

## Shmanners 378: Renaissance Faires

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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:** Hello. Verily, I say unto thee: hello, my dovest.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Yon!

**Teresa:** It's so close.

**Travis:** Yon dove... upon the morning breaks and she sees a worm and that she takes.

**Teresa:** [laughs] You know, in a way...

**Travis:** Yeah?

**Teresa:** ... that's more perfect for a renaissance faire than anything you could have accurately said.

**Travis:** Uh, I don't know what you mean. I nailed it. I was going with the early bird gets the worm kind of deal...

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** ... but said in, uh, like, Shakespeare kind of way.

**Teresa:** Ish.

**Travis:** You get it. You know how you would do it, like...

**Teresa:** Yeah, just like that.

**Travis:** Look at the bird! Out there on the morn! Grabbing the worms before others are born.

**Teresa:** Ooh.

**Travis:** Something like that.

**Teresa:** He loved a rhyming couplet.

**Travis:** Can I give you the other joke I was gonna do?

**Teresa:** Okay, fine.

**Travis:** Ren faire? I prefer Stimpy faire. 'Cause of Ren and Stimpy— You didn't watch...

**Teresa:** Oh, no, I didn't...

**Travis:** ... TV when you were a kid.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** There are people out there who went, [unimpressed] "Oh."

**Teresa:** "Meh."

**Travis:** "Okay."

**Teresa:** Hey, we're talking about renaissance faires.

**Travis:** Now, this is a big topic, right? Because we say renaissance faire.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** But there's a lot of different... I've heard it called a lot of different things where it's a festival...

**Teresa:** Pleasure faire, I've heard it called.

**Travis:** Yes. I hate that one.

**Teresa:** Oh, why?

**Travis:** Because that does not at all sound like...

**Teresa:** It's about whatever your pleasure be.

**Travis:** Hey, babe?

**Teresa:** The kind—

**Travis:** But you hear it, right?

**Teresa:** Sure, but it's the way that you'd think about... So, renaissance is a particular period in history, especially the European renaissance.

**Travis:** That doesn't actually fit with what most people think of when they think of renaissance faires, right?

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Exactly, right? Because—

**Travis:** 'Cause it's more of, like, a medieval faire.

**Teresa:** Well, it is...

**Travis:** A fantasy faire.

**Teresa:** A fantasy faire, is what it is because there's usually, there is a lot of medieval kind of, um... So, like, the idea of, like, castles and knights and stuff, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** That's medieval. But there's also usually, like, at the one here in Ohio, there's a queen, they usually, like, center it around, like, Queen Elizabeth I.

**Travis:** Yeah. But then there's also, like, fairies and...

**Teresa:** Right. Elves...

**Travis:** ... dragons and stuff.

**Teresa:** ... and Vikings and, you know, all that kind of stuff, right? So I actually think that pleasure faire fits better.

**Travis:** Yeah, I just wish it wasn't that, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay.

**Travis:** Um...

**Teresa:** Oh, and pirates. Don't forget pirates. And vampires are often incorporated too.

**Travis:** Sure. I would say, like, fantasy faire because they... Well, it's not fantasy though, it's a lot of historical stuff. Okay, pleasure faire, we'll go with it. But we're not gonna call it that, we're gonna call it renaissance festival.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Um... I would also extend it even further than that because, like, you're in, uh, Cincinnati. Honestly, sadly, don't think they still do it, or if they do, it's changed. But there was a, like, um, old west fest...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... right? That I would incorporate in that same thing, right? Because it was an immersive event, uh, dress up in costume, historical thing...

**Teresa:** Ish.

**Travis:** Yeah, right? So it wasn't medieval, right? It wasn't knights and stuff. It was cowboys, but...

**Teresa:** But it's highly romanticized.

**Travis:** It's the same idea, right? Of, like, you come, oh, we've got old timey food, old timey drinks, old timey games, old timey experiences, dress up in costume...

**Teresa:** People doing bull whips and sharpshooting and...

**Travis:** Sure, instead of swords, it's, you know, quick draws and stuff, but... Like, instead of jousting, it's rodeo. But it's basically the same concept, so I would say, like, this kind of encompasses this idea of we're traveling to a different period of time.

We're— There's a lot of people in costumes, we have people in character. There's vendors, there's food, there's drink...

