

## Shmanners 358: Dorothy Parker

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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 ya?

**Teresa:** All things considered, I'm doing just fine.

**Travis:** Yeah. I'll tell you, it's—can I tell you what's wild? Time dilation, uh, where sitting in this booth, I was like, "It's been forever since we recorded." And it's been, like, two weeks, but it's *wild*. To just be, like, two weeks? Might as well have been— it felt like two years! It's been forever.

**Teresa:** Really?

**Travis:** I can't remember. When we started doing the intro, I was like, "I'll just let go and let God."

**Teresa:** [bursts out laughing]

**Travis:** And I hope I open my mouth and the right words come out. You know what I mean?

**Teresa:** They did. Good job.

**Travis:** Thank goodness. Thank goodness, man. Oh, boy! Almost summer, ugh. I got senioritis over here.

**Teresa:** [giggling]

**Travis:** Just once we hit summer, man, no more teachers.

**Teresa:** Is that— is that when you're so old that all you think about is summer? Is that what senioritis is?

**Travis:** No. It's when you're a senior in high school.

**Teresa:** [exasperatedly] I know! I know.

**Travis:** I'm not that old.

**Teresa:** It was a joke.

**Travis:** I'm not even for— I will say this. I learned recently that— this has nothing to do with the episode, that I'm, like, ten years older than Kelsey Grammer was when he started filming *Cheers*.

**Teresa:** You look so much better though.

**Travis:** Hey, thank you. Don't let Kelsey Grammer hear you say that but thank you so much. Kelsey, she didn't mean it!

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** Oh, he's crying now.

**Teresa:** A lot of the people on that show looked a lot older. And I feel like that's a kind of, like, old-school television thing, right? Where, like, they looked a lot older than they actually were. And nowadays, we just cast, like, teenagers. No, we don't. Do we? People tend to— what am I talking about?

People tend to look a lot older. I'm thinking about, like, *Euphoria*, right? All of those people are supposed to be teenagers, but they're, like, in their mid-twenties.

**Travis:** Well, I think a lot of it has to do to— 'cause I saw a thing recently where it was, like, when you look at TV from the 70s and 80s and even, like, early 90s and stuff, and you're like, "Those people look so old!" Right? But it's— if you swap out, like, haircuts and fashions— like what they're wearing—

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... and it's like, "Okay, they look more of what I think a 32-year-old should look like." Right? 'Cause a lot of it is just like when I see, for example, Ted Danson in *Cheers*, his haircut is, like, what I associate, like, "Yeah, that's what, like, an old person looks like." All right?

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** That's like my dad's haircut.

**Teresa:** Which is why probably in that— it was a TikTok that you watched, right?

**Travis:** Correct.

**Teresa:** Probably, that's why Woody Harrelson actually looks like he's mid-twenties. Because he's just got short blond hair and he's wearing a tux.

**Travis:** Yeah. And it's a lot of that and, like— it also though, was like the way that people cast stuff. Where especially like thinking about *Cheers*.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Where I think the casting was, like, "We want these people to look like this is, like, a working man." Like John Ratzenberger's, like, 34 when that show started.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And he's the guy who plays Cliff, the mailman. And it's like we want him to look like a guy who delivers mail in Boston, right? And so, they cast a guy who looked like he'd been working his whole life and not, like somebody who, you know, looked like he may be 34 but he looks like he's 20.

**Teresa:** "This isn't the OC," they said to themselves.

**Travis:** Can I tell you? I was actually thinking about characters from the OC when I was talking about that.

**Teresa:** [laughing] Okay.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** By the way, this has nothing to do with our show this week.  
[laughing]

**Travis:** Nothing at all.

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Just a little insight into our lives, listeners.

**Travis:** Oh, but I do want to right up to— in all seriousness, uh, a bit of a trigger content warning here. The person we are going to be discussing wrote a lot of poems that involve topics of, like, self-harm. Um, I don't think that the show will contain actual discussions of, like, self-harm, but she did write poetry that contained self-harm.

**Teresa:** Yes. Okay. We have said in bits and pieces a little bit about a very famous witty— actually famous for her witticisms, a writer, Dorothy Parker.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm. Yes.

