

Shmanners 433: Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

Published November 15th, 2024

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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: Why is it that when we do the intro, you close your eyes? Is it because you're worried I'm going to make you laugh, or are you doing Catherine O'Hara?

Teresa: [giggles] Yes.

Travis: When you close your eyes, you go like this.

Teresa: When you close your eyes when you're talking to someone.

Travis: It's because—

Teresa: And then you look away, and then you look back. [giggles]

Travis: She does that, we watched *Beetlejuice*, *Beetlejuice*, she does that.

Teresa: She did it. She—

Travis: I thought it was just a bit in *Waiting for Guffman*, and maybe it is now that she's incorporated into comedy stuff.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But she does that.

Teresa: She does do that.

Travis: Hi everybody. I want to talk to you about Thanksgiving. I had the realization, 'cause we're talking about the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Teresa: Well, kind of.

Travis: Ohhhh, tweest. So. My thought was Thanksgiving is such a bizarre holiday in the form that it is now to me.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Because there's definitely something— You know there's practises, there's you know ritual isn't the word I'm looking for.

Teresa: Tradition.

Travis: Tradition to it. But mostly it's become the gateway to Christmas.

Teresa: Yes, the opening bell, if you will.

Travis: Yes. Of Christmas, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Because there's not like Thanksgiving movies. There's not like Thanksgiving songs. There's not—

Teresa: Thanksgiving occurs in several movies, in fact *Miracle on 34th Street* starts on Thanksgiving, and the Thanksgiving meal is in that movie.

Travis: Yes, but it doesn't— It's not centered around Thanksgiving. I mean there are Halloween movies, and there are scary movies you would watch at Halloween, obviously. There are countless Christmas movies, right?

Teresa: And movies that take place during Christmas, like *Die Hard*.

Travis: Yes, I— Listen, you know I'm on the same page, I don't know why you said that like I was gonna argue with you.

Teresa: I— [chuckles] I'm saying that for the internet.

Travis: Oh, don't do anything for the internet.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: What have they ever done for you? [chuckles] But I'm saying like Thanksgiving might be in a movie, right? But it's— I would posit if it's like, I don't know, *Family Stone* feels like it takes place at Thanksgiving, I've never seen it.

Teresa: Does it?

Travis: I don't know, it just in my head is. But there are probably plenty of Hallmark Thanksgiving movies. But I would—

Teresa: I think you're right, I think it does.

Travis: I would put money it's on they said like, "Well we want it to be a holiday where a family gets together, but we don't wanna deal with all the Christmas stuff."

Teresa: Mmm.

Travis: "Thanksgiving." Anyways, Thanksgiving to me, in my head, has become a gateway.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Now, another thing I wanted to ask before we got started.

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: Did you grow up watching the Macy's Parade?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And was there like— Was it a big deal? Was there like things surrounding it for your family? Or was it just on?

Teresa: No, it was just on. It was just on.

Travis: My dad—

Teresa: Because they don't have cartoons on that channel.

Travis: Well.

Teresa: They just have the Parade.

Travis: They don't have a lot of things. This used to be a time— Oh my god, so many divergences. But.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: This is a thing whenever we travel, right? And we like stay in a hotel where we don't have like streaming services.

Teresa: Yees.

Travis: And trying to explain to our kids like, "Well what's on is what's on."

Teresa: "We can't put on the other show, because this is the show."

Travis: And what's wild to me is that even then it's one of the few like, "Back in my days" that I celebrate, that I raise up to the light. Because like there are whole channels now that are just cartoons all the time.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And it's like not the one they wanna watch in the moment. I'm like, "Do you understand?"

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: “What it used to be like when there’s like a three-hour window on Saturdays when we know there were cartoons. Other than that—”

Teresa: There were us—

Travis: Until Cartoon Network came around.

Teresa: No, so there were after school cartoons while I was growing up. Fox had some afternoon cartoons.

Travis: But what I’m saying is there were windows.

Teresa: Like *Spider-Man* and *X-Men* and things like that.

Travis: There were windows in time.

Teresa: Right, there were windows of time.

Travis: Where you might find cartoons.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Anyways.

Teresa: Like 3:30 to 4:30 were cartoons while I was growing up.

