

Shmanners 375: Service Animals

Published September 15, 2023

[Listen here at themcelroy.family](https://themcelroy.family)

[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: [sighs heavily]

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: You know... I think—is it... is it too early here in Ohio—

Travis: Never.

Teresa: —to say that it might be fall?

Travis: It's fall, y'all!

Teresa: I just don't know, because we have so many false falls in this area, this neck of the woods.

Travis: I call 'em trips.

Teresa: [laughs] I get it.

Travis: Yeah. Pratfalls. That would've been better.

Teresa: Oh. Well... I don't know.

Travis: Eh.

Teresa: It's alright. Because we had a nice, like, week, and then it got blazing hot again. Um, and I think that that's called the second summer around here.

Travis: I don't know.

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Here's all I know. It was, uh—it was cool enough this morning I put on a flannel shirt, so it's fall, y'all.

Teresa: I can tell. That is—that's the truth, friends, listeners. The shirt, it is flannel.

Travis: I can tell, 'cause it would be weird... if you could—like, "I put on a flannel shirt."

"I had no idea."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We're sitting in the same room.

Teresa: I think I wanted—what I meant was, I can tell you, people out there, that it maybe—is that what I meant?

Travis: No.

Teresa: No. [through laughter] That's probably not.

Travis: That's okay. That's okay. Do you want to say something about an article of clothing you're wearing and I can confirm that it's true as well?

Teresa: [laughs] I'm wearing a Bob's Burgers t-shirt.

Travis: I can tell.

Teresa: [laughs quietly] It says "Butts."

Travis: Mm-hmm, yeah, everybody. That's true. It does.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Confirmed.

Teresa: I have a whole collection at this point. I love 'em.

Travis: It's something I know I can find at, like, conventions and stuff that I know you'll like. But that's not what we're talking about at all.

Teresa: No, it's not.

Travis: Speaking of conventions...

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: ... when we went and did our show in Seattle, when we were at Pax, we were performing at a place that I don't know if it's, like, in the Seahawks stadium or if it's just, like, really, really adjacent to it. I don't know. But, um, we're sitting in the green room.

Teresa: Who can tell? It was only—

Travis: [simultaneously] Yeah, nobody knows.

Teresa: You were only there...

Travis: A lot. Um, we were sitting there and somebody comes in and they were like, 'Hey. Is it okay if the bomb sniffing dog comes through?'

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: And I was like, "Yeah."

Because I think it would be weird, for two reasons. One, that feels like a trick, right? That if you're like, "What? No!"

Right? But also if I was like, "No, I I—I'd rather live not knowing if there was a bomb in here or not." Right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So we were like, "Yeah."

So the dog comes through. Then I notice that the dog was sniffing at our stuff a lot. And that's when I was like, "I don't know want to tell you guys how to do your job, but it'd be wild if we were the ones who brought it, right?"

Anywho, then Dad was like, "Hey. When the dog is done... working, can I pet that dog?"

And they said yes. So the dog finished his shift, and then they brought him over. His name is Watson.

Teresa: Ooh!

Travis: And he was amazing. He was incredible and adorable.

Teresa: He's a detective dog.

Travis: He was a detective dog and he did an amazing job.

Teresa: His name is Watson.

Travis: He was a good partner.

Teresa: Ah.

Travis: That would be my bet.

Teresa: I see.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah, you finished it. You got it.

Travis: Well, 'cause Watson... Watson wasn't the detective of the two of 'em.

Teresa: I mean, he was a wannabe. He really loved it.

Travis: I don't think he wanted to. I think he liked the event—it depends on which version we're talking about, obvs. But I never got the impression that Watson was like, "I wish I was a detective."

I think he was a lot more of the grumbly sidekick of like, "Alright. Ugh."
[laughs]

Teresa: Again, it depends on the version. Because if you read the books, he's very into it.

Travis: Okay.

[pause]

Teresa: Anyway.

Travis: So we're talking about service dogs.

Teresa: We are talking about service dogs!

Travis: That's why I brought up Watson.