**Teresa:** There's entertainment.

**Travis:** There's entertainment of some kind. Um, it's not just, like, a convention, right? Where you would go and maybe cosplay and there's tables and stuff. This is supposed to be an immersive thing. Like, you're there in the festival, in the village.

**Teresa:** And a lot of places, these days, have, like, actually dedicated, like, built storefronts and things like that. They're not open year round, so they're not, like, um... You know, like, air conditioned or heated or whatever, but they're, like, you know vendor stalls and some of them even have, like, wooden floors that they've built up and things like that.

Um, in case there are people out there, our listeners, who don't know... We've talked about these things, uh, but I don't know anyone who doesn't like it, except if you've worked at one. And then...

**Travis:** That's true of a lot of things, though, isn't it?

**Teresa:** I don't really like it...

**Travis:** That is true of many things, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Like... Aw, that's really fun. For you! Yeah. Yeah. I bet there's a lot of theme park workers listening to this going, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah..." "

**Teresa:** Yeah. They're like, you know, there's a certain kind of, like... It's nerdy fun for everyone.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And that's the thing, I can't say— I've never worked at a renaissance festival or any kind of thing like that, but I have done, like, conventions quite a bit and have done events quite a bit. And, yeah, it's a different experience.

Now, that said, I also know plenty of people who love working them for the, uh, kind of backend side of it where it's just, like, I love getting to see my friends that I work it with, it's so fun, you know, the stories that come out of it is wild, and the experience of doing it is fun, right?

But that's also true of a lot of jobs where it's just, like, "Oh, yeah, when I'm on the floor helping customers or whatever... "

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** "... that's the work. And then I'm back in the warehouse, goofing off with the other people and, you know, weird things happen and I've got all these wild stories. That's the fun." So we're not saying working at a renaissance faire is, like, toil and trouble and terrible.

**Teresa:** No, but...

**Travis:** There are plenty of people who love it, it's just always there's two sides of any kind of, like, experience when it comes to stuff like this. There's the consumer side and the producer side and they're just often different kind of enjoyments.

**Teresa:** Um, so... If you go to a renaissance faire, you are encouraged to kind of dress up to whatever it is that you like, uh, there's pirates and fairies and wizards and there's Vikings and, um, squires and Shakespearean actor-looking, and...

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** I mean, really. Uh, knights and ladies in waiting and princesses and whatever it is, right? But if you, uh... The ren faire subculture word for these costumed guests are playtrons.

**Travis:** Oh, I like that.

**Teresa:** Which is the portmanteau of player and patron.

**Travis:** You know I love a portmanteau.

**Teresa:** I know you do.

**Travis:** I do.

**Teresa:** Uh, and these are encouraged, right? Because it's about, like, getting into the act...

**Travis:** Immersive.

**Teresa:** ... playing in the space, right? Um, but there is a fine line, right?

**Travis:** Oh, yeah.

**Teresa:** You, uh, it's important that you have a really great time and you play in the space, but don't, like, pretend that you work there. [laughs]

**Travis:** Well, and I would also say, don't— Not just don't pretend that you work there, but never lose sight of the fact that the other person does work there.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Right? So, like, oh, all fun and games and be, like, "Oh, I challenge you to a duel, ha ha!" Another thing to, like, actually try to fight them.

**Teresa:** Right. Well, most renaissance faires make you, like, tie up your weapons.

**Travis:** Yes, but not God's weapons!



**Teresa:** Oh—

**Travis:** These two fists!

**Teresa:** Not fisticuffs.

**Travis:** I'm just saying, like, that kind of thing. The same as, like, joke-flirting with people, that usually happens a lot. You know, when you're talking about, like, oh, you're at the tavern and you see a lot of videos of, like, you know, pouring drinks down people's throats and stuff on Tiktok and it's flirting, right? But it's play-pretend, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** The fighting is play-pretend, the kind of, like, back and forth, "I'm a jester, giving you a hard time," right, is play-pretend. Like, never let yourself immerse, immerge?

**Teresa:** Submerge.

**Travis:** Submerge— Yeah!

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** Okay. Never let yourself become so immersed that you lose sight of that fact that the key word there is "pretend."

**Teresa:** Right. And these people are usually, like, full-time for this. They go around the country or this is, like, their big season is...

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** ... and so they're usually pretty good at figuring out who is game to play these games and who is more just, like, there to watch.