Travis: My dad, in his infinite wisdom, realized that he cared more about watching the Macy’s Parade than his sons did.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: So.

Teresa: That tracks.

Travis: We began a family tradition where it was the one time of year where we were not only allowed but encouraged to fire our NERF blasters at the TV. So we were allowed to be like, “Oh, I hate this song,” right? And then it was like gettin’ your NERF bow and arrow and letting fly at the TV.

Teresa: Which works really well for like a glass-front television, but with an LED screen, I think that that could be problematic.

Travis: You gotta remember the time in which you're talking about.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: There was no LED at this point. LCD?

Teresa: LCD?

Travis: There was no LEDs, LCDs, plasmas.

Teresa: None of that.

Travis: I— We didn't even get—

Teresa: Just glass front.

Travis: — a rear projection for many, many years, and so it was open season. Not a thing I would encourage our kids to do now, but this idea of like, "Yeah, we can play with NERF guns in, you know, the family room during this time." And then the follow up tradition that was so forced, "Let's go out and play basketball in the backyard."

Teresa: Ugh.

Travis: My dad, for some reason, once again in his infinite wisdom, looked at his three sons who the internet knows well by this point, and decided "You know what? Let's pave over the backyard and turn it into a basketball court." Why? I will never know.

Teresa: To get you fools out of his house.

Travis: Hey, guess what didn't work?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, let's talk about the Macy's Parade.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: One more divergence.

Teresa: Wo— Oh.

Travis: I'm very excited this year, because we will be in New York for Thanksgiving, because I'll be doing *Twenty-Sided Tavern* that week, go get your tickets, thetwentysidedtavern.com.

And we're near enough to the parade that I think we can take the girls for a little bit. Because Bebe being my exact clone, I can tell you what's gonna happen. She'll be so excited, we're gonna get there, we'll watch about five minutes, and then she'll say, "Now what do we do?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So here's a little history. The Macy's Department Store was established in 1858.

Travis: The oldest thing ever.

Teresa: Which is way earlier than I thought it was. [chuckles] I thought we were talking turn of the 19th century. Way before that.

Travis: Turn of the 20th.

Teresa: Turn of the 20th, you're right, 20th century.

Travis: Yeah, it's like daylight savings time, it's always confusing.

Teresa: [laughs] The beginning of the 1900s is when I thought that Macy's Department Store was founded. No, before that.

Travis: No, I'm not surprised, I mean.

Teresa: Half a century before that.

Travis: What we think of department stores.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right, is a lot different than them, because— So to run it back, and we've probably talked about this before, but it used to be there was a store for hardware, a store for clothes, a store for like home essentials, right.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: A store for individual things, and then someone said, "What if we just had all those departments in one building?"

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: So it wasn't what you think. Like if you walk into a Macy's now, right, where it'll be like clothes and kid's clothes and like perfume and makeup. This was like, "This is where the brooms and trash cans are, this is where the clothes are."

Teresa: More like a Walmart.

Travis: Yeah, a lot more like that. I mean smaller, obviously, it wasn't that scale, but yeah.

Teresa: I wonder if you could even get like dry goods there.

Travis: Probably.

Teresa: Probably, okay. So. Its flagship store on 34th Street in New York City was where the first parade took place on Thanksgiving Day, 1924.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Where a group of store employees marched there, marched there from somewhere else, dressed in vibrant costumes with floats and bands. They even borrowed animals from the Central Park Zoo.

Travis: "Borrowed." [chuckles]

Teresa: [laughs] And at the end—

Travis: "Hey, where's the lion?"
"I borrowed it!"

Teresa: [chuckles] And then at the end of the very first parade, Santa Claus was welcomed into Macy's flagship store, enthroned on the balcony at the 34th Street entrance, where he was crowned the King of the Kiddies! [chuckles]

Travis: K— I assume K-I-D-D-I— Yeah.

Teresa: K-I-D-D-I-E-S, yes.

Travis: "This is Kitten Santa, Santa Paws."

Teresa: [laughs] Very nice.

Travis: Thank you.

Teresa: And the interesting thing about this is that it wasn't very publicized. I mean, it was a publicity stunt, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But it didn't matter that people— like that it wasn't like publicized because—

Travis: It's a parade.

