

Shmanners 419: Park Rangers

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[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: Fine, how are you.

Travis: I'm good.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: We're recording this, like, 30 seconds before we're supposed to leave for a family trip.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, we're heading to Tennessee, somewhere in there. I'm not telling you where, you weirdos!

Teresa: Not telling you guys!

Travis: You're not gonna know! But I was thinking about, um, the Smoky Mountains National Park.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: And I remember being told by a ranger while we were there that it was, uh, like, the only rainforest in, like, the continental US. Because it's not a tropical rainforest, but it's a—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Um, but that's not the ranger story I wanted to tell. The ranger story I want to tell is when I was at—

Teresa: [laughs] I know this story. I love this.

Travis: Wait, which one do you think I'm gonna tell?

Teresa: The—the beer story.

Travis: Oh, yeah, no, that was one.

Teresa: No. [laughs]

Travis: Where—that's another ranger story where I was at, uh, Lake Vesuvius I think in, at Wayne. In West Virginia, I think it is. Or it's in Kentucky. Anyway, it doesn't matter.

I was there, and I decided I was gonna go camping by myself and I brought, like, a 24 pack of beer to just, like, sit and chill. I think at the time I was, like, 23. And I got, like, the camping spot that was as far away from the parking area as I could. I was like, I wanna be just by myself.

Unbeknownst to me, a ranger basically, like, saw me stop at the place to buy beer and then drive in. So he just, like, followed me, parked next to me, followed after me, and it wasn't until I got to my campsite after carrying the beer the whole way there—it was so heavy.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And then he was like, "Hey, man. You can't have that here. It's a state park."

Teresa: Maybe they wanted to give you the benefit of the doubt that you were gonna let it sit in your car?

Travis: Well, he was like, "Either you have to, uh—either you have to dump it out or I'm gonna have to, like, write you a ticket." And I said, "If you write me a ticket, do I get to keep it?" And he said, "No."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I was like, "Okay, then I'm gonna dump it out." And he was cool. He even said, like, "Is there somewhere nearby, like, do you know somebody? Can you take it home and drop it off there?" And I was like, "No."

So he stood there and watched me pour out 24 beers. It was very sad. And there's no way that was good for the ground.

Teresa: I feel sad for the beers. I feel sad for you. But he was just doing his job.

Travis: And he was trying to be cool, right? And also, like, if I saw a 23-year-old go camping by himself and bring a 24 pack of beer I'd be like, "No good choices are gonna happen from this. You're gonna be by yourself, like, manning a fire." But the story I was gonna tell, third one—

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: —was when I was at the, uh, Old North Church in Boston, which is the One if by Land, Two if by Sea, you know, where they hung the lanterns famously in Fallout 4.

Teresa: [laughs] I was gonna say in National Treasure.

Travis: Sure, yes, that too. So I went with my friend Alice, who is a big National Treasure fan, so she was excited for that, and I was excited 'cause it was like, "This is in Fallout 4! And that's, like—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um... but then, like, we went next door and I was, like, getting a coffee I think from this, like, sandwich shop. And there was a dude there, a park ranger, 'cause a lot of, like, national monuments also fall under national parks, right? So they have park rangers there.

And I think, like—and he was in full uniform. And somebody was like, "Hey, and I'll buy his lunch." And he was like, "I can't do that." And he was like, "It's against the rule. Uh, we, you know, can't accept gifts over blah, blah—"

And I was like—I was sitting there thinking, like, that's pretty hardcore anti-corruption, man. That you're like, you can't buy me a sandwich. What if that somehow compromises my ranger integrity? And I was very impressed. But also, like—

Teresa: The government pays for his sandwich.

Travis: But I was also like... take the sandwich, man. It's cool. None of us are gonna narc. It's cool, man! Have the sandwich!

Teresa: He would know. He would know in his heart.

Travis: We're talking about park rangers.

Teresa: We are.

Travis: This week.

Teresa: Not just in the intro. Also in the show! [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. Let's get to it.

Teresa: Okay. So, last week, uh, we talked about the history of the National Park Service. And this week we're gonna talk about working there.

Travis: Do you think... when you get hired as a park ranger, one of the things, like it's a selling point, and they're like, "And there's national perks!"

Teresa: Ahh.

Travis: And then you're like, "What?" And they're like, "There's not. I mean, you get, like, 20% off dis—or whatever. But it's just a line we use."

