

## Shmanners 363: Hedy Lamarr

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**Travis:** Hey, folks! Before we get started, just wanted to do a quick content warning. We discuss some emotional abuse and potential domestic violence in this episode, so if that is something that you are not comfortable hearing discussed, then we recommend checking out a different episode. Otherwise, enjoy!

[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:** You look beautiful.

**Teresa:** Thank you.

**Travis:** I think I just noticed the pattern of your dress. I've been so head-down, rat race, thinking about the salt mines out here.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Just generating content from these content fruit that I harvest every day.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** I wasn't even paying attention to how beautiful you're dressed—I'm dressed like a schlub.

**Teresa:** It's quite geometric.

**Travis:** I love it.

**Teresa:** Oh, thank you.

**Travis:** I love it. I'm still wearing my gym clothes.

**Teresa:** That's already.

**Travis:** Uh, I look... bad.

**Teresa:** You look fine.

**Travis:** I look like a schlub.

**Teresa:** You look great.

**Travis:** Okay. Hi, everybody! Hi!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So, today, let's jump right into it.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** We're talking about Hedy Lamarr.

**Teresa:** We are.

**Travis:** And it's going to be so hard for me, because there's a running joke in *Blazing Saddles*, which is—

**Teresa:** Your favorite movie.

**Travis:** —my favorite movie, the movie I've seen the most in my entire life, where there is a main character named Hedley Lamarr, and everyone keeps calling him Hedy, and he keeps correcting them. Um, there's a bit where Mel Brooks, who's the mayor—er, the governor—says, like, "It's, like, 1840-something. You can't sue her!"

And apparently... um, Hedy Lamarr's, like, reps, like, wrote to Mel Brooks in the studio and stuff and they're like, "Yeah, you can't do that. We'll sue."

And so they just asked Hedy Lamarr and she was like, "Oh yeah, it's fine. That's great. It's really funny."

The other reference I know is from Little Shop of Horrors, where it's in Feed Me. And Audrey II says, "How about a date with Hedy Lamarr? You're gonna get it." Which both of those things I would say really date both of those things. There's another bit in Feed Me where he says, like, "How about a guest spot on Jack Parr?" Which wasn't even, I think, as big as—it just rhymed with, like, Cadillac car, Hedy Lamarr, Jack Parr.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Great.

**Teresa:** That's a great rhyming scheme.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I do have some conflicting information for you.

**Travis:** Oh no.

**Teresa:** Regarding the Mel Brooks...

**Travis:** Oh no.

**Teresa:** ... saga.

**Travis:** See, I was going off of the Blazing Saddles commentary by Mel Brookes, which that's what he said. But he also—I don't know if you know this—exaggerates and makes stuff up a lot.

**Teresa:** So, um, in 1974 apparently she filed a 10 million dollar lawsuit against Warner Brothers, claiming that Mel Brooks' parody of her name in Blazing Saddles infringed on her privacy. Brooks said he was flattered, and the studio settled out of court for an undisclosed but much, much lower [laughs quietly] sum of money.

And according to this, Brooks apologized to Lamarr for, quote, "Almost using her name." And Mel Brooks is later quoted saying that he was disappointed that Lamarr never got the joke.

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

**Teresa:** That's what I have.

**Travis:** To be fair, it is not a good joke. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** This is the thing, right? I'm a huge Mel Brooks fan and I've seen every Mel Brooks movie, even the weird one. Uh, 12 Jurors, looking at you. And—Life Stinks, looking at you. And the thing is, there's... people will talk about, like, Robin Hood: Men in Tights, Dracula: Dead and Loving It, and say, like—and by that point, like, the jokes were bad, and it just didn't work. And it's like, no, no, no. Guys. The jokes are always bad.

**Teresa:** That's the joke.

**Travis:** There are good jokes. There are genius jokes. There are dumb jokes. There's a mixture of all of them. It's not about that. Listen, we're not talking about Mel Brooks. I could for ages.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But my point being that his name being Hedley Lamarr and everybody calling him Hedy Lamarr and him going, "It's Hedley," is the joke. [laughs] I don't know that there's much beyond that.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Anyways, we're not talking about Mel Brooks. We're not talking about Hedley Lamarr. We're talking about Hedy Lamarr.