Teresa: — in 1924—

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: — over 250,000 people came out to enjoy it. So like it was— They didn't even tell anybody and there were a ton of people, that's amazing, right?

Travis: Well you say they didn't tell, I mean they might not have made a big deal out of it, right, but newspapers are gonna talk about it, things are gonna talk.

You know, they might not have been putting full page ads or whatever, or going on X the everything app. And bleugh, and like talking about it, but I assume... there's not a lot to do on Thanksgiving. 'Cause here's the thing, like I said earlier, there's the meal.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And a family getting together.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But when that immediately falls through, right.

Teresa: I mean the—

Travis: Like when the meal's at four.

Teresa: Yeah, the meal's at four, or whatever.

Travis: And I've run out of things I want to talk to my uncle about.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: What do we do?

Teresa: But the thing that they didn't have were the balloons. Not until 1927.

Travis: That's actually way sooner than I thought.

Teresa: Really?

Travis: That it started in '24.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And they had balloons in '27. I thought you were gonna be like not until like 1945 or whatever.

Teresa: Okay, okay. Well they weren't the balloons that we know as balloons.

Travis: Oh they weren't like the kaiju sized, like, "Oh god, Snoopy's gonna destroy the city" kind of balloons?

Teresa: No, no no no no. They were rubber representations of cartoon characters, right? And they were kind of like reverse puppets, where it— So, alright. Thing of a marionette, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: A puppet on strings.

Travis: I'd rather not, but go on.

Teresa: So what they did was they filled these rubberized kind of cartoon characters with air, not helium, with air, and puppeteered them with poles, okay?

Travis: Oh, like a Chinese dragon like fur— You know, when you're like inside of it, moving it around.

Teresa: No, but—

Travis: And you're underneath, yeah I understand what you're saying.

Teresa: Yeah, they were underneath.

Travis: But the idea of you're manipulating it from underneath.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Kinda holding it up on poles, manipulating it like that, right? And they were designed by a German American puppeteer named Tony Sarg, and he was known as America's Puppet Master because—

Travis: [scoffs] What a title though! Can you imagine?

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Like if someone was called that today, it would be such a different connotation.

Teresa: Yes, because that's not what we think of when we hear "puppet master."

Travis: That would be such a negative connotation now.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But what a—

Teresa: Master of Puppets.

Travis: A wild, wild title to get.

Teresa: And his family was puppeteers, and they loved marionettes.

Travis: His family was puppets. [wheezes]

Teresa: [chuckles] So what he wanted to do was make something in the parade that the entire crowd could see, right?

Travis: Brilliant.

Teresa: Because once you're so many people deep in a crowd, you really can't see what's happening directly in front of you, right. So they decided to take it up into the air so that people could see it.

Travis: And I mean obviously this is the '20s, so it's not like the scope that it is now.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But now it's so dramatic of like, "We have these super tall buildings, right, very clustered together. And getting these like glimpses of these huge floating balloons between them—"

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: "— is like a spectacle in and of itself, you know?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It's like fireworks kind of deal, where it's like suddenly there's, I don't know, Jolly Green Giant or whatever. I haven't watched in a while, I don't know if that's clear.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: My only two references are like Snoopy, I think the Jolly Green Giant's in there.

Teresa: And in 1927, they debuted a large rubber Felix the Cat.

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: A toy soldier, and a dragon.

Travis: The toy soldier became like the iconic thing of the Macy's Parade. That's what I picture.

Teresa: Oh yeah?

Travis: When I think—

Teresa: That's what you picture?

Travis: I mean Santa Claus obviously, but like you know, you would picture the Oscar statue for the Oscars.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I picture the toy soldier for Macy's.

Teresa: And back then it was called the Christmas Parade.

Travis: I knew it.

Teresa: The Macy's Christmas Parade. Even though it took place on Thanksgivings— Thanksgiving Day, it wasn't actually called the Thanksgiving Day Parade until much later.

Travis: I don't think you should be allowed to put up your Christmas decorations until after the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Teresa: Interesting.

Travis: Flag. [imitates an impact sound effect] Planted.

Teresa: I think that you can do whatever makes you happy.

Travis: Well yeah.

Teresa: In your own home.