Teresa: We got there.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, this is actually a highly requested topic from many people who have written in. And so we're talking about service animals. There's a little bit of a fascinating history. And then, you know, we'll answer the popular question of, what's the difference between a service animal and an emotional support animal?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Quick note. The Americans with Disabilities Act was revised in 2010 to include miniature horses as service animals, and it can also vary from state to state what qualifies as a service animal. And we are gonna focus mostly on dogs. Although there are lots of animals that are trained to bring people comfort and safety.

Travis: I think it's probably just that dogs are the best animal in the world, right?

Teresa: Is that it?

Travis: And different forms of dog, too. Like, I'd put wolf up there. Fox. Who even knows, right?

Teresa: Not—I mean...

Travis: Oh, you were about to confidently say it's not! But you don't know.

Teresa: Is it in the canine family?

Travis: Nobody knows. This is the wild thing. Nobody knows.

Teresa: I don't believe you.

Travis: Nobody knows.

Teresa: [clears throat] So—

Travis: Hyena. That's a cool one. Huh?

Teresa: We don't have an exact date that dogs started to be trained to assist humans.

Travis: You know, I actually think that foxes probably are cats, 'cause the fennec fox, isn't that in, like, the night cat—ah—[gasps] it's not worth looking up.

Teresa: I don't know. You're not gonna check?

Travis: [sighs]

Teresa: Anyway, we do know for a fact that service dogs have been around for thousands of years, because there is early evidence, uncovered by archaeologists, in the ruins of the ancient Roman city of Herculaneum.

Um, that is where historians found a mural of a blind man being led by his dog that dates all the way back to the first century CE.

Travis: Foxes are dogs.

Teresa: Nice.

Travis: M'kay.

Teresa: Thanks, Google.

Travis: Now, this isn't surprising to me at all, right? Because I think that... um, if you think about the very nature of dogs, right? The existence of dogs, the evolution of dogs—

Teresa: As humans have made them.

Travis: The domestication of dogs, I guess.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yeah, that's the right way to do it, right? Is like, from the beginning, right? It was like, "Hey. I think that this relationship can be mutually beneficial."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? That it was like, protection, herding, hunting.

Teresa: "You will help me, and I will feed you."

Travis: Exactly, right? There is—we are safer together, dog and man. Right? And so I think that there is a pretty logical, uh, step to be like, "Hey. And how about you help me also in, like, day to day life a little bit more," right?

Teresa: Right. Um, and—

Travis: Now, not quite at the level in Peter Pan where it's like the dog's taking care of the kids.

Teresa: Oh, Nana? Yeah.

Travis: I don't know—listen. I think Buttercup and Lily are great. But if we were like, "Hey. We're leaving for the night, dog. Keep an eye for the kids." No thank you. There was a human being there, wasn't there?

Teresa: Yeah, Wendy was there.

Travis: Wendy's, like, 12.

Teresa: She's charged—well, but she's supposed to take care of those boys too. Like, that was the idea, right?

Travis: Oh my god, but she—that's parentification. I don't like that one bit.

Teresa: I also don't like the idea of leaving your dogs alone with your children, because dogs and children should always be supervised.

Travis: I mean, I guess that's true. Also, lock that window, man. 'Cause listen, flying—

Teresa: Yeah, what are you guys doing?

Travis: —flying boys could come in there left and right. That's why in my house, I got—I got shutters that detect pixie dust. Vshhh. Those metal things slam right down. No Peter Pan to me and taking my kids away. There's pirates in Neverland! It is not safe there!

Teresa: Oh—okay.

Travis: They shoot her with arrows!

Teresa: Alright.

Travis: The boys do! Okay.

Teresa: There are also records from Asia and the Middle East and other parts of Europe of dogs assisting blind owners, so it is very likely that the

first job that a dog had outside of protection and livestock, the first job directly benefiting a human owner was for a vision impaired person.

Travis: So, this is what I'm saying. Once again, right? Like, if I—you know, I'm sitting there. It's, I don't know, 200 AD or whatever, right? And my vision is impaired. Right? I'm gonna have a dog sitting next to me to let me know, like, if somebody's coming.

Teresa: Oh yeah.

Travis: Right?