**Teresa:** We are. Hedy Lamarr was born Hedwig Ava Maria Kiesler in 1914 in Vienna.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** The only child of Gertrude, or Trudy, and Emile Kiesler.

**Travis:** Can I say... what I've learned about myself... mostly from doing this show?

**Teresa:** Yeah?

**Travis:** Um, my brain has reference points if you say, uh, like, 1890 or earlier.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** If you say 1920 or later. But there's a 30 year period—and listen, don't, like, tweet at me or email us or whatever. I know that stuff happened during there.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** What I'm saying I've learned about myself is you say "1914" and my brain has nothing to hold on to. It's just like, "Oh, okay. Yeah, that was a time. Not quite the Roaring 20's, though, huh? Post-Civil War, though, isn't it?" And that's all my brain knows.

I think there was a World War—was World War I in there? No.

**Teresa:** Between 1920 and 1890? Yes.

**Travis:** World War I was in there?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I should know that! I should know that! I—I've al—it's like I've only seen the sequel. For a long time I had only seen Terminator 2. I had never seen Terminator 1. I had to go back and do it. That's how my brain is with World Wars. I only know about World War II. My brain—I need to go back and watch World War I. Okay, anyways, I'm interrupting so much.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So, um, Trudy was a pianist, and her father Emile was a major player in the banking world.

**Travis:** Ooh. He invented the nickel.

**Teresa:** No. But he was a very brilliant mechanical mind. He was an extremely curious man when it came to engineering and science, and her mother in the arts, so she got a very well-rounded kind of upbringing. She was encouraged to do dance, and also piano. And, I mean, as a single child, you know, she got a lot of attention from her parents.

**Travis:** Hmm. So you're saying we shouldn't have had a second kid?

**Teresa:** No, I'm not saying that.

**Travis:** That's what I heard!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um, so... the story goes that he—her father would take, like, long walks with her and explain basically how things worked as, like, they passed things, right? Like streetcars, and printing presses, and printing shops, and, you know, all kinds of things, right?

So, um—

**Travis:** I do that with Bebe, and but sometimes I start and then realize I'm in over my head, and then she's like, "And how does that one work?"

And I'm like, "Oh, nobody knows."

**Teresa:** Oh. [laughs] And it's said that when she was five years old, she could be found taking apart her music box and reassembling it to see how it worked.

**Travis:** The reassembling part is doubtful.

**Teresa:** I mean, maybe! Maybe!

**Travis:** 'Cause, like, I could believe one of our kids would start taking apart a toy, but then the idea of they're like, "And now... [wheezes] to seamlessly rebuild it."

**Teresa:** I actually would not be surprised if she was able, because of her fantastic scientific contributions."

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, but her early interest was in acting. She loved theater and film, and by the age of 12 she had won a beauty contest in Vienna. And so her scientific aspirations got kind of pushed to the side for an acting career.

**Travis:** Just like me.

**Teresa:** She—[laughs quietly] yeah. She was 16 when she was discovered by director Max Reinhardt, whom she would go to study acting with in Berlin. And her very first film role was in 1930 in a small German film called Money on the Street.

She's kind of, like, on her way, right? But she ends up in a very scandalous film.

**Travis:** [gasps]

**Teresa:** Called Ecstasy.

**Travis:** Oh boy.

**Teresa:** Uh, where she plays a neglected wife of an indifferent older man. The movie was celebrated, but also notorious because, you know, she's 18 at the time. She has some brief nudity and even a simulated orgasm on screen.

**Travis:** Oh boy. Oh boy.

**Teresa:** And so the film was controversial, but it would definitely get people's attention. It won the Venice film festival. I mean, it won an award at the Venice film festival.