Travis: Listen, I'm not saying you should go to jail for doing it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I'm saying that like if somebody was like, "What's the standard date?" right. It's that. Then do whatever you want, you would deviate from the norm all you want to. But if you were looking for—

Like there's a first day of fall, first day of spring, but that doesn't mean it can't feel like spring before that or feel like fall before whatever. Doesn't mean it feels like fall on that day.

I'm just saying there should be first day of Christmas season, and it starts right after the— when Santa— It starts when Santa shows up.

Teresa: I'm just saying.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Listen. That's all I'm doing here.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Are you so afraid of my big ideas that I'm not allowed to say my big ideas?

Teresa: Anywaaaaay.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, in the early days of the Parade, instead of deflating and storing the large attractions like the balloons.

Travis: They ate them.

Teresa: They would simply [chuckles] release them into the air.

Travis: No.

Teresa: [through laughter] Yes.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Hoping that they would pop up there. [wheezes]

Travis: I hope so! I hope they're not still up there.

Teresa: In 1928, there were valves added to the balloons.

Travis: Brilliant.

Teresa: That allowed the helium to slowly escape. [giggles]

Travis: So you're saying that for the first like year or so, they were like, "If only there was a way."

Teresa: For the first like five years.

Travis: "If— Oh, you know what we should've done? We'll definitely remember this next year, guys. Put something in to let the air out. Everybody remind me next year, okay? Okay."

Teresa: So they just let them free at the end of the parade. They did, by 1928, have a return address, and they rewarded—

Travis: Like a child?

Teresa: I know.

Travis: Like a child would do?

Teresa: They had a reward on them to encourage citizens to return them to the Macy's store.

Travis: I know I've talked about this—

Teresa: But not all of them made it back. [giggles]

Travis: No, I know I've talked about this on the show before, but have— You didn't do the thing where you released balloons with stuff, no.

Teresa: No.

Travis: I did when I was a kid, and one time, just like some stranger was like, "I found this, this note that said 'Bring it back if it comes'," and I remember thinking "Well this is nothing."

Teresa: "This is nothing."

Travis: Well I don't— Like I didn't do any more after that.

Teresa: It made it three streets over.

Travis: Yeah, well no, I thought it would just be like this magical moment where it's like, "Oh, how the balloon travelled" or whatever, and then it was just like, "Oh, thanks man."

Teresa: Yup.

Travis: "Alright, have a good one. Bye."

Teresa: So, when one landed in the East River and another one landed in the ocean, the department store decided it was probably not the best way to dispose of their used balloons.

Travis: Aw, guys. It took that? To figure that out? Aw.

Teresa: So by 1934, they stopped releasing the character balloons [chuckles] into the wild at the end.

Travis: So they— It didn't— Okay, so not that we have to keep making these year after year 'cause we keep losing 'em, that wasn't what did it.

Teresa: Nope.

Travis: It was like, "Well that one's in the ocean. [groans]."

Teresa: [laughs] So, another 1934 milestone, we've got the first Mickey Mouse balloon debuted.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And at this point, the local radio stations were covering the parade, and it only paused during World War II, right, when the parade was temporarily suspended, because rubber and helium—

Travis: Ah, yeah I was gonna say.

Teresa: — went to support the war effort. Once it was over—

Travis: Once what was over?

Teresa: Once the World War II was over.

Travis: Uh-huh. Did we win?

Teresa: We did.

Travis: Yeeeeeah.

Teresa: 1945 we were back, and the Parade would then receive national attention thanks to the holiday classic...

Travis & Teresa: [simultaneously] *Miracle on 34th Street*.

Teresa: Which was released in 1947.

Travis: Starring Mara Wilson, and—

Teresa: No.

Travis: No?

Teresa: Mm-mm.

Travis: No.

Teresa: And Dylan McDermott. No, that's later.

Travis: [sighs] He's so good in that. We watch it every year.

Teresa: [sighs] It's so beautiful.

Travis: And every year I think "Dylan McDermott, what a dreamboat."

Teresa: Listen, if you want a masterclass in color and lighting.

Travis: Oh my god.

Teresa: In a movie, you have to watch that movie. It looks like a jewel, it's beautiful.

Travis: Yes, like somehow the whole movie sparkles.

Teresa: Whole movie, anyway.

Travis: It is a visual feast.