**Teresa:** But we haven't actually done a biography on them, so here it is.

**Travis:** Now, I'm sure we'll get to it, but she was a member of the Algonquin Round Table, right?

**Teresa:** Indeed, yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And we've talked about that as well. So, here is another disclaimer but only because the patriarchy is so strong.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** When you go through a lot of biographies of people of, like, this certain age, you often find that their histories are kind of shrouded in misogyny and half-myths.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** Because male historians were often quick to turn successful women's origin stories into soap operas of scandal—

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** ... and other things like misfortunes in order to take away their power.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And this is not something that is, uh, unique to her. But it is something that we encounter around biographies of this period.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** So, we are going to rely *heavily* on the biographer Marion Mead. It's something that has been corroborated by more than one source to be the closest to the truth.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Okay?

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Dorothy Parker was born Dorothy Rothschild on August 22, 1893. And she was born in Long Branch, New Jersey, which is a kind of, like, a summer cottagey town. Beach town. One of those.

**Travis:** I would like to live in a summer cottagey beach town.

**Teresa:** Yeah?

**Travis:** For a little bit. Then if it's too warm too long, I don't want to. I actually—

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** No. You know when I said that? I don't really.

**Teresa:** You don't really.

**Travis:** I hate that idea.

**Teresa:** I was looking at you and I was like, "No."

**Travis:** No, never mind.

**Teresa:** You don't like that? Um, because—

**Travis:** I want to live in a house that looks like it belongs to a witch—

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** ... that is set way back from the road, with lots and lots of trees between me and the road. I want people to kind of hushed whisper as they walk past it and I want it to always kind of be a little bit chilly inside. None of that is a joke. That is 100% true. If there could be some kind of body of water in the back, preferably like a little brook.

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** Or a pond with its teeming with life. That would also be ideal.

**Teresa:** This tracks. You have mentioned several times.

**Travis:** This is what I want. This is where I'm retiring to. Other people can have Florida. I want a witch's house. Thank you very much.

**Teresa:** Um, so, this is where a lot of people from New York City summered, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** But shortly after Dorothy's birth they returned to their Manhattan apartment so that they could raise their daughter as a (quote) "true New Yorker."

**Travis:** Ah, there it is. Okay.

**Teresa:** Unfortunately, her mother passed away very shortly after Dorothy's 5th birthday.

**Travis:** Oh. Rough.

**Teresa:** And her father remarried two years later, and this is one of the instances that tend to get aggrandized in her life. Some say that Dorothy hated her father and that he was not good to her, and they had a strained relationship. And her wicked stepmother, um, was a person that Dorothy refused to refer to anything other than the housekeeper. But Marion Mead says that this account is largely false.

Certainly, there were hard times. And fathers of the period were often not very affectionate to their children, but Marion Mead says that Parker grew up in an indulgent, supportive, generous, and privileged household. And her stepmom passed away in 1903. So, like, it wasn't that long of a time, right?

**Travis:** Wait, when was Dorothy Parker born?

**Teresa:** Oh, she was born in 1893.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** And then her mother died in 1898, and then her stepmother passed in 1903.

**Travis:** Okay. Now, listen, hold on. I also listened to true crime podcasts. I have been watching a lot of stuff on TikTok about true crime. This man went through two wives in like five years? Some eyebrows raised!

**Teresa:** It's also the turn of the century so lots of, like, disease and hardships.

**Travis:** Oh. Okay, sure. But—

**Teresa:** [laughing] Okay.

**Travis:** ... I think I'm onto something here.

**Teresa:** So, um, Parker grew up attending The Convent of the Blessed Sacrament and then went on to graduate from Miss Dana's School, which is—

**Travis:** What? What wildly different names for things, right?

**Teresa:** Well, so is a Catholic school and then a finishing school.

**Travis:** But it was the Convent of the Blessed Sacrament and Miss Dana's. [chuckles] Right? It was, like, just two different— Yeah, I went to, uh, The Convent of the Sacred and then I went to Todd's.

**Teresa:** All right. It is interesting to note though, that Parker's schooling was largely at Christian institutions, even though her father was Jewish. And she once joked that she was asked to leave one of her Catholic schools because she described the Immaculate Conception as "Spontaneous Combustion." [chuckles]

**Travis:** [gasps] Oh! I love this.

**Teresa:** Scandalous.

**Travis:** No, hilarious.

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** Man. I'm looking at that and if I'm a teacher, I don't care how devout you are. If a child— kids say the darndest things. And if a kid said that to me and I'm, like, a super devout person working in a convent, and the kid's like, "The uh, uh, spontaneous combustion." I would fall all over myself laughing.