**Travis:** I wish that that—I wish that there was a, like...

**Teresa:** [laughs] "You're the winner!"

**Travis:** "Hey, listen. We showed all the movies. Yours was the best of movies."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I wanna say, I pulled up—'cause I realized I didn't know what she looked like. She looks like you—

**Teresa:** But you do.

**Travis:** You look like her!

**Teresa:** You think?

**Travis:** You remind me of her. Yeah! Look at that picture?



**Teresa:** Oh. I mean, alright.

**Travis:** Yeah. You look like Hedy Lamarr.

**Teresa:** Oh. I...

**Travis:** Deal with it!

**Teresa:** Thank you? [wheezes]

**Travis:** Thank you for saying thank you. I saw you wanting to deny it, and then your Shmanners kicked in. You were like, "Thank you?"

**Teresa:** I have heard that I more closely resemble Ava Gardner.

**Travis:** Okay, I'll look at that too.

**Teresa:** Anyway. Okay. So, she continued growing her career, both on stage and in film, and it was on stage—she was in the play Sissy about Empress Elizabeth of Austria, which was a smash hit in Vienna.

One of her adoring fans was a man by the name of Friedrich Mandl. He was, um, let's say obsessed with getting to know Hedy. So despite her sending away many, many of her admirers, he began not to take no for an answer.

**Travis:** Not great. That's bad shmanners.

**Teresa:** That is red flag number one.

**Travis:** That's old school, like, "Oh, he was so romantic! And I told him that I wouldn't take no for an answer." Like... [clicks tongue] that's not romantic.

**Teresa:** He was also an Austrian arms merchant and munitions manufacturer. Red flag number two.

**Travis:** And this was, uh, mid-1930's?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Hmm. Interesting.

**Teresa:** He was the third richest man in Austria and had ties to Mussolini and Hitler. Red flag 3 through 100. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's an expanding red flag, I would say.

**Teresa:** Yes, yes. Um, eventually he wore Hedy down, uh, which is a sad sentence to say. And, um, she... I guess rationalized his charm, and personality, and money, and married on August 10th, 1933.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** She was 18.

**Travis:** Boooo!

**Teresa:** He was 33, so—

**Travis:** [loudly] Boooo! Now, Teresa.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** I have made a side-by-side image—

**Teresa:** Were you even listening?!

**Travis:** I was! I was! Remember? I was talking during it about expanding red flags? I can do two things at once. I made a side-by-side image. You tell me which of these people you look more like.

**Teresa:** Uh... they are looking in different directions. I'm having a hard time.

**Travis:** Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. Everybody? Everybody?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I'm gonna post it on Instagram. You go to @travismcelroy on Instagram. I'm gonna post it. 'Cause she looks so much like Hedy Lamarr I can't get over it. Okay, keep going.

**Teresa:** Alright. Um, her parents objected to this union.

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Teresa:** Um, and also they had Jewish ancestry. There was a little bit—I mean, the whisperings, right? And to be involved in this group of people was obviously dangerous for her family. And she went ahead with it. Um, it—it—

**Travis:** Hey. Hey. Listen to—listen to your parents. Hey, uh, we're parents now. And, uh, there's this, uh, old school, like, romanticized version of like, "Wouldn't take no for an answer," and also, like, and the parents are like, "I don't know, I don't trust him!" But it was love.

Hey, both of those [wheezes] things... ugh! They cannot—they—whew.  
[unintelligible]

**Teresa:** This is not lost on Hedy, because later she would describe this marriage as being a prisoner in her own home. He was extremely controlling, hated that his wife was the subject of such a controversial movie—Ecstasy, as I mentioned earlier. He halted her acting career and wanted her to basically be a trophy wife so he could go to fancy parties with her.

**Travis:** She was wearing her own trophies!

**Teresa:** She would later say of this time, "I knew very soon that I could never be an actress while I was his wife. He was the absolute monarch in his marriage. I was like a doll.

**Travis:** Boo, gross, boo.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Not good. Um, so according to Lamarr, both higher ups of the Nazi party would attend lavish gatherings at their home, despite the fact

that Lamarr and Mandl had Jewish ancestry. She says that she hated these men and their associates, but Lamarr did not waste any time. Um, she often accompanied him to whatever kind of business meetings she could get to with other scientists and professionals in the military technology area.