Teresa: The film ac— The original film actually featured real footage from the 1946 Parade, and obviously in part due to the success of the movie, the event was then broadcast on network television in 1948.

Travis: I wanna keep talking about this, I really do, I promise, I swear.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: But first, how about a word from some other Max Fun shows.

[transition theme music plays]

Kirk Hamilton: Say you like video games, and who doesn't?

Maddy Myers: I mean some people probably don't.

Kirk Hamilton: Okay, but a lot of people do. So say you're one of those people, and you don't really have anyone to talk to about the games that you like.

Jason Schreier: Well, you should get some better friends.

Maddy Myers: [chuckles]

Kirk Hamilton: Oh, yes, you could get some better friends, but you could also listen to *Triple Click*.

[triple drum hit plays]

Kirk Hamilton: A weekly podcast about video games, hosted by me, Kirk Hamilton.

Maddy Myers: Me, Maddy Myers.

Jason Schreier: And me, Jason Schreier. We talk about new releases, old classics, industry news, and whatever really.

Maddy Myers: We'll show you new things to love about games, and maybe even help you find new friends to talk to about them.

Kirk Hamilton: *Triple Click*.

[triple drum hit plays]

Kirk Hamilton: It's kinda like we're your friends. Find us at maximumfun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts.

[ukulele music plays]

Jesse Thorn: Hi, I'm Jesse Thorn, the founder of MaximumFun, and I have a special announcement. I'm no longer embarrassed by *My Brother, My Brother And Me*.

You know for years, each new episode of this supposed advice show was a fresh insight, a depraved jumble of erection jokes, ghost humor, and frankly this is for the best, very little actionable advice. But now as they enter their twilight years, I'm as surprised as anyone to admit that it's gotten kinda good.

Justin, Travis, and Griffin's witticisms are more refined, like a humor column in a fancy magazine, and they hardly ever say, "Bazinga" anymore.

So, after you've completely finished listening to every single one of all of our other shows, why not join the McElroy brothers every week for *My Brother, My Brother And Me*.

[ukulele music fades out]

Travis: Okay, so now it's airing on the television.

Teresa: Now it's on the television, and now we get... celebrities.

Travis: Oh. Lip syncing to songs.

Teresa: I mean, soon. So in 1958, one celebrity of note was Benny Goodman, and then other musicians of the time and things like that. But they realized pretty quickly that they weren't really able to perform on moving stages.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: Live.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So 1964 was when they began to transition into lip syncing.

Travis: Well, and the other thing is, I— Okay, so I've never been there live, but I know that there's like the main thing in front of—

Teresa: There's like a little stage area.

Travis: Right, and it's like that it where— when the float gets there it kinda stops, and they film the person doing it. But they haven't been like singing that whole—

They've been waving mostly til they get there, and then they lip sync. But even then it's a— I guess now there's a lot more ability of like wireless things and hooking stuff up to generators is the thing.

Teresa: I mean I suppose it would be technically feasible now. But why?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I don't know— I mean, there's definitely a point in my childhood where I figured out they're not really singing, but then I was like, "Of course they're not really singing, they're outside, it's a parade. Who would be able to hear them?"

Travis: I think for me that thing that bothers me about it is not that they're not really singing, but rather if they're not really singing and it's just lip syncing, what is it adding... to the experience? Right?

If they're just doing like a fake thing, and everyone knows it's a fake thing, and they're just like standing on the thing. I just don't know why we all think like, "This is something," you know what I mean?

Teresa: Well I think that once it's televised, you have that kind of like, "We're doing this for the benefit of people who aren't here."

Travis: Yeah, but doing what?

Teresa: Performing, because you can't— If you're sitting in your living room, you can't watch a parade go by, so you have to— you get a little taste from the performances.

Travis: But here's the problem, it's juxtaposed with the Broadway numbers that are like full out performing, and they're like doing the number. I don't know—

Teresa: I mean yeah, but they're not even live singing there.

Travis: I know, but like they're moving around—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: — and doing choreography and doing the thing, as opposed to like Reba McIntyre, who don't get me wrong is a jewel, standing like still on a float, surrounded by, I don't know, like Kebler elves, right. And she's pretending to sing into a microphone while she's freezing her butt off, and I'm like, "This is... nothing."