**Travis:** And let me just jump in, talking about costumes and we're gonna...

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** ... I'm gonna skip ahead a little bit to when we get to, like, the do's and don't's. No matter what your costume is, wear shoes you can walk around in mud in because...

**Teresa:** Mm, yeah. It's an outdoor thing.

**Travis:** It's an outdoor thing and it doesn't take much. And I have this very clear memory from when we went to the renaissance festival when we were living in Los Angeles and there was a person there who had, like a very beautiful, like, fairy costume, shimmery kind of outfit and they were wearing, maybe, like, four or five inch heels.

**Teresa:** Oof.

**Travis:** And it had, like, rained the day before and they just looked miserable, right? Like, they could not walk without, like, wobbling their ankles and getting stuck in everything and, like, there was straw laid down, but it was not enough. And I just looked at them, like, you look great. If you were wearing flats, you'd be having such a better time right now.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Like, boots are almost always the way to go, you know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Agreed. Okay. So... Let's go back...

**Travis:** Way back! [imitates time machine]

**Teresa:** ... to the... [laughs] To the American 1940s.

**Travis:** I guess it makes sense that it's not further back than that.

**Teresa:** No, it's not, really.

**Travis:** It would be weird if they started having renaissance faires in, like, 1520.

**Teresa:** Well, okay. Yes.

**Travis:** They had faires.

**Teresa:** They had faires.

**Travis:** They just called them faires.

**Teresa:** And—

**Travis:** They didn't call it now-faires.

**Teresa:** [laughs] It has kind of always been trendy to look back, right? We've talked about the Victorians and they were kind of obsessed with, like, the Greek and Roman kind of architecture and artwork and history and stuff. Um, but post-World War II America, there was a sudden resurgence in the interest in medieval and renaissance culture.

**Travis:** Yeah, that actually makes a lot of sense to me, because, like, when you think about... This is, once again, I think we talked about this on last week's episode, too.

But when people talk about, uh, "How often do you think about the Roman empire?" Right? I would put the pillars of, like, uh, 1940s to 2020 masculinity that is taught, is knights, cowboys, and, like, Romans, right?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Those three are the three that are most often being, like, "Ah, what about chivalry? What about the code of the west? Ah, be as tough as a

Spartan!" Right? These three things, you know, are, like, the things that are most, uh, referenced and I think, especially, when you talk about, "Oh, they started getting really into, like, the medieval period.

Man, so much of that has to be tied to movies and you start to see, like, King Arthur popping up and Romans popping up and cowboys popping up, right?

**Teresa:** I mean, if you just go through the career of, like, Sir Lawrence Olivier, like, you can just see them all in there, right?

**Travis:** Well, this is the thing, even Robin Hood, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Robin Hood wasn't, like, medieval... Was it? Eh.

**Teresa:** Yeah, a little bit. King John.

**Travis:** Not the same as, like, King Arthur, though. It was so...

**Teresa:** Right, yes. Not...

**Travis:** Different— Hundreds of years difference, but this idea of, like, swords and chivalry and knights and swashbuckling up and down the staircase, right? Pirates were in there as well. It's these things that became just, like, big ticket sellers in movies.

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Where it's just, like, yeah, there's a reason that these are the things we think of is 'cause, like, these were the things that they made movies about and if we're talking about the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s... We're talking radio plays, movies, TV shows.

**Teresa:** Absolutely. Um, so in the 50s, there was a very strong early music revival that created the folk musician and traditionalist, John Langstaff. Um,

and in 1957, Langstaff held, quote, "a Christmas mosque of traditional revels."

**Travis:** Ooh, so this was, like, the harlequin, we're wearing masks and we're reveling about, ah! I enjoy the wassail!

**Teresa:** The medieval folk music.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** Um, so what does this actually mean? It was, like, a renaissance faire and a Christmas pageant kind of had a baby, right? There was performances.

Uh, dancing recitals, theatrics, loosely organized around the central theme of Christmas, at this point. Um, people would dress in, like, flower crowns and traditional tunics and, you know, think of it as, like...

**Travis:** Get cholera.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** No, not that.

**Travis:** They didn't get that deep in the immersion.

**Teresa:** Um, but it was very successful in New York, uh, and the following year Langstaff took it to Washington, D.C.. Um, and, you know, he had a hit. It was a televised event in 1966 on the Hallmark Hall of Fame. Uh, and Dustin Hoffman played the part of the dragon slain by St. George.