**Travis:** I'm having such conflicted emotions.

**Teresa:** She was able to nurture her, you know, scientific brain. Kind of in the worst of circumstances, right?

**Travis:** Yeah, but I think that it's easy, right? To be like, "Okay, but you still, like... associated... " like, wild, right? But one, as we've already said, clearly her husband was at least emotionally abusive.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Right? And so the idea of like, "Well, she could've just said no and made her own choices!" It doesn't sound like that was the deal. So my impulse is to say, like, best of a bad situation, from what I'm hearing.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** I'm not an expert on this.

**Teresa:** She says that her marriage was completely unbearable by 1937. That's when she decided to flee, and also left the country. She says that she disguised herself as a maid and fled to Paris. Other accounts are that she persuaded him to let her wear all of her jewelry for a dinner party, and then disappeared afterward.

**Travis:** That sounds like a better plan.

**Teresa:** With all of her money around her neck.

**Travis:** I love the idea of, like, it being a—an extraordinary amount of jewelry. Where it's like, "Okay, but that's, like, 30 necklaces."

"I need them!"

"Oh—okay! Yeah! You can't look down! You have so many necklaces on you can't look down."

**Teresa:** "I don't need to look down."

**Travis:** "Okay, alright. You have so many bracelets on you can't raise your arm."

"It's fine! I'll wave from the hip."

**Teresa:** [laughs] Hedy eventually ended up in London, where she was—

**Travis:** I can't wait to hear more about her time in London—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —but first! How about a thank you note for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** This week we want to say thank you to our sponsor, Zola. Not just thank you for sponsoring the show, but thank you for making weddings easier. I mean, it's too late for us. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** God knows it's too late for us. We've been married for 86 years. But...

**Teresa:** 10.

**Travis:** Almost.

**Teresa:** Almost 10.

**Travis:** Yeah. And we're gonna remember this year. [crosstalk]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** We've forgotten our anniver—both of us collectively—the last two years. Okay. But... with Zola's help, you won't worry about your wedding day, 'cause Zola is there for you. They have free planning tools that are there for you on all the important days. Not just your wedding, but planning along the way. They show you every step, where to start. They have venues, vendors, save-the-dates and invites, free wedding websites, an amazing registry, and they're all designed by wedding experts.

The Zola community is your place to share, celebrate, and vent with other engaged couples, and know exactly what you're going through. And if you need help, there's Team Z, which is Zola's wedding advisers. I wish we had had something like this, 'cause—you know, it's one thing to be like, well, we had friends who had gotten married before, and we knew people who've gotten married and we've asked them questions and everything. But it's different to be like, this isn't about people telling you how they did their wedding. This is, like, people helping you do your wedding.

**Teresa:** Right. And we were interested in a pretty chill wedding, thank goodness, right? But if we had wanted to do—

**Travis:** Not now. If we could do it again? Ugh!

**Teresa:** No. No.

**Travis:** Ostentatious!

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

**Travis:** Ugh! Ice sculptures! I'd come in on a giant ice sculpture, being dragged by other ice sculptures. [pause] I don't know how. Anyways, from just engaged to the only left to do is say "I do," Zola is here for all the days along the way. Just go to [zola.com/shmanners](https://zola.com/shmanners). That's Z-O-L-A.com/shmanners.

[school bell rings]

**Ella:** Alright, class. Tomorrow's exam will cover the science of cosmic rays, the morals of art forgery, and whether or not fish can drown. Any questions? Yes, you in the back.

**Speaker 2:** Uh, what is this?

**Caroline:** It's the podcast Let's Learn Everything!

**Tom:** Where we learn about science and a bit of everything else. My name's Tom. I studied cognitive and computer science, but I'll also be your teacher for intermediate emojis.

**Caroline:** My name's Caroline, and I did my Masters in biodiversity conservation, and I'll be teaching you intro to things the British Museum stole.

**Ella:** My name's Ella. I did a PHD in stem cell biology, so obviously I'll be teaching you the history of fan fiction.