**Teresa:** [giggles] I know you would.

**Travis:** You gotta have a sense of humor to just exist. Come on.

**Teresa:** And Dorothy made a lot of jokes about her schooling, but it didn't make up for the fact that education was kind of a rough period in her life. Her father claimed that his daughter was Episcopalian though she had said—

**Travis:** But really he meant Pescatarian.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** She has said that her (quote) "Dark Jewishness" as it was put, clearly made her an outsider.

**Travis:** Mm.

**Teresa:** I don't know exactly what "dark Jewishness" means. Maybe dark-haired and olive-toned skin?

**Travis:** Hmm. It also must have been tough, man, education because— especially at the time. We're talking about, you know, the turn of the

century, 1900s. It must have been tough just to be, like, an intelligent and, like, witty young woman.

**Teresa:** Indeed!

**Travis:** It must have been tough to, like, ask questions and question things people were telling you.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And talk about the thing you wanted to be or what you wanted to do. And someone would be like, "No, no, no. That's not— You need to do this when you get bigger." And they're like, "No, I— no, thank you."

**Teresa:** She does credit this feeling of alienation with her kind of, like, biting and irreverent sense of humor.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I think that happens for a lot of writers and comedians and things like that. Where they find the kind of darkness in their life and turn it on its head to make it comedy.

**Travis:** Well, and it's also a thing when— oh, okay. Please, everybody, let me be me for a second. This is in *Ted Lasso*, right? When they give Jamie the signal.

**Teresa:** Oh!

**Travis:** I'm gonna be full-blown Travis for a second. Sometimes when you're intelligent— and being intelligent makes people who aren't as intelligent around you makes— it makes them angry when you're intelligent around them. Being funny and witty is a way to continue being that intelligent. And somebody laughs, and they didn't realize that you maybe were being a smarty-pants, right?

**Teresa:** Uh-huh.

**Travis:** Is that you were making a joke out of it, and they laugh. In your head, you're thinking, "You don't get it. Yep, I can be funny and witty as a way to showcase intelligence without making that person angry at me because I made them feel dumb because I'm so smart."

**Teresa:** I get it.

**Travis:** [high-pitched voice] I'm not saying it's me.

**Teresa:** Ohh.

**Travis:** I'm not saying I feel that way about myself.

**Teresa:** So, she would also later credit the shunning of her— from her classmates that would fuel much of her Civil Rights activism later in life.

**Travis:** Mm.

**Teresa:** Her father passed away when she was 20. At the time she was making a living playing piano while she wrote poetry.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** And, you know—

**Travis:** It must be difficult to do those things at the same time.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] You do need your fingers, I think, to write.

**Travis:** Maybe she held the pen in her teeth?

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

**Travis:** Played the keys with her fing— her toes.

**Teresa:** Probably did one and then the other.

**Travis:** Ah!

**Teresa:** In 1914, when Dorothy was just 21, her poem entitled "Any Porch" was accepted by Vanity Fair.

**Travis:** Ooh, la, la.

**Teresa:** And then a year later, she got hired to do editorial and caption writing for Vogue.

**Travis:** Zut Alors!

**Teresa:** So, she was in. And this was the time that she also got married to her first husband who they would divorce in 1928, but she did keep his last name. And then she spent two years as a staff writer for Vogue and then moved back to Vanity Fair as a—

**Travis:** Hmm. Just like *Devil Wears Prada*.

**Teresa:** [laughs lightly] I guess so.

**Travis:** No, I don't think that happens in *Devil Wears Prada*.

**Teresa:** No, I don't think so.

**Travis:** Just whenever someone says Vogue now, I think about *Devil Wears Prada*.

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** A movie I have only seen once and apparently remember every detail of.

**Teresa:** [laughing] An inordinate amount of detail!

**Travis:** I remember a lot about it. Because I watched it as research for going to see a musical.

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** So, I was really focused and really paying attention.

**Teresa:** What your mind can do when you put it to something.

**Travis:** Yeah, it's wild. Yeah, I can't remember people's birthdays or, like, someone, like, that I have met several times. I can't remember their name. But ask me about Emily Blunt's character arch in *Devil Wears Prada*, and I'll tell you all about it.