Teresa: [laughs] Um, the good thing is, there are lots of different jobs within the Park Service, right? And—

Travis: There's bear wrangler. There's deer yeller. There's raccoon chaser. There's raccoon catcher. You gotta chase it toward the catcher.

Teresa: I would say that those all fall under wildlife. Right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: And then there's person hunter.

Teresa: [laughs] I guess that's also wildlife? I'm not quite sure. Okay.

Travis: The most dangerous wildlife.

Teresa: So, generally a park ranger's job is to protect the nation's ecosystems and the wildlife within them, while also protecting the people that visit. Right? Because it's kind of like a all-encompassing thing. You protect—you protect the environment from the people and the people from the environment.

Travis: Do you think there's a hierarchy? Like, you know, like the laws of robotics kind of thing? Where it's like, first, don't harm humans. Then, don't

harm, like, other robots and blah, blah, blah, unless they're gonna harm humans.

Teresa: I think you're right, yeah.

Travis: So it's like—but do you think the hierarchy is like, humans first or animals first?

Teresa: Ooh...

Travis: 'Cause if I saw a human, right? About to, like, fight a bear or whatever, who do I save?

Teresa: Humans are the most dangerous animals.

Travis: This is what I'm saying. I think—ask any park ranger, and secretly I think in their heart of hearts they feel it's their job first and foremost, protect animals from humans.

Teresa: [laughs] But there are a lot of different, like, niches within all of these ranger duties. So you've got environmental experts, nature guides, park historians, even law enforcement officers. I would say that the gentleman that followed you to your campsite probably—

Travis: And he was a gentleman about it. I can't stress enough. Very kind, gave me plenty of options.

Teresa: Um...

Travis: He could've offered to help me carry the beer back to the campsite and then make me dump it out there, but it's fine.

Teresa: [laughs] They could work at a visitor center answering questions, or give you guidance as far as, like, directions or even, like, doing surveys of the park. Um, making sure that guests are following the rules. And so there's a long resume of skills, right? Um, but it's always the goal to protect the visitors and the ecosystems of their assigned park.

You need some credentials for that, right? Most positions require a bachelor's degree, while others are happy to have you maybe if you're former law enforcement.

Travis: If you can speak squirrel.

Teresa: Yeah. That would be great.

Travis: That would be a huge plus, don't you think?

Teresa: Yeah, it really would.

Travis: 'Cause think about all of the—all of the gossip and all the, like, insider info you could get if you befriended the squirrels. And then you're like, "Let me know when there's, like, underage drinking happening. Let me know if somebody's setting off fireworks or whatever. Let me know if the raccoons are planning something."

Teresa: Maybe you have other practical outdoor experience. Maybe you have—

Travis: There should be a crossover movie—

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: —of, like, the Madagascar zoo—I think I'd love to see penguins versus raccoons. Those penguins are always up to some—this isn't, um, important.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's just occurred to me that raccoons seem very schemey, and I'd just like to see raccoons versus the penguins from Madagascar. If we could figure that out, that would be great. Get at me, Hollywood.

Teresa: Um, some programs even take volunteer experience, right? As, like, putting that onto your resume to get a ranger job.

Travis: Now, I'd have to assume its volunteer experience related—

Teresa: [simultaneously] At their park.

Travis: —yeah, okay.

Teresa: Right, yes. The idea of, like, working your way up kind of, like, the ladder, right? Um, the bachelor's degree has to have some kind of relevance, obvs. So, like, natural sciences or public service, or even history, right? Because, like you said, there's a lot of landmarks and things like that that fall under this jurisdiction.

Travis: Uh, like battlegrounds, you know, that kind of thing where somebody being able to tell you about the thing that happened there. Or, like, old forts. Um, stuff like that. There's a lot of that kind of thing.

Teresa: Uh, horticulture, wildlife and forestry, biological sciences, management, even. Um, botany, anthropology, all that kind of stuff, right? And if a four year program is not something that was in your plan, AmeriCorps or the Peace Corps as well as different, like, firefighter academies and trainings and things like that, it's always good to have extracurriculars on your resume.

Travis: Sure. Bear friend.

Teresa: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Travis: Maybe just like an amateur raccoon chaser.

Teresa: M.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: What about sociology?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Or, uh, archaeology?

Travis: Ooh.

Teresa: Or museum sciences, or public administration?

Travis: All these things is very—a lot of varied opportunities. I'm gonna go be a park ranger now.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Uh—

Travis: Do I have to be outside?