**Travis:** I've heard him, yeah.

**Teresa:** Uh, in 1971, Langstaff established a permanent Christmas revel in Cambridge, Massachusetts and continued to lead or foster, uh, similar medieval-inspired revels until he passed in 2005.

**Travis:** I like how you threw in "inspired." I think that's a—

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Medieval inspired.

**Teresa:** Medieval inspired. Um, Revel's Ink continues to operate today with the mission of bringing cultural songs, celebrations, and seasonal traditions to participating audiences all over.

Um, and although this was the earlier incarnation, what we really know today as a renaissance faire was the brainchild of Phyllis Patterson.

**Travis:** Of course, I knew it was her!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** If you had asked me, like, who do you think did it? I'd be, like, "Phyllis. Phyllis did that one, right? I knew it." I'm a big fan—

**Teresa:** Jokes on jokes on jokes.

**Travis:** I have no idea who that is.

**Teresa:** You have no idea who that is. She was a history teacher who taught high school in California. She was described as an extrovert. She wrote—

**Travis:** It would be wild if you were, like, "oh, yeah, the medieval fair was created by a chemistry teacher who didn't really like a lot of attention."

**Teresa:** [laughs] She wrote and directed one of the very first broadcast television programs, a children's show called Phyll's Playhouse. Um, and was a DJ on the all-girl radio station, WHER.

**Travis:** Hey, she sounds awesome.

**Teresa:** She, uh, got married to an artist named Ron Patterson in 1956 and they moved to LA together. In the 60s, her and her husband created, quote, Into the Woods, which—

**Travis:** Not—

**Teresa:** No. Not that.

**Travis:** I was gonna say, they didn't write that.

**Teresa:** Which was a backyard drama and arts program at their Laurel Canyon home.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** Um...

**Travis:** How did they afford to live in Laurel Canyon?

**Teresa:** Uh, I mean...

**Travis:** I mean, I guess it was the 60s. Maybe it wasn't fully developed. But now, Laurel Canyon's like the Hills, like, it's... It ain't cheap.

**Teresa:** It ain't cheap.

**Travis:** Teresa and I used to play this game where we would, uh, get— Because we lived in the valley for two years and, uh, she worked in West Hollywood? Yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And I would drive her there, because we only had one car. And we were— Tons of traffic. So, like, every time we saw a For Sale sign, I would look it up and be, like, "Okay."

**Teresa:** "How much is it?"

**Travis:** "This is a one-bedroom, one-bathroom home. How much do you think... ?" And it was always, like, three times as much as you would guess.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Okay, um, so... What they would do is they had, you know, like nine- and ten-year-olds, uh, that they would kind of, like, lead in creative writing exercises and then, you know, they would mount these plays or scenes that the kids wrote.

They would kind of, like, do creation myths or learn theatrical improv, or write their own plays, right? And she took these kids to a, um, children's theater competition in LA and all the students were so delighted that they begged her to keep going.

**Travis:** Ooh!

**Teresa:** Um, and then, they had to expand the program. They went to a park and they enlisted a local radio station to sponsor the very first renaissance faire in America on May 11th and 12th in 1963.

**Travis:** Okay!

**Teresa:** This was where the term pleasure faire was coined, um, and quote, "The whole idea is to get people to play the living history game," she told a Times reporter in 1987. Quote, "Our motto is to tickle into learning with a laugh."

**Travis:** That's nice.

**Teresa:** That's really sweet, isn't it?



**Travis:** I like Phyllis.

**Teresa:** The one thing that I think sets this apart from our renaissance faires today is that historical accuracy was very important to Phyllis.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, she was kind of a purist about it. She banned the sale of plastic goods and insisted that theatrical acts be as historically accurate as necessary. Which makes sense, she's a history teacher, right? This is part of a teaching kind of, like, atmosphere...

**Travis:** Well, and that makes sense with the, you know, laugh into learning kind of deal, because it was, like, this is an excuse to teach people and not kind of the other way around which is how I think of it now, which is, like, yeah, we're saying it's historical, but it's an excuse to have fun.

**Teresa:** Right. Um, over the course of their time together, she and her husband acquired 3000 volumes of Elizabethan history.

**Travis:** Wow.

**Teresa:** That is a lot and they were ardent supporters and researchers of historical accuracy for the environment and the level of merriment. Um, she said, "You have to remember that in the 16th or 17th century, life expectancy was only about 45 years and for most of it, it was an accomplishment just to survive the winter.