**Teresa:** This time though, for Vanity Fair, she was the publications drama critic. Which was unprecedented for a woman to be at the time.

**Travis:** Oh, yeah, I can see that.

**Teresa:** And she was an immediate success because she had that trademark wit and pernicious writing style.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** So, it earned her a reputation for biting hilarity that the readers adored.

**Travis:** I can't wait to find out more, but first, how about a word from some other MaxFun shows?

[theme music plays]

[new music plays]

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[music fades out]

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**Maddy:** *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*.

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**Jason:** *Final Fantasy XVI*.

**Maddy:** *Street Fighter 6*.

**Kirk:** *Baldur's Gate III*.

**Jason:** *Starfield*.

**Kirk:** *Spider-man 2*.

**Jason:** *Master Detective Archives: Rain Code* for Nintendo Switch. No? Is that just me?

**Maddy and Kirk:** [laughing simultaneously]

**Maddy:** It's a huge time for video games.

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[music fades away]

**Travis:** I also have to imagine that, like, being a drama critic is a great way to, like, get your way into the, like, witty elite of things, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Because you're then one, someone who is, like, in the social scene of like going to see theater, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And, like, you're hanging out with people you're getting to meet these, like, writers and directors and actors and stuff.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And two, you will now have a job that highlights your intelligence and wit and sense of humor.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** And that kind of thing. That is something that other witty people notice.

**Teresa:** Right. It did get her into a little bit of trouble, though.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** One playwright was so offended by her review that he accused her of libel.

**Travis:** Oh, my!

**Teresa:** And in the same article about that, she also zinged beloved actress Billie Burke. Glinda from the 1939, *Wizard of Oz*.

**Travis:** Oh, yes, of course.

**Teresa:** In her work in a new play called *Caesar's Wife* and said that Burke acted as if she were giving an impersonation of Eva Tanguay. Now, I have to tell you about Eva Tanguay. Because Eva Tanguay was the Queen of Vaudeville and known for being quite lewd at the time.

**Travis:** Ooh, la, la.

**Teresa:** But it would also so happened that Billie Burke was married to Florenz Ziegfeld of The Follies.

**Travis:** Oh, Ziegfeld Follies.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] Yeah.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So, that circle was very upset with her.

**Travis:** Mm.

**Teresa:** Okay. So, not only did that kind of affect her social life, it also affected her job because Ziegfeld was one of Vanity Fair's most reliable advertisers.

**Travis:** Oh, okay. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Yeah. So, her boss called her in actually to The Plaza for lunch and fired her.

**Travis:** Ah, man!

**Teresa:** But being Dorothy, it's said that she promptly ordered the most expensive dessert on the menu and then left. [chuckles]

**Travis:** Yeah, I love this. I love that move. Didn't even eat the dessert.

**Teresa:** Not to my knowledge.

**Travis:** Either way. Either way, it works.

**Teresa:** Either way. All right. So, here we get to what you mentioned earlier, The Algonquian Round Table.

**Travis:** Yes. Which is a bunch of witty people just sitting around being witty.

**Teresa:** Indeed. Right. So, at her time during Vanity Fair, she and Robert Benchley and Robert Sherwood who were extremely—

**Travis:** The Bob's.

**Teresa:** The Robert's?

**Travis:** Well, Bob is short for Robert. I don't know if you know this.

**Teresa:** Anyway, were extremely talented raconteurs of the time.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm. I love raccoons.

**Teresa:** And they were a trio of friends. And so, they met for lunch, like, every day for lunch at The Algonquin Hotel.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** And it became kind of a famous meeting place.

**Travis:** Uh, raconteur is like a storyteller, and I said they loved raccoons, and that was a joke.

**Teresa:** [through laughter] I totally ignored it.

**Travis:** But I need everyone to know that I know what raconteur means. It's like somebody who can, like, tell a tale. You know, spin a yarn. Uh, can hold people's attention while they tell a story and, like, jokes and stuff. Okay.

**Teresa:** And so—

**Travis:** And it's also funny to pretend, like, it means, like, somebody who's just way into raccoons.

**Teresa:** From 1919 until roughly 1929, The Algonquin Round Table was a massive group of New York City writers and critics and actors and artists and sharp-witted humorists who ate lunch together and basically just entertained each other for hours doing wisecracks and witticisms and wordplay. And just talking about it made you kind of, like, part of that circle, so everyone talked about it.