Teresa: Oh, well.

Travis: I'd rather have Reba McIntyre just like, "Hi everybody, love these Keebler elves."

Teresa: [giggles] Okay. Here are a few... let's say dark days for the Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: In 1993.

Travis: They lost Santa.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: There was a surprisingly strong gust of wind that pushed Sonic the Hedgehog, the balloon. [chuckles]

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: You have— Are you alright?

Travis: No, keep going, I was just taking a drink while you said, "Sonic the Hedgehog," which wasn't what I thought you were gonna say, keep going.

Teresa: [laughs] Pushed him into a lamppost at Columbus Circle.

Travis: Oh no.

Teresa: Breaking the top of the post off into the balloon, dragging the balloon down, injuring a child and an off-duty [chuckles] police officer. Oooo.

Travis: Sonic, oh no.

Teresa: 1997, another large gust of wind went Cat in the Hat balloon into another lamppost and falling debris struck a parade goer and sent her into a 24-day coma.

Travis: Oh no.

Teresa: She's okay.

Travis: Can you imagine though when she woke up and they're like, "What's the last thing you remember?" and she's like, "The Cat in the Hat was comin' for me."

Teresa: Mmm. And she got some—

Travis: "That can't be real, was it, doc?"
"No, the Cat in the Hat got you."

Teresa: Yup. She got some money for that. So the wind is really like the biggest problem for the Thanksgiving Day Parade, especially 'cause of the way that New York is laid out, right. With the tall buildings and the grid plan and all that kind of stuff, it can really amplify the wind.

Travis: Well, here's the thing, if you've ever walked around New York on a windy day, depending on the direction of the wind, you will come to like an intersection on the sidewalk, right? And suddenly, here's this like open like street, but it's like a wind tunnel.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Where you've been walking just fine because you've been blocked by buildings, and then you get to his corner where you're exposed, and it's just like foom!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: [chuckles] That is that— Feels like— Now imagine you were filled with helium and floating above the city.

Teresa: 1997 was a pretty bad time for this parade, because again Barney, the purple dinosaur... veered so wildly out of control that the NYPD had to eventually stomp and stab the balloon to prevent other carnage, right?

And while Barney's purple madness was bearing down on Manhattan, the Pink Panther collapsed on the ground and also needed to be stabbed by an NYPD officer.

Travis: This—

Teresa: [chuckles] I mean, it was—

Travis: This is— Works out this is—

Teresa: It was really bad. [chuckles]

Travis: I— My brain can't process—

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: — how upsetting all of this is. Just if you—

Teresa: 1997 was a dark day for the Parade.

Travis: If you remove the context of it was a parade and they were balloons, and you're just like Barney was just goin' wild in New York City like Godzilla.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And the police had to stomp and stab Barney. It's very upsetting. And don't get— And his partner the Pink Panther was out there runnin' amok. I'm just saying, maybe we need to reconsider the balloons and the police. [wheezes] It sounds like it's very upsetting.

Teresa: So, it wasn't really—

Travis: Was there not a more humane way to take down Barney, is what I'm saying?

Teresa: No, there wasn't.

Travis: Maybe take him to Isla Nublar with the other dinosaurs, where he can chill out and just live out the rest of his life. You know they were so busy thinking about is they could, they didn't stop to think about if they should.

Teresa: My problem is all of those things happened in 1997, and there was another instance in 2005 where the M&M balloon collided with a streetlight in Times Squares— in Time Square, right.

Travis: Keep these things away from streetlights.

Teresa: And so it wasn't until 2006 that safety measures were added to prevent these incidents. [chuckles]

Travis: It wasn't until 13 years after Sonic the Hedgehog—

Teresa: I know.

Travis: — injured a child.

Teresa: I know.

Travis: Then they went "You know what? Maybe we should be more careful."

Teresa: And so there were wind measurement devices added to the parade route. I'm not sure if they put 'em on the actual balloons, or if there was like— they were like attached somehow to the parade route itself.

Travis: I wanna picture them as like old timey weather manes, like weathervanes—

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: — on top of— Just like you see just like on top of this tall skyscraper just a rooster on top of like a compass, and they're like, "Mm, wind's comin' in strong today! Better get Felix the Cat down a little bit lower."

