want to say “thank you” to you for listening. We make this show so that you enjoy it, and we really appreciate that you’re here. Um, let’s see. What else, Teresa? Who else do we thank?

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 Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today. Always, we are taking topic submissions. We’re taking— I would love to do another idiom show.

Travis: Yeah, me too.

Teresa: If we— if we have enough idioms because we use them a lot! And so, you can send those to our Gmail which is shmannerscast@gmail.com. And make sure that you say “hi” to Alex because she reads every single one.

Travis: We also want to say, uh, a couple of bits of information you should have. Next week, we’re doing some *Adventure Zone* and *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* shows. We are going to be in San Jose, California on April 27th, doing *Adventure Zone* with Aabria Iyengar. On April 28th, we’re in San Jose again doing *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. And on April 29th, we’re in Denver doing *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* as well. You can get those tickets at bit.ly/Mcelroytours. And that’s going to 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]

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