Teresa: Those barks. They bark at all that stuff.

Travis: Right? Oh, I'm here just, like, sitting on my front porch, uh, enjoying the breeze and listening to the sound of the stream. I don't know where I am in this story, but—

Teresa: I don't know where you are either.

Travis: —there's gonna be a dog sitting next to me and they'll, like, bark and let me know if someone approaches. Right?

Teresa: Yeah, totally.

Travis: So, like, it makes complete sense where the logic would be. You know what I mean? And once again, kind of like—I think we've talked about this maybe on the show. But, like, with dragons, I think we also talked about it with, like, pasta and bread.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: That it makes complete sense that there would be multiple different origin points for these things without it just being like, "Yeah, this one person had this idea one time and it spread all over the world."

I can very easily see, like, a bunch of people—not simultaneously, but more or less concurrently going like, "Hey, dogs are really helpful."

Teresa: Indeed. Um, the first formal training that we have evidence of was during the mid-1700's. Les Quinze-Vingts was a hospital specializing in ophthalmology, and unofficially began to train dogs to see if they could assist vision impaired patients.

So, I mean, okay. I said "officially," I said "formally trained," right? So this is a doctor kind of, like, seeing if this would work in a kind of, like...

Travis: This is not a tested, proven scenario.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: This is, we're going to formally attempt to train—what—an agenda we're putting in a, uh—what's it called when teachers build up the thing for kids?

Teresa: Syllabus?

Travis: Sure? Yeah. Yeah?

Teresa: Something like that.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because the training facilities would come later.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Other European doctors—

Travis: It would be wild to build a building first that is specifically like, "This is gonna be a building to train dogs."

"How do we train 'em?"

"I don't know, man."

Teresa: [laughs] "I don't know."

Travis: "We don't have the building yet."

Teresa: Other doctors followed suit once they heard about this guy being like, "Hey. Let's see if we can do this."

In 1819 Johann Wilhelm Klein, the founder of the Institute for the Blind in Vienna, published one of the very first official guide dog training manuals. He recommended that each dog be fitted with a special kind of harness, and that poodles and shepherds were preferred breeds for this kind of work.

Travis: Really?

Teresa: You know, it makes sense to me because it is about the right height, right?

Travis: Yeah, I just don't think—like, when I think of a service animal today, I think the first thing my brain thinks of is, like, a golden retriever.

Teresa: Because they are highly trainable.

Travis: Y—well... so, I was a dog trainer for a little while.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Golden retrievers are highly eager to please.

Teresa: Yes. Yes.

Travis: So—

Teresa: Maybe not that smart, but—

Travis: From what I understand—

Teresa: —eager to please.

Travis: Yeah. From what I understand, the most trainable dog is the Pomeranian. But a Pomeranian.—and once again, this is my understanding, so if you're an animal behavior person and I'm wrong, eh, it's fine. I'm okay living in my wrongness.

Pomeranians are so smart that once have master a trick or whatever and do it a couple times they're like, "I don't wanna do that anymore. It's boring now."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But it's why Pomeranians are, like, really good, like, circus dogs, and they're good at, like, flips and stuff. And meanwhile a golden retriever is like, "I just want you to like me, so I'll just do it."

Teresa: So they'll do the same thing over and over again if you give them enough praise.

Travis: Correct. Or just even a little bit of praise. They're really the Travis McElroy of dogs.

Teresa: [laughs] Um... I think it has to do with maybe the herding instinct, right?

Travis: Now, that makes complete sense, yeah.

Teresa: They found the herding instinct to be very helpful keeping blind people from being in danger.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And I've seen that, actually, firsthand. We don't know exactly what kind of shepherd mix Lily is, but I have seen her. When Buttercup sees a, like, I don't know, like a squirrel or whatever, and if Lily doesn't want Buttercup to chase, it, she will cut her off and herd her from going where she wants to go.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: It's amazing.

Travis: Um, it's always interesting to me, 'cause like, poodles are hunting dogs. And I think people never think about that when they look at a poodle 'cause they're like, "Oh, so pretty. So fancy and dai—" but it's like, yeah, poodles were meant to, like, retrieve, like, ducks from, you know, the water when they're shot down and stuff. They have a water resistant coat, all this stuff. That's a hunting dog, right there.