**Tom:** Class meets every other Thursday on Maximum Fun.

**Speaker 2:** So do I still get credit for this?

**Together:** [laugh] No!

**Ella:** Obviously not.

**Caroline:** No.

**Tom:** It's a podcast.

[all laugh]

[ad ends]

[music plays]

**Speaker 1:** Hey. Let us guess. You love books, but wish you had more time to read.

**Speaker 2:** Or maybe you used to read a lot, but life has gotten in the way. Kids, grad school, you name it.

**Speaker 1:** Maybe you don't know where to start, and bookish social media is overwhelming. How do people on TikTok read so many books?

**Speaker 2:** Oh my god, I don't know! And maybe you've been reading the same book for six months, and now it's permanently attached to your bedside table.

**Speaker 1:** Maybe you don't even know what you like to read anymore.

**Speaker 2:** We're Reading Glasses, and don't worry. We got you.

**Speaker 1:** We'll get you back into reading, and help you enjoy books again.

**Speaker 2:** Reading Glasses: every week on Maximum Fun.

[music and ad end]

**Travis:** So she's in London.

**Teresa:** Yes. Where she meets the—

**Travis:** Queen!

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** The Mayer of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, AKA MGM.

**Travis:** Ohh. Okay. I—that was a royal coaster thing 'cause I said the queen as a joke, and then you said "The mayor." And I was like, "The mayor?"



**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And you were like, "The mayor of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer." And I'm like, MGM had a mayor? Oh, right.

**Teresa:** No, that guy.

**Travis:** Yeah. That was Mayer in the name.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** He had been scouting talent in Europe and made her an offer of \$125 a week, which is about \$2600 a week today.

**Travis:** Not bad.

**Teresa:** Hmm, she turned him down.

**Travis:** [gasps loudly] Wait. To do what? To be an actor?

**Teresa:** Yeah. To sign with a studio, right?

**Travis:** 2600 a—so we're talking, what? [unintelligible] It's \$10,000 a month! I said "Not bad," but \$10,000 a month...!

**Teresa:** She actually booked herself on the same New York-bound ocean liner, and he was so impressed with her that he decided that he would offer her 500 a week, which is 10,000 in today's money.

**Travis:** Okay. Alright. Now we're talking about half a million dollars a year.

**Teresa:** I mean, why sign for 125 a week when you could get...

**Travis:** When you could get the cow for free.

**Teresa:** ... 500.

**Travis:** Oh, wait. Yeah.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um—

**Travis:** Don't you miss the days where all you had to do to be impressive was to be a woman who did stuff?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "You booked yourself on a boat? Oh, how about a half a million dollars a year! You've got moxie, kid! You've got spunk! You got pizzazz! Ahhh."

**Teresa:** Little did they know how amazing she actually was.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Anyway, um, so this is when it was suggested time to time she change her name to Hedy Lamarr to get some distance from the Ecstasy movie and, you know, that controversy. And apparently Mayer chose Lamarr as an homage to the silent film star Barbara Lamarr. Um, because it was one of the actresses his wife really loved. [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** Oh. Nice.

**Teresa:** Sure, sure.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Um, so that's when she joined Hollywood, in 1938, and she was promoted as, quote, "The world's most beautiful woman."

**Travis:** Wow.

**Teresa:** Wow!

**Travis:** A bold stance.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** In this day and age, with social media? I don't think that would fly.

**Teresa:** Maybe not.

**Travis:** Everybody'd be chimin' in.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Everybody'd be chimin' in saying, "Don't you mean Teresa Wellman McElroy?" Everybody'd be saying it. 'Cause you're the most beautiful woman in the world.

**Teresa:** Aww. Thanks, babe. So, um, Mayer loaned Lamarr to Walter Wanger, who was making a film called Algiers.

**Travis:** This is the thing, too. I don't know if we've ever talked about the studio system on the show?

**Teresa:** Oh, no we haven't.

**Travis:** Did we? Okay. So when we said that, my first thing was like, "That sounds very objectify-y." But that was literally a thing that e—so, actors were under contract with studios, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** So it was like, when we talk about her getting paid weekly, it was because she worked for MGM. That's who she made movies with. They would either write a movie for her or put her in movies. And if another studio wanted to work with an actor that had a contract with the studio they had to, like, trade. It was like a baseball team, right?

