

Shmanners 460: Water Pistols

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["Shmanners Intro Theme" by brentalfloss 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: Happy summer to you.

Teresa: Oh, boy.

Travis: A happy summer to you all. Happy Pride Month to you all.

Teresa: Yeah. Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Yeah.

Travis: I bet it's other months, too. Pride Month and summer.

Teresa: Yup.

Travis: And... June.

Teresa: Yes, our kids—our kids are summering so hard.

Travis: Yeah.

Travis: But today, I asked them if they were gonna get dressed and in unison they both screamed "no" at me.

Travis: Beautiful.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Here's what I've learned from looking at this from a parent's perspective, is that a lot of the summer fun stuff that kids want to do requires a lot of work and set up from parents.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Like—

Teresa: Yes, it does. A Little more forethought than just, "I want to do this."

Travis: Yeah, we talked about this before, but—maybe on the show. But like from our kids' perspective, there is no list of things between "I want to do this" and it's done, right? Where they'll be like, "Oh, let's do the slip and slide." And I'm like, okay, I have to get the slip and slide, start that up—clean it up, hook it up, run it out. And then gotta take it back down and hope we didn't kill all the grass and everything. And they're like, "No slip and slide! Poof."

Teresa: "Do it!" [chuckles]

Travis: It's just there.

Teresa: Yes. Although, I mean, they are things that take a little less than the slip and slide. For example—

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: Water gun fight.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Yes. Which is what—

Travis: Indubitably.

Teresa: We're doing today. I mean, not you and I. We're not—we're not doing a water—but we're talking—

Travis: No, that's scheduled for tomorrow, yes.

Teresa: [chuckles] We're talking about it. We're talking about them.

Travis: When I was a kid, I was—we did a squirt gun fight like during a camping trip that was like a tandem thing with like us and like two other families.

Teresa: Mm-hm?

Travis: And that's when I climbed up a tree to try to get a better vantage point, and slipped out of the tree and landed like face first on a rock.

Teresa: [chuckles] Oh no.

Travis: And I wasn't able to eat corn on the cob that night, because I was holding an ice pack to my nose.

Teresa: Aw...

Travis: It was the worst.

Teresa: Poor guy.

Travis: But look how handsome I am now, so I guess it all worked out!

Teresa: There is a long and wild history of water weaponry.

Travis: Get out.

Teresa: There is. Well—

Travis: Really?

Teresa: Okay, let's—

Travis: I would have guessed 1989, poof.

Teresa: So, yes, but also...

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: Let's think about this as kind of like a... what's the word for people who study humans?

Travis: Anthro.

Teresa: Anthropology.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Antho...

Travis: Anthropologically.

Teresa: There it is.

Travis: There's too many consonants in that word.

Teresa: [chuckles] Here is—

Travis: Too many Ls.

Teresa: Here's something—I mean, taken from Wikipedia, but still good. It is unknown, which I think is what is great about Wikipedia. It is unknown.
[laughs]

Travis: This is the same thing—we were talking about this the other day about like universal punch lines.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And they—I have one where—

Teresa: Nobody knows.

Travis: The kids will ask and I'll be like, "Nobody knows." And it's like, no, people know, you just don't know it.

Teresa: It is unknown *precisely* when humans first begin splashing their friends with water. Water play is exhibited by other animals, such as monkeys and elephants, opting to spray themselves and others to cool off during hotter months. Splashing others with water has likely been around since humans first discovered that a cupped hand could be used to cradle water within. I think that—

Travis: Beautiful.

Teresa: It's—

Travis: Poetry.

Teresa: It's quite poetic, indeed.

Travis: A cupped hand.

Teresa: So, that means that water fights in general are as old as humanity, even older, if you talk about monkeys.

Travis: Okay, yeah, if we're talking about like brontosauri.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Sure. So like, the squirt gun was invented pretty much alongside with the other named artillery, right? So like, they were utilizing—people were utilizing whatever was at their disposal long before there were squirt guns.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Do you know what I—you know what I mean?

Travis: Well, you weren't having a squirt gun fight with like a Winchester rifle?

Teresa: No, no, no, no, no. That's not—that's not all—

Travis: You mean like hoses and stuff?

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That makes a lot more sense.

Teresa: If we talk about water fighting in general, right?