Teresa: Yeah, but it had the reputation for the froufrou... haircuts and stuff.

Travis: Sure. But they're hunting dogs.

Teresa: Anyway, um, so in 1847 a man named Jakob Birrer began officially training his beloved Svitz and documenting the experiences of being led by a dog.

So a Svitz—Spitz, sorry—for those who don't know is a smaller German dog. They weigh about 25 pounds or so, and they look very similar to the Pomeranian, right?

Travis: Now, a Shvitz is sitting in a sauna, right? Isn't that—yeah, okay.

Teresa: Right. [laughs] A Svi—Spitz is what I'm—a Spitz.

Travis: Okay. Okay.

Teresa: Uh, and so similar to the Pomeranian they have very pointed ears, fluffy fur. Birrer trained his Spitz for five years, and continued to take notes for his next pooch after that one passed.

Travis: Oh, bummer.

Teresa: Well...

Travis: Yeah. I mean, listen. I—

Teresa: They just don't live as long as people do.

Travis: [sighs]

Teresa: And it's sad. But—

Travis: Yes. We don't have to talk about it!

Teresa: Okay. So this is about the time when people began experimenting with the therapeutic effects of other animals.

Travis: I can't wait to talk about that. But first... how about a word from some other Max Fun shows?

Teresa: Let's go.

[theme music plays]

[music plays]

Griffin: Throughout history, sirens have captured men's attention, enticed men with their feminine wiles, and fulfilled men's primal needs. The siren's allure persists—

Justin: [shudders]

Travis: Ugh! They have not! Unless the primal need is "I need to be smashed on the rocks."

Griffin: Yeah, smash me. [laughs]

Travis: Smash me, mommy!

Griffin: Smash me, momma!

Justin: Smash me, mommy! [tea kettle noise]

Griffin: [laughs] The siren's allure persists—

Travis: Why do we do this to ourselves?!

Justin: Strand me, baby! Strand me, mommy!

Travis: Strand me, baby!

Griffin: [through laughter] Strand—

Justin: So yeah, listen to My Brother, My Brother, and Me from Maximum Fun on Mondays. It's just like... that. Just like that but more—[wheezes] just like that, but more of it. There's m—there's just... more of that.

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

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

Kirk: Diablo IV.

Jason: Final Fantasy XVI.

Maddy: Street Fighter 6!

Kirk: Baldur's Gate 3!

Jason: Starfield!

Kirk: Spider-Man 2!

Jason: Master Detective Archives: Rain Code for Nintendo Switch? No, is that just me?

[all laugh]

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

Kirk: You need somebody to tell you what's good, what's not so good, and what's amazing.

Jason: I'm Jason Schreier.

Maddy: I'm Maddy Meyers.

Kirk: And I'm Kirk Hamilton. We're the hosts of Triple Click. [three clicks] A video game podcast for anyone who likes games.

Maddy: Find us at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts. Bye!

[music and ad end]

Travis: Okay. Other animals.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Now, do you mean, like, other guide animals?

Teresa: Yeah. So, doctors at this time began to use things like horses, and even birds, in studies for people suffering from, like, psychological or neurological issues. In 1867 in Germany, an institution for people suffering from epilepsy began offering alternative care programs like riding therapy.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, and after the first World War, nurses at Pawling Army Air Force Convalescent Hospital in New York also had success using dogs as therapeutic aids for soldiers suffering from PTSD.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: World War I is really when we start to see the development of the modern guide dog movement. Um, there was a lot of devastation from mustard gas and shrapnel.

Travis: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Right? Uh, and it left a lot of soldiers blind and traumatized, because war is terrible. And so another German doctor named Gerhard Stalling was walking with one of his patients and his personal guide dog, and after leaving the guide dog and the blind man together for a short time, he began to notice that the dog was helping the patient.

Uh, and so this began his investigation into ways of training dogs to become reliable guide dogs, and his work led to Stalling opening a school for guide dogs in Germany.

Travis: Dogs are just the best, man.