Teresa: Right, and so those devices could alert the organizers to any unsafe conditions, and also the balloons themselves were finally modified to fly a little closer to the ground, making them easier to control, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So now there are specific protocols and safety measures. [chuckles] And it really feels like it took a very long time for that to happen.

Travis: Well they didn't thing about figuring out a way to deflate the balloons when they first filled them for many years.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: So it seems like the wheels of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade grind slowly.

Teresa: Let me throw some numbers at you.

Travis: Eight, 12.

Teresa: [laughs] 2023, more than 8000 participants flooded the streets, and at least 5000 specifically made costumes, and 49 character balloons. 27 specialty craftsmen worked over 8000 hours, using 2000 gallons of paint, 300 pounds of glitter, and 200 pounds of confetti. For the parade.

Travis: Here's all I'm saying. Why not get 54 specialty craftsmen and only make 'em work 4000 hours each.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: It probably wasn't each, combined 8000 hours?

Teresa: Combined, combined.

Travis: Okay, that makes a lot more sense than 27 people each working 8000 hours, that? Too many hours.

Teresa: Too many. [laughs] This year, here are the specs for this year. NBC expects more than 44 million people to watch, keeping their eyes out for 17 giant balloons, 15 heritage nov— and novelty balloons, 27 floats, 11 marching bands, 10 performance groups, and more than [chuckles] 700 clowns. Before Santa Claus at the end.

Travis: I like to think they started with eight clowns, and that's all they ever intended to have, and then each year there's just more clowns there, and they're like, "Did you guys hire more clowns?"

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like, "No, I don't think so, we said eight clowns, we were counting on eight clowns." And then there were 16 clowns, and then there was 32 clowns. Where are these clowns coming from?

Teresa: That was the televised audience, 44 million people, but there is estimated that three and a half million people will be watching along the two-and-a-half-mile parade route.

Travis: Oh, then I don't wanna go.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's too many people.

Teresa: Here are some really great tips for watching the parade in person.

Travis: Stay at home.

Teresa: [laughs] The Parade starts at 8:30 am, and so you should start lining up early and bring something warm, something to keep you occupied, and some snacks, 'cause you could be waiting outside for a bit, right?

People start lining up very, very early for the 8:30 start. Sit as much as possible before the parade arrives, not etiquette but I mean that's the advice, because three and a half hours long is the parade.

Travis: Now here's a little tip from me to you. Get out there, when the first parade float, whatever the beginning is, has reached the end of the line. Then just start running back along the line.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You can like cut that in half.

Teresa: Well, wear sensible shoes, I guess.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Obviously, be courteous to others around you, especially if they have accessibility needs, right?

Travis: Or small children. Remember, this is a parade, and like...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I assume when we go for 20 minutes, [chuckles] the kids will go up on my shoulders for sections of it. But you know, try not to stand in front of a kid whose watching, like come on.

Teresa: Don't feel the need to push forward, right? Because you'll be able to see most of the floats and bands and balloons just as well a few people deep. And you probably don't really need to see a kid from Iowa play the French horn.

Travis: Well unless it's your kid.

Teresa: I guess so. Obviously—

Travis: And I would say in general, there's no need to push.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And what— Even if you weren't able to see everything, don't push.

Teresa: This is a family event, like you said, watch your language, don't litter, don't bring your pets, right? Because there's nowhere for you to go, if they need to poop or if they become unruly.

And this is not a parade where people encourage noisemakers and horns and bells and things. Okay, that might be what you do at your local parades, where they throw candy and things like that, right? Not at this one. You don't do that.

Travis: Same I assume with like public drinking, right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: This isn't like, "I sat down with a cooler of beer and watched the parade."

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: I assume that's frowned upon.

Teresa: It's also 7am, right, when people start lining up, so that's a little early—

Travis: Hey, listen.

Teresa: — for me to start drinking.

Travis: It's a holiday, there's mimosas, I don't know. I'm just saying that if you're used to like plopping down at the Ironton Memorial Day Parade and you're like—

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: — "I sit there and, you know, we grill out in the yard and watch it go by, and drink some beers," that's probably frowned upon here.

Teresa: Yes. It— I think it goes without saying, but stay out of the street. There's a parade happening there.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You best stay on the sidewalk. Alright, here are some other fun facts.