People were not just celebrating the changing of the season, they were celebrating the regeneration of life."

**Travis:** Sure, yeah. Speaking of celebrating, we're gonna take a break because we have a special message for a listener!

**Teresa:** Nice!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hi, Chan. Are you listening? Because this is a message to you! A message to Chan from Mare. "Hi, cutie. I have—" I don't like how I said that at all, sorry Chan! Hey, Chan? Sorry for how I said that.

**Teresa:** Let's try again.

**Travis:** "Hi, cutie!" That's better. [deep voice] Hi, cutie.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** You... No. Mare says, "Hi, cutie! A very happy four years of loving, goofing, and crosswording to you. After four wonderful years, I figured it was about time to show my life via a McElroy jumbotron. Thank you for being the best all the time and forever encouraging me to be my best. This message might be a little bit late, but I still love you a lot. Yours always, Mare."

Now this is on October 6, which is when this is gonna go out. Which is also mine and Teresa's anniversary, so when you're listening to this, it is our ten year wedding anniversary.

**Teresa:** Woohoo!

**Travis:** And we remembered it this year.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** We did not forget it for the third year in a row. Plans... We're doing stuff. Deal with it!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So, Chan and Mare, congratulations.

**Teresa:** You guys should do stuff too.

**Travis:** You should do stuff too. Uh, we're probably gonna just sleep. That's, like... Other people are watching our kids so that we can sleep in. It's gonna be amazing! Anyway, congratulations, happy four years! Back to the show!

[Max Fun promo]

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**K. T.:** Hey! This is K. T. Wiegbin, operations specialist. I'm here with...

**Christian:** Christian Dueñas, producer. And we're both worker owners here at Maximum Fun.

**K. T.:** October is national co-op month, so we're celebrating our brand new co-op and some others with an event called Co-optober.

**Christian:** We've got special events all month long, starting with a live Q&A on YouTube where Max Fun worker-owners will answer your questions on Friday, October 6th. And much more to come!

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**K. T.:** That's C-O-O-P-T-O-B-E-R.

**Christian:** Happy co-optober!

[promo ends]

**Travis:** Okay. Where were we? So, Phyllis, she's taking over.

**Teresa:** Phyll and Ron—

**Travis:** She bought all the books?

**Teresa:** Bought all the books there are, um, and thanks to them, faire-like events began popping up all over. Um, Neil Steinberg wrote in 2007 in the Chicago Sun Times, "If theme parks with their pasteboard main streets reek of bland, safe, homogenized, white-bread America, the renaissance faire is at the other end of the social spectrum: a whiff of the occult, a flash of danger, and a hint of the erotic. Here... "

**Travis:** Ooh! Whoa.

**Teresa:** "... they let you throw axes. Here there are more beer and bosoms than you'll find in all of Disney World."

**Travis:** Oh, boy. Oh, boy! That's true.

**Teresa:** Yeah, that's true.

**Travis:** This is also, so... I know— So I have a bit of a fascination with defunct theme parks.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And two podcasts... Or, one's a YouTube channel, Defunctland, and the other one's called, uh, Abandoned Carousel, which I don't think is still going. But, uh, rightfully so. Uh...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But, um, this is basically a time period, right, where Disneyland and, shortly thereafter, Disney World, which I think Disney World was more in the 80s... But Disneyland, right, was in California and air travel was still, uh, prohibitively expensive. But cars were becoming more and more common for everyone to have.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** So what you ended up getting was all of these... There's, like, a boom in the '60s and '70s of, like, a local theme park.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And so what you ended up with was a lot of this theming, right, that was, like... "Alright, there's a castle in Disneyland, so ours is also, like, oh, there's dragons and magic and wizards." And so you see a lot of that, right?

Which I can see then tying into, "We can't justify building a theme park here, right, 'cause it's cold, you know... It's cold basically September through March. But we could do a faire here every summer, right?"

And make money off of that and have a destination you could go to and have that, like, magic and knights and kingdoms and stuff and not have to, like, drive all the way or fly all the way to California. So I think, like...

**Teresa:** Yeah, totally.

**Travis:** ... I'm guessing at this, but it really makes sense that, like to have this boom together...

**Teresa:** It all kind of fits.

**Travis:** Yeah, right? Doesn't it all make sense? Of, like, yeah, we could drive an hour to go to this renaissance festival and give you this, like, magical summer experience, child, and not have to, like, drive all the way or fly all the way to Disneyland.