Teresa: August of 1916.

Travis: Dogs are the best. So cool.

Teresa: This school was a great success, and so soon Stalling's schools were training up to 600 guide dogs a year, uh, for blind handlers and vision

impaired people, mainly ex-servicemen from across Europe and the Soviet Union and Canada and the United States. Uh, that school closed in 1926, but by that time, there was another very prestigious school that started to open up to meet this demand for protective and assistive dogs.

Um, so... this school was capable of accommodating 100 dogs at a time, and would provide up to 12 fully trained dogs a month to handlers who needed them. I mean, that is amazing, right?

Travis: 'Cause it's a—it's a pretty, uh, strict kind of training regimen.

Teresa: Absolutely. And to make 12 dogs a month who are capable of this kind of training—I mean, that definitely shows you the kind of demand there was for this kind of help.

And here we meet Dorothy Eustace. Eustace was an American dog breeder and philanthropist who had a deep love for animals, and dogs especially.

She was a skilled and prolific dog trainer. She trained dogs for the army, for the police, for customs service in Switzerland, and she was enthralled with this European method of training dogs for the blind, and spent several months in Europe learning how it worked.

Returning to America, she wrote an article published in the Saturday Evening Post where she told the tale of a school outside Berlin where she had studied. Shortly after this article was published, she began getting piles of letters from young reads who wanted to know more.

One of which was from a man in Nashville, Tennessee named Morris Frank who desperately needed assistance from one of these types of dogs. Um, and he said that "Help me and I will help them. There are thousands of blind like me who abhor being dependent on others. Train me and I will bring back my dog and show people who a blind man can be absolutely on his own."

Travis: Okay, Morris!

Teresa: I think that's amazing, right?

Travis: Yeah. I like that kind of thing—that feels, like, straight out of a movie, doesn't it?

Teresa: It really does.

Travis: Right? Like, you would write that of like, "I'm telling you. Train me, and I will help them."

Right? Like, that's powerful, Morris. I like that.

Teresa: I love it. I love it. Um, so—and Eustace loved it too. Uh, she immediately set to work training a guide dog for him, a German Shepherd named Buddy.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: How sweet. And the two of them went to Switzerland together, Eustace and Frank.

Travis: I did already think you meant Frank and Buddy.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, I'm not gonna lie. My brain just went like, "Yeah, she trained Buddy, and Buddy and Morris were just like, 'Cool, man. Bye!'"

Teresa: I am assuming that Buddy also went.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: To receive the training. [laughs]

Travis: Sure, that makes a lot of sense.

Teresa: Um, and so Mr. Frank returned home with America's very first official guide dog.

Um, he traveled the country, demonstrating how well Buddy could help him navigate obstacles and cross busy streets. And later he would recount that the five cents he spent on the Saturday Evening Post had, quote, "bought an article that was worth more than a million dollars. It changed my life."

Travis: Morris Frank is very well spoken.

Teresa: He surely is.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: What a beautiful [[ring?]].

Travis: You know what? I'm actually guess, was very well spoken.

Teresa: [laughs] Probably.

Travis: Just a guess. Okay.

Teresa: Okay. So, Eustace was not to be stopped. And by the end of 1928—

Travis: [muffled laughter] I like that phrasing! "Oh, how they tried."

Teresa: How they tried.

Travis: Oh, the authorities, they couldn't bring her down. Like Godzilla, she was!

Teresa: Yes. She and Morris Frank launched the Seeing Eye, which was the very first dog guide school in the United States of America. Uh, which is where we get...

Travis: Seeing eye dog.

Teresa: Seeing eye dog.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, I mean, a lot—I have always, before this, referred to a assistance dog for the blind as a seeing eye dog. But not all dogs are seeing eye dogs, because—

Travis: Oh, this is like Xerox and Kleenex and Band-Aids?

Teresa: Yeah, yeah.

Travis: Okay, okay.

Teresa: They didn't have a facility, but they toured the country—

Travis: 'Cause you build the facility second!

Teresa: [laughs quietly] That's—that's right. In 1931, in New Jersey, where they purchased a ten bedroom mansion so that they could house the students during their program so they could always be near the dogs that were training.