Teresa: Yeah, sometimes. It depends on where you are.

Travis: I wanna work a gift shop, but have a badge.

Teresa: Hmm, maybe. Um, now, there are some park jobs that require clean pee. You may...

Travis: Oh, from me. Not, like, I have to bring it in.

Teresa: [laughs] You have to bring it in within your own body.

Travis: "Is this enough? How much did you need?"

Teresa: [laughs] [coughs]

Travis: "I've been collecting it all over the place, man."

Teresa: No.

Travis: "I only have so many friends."

Teresa: You may be interested in working at a specific park that doesn't drug test, but most of them do.

Travis: I think if I—it's been a long time since if had to take a drug test, but I did have to take one or two when I worked at Best Buy, for some reason. As if being high would somehow stop me from selling CDs.

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: But that was thing where we used to play music on shiny mirrors. And I think if I could go back in time just once, I'd like to sneak in a little packet of, like, Crystal Light or, like, Hi-C, you know? Like, Kool-Aid. And do it.

Teresa: Just really freak people out.

Travis: And then mix it in. And they'd be like, "Why is your pee watermelon?"

And I'd be like, "I don't know, man! I eat a lot of watermelons, I guess."

Teresa: Although, um, now that more and more places, cannabis is legal, I don't know if that's gonna change.

Travis: Well, I imagine still as long as it's a federal job, right? If you're a national park ranger. Because federally it's still not.

Teresa: Ah. For now.

Travis: But who cares? Grow up! Read a book!

Teresa: You probably need some outdoor experience, especially if you're working with the public. But also customer service and manual labor experience is very valuable. You know who make really great rangers?

Travis: Who?

Teresa: Former ski instructors!

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Former camp counselors.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And... former food service workers.

Travis: Yeah, I could see that. Especially if I had to work food service long enough and then I was given the opportunity to just be out in nature and not around people. And it's like, oh my god, that's the dream! Thank you so much.

Teresa: So it's about being a leader in the natural environment. So anything on your resume that shows that you're, you know, you're helpful to wildlife and to people, is great. One former ranger on Reddit said that yes, they have a scientific degree, but they are more grateful for their home maintenance and food service experience because, quote, "You pick up a lot of trash and shake a lot of hands."

Travis: There you go.

Teresa: Hopefully you wash your hands between, ha! Right? That was a— that was a joke.

Travis: Or you're building up a natural, like, just dirt layer that is protecting you, you know what I mean? A natural protection.

Teresa: Like a glove hand.

Travis: Like a glove hand, yes, exactly.

Teresa: [laughs] So let's go through a day in the life of a ranger.

Travis: I'd love to do that! But first, how about a word from another Max Fun show?

[theme music plays]

[music plays]

Jesse: I'm Jesse Thorn.

Dan: I just don't want to leave a mess.

Jesse: This week on Bullseye, Dan Aykroyd talks to me about The Blues Brothers, Ghostbusters, and his very detailed plans about how he'll spend his afterlife.

Dan: I think I'm gonna roam in a few places, yes. I'm gonna manifest and roam.

Jesse: All that and more on the next Bullseye, from Maximumfun.org and NPR.

[music and ad end]

[chimes]

Janet: Hello, teachers and faculty. This is Janet Varney. I'm here to remind you that listening to my podcast, the JV Club with Janet Varney, is part of the curriculum for the school year. Learning about the teenage years of such guests as Alison Brie, Vicki Peterson, John Hodgman, and so many more is a valuable and enriching experience, one you have no choice but to embrace, because yes, listening is mandatory.

The JV Club with Janet Varney is available every Thursday on Maximum Fun, or wherever you get your podcasts. Thank you. And remember, no running in the halls!

[chimes]

[ad ends]

Travis: Okay. Ranger. Wakes up. There's a snake! Fight.

Teresa: No?

Travis: It's a bear snake. The worst kind! Fight.

Teresa: So, again—

Travis: You didn't even ask me...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Which do you think is scarier? Head of a snake, body of a bear?
Head of a bear, body of a snake?

Teresa: [laughs] Oh no. I think head of a snake, body of a bear.

Travis: Now, you're assuming that the bear's—

Teresa: [simultaneously] Because it goes faster.

Travis: But you're assuming that the snake's head is to scale, is that what you were picturing, to the bear body?

Teresa: No, but it would run faster than a snake head—a bear head on a snake body.