Travis: Now I'm picturing, by the way, like a—like Jesse James, but with squirt guns.

Teresa: Mm-hm!

Travis: And them fighting in the Old West, and it's really funny to me, and cute.

Teresa: You could—you could do it with a lot of different things. You could do it with like plunger devices, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: You could do it with like dropper style—I'm thinking about like a turkey baster, right?

Travis: Oh, yeah, okay.

Teresa: Something with like a—like a tube and a balloon on the end, right?

Travis: Sure, yeah.

Teresa: You could do it like that. You could do it—I mean, we have water balloons, but you could use things that were not balloons. Like you could even soak a rag in water, right? And throw it at somebody.

Travis: A bucket.

Teresa: A bucket, of course, yes. The oldest surviving example of a squirt gun, specifically—now, this is the oldest surviving example, dates back to J.W. Wolff's patent for a product from June of 1896.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But like I said, there are depictions of children using water spraying devices, like I talked about, right? Like the kind of like ball on the end of like a tube, or whatever.

Travis: Well, that's the thing about water guns—

Teresa: All the way back to the sixteenth century.

Travis: Well, that's the thing about water guns, right? Is like, I mean, I'm sure that there are some highfalutin fancy-schmancy ones. But mostly, you gotta keep it pretty simple, because you're running water through those bad boys, right? So it can't get like super like electronic and everything.

Teresa: Right. Although, that doesn't stop us, because there has been.

Travis: Sure. But like, I'm picturing those ones that the girls have that are basically like tubes.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: With a handle on the back, that you stick in the water and you pull back on the plunger.

Teresa: That's like a plunger device, yeah.

Travis: Yeah, and sucks the water up, and then you push it for—like, yeah, man, pretty simple.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: You know?

Teresa: Which is actually a precursor to the air pump devices that we'll talk about later.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, there is a... there's a connection in—not connection, there's a... what am I trying—example in literature. In 1861, Civil War veteran, Sherman, General Sherman?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: He was commenting on the effort to quell the Confederate secession from the Union saying, "Why, you might as well attempt to put out the flames of a burning house with a squirt gun." Right?

Travis: What?

Teresa: Yeah. So, in literature, they—

Travis: *What?* Get out of the town!

Teresa: And so—

Travis: I would have preferred if he said Super Soaker, but I'll take it.

Teresa: Well, no, that—I—we are. We are going to talk about Super Soakers.

Travis: Ah yeah.

Teresa: Squirt guns at that time, during the Civil War, actually resembled kind of like regular pistols. They had a cast iron shell.

Travis: *What?*

Teresa: I know, right? With a tube threaded through, with like an eyedropper like squeeze bulb, like we were talking about.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? And maybe—

Travis: I guess it would be wild if they had been plastic.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: If they were like, "We had plastic back then, but the only thing we used it for was squirt guns. We just didn't think about the other applications."

Teresa: [laughs] Maybe they were considered as part of like a regular arsenal? Maybe it could be used with like pepper spray or something.

Travis: Sure. I can also see where, you know, as long as there have been guns—

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: There have been toy guns given to, especially for a long-time, boys. To be like, "Let's get them indoctrinated into like gun culture." And, "Ah, a young boy is just a young soldier," that kind of thing.

Teresa: Right, like non-lethal forms of self-defense as well, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: USA Liquid Pistol, which was a company, ran a 1905 ad—

Travis: Can I just say, liquid pistol, it sounds like a euphemism for something else.

Teresa: Oh, dear.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Their ad for their product said, "Will stop the most vicious dog without permanent injury."

Travis: Huh?

Teresa: Yeah, I mean, it's a spray of water, right?

Travis: Yeah, no, it makes complete sense.

Teresa: But you know, it's a—it's an option. It might stop it.

Travis: Also, if there's like a really annoying bird coming at you.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Right? Just a pigeon who won't leave you alone, it could see it being useful there. Or maybe like a chipmunk who maybe just has some big ideas and isn't listening to reason.

Teresa: [chuckles] So, it's a deterrent.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yes, a deterrent is what you're talking about.

Travis: Or like a fish in an emergency. If you see a fish in the middle of the road and you're like, "That guy looks thirsty."

Teresa: "He needs help."

Travis: That would be very useful then.