**Travis:** Imagine— imagine— okay. Really, really think about it because I think that sometimes people hear about The Algonquin Round Table and they don't fully contextualize it, right? But I think about this when I think— imagine you and your friends got together every day for lunch and were so smart and funny that, like, decades later— almost a hundred years later, people talk about you guys getting together and being funny and witty. Can you imagine? This wasn't like—

**Teresa:** Well, I can imagine because the New Yorker, that magazine was born at this table, right? And Dorothy and both of those Roberts worked at the New Yorker for a long time, so like— well, not for a long time. For a couple of years. And so, like, if you think about the New Yorker as a magazine, that's what The Algonquin Round Table was.

**Travis:** It's just— it's simply incredible to me this idea of like, this wasn't, like, a recorded thing. Like, they weren't— this would be, like, the most incredible podcast ever, frankly. If you could go back in time and, like, sit and record The Algonquin Round Table, right? Just imagine. Like, the idea of being so funny, so witty, so clever that it became, like, the reference point for people a century later.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Still referencing, like, "Oh, it's like some kind of Algonquin Round Table." It just— it absolutely blows my mind.

**Teresa:** Here are a couple of very famous Dorothy snippets from her time at The Algonquin Round Table. "If you want to know what God thinks of money, just look at the people that he gave it to."

**Travis:** Ohh!

**Teresa:** Mm. Here's another one, "That woman speaks 18 languages, and she can't say 'No' in any of them."

**Travis:** Oh, boy!

**Teresa:** Scandalous.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** Here's one about herself: "I don't care what's written about me, so long as it isn't true."

**Travis:** [gasps] That's funny! Funny!

**Teresa:** "I've never met a millionaire, but I know I'd just be darling at it."

**Travis:** That's pretty good.

**Teresa:** [giggling] Here's one, "You can lead a horticulture, but you can't make her think."

**Travis:** Oh, whore to culture! Then it's a thing. Ahh! Oh, Dorothy. You catbird.

**Teresa:** Around 1929 is when The Algonquian Round Table was dissolved.

**Travis:** You know who else was a member of The Algonquian Round Table? Just before I forget. Harpo Marx.

**Teresa:** Yeah, very cool.

**Travis:** The other ones are probably cool too, but Harpo Marx was in it and that feels really great.

**Teresa:** And Dorothy is largely credited with being the one who when she left, the Table disbanded. She left in 1929 to go to Hollywood.

**Travis:** Now, I might be wrong and— but from what I remember and what I was just looking at, I think she might have also been— as far as, like, regular people who were there— regular members, the only woman that was, like, a regular member of The Algonquian Round Table. That might be true. I don't— I might be wrong. At the very least, very limited number compared to how many men there were.

**Teresa:** Indeed. Yes. Yes, very limited number of women. So, she moved to Hollywood, and at the time she was married to former actor Alan Campbell. And she would be married and be divorced and then be married and divorced and married again to Alan Campbell, so—

**Travis:** Oh, interesting!

**Teresa:** Yeah. And this is where she wrote the original screenplay for the original *A Star Is Born* in 1939. She was part of that scriptwriting duo. Okay.

So, like, everything really sounds like things are, you know, coming up roses for Dorothy here, but—

**Travis:** Wait. Hold on. I want to say. Hold on. I'm looking 'cause I want to name the women who were on The Algonquian Round Table.

**Teresa:** Go for it.

**Travis:** This is on [Algonquianroundtable.org](http://Algonquianroundtable.org). Um, and this was written by Kevin Fitzpatrick. So, there was Dorothy Parker and Edna Ferber. There was Margalo Gillmore. There was Jane Grant, Ruth Hale, Beatrice Kaufman, Margaret Leech, and Peggy Wood are the ones covered in this. So, let's give them all their names. They were also in the Algonquian Round Table. There we go.

**Teresa:** Awesome. Like I was saying, so, uh, she wasn't really fond of her work in Hollywood. This is kind of like a returning theme for Dorothy, where she'll have literary and social success but not really be happy about it.

**Travis:** Well, man, it sounds like, can I just say? What she wants to be is, like, herself performing— like, once again, born a hundred years too early.

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** Where if she was, like, alive now, she would probably have an incredibly popular, like, radio show or, like, podcast or YouTube channel or something. And get to live full-time just, like, being herself and being funny and being witty.