**Teresa:** A little bit like a baseball team.

**Travis:** Where they had to make deals. And they'd be like, "Okay. You can have her if we can use him for this picture." And yeah, man. It was wild.

**Teresa:** And the film was a sensation. According to one viewer, "When Hedy first appeared onscreen, everyone gasped. Lamarr's literally took one's breath away."

**Travis:** Several people died. Asthma attacks and...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Asphyxiation. It was terrible.

**Teresa:** So this became her archetype, right? Glamorous seductress.

**Travis:** Well, yeah. Because, uh, she had dark hair. [laughs] So, like, if you go back to that time, man, they were so type-driven by hair color.

**Teresa:** I mean, absolutely, right?

**Travis:** Right? Where you had the innocent, uh, for lack of a better word, bimbo, right? Where you had Marilyn Monroe, right?

**Teresa:** Okay. Well, this was a little bit before that. But—so, like—

**Travis:** But I'm saying it's, like, she had dark hair and, like, you know, she had an Elizabeth Taylor kind of vibe going?

**Teresa:** Sure, yeah.

**Travis:** So...

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah. She's the seductress.

**Teresa:** So, um, another film that you may recognize her from in contrast to what you're talking about is Ziegfeld Girl. In 1941, Lamarr, Judy Garland,

and Lana Turner all played aspiring showgirls, and they all had different colored hair, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** So Lana was the blonde, Hedy was the darkest brunette, and then Judy was in the middle. I'm not sure if they turned her into a redhead or not, but it's auburn, at least.

**Travis:** This is the same Ziegfeld as, like, Ziegfeld Follies, right?

**Teresa:** Oh yeah.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I mean, it's the same idea, right? But she was bored. She was very successful but, you know, her archetype didn't, like, leave much for development of character, right?

**Travis:** Yeah. Especially with that studio system. There was a lot of, like, "Yeah, you're gonna do this movie now." There wasn't as much, like, picking and choosing or people, like... if you were an amazing talent, it meant the studio got paid a lot to have you be in a movie, and it wasn't so much as like, "Oh yeah, I've written this Oscar-worthy vehicle for you."

Like, that didn't really happen.

**Teresa:** Right. Um, lo and behold, she met Howard Hughes!

**Travis:** Wh—I assume we're thinking of the same Howard Hughes, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** The guy that made the [crosstalk].

**Teresa:** The inventor. Um, they dated for a little bit, but he really resparked that kind of, like, inventive spirit, scientific mind that she had. And he even gave her equipment to tinker around with in her trailers.

**Travis:** Hey, that's cool.

**Teresa:** She apparently already had quite a collection of, again, tinkering equipment, I suppose.

**Travis:** I need more tinkering equipment.

**Teresa:** You do not need any more. You've got plenty.

**Travis:** No, I have a lot of woodworking. I've got some metal craft stuff. But where's my tinkering stuff? Where's my soldering iron? Let me tinker!

**Teresa:** He took Lamarr to airplane factories and, um, you know, let her watch the process of designing the plane and all that kind of stuff. And so Hughes told her that he wanted to create faster planes so that he could sell them to the US military.

Naturally, Hedy decided that she wanted to design them for him, right? Um, it's said that she went out and bought a book about fish and a book about birds, studied the fastest, and then combined the fins of the fastest fish with the wings of the fastest bird to sketch a whole new wing design.

**Travis:** [loudly] And the brain of the smartest monkey!

**Teresa:** [laughs] To sketch a whole new wing design.

**Travis:** Oh. I love that. That's amazing.

**Teresa:** And Howard Hughes said she was a genius for it, so.

**Travis:** Wow! Okay! Cool!

**Teresa:** Yeah! Um, she wasn't done inventing. She went on to create and upgrade a new stoplight technology, as well as working on a tablet that dissolved in water to make a carbonated beverage. That didn't quite go very good. It was a lot like Alka-Seltzer.