Teresa: So yes, like you—like you talked about, the cast iron was, over time, replaced by plastic.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Of course. And these squirt guns operated pretty much like spray bottles, right? So, it had the tube, it went down into the chamber, you had the trigger that was like a pump, and you could pump it out. And I mean, we have squirt guns like that today.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They are highly ineffective and leak a lot, and you have to refill them constantly.

Travis: That's another thing as a parent that you never anticipate, is like... it's like it was a movie or TV show or something, where you as the parent can see like two hours into the future.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: And you're like in the toy aisle or wherever and your kid's like, "Oh, let's get this!" And you're looking at a thing that costs 40 dollars to buy, but 20 cents to make.

Teresa: Yup.

Travis: And you're like, that's not gonna work the way you think it is.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And if I try to explain reason to you right now that that is poorly made and not a good squirt gun, you're not gonna listen to me. And then we're gonna get home and you're gonna get real frustrated that it like leaks and doesn't work and everything. Well, that's life. Let's go, child!

Teresa: Yup, let's go. Enter the '70s, when we have—

Travis: I'd rather not.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, I mean, it's a miracle. There was the Watergate scandal, and the Beatles broke up and, you know, disco. So, you'd rather not, but that's okay.

Travis: Well, disco I don't have a problem with. Disco is fine. I enjoy many, many disco tunes.

Teresa: Okay. This is when we get our first like upgrade, right? Into squirt guns. A Cosmic Liquidator.

Travis: Sorry, that sounds like a Fantastic Four super villain.

Teresa: It does! It was the first air pressured—

Travis: "I am the Cosmic Liquidator!"

Teresa: [chuckles] It was the first air pressure pump water gun.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: So, instead of the kind of trickle that might start off in a stream and kind of like tapers off—like the squirt bottle, right? The spray bottle. It had an—you could pump air that would build up pressure that wouldn't release until the trigger was pulled. Okay?

Travis: Mm-hm?

Teresa: It was a pretty clunky toy because you had the pressure tank, which was motorized and separated from the gun. Which meant that it was kind of awkwardly connected through tubing.

Travis: Oh, yeah, okay. Sort of like those things you see now where people use them for like pesticide or like—

Teresa: Sure, yeah, but I mean still—

Travis: Water where you pump a thing.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And then you have the like—

Teresa: But a motorized pump.

Travis: Oh, a motorized pump? Okay.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That's—hey, that's over-designed, people of the '70s.

Teresa: That is—that is my thoughts as well there.

Travis: Yeah. You have to plug it in? What are you talking about—motorized.

Teresa: [titters] So, here is the big—the big deal. The big deal happens. The man who is a wholesome genius—

Travis: Jeremy Super Soaker.

Teresa: He did invent—invent the Super Soaker, but not—his name's not Jeremy.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: His name is Lonnie Johnson. He's an inventor, an aerospace engineer, and a former NASA employee.

Travis: And he invented the Super Soaker?

Teresa: Yup.

Travis: Okay, we're gonna talk about this in just a second. But first, how about a quick thank you note from our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week, we were sponsored in part by Teasperience.

Teresa: Ooh, yes.

Travis: This is a perfect fit, not just for Shmanners, because, you know, tea, fancy. Teatime, all that, you get it.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah, you get it.

Travis: But also for us, because we love tea.

Teresa: We do. I'm in—I'm deep into iced tea at the moment.

Travis: I—they sent us a box of various teas.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: I've been thoroughly enjoying, there's one, the Thai tea I enjoy.

Teresa: Mm-hm!

Travis: The gunpowder green tea I've been enjoying. I had a jasmine tea last night.

Teresa: You know, and I really like on the packaging that it tells you what the caffeine level is.

Travis: I do.

Teresa: Because I really cannot—I like a tea in the afternoon, but I have to be careful about the caffeine level. But it's right there on the jar—high, moderate, mild. I love it.

Travis: And it's especially great because like I have it in my head of like, well, black tea is high, like green tea is medium, and any like herbal and stuff is no caffeine. But that's not always true.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Right? And so this way, it takes all the guesswork out of it. They come in cute little jars, and they're very nice, and they all smell great, and they all taste delicious. So, check out Teasperience. They are hand-picked, loose-leaf blends for the best taste and quality. They have balanced flavors, aromas, health benefits in every sip.