**Teresa:** But would you believe that there are people who did not like this?

**Travis:** Hey, babe?

**Teresa:** Did not like this idea?

**Travis:** You said the word erotic and bosoms in there, so yes.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I can 100% believe that in America there are people who did not like that.

**Teresa:** There were lingering echoes of McCarthyism that threatened to bring an end to Patterson's tradition. Um, the counterculture in the time, uh, was...

**Travis:** I bet hippies loved renaissance festivals.

**Teresa:** Oh, yeah, they sure did.

**Travis:** I bet they loved that! "A maypole, you say? Let me at her!"

**Teresa:** [laughs] Indeed! Maypoles and tankards of ale and, you know, generally vaguely pagan tomfoolery.

**Travis:** Alright. Switch that around there, 1960s. You're stealing a lot of your Christian stuff from these pagans!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** You're just saying— They were here first! They were here first! They were everywhere first!

**Teresa:** At one point, the Pattersons attempted to find a larger venue in more conservative areas outside of the bohemian paradise of Laurel Canyon...

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** ... um, and in 1967, the Ventura county sheriff's office suddenly required the crafters, anyone selling wares, to be fingerprinted.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Permits would be denied for some pretense or another. Um, but the message was simple: keep your historical-laden hippie hogwash out of here.

**Travis:** Boo.

**Teresa:** Uh, but Phyllis always found a way around the obstructions. One of the best examples—

**Travis:** I like Phyllis more and more. I like how this becoming... Yes, this is about renaissance faires, but this is also about Phyllis Patterson and how cool she is.

**Teresa:** In 1966, the faire was denied a permit for whatever reason. She asked the American Film Institute to produce a documentary of the event so they could open the gates with a film permit.

**Travis:** Take. That. The man.

**Teresa:** Yep. And they claimed that all of the guests were extras in their film.

**Travis:** I love Phyllis so much.

**Teresa:** Um, so I think that— Let's say that she didn't do all of this on her own, right? She had lots of friends and neighbors and things like that to help. Um, they were also, uh, performers and history buffs and people like that, right? So, um, she didn't do it all alone, but a lot of these people were blacklisted at the time...

**Travis:** Mm.

**Teresa:** ... um, for doing what they do. Um, by—

**Travis:** And McCarthyism.

**Teresa:** And McCarthyism.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? Um, so they, you know, developed a very strong kind of following of all these people who felt like they didn't— they weren't allowed to do the thing that they loved to do anywhere else.

**Travis:** And I also can't stress enough, younger listeners, I'm almost 40 years old and in my four decades, right, fantasy, sci-fi, just like general nerd culture has been able to come so much more into the light, as one might say...



**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... than when I was little, right? Like, I remember going to conventions and it being, like, small, you know, like there was no huge vendor hall... At least, in, like, you know, '89 or whatever, '90.

To find a huge convention, you might find in big places, but the idea of, like, now, you know, going to, like, Columbus, Ohio and there being a huge convention that has, like, you know, thirty thousand, forty thousand people in it blows my mind. Right?

So this idea of, like, at the time, there being something like a renaissance festival where it was, like, hey, come nerd out, fantasy out, get to, like, dress up in your costume, was such a rare thing, especially when you're talking about '60s and '70s.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Like, to do this and, you know, then we get into, like, the '80s satanic panic and all this stuff, right? This idea of being able to just, like, kind of nerd out and enjoy fantasy and stuff was not at all the norm. Just reminding you how important this stuff is.

**Teresa:** Just reminding you. Um, so Phyllis developed a two-pronged attack, right?

**Travis:** Punching and kicking!

**Teresa:** No!

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** Not only, like, kind of finding loopholes, but also, she was a teacher, right? So she was able to, um, you know, put on a conservative pants suit or dress and, you know, pull her hair back in a tight bun or whatever.

**Travis:** "Ooh, I'm a teacher now! Hello!"

**Teresa:** [laughs] And try and convince these conservative country officials to approve the educational value of the faire, right? Because she was also all about historical accuracy and teaching and things like that.

And her son, uh, Kevin, said that, "she came from Tennessee and she was a schoolteacher, so she went into meetings dressed like a teacher with her hair up and drop earrings and she treated them like her students until they understood what she was teaching them. She wore them down and probably sent them home with a Shakespeare assignment."