Travis: Well, can I tell you? The secret is, while you're laughing at how doofy it looks with the tiny snake head on a big bear body, hiss! It's got you.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Bit.

Teresa: Um, okay. So this is a very generic day. And we're going through a ranger in a kind of, like, generic way. I just said the same thing twice.

Travis: Yeah, but you can't talk about—we don't have a specific ranger in mind.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Ranger... Rick Danko.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, the Deedles.

Teresa: You probably arrive at the ranger station at the crack of dawn.

Travis: So what, like, 10: 30?

Teresa: No. No.

Travis: 5: 30 AM, 6?

Teresa: Between 5: 30 and 6, probably. And you might even be early, because you love your job. And you have to take meetings, or answer emails, or do paperwork, right? Because even the ranger has to do clerical work.

Travis: Do you think that there's a lot of rangers who are maybe the cutup of the group, the class clown, who are like, "Hmm, we could really help the environment if we stop filling out all these forms all the time."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "You guys ever thought about that? We're wasting a lot of paper."

Teresa: So, once that's done, you know, general housekeeping tasks, it is patrol time! And patrol looks different for every ranger, depending on what your specific expertise is. But you today are a trail ranger.

Travis: Looking for Bigfoot.

Teresa: No. [wheezes]

Travis: Okay, listen. In all seriousness, if you're a ranger out there, you've always got 1% of your mind on "There might be a Bigfoot," right?

Teresa: Okay, fine.

Travis: Don't you think?

Teresa: I'll give you 1%.

Travis: 1% of your thing is like, "And if I see a Bigfoot... "

Teresa: [laughs] Um, so you're gonna be checking in on the hiking trails around the park. Um, and, you know, stopping to take care of whatever business comes up.

Travis: Gettin' your steps in.

Teresa: Let's do the easier trails first, because that's usually where the tourists would be, right? First stop is the trail that starts on the inner north fork road by Fish Creek Campground.

Travis: Okay, yeah. That's where I was gonna go first.

Teresa: It's a two mile hike, so you gotta check in—

Travis: Gross!

Teresa: You've gotta go around and check in on the families enjoying the creeks.

Travis: [scoffs] Two miles?! Two miles?! Am I in prison? That's terrible!

Teresa: No, you're the opposite of prison. You're in the outside, walking.

Travis: Ugh. Gross! Give me a drone. [laughs quietly] I'll just send a drone around to do it.

Teresa: Like you experienced, you will probably run into some people who you have to encourage better behavior from. An example would be RV campers, right? The thing about camping in a mobile camping van is you can go anywhere, and do it anywhere, and you might not be in the dedicated spots, right? Um, and so—

Travis: Hmm, slash their tires.

Teresa: No?

Travis: No.

Teresa: You get them to move along.

Travis: I'm a rogue ranger, you know what I mean? I'm out here doing forest justice.

Teresa: Move along to their proper campground.

Travis: Or I'm gonna slash your tires. Forest justice!

Teresa: Or I'm going to fine you.

Travis: This one's for the birds. Pshew, pshew.

Teresa: Um, you might have to check on the fishermen nearby, see if they're licensed.

Travis: If they're not, I hook them.

Teresa: Because—

Travis: Fish justice.

Teresa: —fish—you are only allowed to fish for approved species during a specific time of year, right? That's normally what happens with licenses there.

Travis: Oh, you could chop 'em up something and be like, "Didn't I tell you the rules, chum?" Right? And now it's like [crosstalk].

Teresa: Oh, chum.

Travis: 'Cause they're chum, yeah.

Teresa: I get it, I get it. You'll always have to look around for people littering, right? Or maybe answer questions. Um, a couple of the things you probably have to tell people is to stay a safe distance from animals that they may see. You might also have to tell people, "Hmm, the bears that you're looking for are probably on the other side of the park," or whatever.

Travis: As I'm, like, waving at them like a Jedi?

Teresa: [laughs] No, no, no.

Travis: "These are not the bears you're looking for."

Teresa: People commonly get upset when they cannot see the wildlife that they have in their head. But wildlife is good at hiding. That's what they do, right? Because they don't want to get et by other wildlife.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So it's not always—it's... more often that a ranger has to tell people "I'm really sorry you're disappointed." 'Cause it's not a zoo! Right? It's not gonna go to the place where you are.