And they have so much variety. There's going to be something there that you love. I've already found multiple ones there that I love. So, if you're ready to experience premium tea like never before, head over to teasperience.com. It's T-E-A-S-P-E-R-I-E-N-C-E.com. And use code Shmanners—S-H-M-A-N-N-E-R-S, to get 15% off your first order. Go now! Have some tea! It's teatime. That's not their slogan, that's—I just—

Teresa: You made that up. But it's a good one!

Travis: Thank you.

[break]

Jordan: Actor Samantha Sloyan has played a lot of characters—Bev Keane in *Midnight Mass*, Miss Rohrabacher in the new film *The Life of Chuck*, Lily, the mother who diligently watches over her son in the hit medical drama, *The Pitt*. But one character really made Samantha Sloyan feel seen, that is Special Agent Dale Cooper from *Twin Peaks*.

Samantha: When you see somebody swing for the fences with almost like no sense of embarrassment, or, you know, just with total abandon, I'm just captivated.

Jordan: Join me, Jordan Crucchiola, for that and more on the latest Feeling Seen, from maximumfun.org.

[break]

Mallory: Hey, there! Do you like books about various shades of gray?

Brea: Maybe 50 of 'em? Or books about winged men searching for soulmates?

Mallory: Is your E-reader full of stories that would pair well with Barry White in the background?

Brea: We're Brea and Mallory of Reading Glasses, and we have a brand-new show for people who crave reads with just a dash of sriracha sauce.

Mallory: That's right! Every other Friday, we dive into books that could be measured on the Scoville scale and talk to the people who love them.

Brea: You can find our new show by visiting maximumfun.org/spicy. That's maximumfun.org/spicy.

[break]

Travis: Okay, tell me about Lonnie Johnson.

Teresa: Okay, let's back it up. Before he invented the Super Soaker—

Travis: He was born.

Teresa: Yes, he was born, in 1945—

Travis: I knew it.

Teresa: In Alabama. Where it was very clear early on that he had a real knack for tinkering with things. There is a CBS Sunday Morning episode he's on, and talks about how, at one point, he nearly burned down the house for attempting to make rocket fuel on the kitchen stove. This reminds me so much of our firstborn. [titters]

Travis: Yes. Who came to us the other day and she was like, "I want to make a hoverboard. I already have it figured out. Got a metal tube, attach to the board. We're going to burn wood chips in there for fuel. I just have to figure out how to land."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's—oh, that's all?

Teresa: That's it, huh?

Travis: That's all you gotta figure out?

Teresa: And in 1968, he entered his first high school—

Travis: Oh, and to be—

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: To be clear about the Bebe story, this wasn't like a flight of fancy.

Teresa: No.

Travis: She got upset that we wouldn't let her build what would essentially be a fire.

Teresa: Yeah. [chuckles]

Travis: Under her feet.

Teresa: Under her feet. [titters] In 1968, he entered his high school science contest, with his very own robot!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It took him over a year to build, and it was completely remote controlled.

Travis: Wow!

Teresa: So cool, right? And I mean like... he won. Of course he did!

Travis: Oh, okay. Cool, yeah, good for you, man.

Teresa: Of course he won! If a kid rolled up with a robot in 1968? I'd be like—

Travis: Even like a mediocre robot I still would be like, it's the '60s, nice.

Teresa: He earned a master's degree in nuclear [pronounced 'nuke-you-ler'] engineering. Nuclear. Which one is it?

Travis: Don't overthink it.

Teresa: Okay. [laughs]

Travis: I don't know, don't ask me. I was raised in West Virginia. I couldn't have told you before you asked me, but especially not now.

Teresa: I wasn't sure if my—

Travis: *Nuclear.*

Teresa: If my Midwestern was coming out.

Travis: Nuclear!

Teresa: Nuclear.

Travis: Nu-clear.

Teresa: Nuclear. There it is.

Travis: Nuclear.

Teresa: Engineering and got a job working at NASA's famous Jet Propulsion Laboratory. In addition to the Air Force Achievement Medal and the Air Force Commendation Medal, he also received several awards directly from NASA for his work on the spacecraft system design. He builds things for astronauts.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: He's the real deal. Okay?

Travis: No, you've convinced me, baby. You got me! Now reel me in.