**Travis:** [sighs] Phyllis rules.

**Teresa:** Um, and she won out in the end and was able to get the faire established at Paramount Ranch in Santa Monica Mountains where it stayed for 22 years.

**Travis:** Wow!

**Teresa:** Um, they also set up a northern California faire in Marron County and the Great Dickens Christmas Faire in San Francisco. Um, she passed in 2014, but according to her obituary in the LA Times, the family still runs the Dickens event. She is still known as the, quote, "mother of generations of faire folk who now make a living on the festival circuit." So, you know.

**Travis:** Let's hear it for Phyllis.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Next time you step through those magical gates...

**Travis:** Raise a flag to Phyllis. Now let's talk about the faire!

**Teresa:** Yeah! Are you ready for some etiquette?

**Travis:** I'd love some etiquette, yes please!

**Teresa:** Always, always look into the rules of your specific event.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Um, they may have clothing restrictions, they may have weapon restrictions, they may have food restrictions...

**Travis:** I'm gonna almost guarantee they have weapon restrictions.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Most festivals require, like I said, your weapons to be, quote, "peace-tied." Um...

**Travis:** Which is, like, zip-tied. [crosstalk]

**Teresa:** ... so, like, zip-tied or whatever into their sheath.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Same with a lot of conventions, by the way. Just side note. And a lot of, like, firearms restrictions, so...

**Teresa:** Exactly, exactly.

**Travis:** In case that wasn't obvious.

**Teresa:** Um, do make sure to stay hydrated; these faires are outdoor events, um, which could be very sunny. If you're in Ohio, it's sunny at the beginning and its cold at the end. [laughs]

**Travis:** And let me warn you about a thing I call faire drunk, right?

**Teresa:** Ooh.

**Travis:** Faire drunk is when it's just, like, "Aw, giant flagon— I can get a huge, you know, horn of ale? Great." And then you're, like, "Aw, yeah! I'm gonna spend \$150 on this big old flagon!" You got to be careful with your money. That faire, you have, like, two drinks and you're, like, "Yes! I'm gonna buy all the armor!" Don't, friend. Friend, don't. Give a trusted friend your wallet or what have you.

**Teresa:** And this is an occasion that you do want to bring cash.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Because there are often, um, out in, you know, the fields. They are not maybe receiving Wi-Fi or whatever. We can't do Square if we can't connect to the internet, right? Um and also many performers work for tips...

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** ... instead of getting, like, paid by anybody. Um, and then... Speaking of performers. It's great to bring your family, but not every event at the ren faire is gonna be family-friendly. Especially the performances.

There might be adult language, there might be adult themes. Um, and so most places have posted show ratings or specific kind of, like, "this is for the family show," where, um, you can, you know, be comfortable bringing the young kids to.

And if you're worried about it, it's usually on the festival's website, what would be appropriate for families.

**Travis:** Uh, I also want to say, um, and we've said this rule a couple times for a couple different events, but it's always good to reiterate. Cosplay is not consent.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? And so one, ask before you touch anyone ever. Um, and ask before you take photos, ask before whatever. Right? Ask. But also I would say, one of the things, uh, and we touched on it earlier, talking about, like, playing pretend, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** I don't care what the behavior of the actual medieval time would have been. We are in 2023 in real life.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** So there is no excuse for using offensive language that you try to justify by saying, "Well, this is what they would have said back then!" And there's no excuse for offensive behavior that you would justify by saying, "Yeah, but back then, they would've just grabbed—"

Don't do it. Because we're not back then. It's 2023 and you should know better. So don't use ren faires as an excuse to be offensive and behave badly and by saying, like, "Well, it's what they would have... " Nope. Nope, nope, nope. Don't do it. Or I'll find you.

**Teresa:** Oh, thank you. We're gonna tell your mom.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, okay. Next, do have a plan. These are usually large, sprawling events with a lot of walking. If you have someone in your group that really needs to see the joust, okay? Make sure you hit that first.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** So that everybody else has time to wander. Ample time to wander. These places are huge, usually.

**Travis:** Especially since we, as you said with, like, uh, it being out and in the fields, there isn't always good cell service.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Right? And there's a lot going on, there's a lot of people with phones, and so the idea of, "Oh, we'll just text and find you," may not always work. So setting a meeting spot of, like, "Okay, if we get separated, we'll meet here for lunch." Right?