**Travis:** These days, though, are you kidding me?

**Teresa:** I know, I know.

**Travis:** You just market that on Instagram? A billion dollars.

**Teresa:** Um, once the US entered World War II...

**Travis:** Ahh, now we're somewhere—Ahhh! Okay!

**Teresa:** Now you know where we are.

**Travis:** I'm there!

**Teresa:** In 1940, Hedy met a man named George Antheil at a dinner party. He was a writer and musician, and they both again loved science and inventiveness. They talked at length about the looming war. Um, and he would later recall that Hedy said she did not feel very comfortable sitting in Hollywood making lots of money when things were in such a state.

She also was very well aware that her former marriage to Mandl, however horrible, gave her extremely useful military information.

**Travis:** Ohhh! Okay! Whew!

**Teresa:** Here it is, right?

**Travis:** This is twists and turns, babe! Babe! Babe! This is twists and turns, babe!

**Teresa:** [laughs] So, she had knowledge on munitions and various weaponry, and information from the—

**Travis:** [simultaneously] 'Cause he was an ammunition—he was munitions dealer!

**Teresa:** That's right. And information from the mouths of the Axis Powers.

**Travis:** Oh my gosh! Oh boy! Oh, man! My brain! My brain has been freaked! I'm so in it! Okay.

**Teresa:** So, here's the big thing.

**Travis:** [gasps]

**Teresa:** Okay? The big thing. She'd read that the US was proposing the idea of radio-controlled torpedoes to shoot at enemy ships.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** The issue was, you could jam these guidance systems and set them off course. So she and Antheil came up with the idea of implementing a system known as frequency hopping among radio waves. Both the transmitter and the receiver hopped to new frequencies together. Doing so would prevent the enemy from intercepting the movement of the torpedo, allowing it to hit its intended target. They went all-in, right? They hired a law firm to search for prior knowledge of the technology, as well as draft up their patent application. She brought into their group a professor of radio-electrical engineering at Cal Tech. Um, and, I mean, this is amazing, because what they used was the early stages, um, synchronized, like, a miniature player piano mechanism with radio signals. And so the frequency system was basically, like, taped on paper? You know? 'Cause that's how they use those player pianos.

They had their patent by August 11th, 1942. The US Navy didn't adopt the technology till the 1960's, but that doesn't mean that it went unused. They were later incorporated into Bluetooth, GPS, and even WiFi technology.

**Travis:** [gasps] Get outta the town!

**Teresa:** Well, so next time you're on Google Maps and you get to a place that you've never seen before, you might want to thank Hedy Lamarr.

**Travis:** That's incredible.

**Teresa:** It is incredible! It's awesome. So her legacy is undeniable, right?



**Travis:** And far deeper and wider than I would've guessed.

**Teresa:** Yes. It wasn't until 1953 she became an American citizen. Uh, she continued to act until 19—around 1958.

**Travis:** Can I tell you? I don't know why... but the most stand-out—like, where I was like, "What?" thing you said in that whole thing for me was... "Stoplight technology."

That she was like—alright, yeah. She was with Howard Hughes, he was making planes. Did that. Great. And then like oh, munitions dealer? Talking about munitions? Okay, great. And also stoplight technology. And it's like, "Wait." [wheezes] Why was that a passion project? That, to me, is the one where I'm like, "Why? Why stoplights?"

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

**Travis:** I don't know, either!

**Teresa:** She liked to invent, I guess.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and—

**Travis:** I think that's why it stands out. 'Cause it's the one that isn't inspired by something else happening.

**Teresa:** Oh yeah?

**Travis:** But her just being like, "I think I could make stoplights better."

**Teresa:** Yeah. That's pretty awesome.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** She also designed a large ski resort in Aspen, with her then-husband at the time, in the 50's. And despite her retirement from the screen, she got a star on the Hollywood walk of fame in 1960.

Over the course of her life she would be married six times.

**Travis:** Whew! Okay.

**Teresa:** And had three children.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, her—[laughs quietly]

**Travis:** That's half a child each!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Her final marriage was to her divorce lawyer from her fifth marriage.