Travis: Okay, cool.

Teresa: In 1966, the Seeing Eye would move to an even more and better facility in Morristown, New Jersey. Which—

Travis: An 11 bedroom—no.

Teresa: [laughs] No. I mean, it's bigger. Uh, which is still operating today, having trained more than 18,000 guide dog teams throughout North America.

Travis: Whew! That's a lot.

Teresa: And the Seeing Eye school is, I mean, definitely not the only one of these schools that emerged in the 20th century. There's Guide Dogs of America, and Guide Dog Foundation. Um, and Guide Dogs of America specifically specializes in not only assisting people with visual impairments, but also people with autism and veterans suffering from PTSD, mobility issues, brain injuries, things like that.

Um, the next person we need to talk about is Dr. Benita Bergin. She is referred to as the mother of the modern day service dog term and concept.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Uh, she was an American canine researcher and doctor, and founder of the Bergin University of Canine Studies, and credited as the person that realized service dogs were useful companions for people with an array of disabilities, not just the vision impaired.

Traveling throughout the world, Pakistan, Afghanistan, other parts of Europe and Asia, she observed how different cultures used help from guide dogs and service dogs. Um, also, the donkey is often used across the world as a service animal.

Travis: [simultaneously] The humble donkey! Hmm.

Teresa: I heard about—so I said at the beginning about miniature horses, and I guess donkey just kind of, like... left my brain as something that was already kind of a smaller-ish horse-like creature.

Travis: I'm never not thinking about donkeys.

Teresa: Oh really?

Travis: I mean, most of the time it's subconsciously, but I'm thinking about the donkey from Sarah and Duck, that lives with the yarn woman.

Teresa: Oh, yep.

Travis: I'm thinking about the donkey from Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl that's in the—

Teresa: That poor donkey.

Travis: I know, right? That poor donkey. I'm just saying, I'm thinking about the donkey all the time.

Teresa: Anyway.

Travis: The donkey from Shrek, obviously. "[Shrek impression] Donkey!"

Teresa: Obviously. Throughout the world, donkeys—

Travis: He married a dragon.

Teresa: [laughs quietly]

Travis: Now, here's where it gets weird. They had half donkey, half dragon kids.

Teresa: I don't wanna—I don't wanna go down that rabbit hole, thank you. Uh, across the world, donkeys are used as service animals, pack animals. Uh, but she couldn't quite picture them walking down an American street helping people.

Travis: Not with that attitude!

Teresa: So dogs seemed a great alternative to her.

Travis: Okay, sure.

Teresa: And so, together with a young woman named Kerry Knaus, it has a silent K. I'm not sure how to pronounce it. I think it has a silent K?

Travis: A silent K? Okay.

Teresa: Kerry K-naus, or Knaus.

Travis: I'm gonna go with Knaus.

Teresa: Uh, who had muscular dystrophy, trained Abdul, the very first service dog who was able to respond to specific commands that guide dogs might not have. So, I think that all find out these distinctions are very important, right?

Travis: Oh yeah. 'Cause it's specific training for specific needs, right? Yeah.

Teresa: Exactly, exactly. And they settled on the name "service dog" to describe this idea as opposed to guide dog, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, and they opened the Canine Companions for Independence in 1975, which again focused on a variety of training methods and needs that different people had.

Travis: Bespoke service dogs.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. And Bergin was essential in making sure that the Americans with Disabilities Act covered service dogs.

Travis: Ooh, good on you.

Teresa: Uh, by defining the role of service and assistant dogs. And she even helped the United States Justice Department develop the regulations for assistance dogs.

Travis: That's awesome. Is it time now to discuss the difference between a service animal and an emotional support animal?

Teresa: Uh, not quite yet.

Travis: Ugh, okay.

Teresa: I have a little bit more to talk about the ADA. So, today there are over 500,000 service dogs helping out their owners in just the United States alone. Um, these come from a variety of breeds, and they are proven to help everything from epilepsy, to autism, to blindness, to hearing impairments, to psychological disorders. And under the ADA, service dogs must be given access to almost everywhere their human handlers can go. So if they ever need help, the trusty companion is always by their side.