Teresa: Back to the Super Soaker.

Travis: Yes, please.

Teresa: In 1982, Lonnie brought some of his work home with him. And while messing around with a pump, he filled it with water, before realizing that it could shoot a powerful stream of water directly into his bathtub. It was more powerful than any squirt gun he'd ever encountered, right? And he—

Travis: I love this image. Just all of it, but especially this moment of like a NASA scientist with a degree in *nuclear* engineering.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Who like does jet propulsion and stuff, shooting a stream of water from a pump into a bathtub and saying, maybe saying out loud, "Why, that's stronger than any squirt gun I've ever encountered."

Teresa: He told Mo Rocca on CBS Sunday Morning, "That is a pretty cool squirt gun." Right? He knew it! He knew it right from the jump, that that was what it was gonna be.

Travis: What a cool nerd.

Teresa: So awesome. He made a prototype where he strung together plexiglass, PVC pipe, and an empty two-liter soda water bottle.

Travis: That tracks, because if you've ever had, especially like the Super Soaker I'm picturing that was like neon orange and green and white, it was like a bottle that you unscrewed, filled with water and screwed in. And it was like almost the size and shape of a two liter.

Teresa: Yes. He gave his prototype to his seven year old daughter, Annika, and she...

Travis: Terrorized the town—

Teresa: Terrorized the neighborhood—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yes! [chuckles]

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Managed to drench every single kid—

Travis: That's not fair! Her dad's a rocket engineer!

Teresa: On the air force base they were living on, right? So, totally kid-approved. Took a few more years with the design, but on May 27th, 1986, the US Patent Office granted Lonnie Johnson a patent for what he called at the time a squirt gun, right? A few name changes and additional patents, and then the Super Soaker was born.

Travis: This thing—folks, if you are not of my age, right? If you are older or younger. You don't know the sheer grip that the Super Soaker—

Teresa: Oh yes.

Travis: Held us all in. There are toys from my childhood that I remember it being like, oh, yeah, that—this Christmas, everybody wants this one toy, right? And I would put Super Soaker in the same group as like Nerf. Where it was—

Teresa: Oh, it is, it—they have—they all trace back to Lonnie as well.

Travis: Nerf?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I love this man. Okay. But where it was not just like, oh, this toy came out, and for 1996, it was the toy. Every year, there was like an iteration of it.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: That was like, "We've redesigned, now it's this. And now it's this." Right?

Teresa: It was bigger and better and awesome every time.

Travis: Every year.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And to—for something that wasn't attached to like toys based on a TV show or toys based on a movie or something, that it was just like an individual—the speed at which Super Soaker as a household name became a thing, and like Nerf as a house—the speed at which those things just became concrete anchor points of my childhood was blindingly fast.

Teresa: And like you said, what made Super Soaker different was this arm-powered pump, right? This pump that you could pressurize the chamber in order—and then release the pressure with the trigger, right?

Travis: That, I think in many ways, was as much a part of it as the power of it. Because it was—it never felt like, oh, now I have to do work to be able to fire the gun. It felt like cool prep you were doing.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? Because the position of it was like almost like a pump action shotgun kind of thing.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: So you—like, all the commercials and everything was like somebody behind the corner of a wall—[spoofs pumping sounds] ka-chung, ka-chung, ka-chung, djink. Pumping it up and ready to turn the corner and blast their foe. Right? It—the pumping was as cool as the thing. I think eventually they like started doing ones you didn't have to pump. And I honestly think that that was when it started to go downhill.

Teresa: Oh, yeah?

Travis: When it was like, "Oh, now it's automatic—battery powered!" I'm like, I don't want that.

Teresa: Yeah, I mean, again, like that's like, that's over design.

Travis: I don't want that.

Teresa: Right? That was—

Travis: I want it to pump, and I feel like I'm pumping it, and I'm in control. And my parents can hear me coming because it's like ka-chung, ka-chung, ka-chung, and I'm like, don't!

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Don't—not in the house.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: I heard it.

Teresa: So, in the early '90s, selling two million units in 1991 alone, Hasbro acquired the rights to the toy. And then as time went on, the toy sold more than 250 million units, earning well over a billion dollars in revenue. It's the best-selling water toy of all time, inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame in 2015.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: It belongs in a museum.