**Teresa:** Maybe. Maybe. She did say that she always wanted to write a novel and she did write lots of collections of short stories—

**Travis:** Yeah, but that's hard.

**Teresa:** ... and poems and things.

**Travis:** A novel has so many words, man. Are you kidding me?

**Teresa:** But she never— never got around to it, I guess.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And like I said, her marriage was kind of in and out the door several times. They had a complicated relationship because Alan felt overshadowed by Dorothy's obvious talent and personality.

**Travis:** Sure. Yeah.

**Teresa:** He was also a bisexual man, which, at the time, homosexuality in Hollywood was extremely stigmatized. And so, that's a lot of pressure to add to a relationship, right? And then throw in a kind of, like, society-wide struggle with alcohol and other substances.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And then you've got an extremely turbulent marriage, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** So, they were divorced in '47, remarried in '50, separated in '52, reconciled in '56—

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** ... and were together until Alan died in 1963.

**Travis:** And also, simply just not to breeze past it, you also have to think this is a woman of Jewish descent living through the 1940s!

**Teresa:** Yeah, definitely. And I think that, like we said earlier, she often felt ostracized. And so, one of the things that she did really feel proud about was activism. She was very earnest about politics and remained lifelong, but probably intermittent, commitment to the causes of civil rights and civil liberties. She was arrested in the 1920s marching for the release of two anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti. The two Italian Americans who were being falsely accused of murder.

And later, she would go to Spain to work against the Fascist leader, Francisco Franco, during the Spanish Civil War. She served as the Joint Anti-fascist Refugee Committee fundraising arm. She organized Project Rescue Ship to safely transport anti-fascist veterans to Mexico.

So, she was really famous for keeping the company of those in the queer community, and fiercely protecting her LGBTQIA+ friends. In fact, the euphemism "a friend of Dorothy" for someone being gay, is normally attributed to Judy Garland, but many people believe that Parker is the Dorothy that people are talking about.

**Travis:** Interesting.

**Teresa:** I know, right? That was new to me 'cause I had always thought it was Dorothy Gale from Kansas.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Who goes over the rainbow, right?

**Travis:** Yep.

**Teresa:** But many people think it's Dorothy Parker. Very Cool, right? She was in the midst of this very important work when she was accused of being a Communist in the McCarthy Era.

**Travis:** Ugh. Sure. Yeah. Yep. Yep.

**Teresa:** Yeah. So, you know, she was one of those that the FBI, like, compiled a huge dossier for, right? Like, some 1,000 pages or something. Because of her suspected involvement in Communism.

**Travis:** Listen, all that is terrible.

**Teresa:** So, she was blacklisted.

**Travis:** I can't stress enough how terrible that all is, right? But if someone would compile a 1,000-page, like, dossier on me, I'd be *very* interested in that, right? Like, can you imagine?

**Teresa:** All right.

**Travis:** Well, I have a very bad memory and the idea of somebody being, like, "Yeah, we did it, man. We have, like, 1,000 pages on, like, your whole history." I'd be like, "Let me see that!"

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** What did I do? Okay, man! What'd they say about me?

**Teresa:** Awesome.

**Travis:** Right? Now, listen, once again—

**Teresa:** It's a biography of you while you're living.

**Travis:** I wouldn't wish that on anyone. To be blacklisted and to be targeted by the government as Communist and brought up on these charges. Anything like that. I'm just saying I would like to read a 1,000-page dossier on myself. If anybody has one, [chuckles] actually, don't tell me. In retrospect, I don't want to know.

**Teresa:** Okay. Now, I'm glad that we've come to that conclusion.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** So, after she was blacklisted, she went to New York for a while. She went back to Hollywood and then finally, left Hollywood for good and moved back to New York after Alan Campbell, her on-again-off-again husband, died.

So, then in her later years, she would not speak very highly of The Algonquian Round Table. She put it rather bluntly that, (quote) "There were no giants. Think who was writing in those days- Lardner, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and Hemingway. Those were the real giants. The Round Table was just a lot of people telling jokes and telling each other how good they were. Just a bunch of loudmouths showing off, saving their gags for days, waiting

for a chance to spring them. It was the terrible day of the wisecrack, so there didn't have to be any truth."