Travis: I thought you were saying—I didn't get the, like, the wildlife's hiding from you. It's like, "Nah, man. Bears are north. Come on."

Teresa: Oh, no, no, no.

Travis: Bears are always north.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No, okay. Now, here's a good line too if you're a ranger that you could say to them. Like, "Hey. I'm gonna tell both you and the animals to stay away from each other, but they're not good listeners, so I think unfortunately it's a lot of responsibility on you to not get attacked by a bear."

Teresa: Um, you probably have to jump in your car at some point, your truck, because the radio says that you are needed to help with wildlife management. There is a bear on the trail, speaking of bears.

Travis: Is it Jimmy?

Teresa: Uh, it's a new bear. We don't know this bear.

Travis: A new bear?!

Teresa: We just don't know it.

Travis: It's a big discovery!

Teresa: No, no, no. It's a regular bear that—

Travis: It's a polar bear! How did it get there? Lost, season two.

Teresa: —has not been tagged.

Travis: I go spray paint him.

Teresa: This is where you would work with a different, like, ranger group, right? 'Cause you're a trail ranger, but you are needed to help with crowd control.

Travis: Yeah, like an Avenger.

Teresa: Because there is a bear on your trail, right?

Travis: Okay, forest justice, let's do it.

Teresa: So the wildlife management rangers find the bear, and then tranq it to get it to move it to a different place, right? Away from the trail where the visitors are. And they tag it, usually, when you encounter a bear like this, so that you can learn about its movements.

Travis: Then befriend it.

Teresa: Um... no. No. Bears not friend.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Maybe friend-shaped, but not friend.

Travis: Okay. So we're gonna bag it. We're gonna tag it? We're gonna set 'em free.

Teresa: We're gonna tag it. We're gonna bag it. We're gonna—

Travis: No, not in that order! You've gotta bag him first, then tag him.

Teresa: Oh, okay. Then tag him.

Travis: Then set him free.

Teresa: Then set him free on the other side, away from peoples.

Travis: See, this is why people can't find them! You keep putting them on the other side of the park, Teresa!

Teresa: Too close, too close.

Travis: We should set 'em free in the RV. And then you're like, "He's right there. You should've parked in the right spot." Forest justice.

Teresa: Um, then you might, after that, stop by the visitor's center, right? Um, and there you might be able to give a talk to, say, some youth. Fourth graders on a school trip, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: They have questions, and you have a bachelor's of science in botany.

Travis: Oh, cool! Okay.

Teresa: So you start to talk to them about—

Travis: I was afraid that it was me? And I'm like, "Oh no."

Teresa: No. But you have that.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Uh, about flora in the Glacier National Park.

Travis: Okay, cool.

Teresa: So, um, you tell them that there are 62 species of ferns—

Travis: Yeah, you bet I do.

Teresa: —in the park. And that there are hundreds—

Travis: There's Fern Gully, there's Fern Brady there's Fern... um... fern, fern in the sern? Um, there's, uh... Fernalicious. Um... that's it. That's all 62!

Teresa: [laughs quietly] I was gonna ask you to keep going.

Travis: I don't think I could!

Teresa: I don't think you could either, that's why I was gonna ask you. Um, and there are hundreds of varieties of mushrooms and fungi. Don't eat them.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Though. Don't eat them.

Travis: Unless they look really delicious.

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: I mean, come on.

Teresa: Um, and interestingly, Glacier National Park hosts some of the most beautiful and hardiest varieties of wildflowers, because they're able to bloom under such extreme winter weather conditions.

Travis: Don't eat those, either. Don't eat the bears, either, or the ferns. Just don't eat... [sighs] Now, listen. You might be saying like, "Travis, I'm a forager, and I know what I'm looking for."

Cool, dude. I'm not talking to you.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Standard folk? Don't eat 'em.

Teresa: I don't think that you are allowed to forage without a permit in a national park.

Travis: This is another reason, though—listen. I have a lot of strong feelings about, um, like, people walking dogs off leash, no matter where, right? And the thing is is like, even if you're like, "Yeah, my dog's not gonna wander off," right? "My dog's gonna stay by me on the trail" or whatever. "I want 'em to be able to explore."

There are so many things that a dog might eat that would hurt them. And they don't know. There are dogs that die every year from eating mushrooms that they're not supposed to eat. So it's not just like, your dog will run away, or doesn't answer commands or whatever. It just... and I know that, like, I'm not saying—if you're like, "But my dog—" cool. I'm not your boss. But I did train dogs for a little while, and there is no dog so well trained that they're not still a dog.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Just think about it, please.