Travis: It belongs in a museum. Belonging—I—I wouldn't be surprised if somewhere, maybe it's just small, but it has its own museum.

Teresa: So over the years, Lonnie Johnson continued to patent ideas and inventions in both aerospace and nonsense departments. [chuckles]

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: He turned his toy prowess into further work, not only on the Super Soaker, but Nerf Blasters and Nerf Rockets and other Nerf related properties.

Travis: There was a Nerf gun growing up that was basically like a long tube, I mean, that was like another pump action thing, right?

Teresa: Mm-hm?

Travis: That had kind of almost tennis-ball-sized like solid foam balls. And you could load the tube up with like three or four of them, and then pull the thing back. And by pushing it—the plunger forward really quickly, it would

shoot 'em. That was such a staple in the McElroy household. Those things of just like you turn a corner and just get popped in the forehead by one.

Teresa: Uh-huh. [titters]

Travis: Me and Justin and Griffin used those—like, I wouldn't be surprised if our parents had to bury them, because they never stopped working. They were so simple. And we use them all the time. And it was like, oh, yeah, we could just—and then as we got older—I don't know if kids still do this, if we still—if like we still are buying kids Nerf darts. But you could like push a like push pin into it, or something like a pin through it, and then shoot it to get it to like stick in a dartboard or something that that.

Teresa: Oh?

Travis: Yeah. My parents didn't—weren't wild about that innovation.

Teresa: Probably not.

Travis: Yeah...

Teresa: So, Lonnie has over 130 US patents, and the ones for the toys pay him well enough that he can continue work on spacecraft power systems. As well as—

Travis: It's nice that he can do his hobby.

Teresa: Potential inventions.

Travis: Yeah. It's nice that—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: His main job pays for his hobby of rockets.

Teresa: His prolific work landed him not only in the National Toy Hall of Fame, but in 2022, he was also inducted to the National Inventors Hall of Fame. And like... in conclusion, he's a literal rocket scientist who, by the

way, grew up in the Civil Rights Movement. While also being smart enough to put astronauts into space, he's cool and down to earth enough that he took all his otherworldly scientific knowledge and used it to make such a frivolous and delightful thing as a Super Soaker.

Travis: I love that.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: What I also love about that is there's a lot of stories in science and inventions and stuff where it's like, they set out to do this thing and like accidentally created something that became a toy, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I love that this man was like, "No, I'm doing that thing. And then I saw the opportunity to make toys, and I seized on it so hard."

Teresa: [chuckles] Okay, let's do some etiquette.

Travis: Yes, please.

Teresa: I would like—

Travis: Don't shoot the dog. No shooting your sister.

Teresa: No.

Travis: If I hear you guys fighting, I'm gonna have to take him away!

Teresa: [chuckles] So, here's the thing. Also growing up in the time of the Super Soaker, it was very quickly apparent to myself and my friends who were managing a pool at the time. So like, I was born in '85, which means that when I was about like 15, right, Super Soakers had been on the market for a long time. We knew about Super Soakers, but there hadn't been a rule at the pool that I was working at against Super Soakers.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Until us. And we were like, we understand these toys. You cannot have them inside the pool. [titters]

Travis: The level... of artillery—

Teresa: Yes. [titters]

Travis: Beyond just this little plastic, meh-meh-meh, squirt guns, to a Super Soaker? Is like, oh, this is like... it's the difference between like... I'm trying to—it's like if you see like people in a movie doing a montage where they have paint brushes and they're kind of flicking paint on each other.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Versus a paintball gun.

Teresa: Yes. There were just too many innocent bystander casualties, right? The mom who brought her book into the pool ended up with a ruined book.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: The baby who was like riding on her dad's shoulders ended up with a face full of water. Like, it was just too much. We finally had to say you cannot have pump action squirt guns inside the pool. They stay outside the pool, back in the volleyball court, or whatever, right? Like—

Travis: Squirt gun control.

Teresa: You cannot have them in the pool. It's just too much fun to keep these kids from getting it everywhere.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So, you need to know—here's the etiquette of that. You need to know the strength of your weaponry. [chuckles] You can't pit a Super Soaker against a regular squirt gun in like a free for all fight. It's just not—it's not cool, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: If you have teens? Great. All the teens can Super Soak each other as much as they want. But if there's a five year old in there who has one of those little like just plunger style guns, you can't—you can't be in there with those kids. [chuckles] You have to make sure that the strength of the—of the guns matches what you're doing and who you're playing with.