**Teresa:** Right. Yes. Um, again, we would just want to reiterate that these performers and vendors, this is usually, like, one of their full-time gigs. Um, so they are going to try to get you to participate.

And if you don't want to, that's okay. Like I said, most of them are usually pretty good about figuring out who's game and who isn't. Um, but, you know. If they can't seem to read your signs, walk away. You don't owe them anything, uh, and they will not be offended if you just leave. That's okay.

**Travis:** Yeah. It's really hard sometimes in those short, uh, encounters to establish boundaries. Um, and you know, you might be someone who's not comfortable being touched, you might be someone who's not comfortable being, like, making eye contact or being, whatever, spoken to directly.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And so at that point, if you don't feel comfortable setting the boundary, the best boundary you can set is to walk away.

**Teresa:** That's right.

**Travis:** Um, also, when you go into stalls or vendors or what-have-you, especially if you're wearing a costume, you have to be aware of, like, your turning radius and how it increases when you're wearing, like, a scabbard or shoulder armor or whatever, right? Because sometimes the vendor, you know, tents or whatever can be very narrow...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. And full of breakables.

**Travis:** And full of breakables. So you want to be aware of that, you want to be careful, um, and you know, we touched on it being family-friendly. I...

**Teresa:** Occasionally family-friendly.

**Travis:** Occasionally, right? I, as a parent, would also encourage, man, there's little kids running around and if you're wearing, like a helmet or a visor or anything, just be careful you don't punt a kid, you know?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** 'Cause kids will just dart out in front of you. They don't care. Uh, just be aware of your surroundings.

**Teresa:** Uh, last but not least, I'd like to say, um, do remember that you have to drive home, right?

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Have a designated driver or, you know, make sure that you have burned through your, uh, intoxication before you leave because these are, like, out in the, um, the hills kind of events. And you will have to drive home.

**Travis:** Yes. Agreed. Be careful, be safe out there. Have responsible fun. Your mom and dad want you—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Alright, we got a couple of announcements. First of all, coming up, not too long now, I think, one week, we'll be in New York Comic Con doing so much stuff. Um, you can get your tickets at [bit.ly/mcelroytours](http://bit.ly/mcelroytours). October 11th, we're gonna be in Philadelphia doing My Brother, My Brother and Me and I believe Sawbones is opening for that one, too.

Uh, October 12th we're gonna be at New York Comic Con doing Adventure Zone, it's Adventure Zone Hootenanny. Um, it's gonna be a real fun one,

ending with a song, that we'll sing and you can probably sing along if you know it.

October 13th, New York Comic Con, uh, My Brother, My Brother and Me with Sawbones opening. And also, a lot of New York Comic Con events that we're doing. Signings—

**Teresa:** I'll be there!

**Travis:** Yeah! Teresa and Rachel are gonna be there doing signings. We're doing all kinds of stuff. And New York Comic Con does not require you to have a badge to attend the shows.

Uh, folks who have a badge and a ticket to either show will receive a free show poster as well as the option for priority seating at the show. And there will also be video on-demand tickets to, uh, watch the show online later. Uh, like I said, all the info, all the links, at [bit.ly/mcelroytours](http://bit.ly/mcelroytours). Also, we've got brand new merch up at [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com).

**Teresa:** October merch!

**Travis:** We've got the glow in the dark "I Found More Questions in Kepler, West Virginia" pin, which is an Adventure Zone reference. Uh, speaking of Adventure Zone, we've also got an Amnesty Lodge scented candle that has scents of peppercorn, ginger, spice, tobacco leaf, teak wood, sandalwood, amber, and dark musk.

And our Candlenights wrapping paper is back, designed by Justin Gray. Find all of that and 10% of all proceeds this month go to Reproductive Freedom for All, which fights for access to abortion care, birth control, paid parental leave, and protections for pregnancy discrimination.

All of that at [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com). We also want to say thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom we could not make this show. And thank you to you for listening. We make the show for you.



**Teresa:** Ooh. That's a nice one.

**Travis:** Yeah, what else? What am I forgetting?

**Teresa:** Also thank you to Brent "Brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pin Up 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, we continually take your topics submissions and your idioms and your questions. Please send those to [shmannerscast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerscast@gmail.com) and 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]

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