Teresa: Dogs be doggin'.

Travis: They're always dogs! Always dogs.

Teresa: Um, maybe you get a question about bears, right?

Travis: And I bring in Jimmy!

Teresa: No.

Travis: My—oh.

Teresa: Probably shouldn't tell a story that just happened about bears. That might put the kids off. But you're welcome to tell—

Travis: Listen, the world is full of bears!

Teresa: —tell an old story about bears, or bears in general. Apparently there are almost a thousand bears, both black bears and grizzlies, living in Glacier National Park. Pretty awesome.

Travis: One of 'em's Jimmy!

Teresa: I guess so.

Travis: He's cool, man. He's a good bear.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: Taught himself to read.

Teresa: [sighs]

Travis: He's awesome!

Teresa: Okay. Alright.

Travis: He's the bear I go to when I've got troubles. When I need some good advice, I find Jimmy.

Teresa: So, you probably leave—

Travis: I would think you would have more questions about Jimmy, and you seem to just be accepting Jimmy at face value.

Teresa: You probably leave—

Travis: Mmkay.

Teresa: —around sundown. It's a long day. Long day. But, one of the things that rangers almost always talk about is how satisfied they are with their job. It has a very high job satisfaction rate, especially among government work, right?

Travis: Yeah, I can imagine.

Teresa: Yeah. The hours are long and you often work weekends, but people devote their lives to being rangers. Um, and you can even—some of them even come with the perks of living on-property.

Travis: National perks, please.

Teresa: Sorry, yes. National perks.

Travis: Thank you very much.

Teresa: Of living on-property, right? So it's beautiful.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: Find yourself a tree wife, settle down.

Teresa: [laughs] Here are—

Travis: Have some saplings of your own.

Teresa: —some quotes from actual rangers, from the NPS website. Uh, Ranger Kim says, "The great thing about being a park ranger is to be able to share with people what a special and unique place this is."

Ranger Brad says, "Being a guardian of our heritage and actively protecting what's best about America is great about being a park ranger."

Ranger Jan says that there's a variety of things they get to do. No two days are the same.

A Ranger Mark says, "You get to live in a national park and work in the most beautiful places on earth."

So, like, I think that it doesn't sound so much like an occupation, but more of a way of life, right?

Travis: Hmm, like being a podcaster.

Teresa: Um, and many people—[laughs quietly] yeah. Like being a podcaster.

Travis: It's hard work, but...

Teresa: Many people view being a ranger as a lifelong commitment.

Travis: Like marriage.

Teresa: Like marriage. Your tree wife thanks you.

Travis: [singing] My tree wife.

Teresa: Now, you may not have the time or the commitment to be a national park ranger.

Travis: Why are you pointing at me?

Teresa: But you, yes you, Travis McElroy, could become a junior ranger!

Travis: I'm 40 years old?

Teresa: No, you certainly could.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It's for all ages.

Travis: No, it's just that I don't feel—I don't know how I feel about being a junior anything at this point.

Teresa: The National Park Service junior ranger program is an activity-based program conducted in almost every national park, which has a range of activities. You can get a junior ranger patch and a certificate. Um, and they have done everything in their power to make this program accessible to kids and kids at heart everywhere. Right? If you can't make it there, you can participate online, through an array of programs and activity books.

It says on their website:

"Kids, families, and the young at heart are invited to become junior rangers. People—"

Travis: Oh, I'm out, then. I'm old at heart, I'm very old at heart!

Teresa: [laughs] "People of all abilities are welcome. Many programs are targeted at ages five to 14, but are available to all."

So, if you want to explore, learn, and protect our national parks, check out that today.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us. Thank you for listening. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to you for listening. You're like the trees. Um, we could be forest rangers without you, but what would be the point?

Teresa: Ohh, that's nice.

Travis: Yeah, right?

Teresa: I got a lil chill.

Travis: Thank you! It's a new month, uh, here in August, so make sure you go to mcelroymerch.com, check out all the merch there. Also, we've got live shows and stuff coming up. I'm gonna be in London in October for the MCM Convention, so head to bit.ly/mcelroytours, and you'll see all the appearances information there. 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, we are taking your topic submissions, and suggestions, your questions, your idioms. Please send those to shmannerscast@gmail.com, and say hi to Alexx, because 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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