**Travis:** Okay. Well, the ease of that, if nothing else.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, but when her marriages ended, she then remained single for the last 35 years of her life. She was pretty solitary towards the end. Um, unfortunately she had a few run-ins with the law. She had arrests for shoplifting. And this is when she would bring, like, lawsuits up for people she thought were slandering her name or telling lies.

For example, other than the Blazing Saddles one, in 1966 her supposed autobiography, *Ecstasy and Me*, came out, and she sued her ghostwriter, [holding back laughter] claiming that he had fabricated her entire story.

**Travis:** Whoa! Okay!

**Teresa:** That's interesting, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** She then retreated from public life and settled in Miami Beach, Florida in 1981. Um, she started losing her eyesight and lived a pretty solitary life. Although, she would sometimes spend up to seven hours a day talking on the telephone. [crosstalk]

**Travis:** Wow! To who?

**Teresa:** To her kids and her friends. And, you know, she hardly saw anybody, but you heard from her.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** July 19th, 2001, Hedy Lamarr died in Casselberry, Florida from heart disease. She was 85, so that's a long life.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And she was awarded just before she left, she was awarded—in 1977 the Electronic Frontier Foundation awarded her and Antheil with the Pioneer Award.

**Travis:** Wow.

**Teresa:** And, let's see. She became the very first woman to receive the Inventions Convention's BULBIE Gnass Spirit of Achievement Award. And in 2014, she was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame for the frequency hopping technology.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, so, you know, today she's, in addition to being a beautiful and celebrated film actress, she is celebrated as the mother of WiFi.

**Travis:** Truly amazing. I didn't know about any of this. Any of it!

**Teresa:** In 2014, a memorial to her was unveiled in Vienna in the Central Cemetery, and that is when her ashes were also returned to the home of her birth, in the Vienna woods, according to her last wishes.

**Travis:** Such a cool story.

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** I didn't know any of that. I mean, I knew she was in movies.

**Teresa:** You knew she was in movies. I mean, there's also, uh, a lot of times—like, I feel like I've seen on her birthday people post about her on social media, about this idea of her being, like, the mother of WiFi. I think that's pretty cool.

**Travis:** Um, I want to thank you for presenting that to us. I want to thank our researcher and writer, Alex, without whom we would not be able to make this show. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we would not be able to make this show. Thank you to you for listening. We could make this show without you, but why?

Um, I want to tell you this week. Uh, My Brother, My Brother, and Me and The Adventure Zone are going to be in Raleigh, North Carolina. So, June 23rd we're in Raleigh doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me. June 24th we're in Raleigh doing TAZ. And June 25th, we're in Richmond, Virginia doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me.

Uh, coming up we've got shows in San Diego during San Diego Comic Con, July 21st and 22nd. And then on August 31st, we're in Seattle, Washington doing The Adventure Zone. And September 1st, we're in Seattle, Washington doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me. And then October 12th and 13th we are at New York Comic Con doing Adventure Zone and My Brother, My Brother, and Me respectively. Respectably? Respectively. Hopefully we're doing 'em respectably.

**Teresa:** [laughs] I think you will.

**Travis:** We'll see. Uh, the tickets for the Seattle shows go on sale Friday, June 16th, so if you're listening to this after that, they're on sale! Uh, New York Comic Con, if you want to come to those shows you will require a badge to attend in person. But we'll be doing a streaming of those for the first time, and you can watch that without a badge. Badge-free tickets available for streaming.

Um, you can find out all the information about that at [bit.ly/mcelroytours](http://bit.ly/mcelroytours). Also, I'm going to be at Gen Con August 3rd through 6th. You can find details about that at [bit.ly/mcelroytours](http://bit.ly/mcelroytours) as well. 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 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.

Um, and as always we are taking topic suggestions, biography suggestions, and I'd love to get another idiom show together. Uh, so please send those ideas to [shmannerstcast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerstcast@gmail.com), and make sure that you say hi to Alex, 'cause she reads every single one.

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

**Teresa:** No RSVP required.

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

**Teresa:** Manners, Shmanners! Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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