Um, and like I said at the beginning, miniature horses also being trained now, and are included in the ADA, which was revised in 2010.

Travis: And like I said, man—I don't know if you were gonna get into this, but when we did—when we were doing Can I Pet Your Dog? We talked about service animals a lot. And the testing training process for service dogs is, as you might imagine, right? It has to be pretty regimented, because you're putting a lot of, like, um, trust, and you're putting a lot of responsibility with these animals, right?

So there are, uh, dogs that just don't make it past the final test, because you don't want to, like, entrust someone's, you know, independence and safety into a dog that's not 100% of the time reliable.

So, like, these service dogs are well trained, high, high, uh... what's the word I'm looking for? Um, they're amazing.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Yes. According to the ADA, a service animals means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including physical, sensory, psychiatric, on and on

and on, right? Whereas emotional support animals and comfort animals and therapy dogs are not service animals under this.

Uh, because the work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. And so there are specific examples that the ADA gives, things like a guide dog or a seeing eye dog, which according to the ADA is a registered trademark.

Travis: Yep, yep. There you go.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, and things like a psychiatric service dog that helps with, like, PTSD, there's a sensory signal dog or a social signal dog that would be trained to assist an autistic person or their caregiver. Seizure response dogs, and also different medical alert dogs. Uh, there are certain dogs that can alert you if, like, your blood sugar's too high, right? They can smell that type of thing.

And so, like, I think that the ADA is a very interesting piece of legislation. And I think that, you know, if you are interested in this type of thing, you should look it up and figure out how that relates to the dogs that you've interacted with. I think it's really cool, really cool.

Travis: Okay. So, the answer to—if I'm hearing you correctly...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... the difference between a service animal and an emotional support animal is that the service animal has been specifically trained in tasks, like, that are designed and related to their job.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Right? So it's like, if you're there for, you know, detection of something like a seizure, right? That they are trained specifically in those tasks and perform and alert and do those things. As opposed to an emotional support animal, which is an animal that provides emotional

support, but isn't necessarily specifically trained in tasks specifically related to the condition.

Teresa: Correct.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, although an emotional support animal does provide a service, it is not a service dog unless it has specific training for specific tasks.

Travis: Okay. Complete sense made!

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: At least to me.

Teresa: The next question people often have is, "How do I interact with a service animal?"

And, I mean, I think that the biggest thing is, you really don't. Right? Because it is not—it is not the way a regular dog would be kind of like, "I'm just happy to be here!"

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right?

Travis: It's workin'. That's a workin' dog.

Teresa: It's a working dog. And, you know, I've tried to explain this to my kids, right? And you can usually see a service animal, because they will be wearing something very specific to their job, like a guide dog will be wearing, like, a specific harness, uh, with a handle. Or, uh, they even—

Travis: A little vest.

Teresa: They even have vests with, like, maybe words on it, right? Um, and so—

Travis: Now, I have seen before—'cause we also talked about this on Can I Pet Your Dog—that, like, those TSA dogs and dogs like that, um, that because, you know, you're not allowed to pet them, but if you ask, like, "Can I pet that—" they'd be like, "No, but here is a trading card for this dog," and it had, like, a picture of the dog.

Teresa: Oh, that's so cool!

Travis: And they had, like, stats about it or whatever on the back because you weren't allowed to pet it, but here's the trading card for the dog, and I thought it was the cutest thing.

Teresa: That's nifty. Because you don't want to distract a dog, right? While it's working. Because then if it's distracted it can't perform the task that it's supposed to be doing. And so you might have really good intentions, but you could make the handler exposed to harm if you distract this dog. Um, so one way to tell if it's a service animal is if—they're generally not—you would see a service animal in a place where pets aren't generally allowed, right? Um, because legally they are allowed to be there, they're performing a service and a task. Places like restaurants and schools and hospitals, places like that, these are trained animals, and so they're not pets. You shouldn't pet them.

Travis: I would also—man, I would go so far as to say... it doesn't matter, right? Because you should always ask before you interact with a dog anyways.