Travis: I assume about the parade.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Chronologically, please. 2018, the parade made history when actresses Caitlin Kinnunen and Isabella Mikawa. They kissed during their Broadway cast performance of *The Prom*, which became the first same sex kiss in the parade history.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Not in television history.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Just the parade.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: 2020, the parade was not open to the public, it was just filmed in a broadcast only event, to align with Covid compliance at the time. And the high school and college bands that were featured annually were invited back to perform in 2021, and the traditional in person procession came back with 6500 participants, which is not as big as it has ever been.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But still a revival, I would say. The next year, 2022, the parade was the— hosted by entirely woman, because Al Roker was ill.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: It stopped being the Christmas Parade and became the Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1927.

Travis: When Christmas was outlawed.

Teresa: Nnnnn— What?

Travis: No.

Teresa: No. The other way.

Travis: Oh right.

Teresa: Right. When...

Travis: Thanksgiving was allowed. [chuckles]

Teresa: [laughs] And it was televised in— It began to be televised in 1946. Before that it was just described on radio, by broadcasters.

Travis: “And there’s another guy with a trumpet. Wild.”

Teresa: Yeah. Here’s one. Each large balloon needs at least an hour and half to two hours to inflate, and they [chuckles] have to be able to fit through the Lincoln Tunnel. Because they have to get from the studio in New Jersey into the city. And you can come and watch the balloons inflate the day before if you want.

Travis: No thank you. Hey everybody, that’s gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for—

Teresa: Wait.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: I have one more thing that would really interest you specifically.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Snoopy.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Has been a regular staple character in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade since 1968. Since then, he has more unique variants than any other character balloon, with nine in total across eight balloons. It has appeared the most out of any character, with a grand total of 42 appearances. [chuckles]

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And if you listen to, what is it?

Travis: Just saying, it feels forced.

Teresa: [wheezes] Where did the Snoopy debate happen?

Travis: We don't need more— to stir up more stuff across podcasts that my brothers and I don't get the Snoopy height.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: We talk about it on *My Brother, My Brother And Me*, don't worry about it.

Teresa: And the only entity—

Travis: I'm not anti-Snoopy, I like Snoopy.

Teresa: I understand. [chuckles]

Travis: Just don't get the height.

Teresa: The only entity that annually uses more helium... is the United States military, as a whole. The whole military is the only thing—

Travis: Well they think it's funny that they have high voices and order commands—

Teresa: [giggles] They use—

Travis: — and so they do that a lot.

Teresa: That uses more helium than the Macy's Day Parade.

Travis: Than a single day.

Teresa: What? Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: I see, okay. Hey that's gonna do it for us folks, thank you so much for joining us. Let's see, like I mentioned at the beginning of the episode, I'm going to be in New York making my off-Broadway debut in *The Twenty-Sided Tavern*.

I wanna say it's November 27th through December 1st, there's seven performances if you wanna come get tickets, go to thetwentsidedtavern.com, it's all spelled out. Thetwentsidedtavern.com.

Go check out all of the merch at the McElroy merch store, mcelroymerch.com. Let's see, speaking of Thanksgiving, *Til Death Do Us Blart*.

Teresa: Ooo yeah.

Travis: I think the te— Is this the 10th anniversary? Yes. 10th anniversary season will be out on American Thanksgiving.

Thank you to our editor Rachel, without whom we could not do this show. Thank you to our researcher Alex, without whom we could not do this show. Thank you to you, the listener. You are the balloons to our parade.

Teresa: Nice. Thank you to Brent "Brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. 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 are taking your topic suggestions, your questions, your idioms. All that stuff, send it to us at shmannerscast@gmail.com, and say hi to Alex because she reads every single one.

Travis: I just wanna say, along with idioms and stuff, I know people gotta have questions about like the origins of Christmas traditions or other holiday traditions around that time.

Teresa: Yeah, topics and stuff.

Travis: Yeah, like, "Why do we say this? Why do we do this?" we could do an idioms-like episode of how did this thing come to be? How did this evolve?

So if you have a question of like, "Why did we start doing this? Why is this involved in this holiday, and why do we do this in this celebration?" please send those in, I'd love to do an episode about that. 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?

[outro theme music plays]

[ukulele chord]

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