Travis: This is similar back to our snowball fight episode. My recommendation for something like this, bunch of neighborhood kids, or like family... family gathering or whatever, where this is going to happen. Make it like a scheduled time.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? And not like Bobby has a squirt gun and he's trying to get something going by just running around and surprising people with squirt gun blasts.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Right? No like— "We've provided Super Soakers for all the kids. The squirt gun fight starts at 3:00." Right? That kind of thing.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So everybody who wants to participate, can participate. And everyone who doesn't want to, isn't going to just get caught in the crossfire.

Teresa: Right. So it's important to have things like maybe there's a time limit, maybe there's out of bounds. Maybe there's specific areas—I recommend no shooting in the face, right? Maybe there's like a specific kind of—maybe even you don't want to shoot at each other. You cannot trust your children with that. [chuckles] Maybe it's—

Travis: Good luck with that!

Teresa: Maybe it's like an accuracy game, right? Where you set up like plastic cups.

Travis: No. Hey, baby? I love you and I respect you as a parent and person.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Giving kids squirt guns and saying, "But you just shoot cups, you don't shoot each other."

Teresa: Well, you only have to have—

Travis: You might start that—you might start that way.

Teresa: If you only have one squirt gun, okay? You could do an accuracy game.

Travis: Oh my god, mom! Let me and my friends play with our squirt—what are you talking about one squirt gun for multiple children? What are you talking about?

Teresa: I'm just—

Travis: They have to be able to run around and shoot each other with squirt guns!

Teresa: Yes. But—

Travis: Let them get their wiggles out!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's gonna be okay!

Teresa: But—

Travis: It's not acid!

Teresa: Consent is key.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: That is true.

Teresa: If Aunt Helen doesn't want to be sprayed because she's wearing her Sunday best, don't spray Aunt Helen, okay?

Travis: Water balloon, water gun, water balloon, both of 'em. They're not opt in. Or they're not opt out, they're opt in.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right?

Teresa: Opt in, always. Always—and also have a clear timeout signal or a clear end of the game. I like to do, this is the amount of water that you get to play with. When the water is gone, you're done with the game. Like fill up a bucket or something. And you can refill from the bucket, but when the bucket is empty, we're taking a break. The game is over. There's no perpetual playing.

Travis: I also—I'm joshing. Because setting expectations and rules is very important for something like this.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And telling the kids ahead of time like, "Hey, these are the rules. And if we want to do this again sometime, I need to make sure you follow these rules. Or like if we break—if we can't follow the rules, then we can't do this thing."

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Right? *Way* better than in like the middle of 80 kids running around a house or a backyard or whatever you're trying to say, "Hey, no shooting each other in the face. No, no, not like that. No, no, don't get—" Tell them all before it starts. That's when you most have their attention.

Teresa: Clear rules are very important. Also, hey, guys, wear your sunscreen outside and wear sensible shoes, because the slipping around in the water is real.

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: Also, like, don't forget to clean your squirt guns.

Travis: Yeah, man. Don't leave it.

Teresa: A moldy—a moldy squirt gun is no fun.

Travis: Don't leave it put together, don't leave it with water in it, all that stuff.

Teresa: Yeah! So, enjoy yourself and have fun, but be safe, and we love you.

Travis: Hey, thank you everybody for listening. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not do the show. Thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we could not do this show. And thank you to you for listening! I don't want to do the show without you, and you can't make me! What else, Teresa?

Teresa: We—

Travis: Oh, wait, I want to say! Ha-hoo! We're going to be at Origins Game Fair in Columbus, doing *My Brother, My Brother and Me* and *The Adventure Zone* live shows, as well as a bunch of programming at the convention. Go check that out and all of our other upcoming dates at bit.ly/mcelroytours. Now, what else?

Teresa: We always thank Brent 'Brental Floss' 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, send in your topic suggestions, your questions, your idioms, all that stuff, shmannerscast@gmail.com. Say hi to Alex, because she reads every single one.

Travis: And that's going to 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?

["Shmanners Intro Theme" by brentalfloss plays]

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