Teresa: Correct.

Travis: Right? So even if it's just like a dog on a leash that you see on the street, never assume, like, it's totally okay if I go over and start petting that dog. You don't know the dog's deal, you don't know the owner's deal, you don't know if it's a working dog, you don't know—like, there are so many things you do not know. And, like, there are certain ways that you should approach a dog that doesn't know you, and all these things. And so yes,

obviously when I say it doesn't matter I don't mean it doesn't matter if it's a service animal. Obviously it does.

But I mean behavior-wise, just because it's a service animal doesn't mean like—or it's not a service animal doesn't mean like, "Ah, not a service animal? You have free reign to go over and, like, start petting and playing with that dog."

Teresa: [laughs] Specifically try not to make eye contact or talk to the dog. Obviously don't try and feed it, right? And if you have your own dog in an area where you suspect someone's service dog is also, try and keep them apart, right? This is another distraction, right?

Travis: Don't pick up your dog.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Hey, listen. As long as I have this soapbox I'm gonna stand on it for a second.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, if you are a dog owner and you see a dog coming or whatever and you're like, "Ooh, that other dog seems aggressive," or "I don't like when other dogs interact with my—" whatever, walk away. Because picking up your dog is a signal to the other dog, like, "We're playing a game now where you're trying to get this dog out of my hand."

So even non-aggressive dogs will get excited and be like, "We're playing a game now!" Right? And tightening your grip on the leash of your dog, right? And pulling it tight is signaling your dog...

Teresa: That there's something to be afraid of.

Travis: ... this other dog is scary. So what you want to do is just turn calmly and walk away. That's the best way to distance yourself from another dog. So, like, that's just a good way to avoid letting dogs get hyped up, right?

Teresa: Totally.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Along that vein, don't asleep that a sleeping dog is an off duty dog, because dogs sleep differently from us. And just because it has its eyes shut doesn't mean that it isn't alert. Um, and so the rules still apply, even if you think the dog is taking a nap.

Travis: Do you think Lily is alert? What if we—if we say her name? Lily.

No, she's asleep. That's fine.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: She's completely asleep. There was no movement.

Teresa: She's also not a service dog. [laughs]

Travis: But I'm just saying, like, there was no movement whatsoever.

Teresa: Um, but here's the last thing. If a service dog approaches you without their owner, you should follow that dog.

Travis: Well, yeah, 'cause that might mean somebody's in trouble.

Teresa: Exactly. So the service dog—like, for example if someone is having a seizure, one of the things that a service dog could be trained to do is go and find help. Right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So if you recognize it's a service dog, follow that dog and figure out what they need.

Travis: I'm just saying that if any dog comes to find me and wants me to follow it, I'm gonna follow it. And I just hope that, like, there isn't some kind of, like, Fagin-esque character who's trained that dog to lure in people to pick their pockets.

Teresa: Oh no.

Travis: 'Cause I will fall for it every single time.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Hey, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us. Thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to you for listening. We could make this show without you, but we wouldn't. Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. Whoa.

Travis: Yeah, that's right. We could, but why?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I want to tell you, coming up we've got some My Brother, My Brother, and Me and Adventure Zone shows coming up on October 11th, we're gonna be in Philadelphia doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me. On October 12th we're gonna be at New York Comic Con doing Adventure Zone Hootenanny, which is our, like, country music space opera, what you call a space opry. It's gonna be super fun.

And then on October 13th at New York Comic Con we're doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me with Sawbones opening, and big update. New York Comic Con has decided that you no longer need a badge to attend, so whether you're going to New York Comic Con or not, if you're in the area, you can come see the show.

Now, if you do have a badge and a ticket, you'll receive a free show poster and the option for priority seating at the show. There are also tickets that will be made available to watch a video on-demand of the show online.

You can get all the information about all that stuff at bit.ly/mcelroytours.

What else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to 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.

As always, this was a listener-submitted request of a topic, and you can send your request to shmannerscast@gmail.com. Say hi to Alexx, 'cause she reads every 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]

Maximumfun.org.
A Worker-Owned Network.
Of Artist-Owned Shows.
Supported Directly By You.