**Travis:** Interesting.

**Teresa:** She's like— do you know what I see? Like, that pattern I was talking about, where she has an accomplishment and then looks back and doesn't feel like she's really accomplished anything.

**Travis:** Yeah. I also think, I mean, it's interesting because, once again, it's not recorded. It wasn't a thing they were publishing in any way, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** But I also know— I know lots of, like, comedians and humorists and writers and stuff, right? That handle truth through jokes—

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... and through wisecracks and through witticism that look back on everything and think, "Yeah, there were people out there, like, actually, like, fighting the fight and doing stuff, and, like, I was just making jokes." And they don't see the value in that. They really don't see the value in one— like, think about, like, John Stewart and, like, John Olliver and Trevor Noah, and, like, guys like that who use humor to, like, make points.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And there are people who then look back on it are like, "Ah, I could've been doing more. That's nothing. I was just being a silly gay."

**Teresa:** Sure. But, so, like, she has a reputation for having a lot of very dark humor, especially in her short poems and short stories and things like that. And I think that— I mean, that really kind of is apropos of the way that she felt about herself. Where, like, she seemed to be having the best time that she could. But she had kind of, like, a cloud over her own accomplishments.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm. Sure.

**Teresa:** And she also suffered from alcoholism and depression. And so, that of, like, criticalness, that I think at first everybody really, like, loved her for, kind of turned its ugly head onto her own work. But she remains an extremely celebrated writer. On June 7th, 1967, she passed away from a heart attack at the age of 73. And in her obituary, which I'm not certain who exactly wrote, it says, "In her final illness Ms. Parker was melancholy about her life's accomplishments. She wanted to write again concise stories, but she lacked the strength."

It's kind of— it's— for someone who is really celebrated for their humor, it's a really sad thing, I think. Um, but I actually after reading several of her poems, I feel a kind of reminiscence to, um, like, Maria Bamford's work these days.

**Travis:** Hmm.

**Teresa:** Where she talks a lot about the kind of darkness in her life and about her failures but also her triumphs. And how she kind of wraps it all up in a nice humor bow if you know what I mean. So, not only remembered for her writing, Dorothy died in the midst of the Civil rights movement. And she attended at the time before her death countless protests for equal protection under the law. And upon her death, it was revealed that she bequeathed her entire estate to the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr.

**Travis:** Huh.

**Teresa:** Did she know him? No. She did not.

**Travis:** But just said, "Hey, give it to him."

**Teresa:** Nope. She admired him and believed in the cause and wanted to leave something to help even if she could no longer march beside him. And then, it's stated in the will that after *his* death her estate would pass to the ownership of the NAACP.

**Travis:** Interesting.

**Teresa:** Yeah. So, now, if anyone wants to license their work, they have to go through the NAACP.

**Travis:** Cool.

**Teresa:** So, her wit and talent continued to shine through her poems and her books and, you know, all of the societal references to the Algonquian Round Table. And certainly, *A Star Is Born* is a lasting tribute. She will always be one of the most shrewdly sensitive and elegant satirist— satirists. Excuse me. Of the 20th century.

**Travis:** Satirists.

**Teresa:** Satirist? I was right the first time.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I should trust my brain. Uh, of the 20th century.

**Travis:** Okay. Well, thank you for sharing that with us. And thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom we wouldn't be able to make this show. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we wouldn't be able to make this show. And thank you for listening. I don't want to make the show without you, and no one can make me.

**Teresa:** [giggling]

**Travis:** Thank you. Thank you for listening. If you're listening to this on Friday, today, we're going to be performing in Columbus this evening. *Shmanners* is going to be there. *Sawbones* is going to be there. *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* is going to be there. So, come and see that tonight in Columbus. And then, on May 20th we're doing *Adventure Zone* in Columbus. And on May 21st we're doing *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. That one's just *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*, but you can get those tickets at [bit.ly/Mcelroytours](http://bit.ly/Mcelroytours) and come hang out with us. What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always like to thank Brent “brentalfloss” Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, check out his musical, *KHAN!!!*

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** What— isn’t there a longer title?

**Travis:** Uh, *KHAN!!!: The Star Trek Musical*, I believe.

**Teresa:** The *Star Trek Parody Musical*.

**Travis:** There you go.

**Teresa:** There it is. That’s, uh— those tickets are available now. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. If you love to give or get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

**Travis:** 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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