

Shmanners 467: Fly Fishing

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[Shmanners 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: [makes buzzing noise] [pop] [makes fishing sound]

Teresa [giggles]

Travis: What do you think?

Teresa I love it.

Travis: I've been working on it.

Teresa I actually— I've been working on a question that I *know*, I know you can answer.

Travis: Oh, boy. Okay.

Teresa Your favorite media representation of fly fishing.

Travis: *My* favorite...

Teresa Is from?

Travis: My favorite media representation— Is it from *Yellowstone*?

Teresa [exasperated] No!

Travis: Oh.

Teresa *Goofy Movie*!

Travis: Oh! Of course.

Teresa The perfect cast!

Travis: The perfect cast. That's fly fishing?

Teresa Yes! [laughs]

Travis: I guess I've just always thought of it as "fishing."

Teresa No. That's fly fishing. You know, you're out there in the waders. And you got the big, long thing with the... the big thing. And you go, "Wooshoosh!" And you gotta do—

Travis: I think there's words for those things, that you're—

Teresa There are. And I'll tell you about 'em.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa But you gotta do the... [makes winding sound] [pop]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa Right? So that—

Travis: It is one of my greatest shames...

Teresa The perfect cast is fly fishing.

Travis: ... that I have not memorized the steps of the perfect cast.

Teresa [sighs]

Travis: As many times as I've seen that movie – in the hundreds at this point, I would say, in my life...

Teresa Mm-hmm.

Travis: And when I see people doing it, usually via TikToks or whatnot, I'm like, "Oh, that's the perfect cast." But I can't— It won't stick in my brain. Not like "Hi, Dad" soup. "Hi, Dad" soup's always in my brain.

Teresa [giggles]

Travis: So we're talking, this week, about fly fishing.

Teresa Yes, we are.

Travis: And—

Teresa And everything we know about fly fishing is *from* TV and movies.

Travis: Yes. Here's the things I know about fly fishing. It was in *A River Runs Through It*, a movie I saw once when I was ten years old.

Teresa Okay.

Travis: You have a bunch of different flies.

Teresa Mm-hmm.

Travis: Which are weird, furry little things that you make. And have feathers, and different doodads and whatnots, and hooks.

Teresa Yes. It is important that they be made of synthetic materials.

Travis: And you kinda stand in the water...

Teresa Or, I suppose, non— They could be made of organic materials, like feathers and stuff. But not food, like worms and stuff.

Travis: And I believe most tackle boxes, what *I* think of as containing crafting supplies...

Teresa Uh-huh.

Travis: ... you would use for fishing. I believe that's why they're called tackle boxes, or caboodles.

Teresa [laughs heartily]

Travis: I bet that fly fishermen and any fisher-people in general get really mad if you refer to their tackle boxes as caboodles.

Teresa [through laughter] Probably.

Travis: I bet they don't care for that *one bit*.

Teresa Right.

Well, so if we're gonna talk about fishing... I mean, fish is food, right? For people.

Travis: And friends!

Teresa And friends.

Travis: Well, I got fish right there. Don't let 'em hear you say that too loud. My angel fish are gonna be real mad, and start getting scared you're gonna eat 'em.

Teresa Okay. Well...

Travis: Now, don't you think it's messed up that in *The Little Mermaid*... And maybe this has been a practice before this. But the "Under the Sea" people believe that the fish in the bowl... is lucky.

Teresa Uh-huh. [laughs]

Travis: "They in for a worser fate. One day when the boss gets hungry, guess who gonna be on the plate?"

So the belief that, one day, I'll be like, "Mm. I don't *wanna* eat any of the food in my house. None of this looks appetizing to me. You know what I'm gonna do? Eat my fish!"

Teresa But— No, I think that there's punctuation there. That indicates that the fish in the bowl is lucky. *They* in for a worser fate, one day, when— "They," as in us, we, the other fish in the sea. Not the ones in the bowl.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa "One day, when the boss gets hungry, we're gonna be on the plate." Not them.

Travis: Well, this does also— I guess, if we're talking about aquariums, because maybe fish like big, huge aquariums, like buildings for sea fish. Maybe the fish there have realized that, at least in my experience – and I've been to many aquariums throughout the US – there is always, within 50 feet of the entrance to the aquarium, a seafood restaurant.

Teresa [laughs]

Travis: As if people are like, "These fish are beautiful. I would like to eat them."

Teresa Hmm. Maybe.

Travis: Okay. So fishing, fish are food.

Teresa Fishing. Fish. People have always been doing things like spearfishing. Or snagging devices, like nets and stuff, to try and fish. But the thing about fly fishing is it is inherently different. It is very specialized. And—

Travis: You gotta have special pants!

Teresa You do! You *do* have to have special pants.

Travis: I think you have to have special pants to spearfish.

Teresa And the goal of fly fishing is a little more nuanced, right? So it's done in rivers with flowing water, normally. And is focused on the art of the sport, rather than catching fish to eat. In fact, it is *normally* a catch-and-release type activity.

Travis: Now, in general, when I think about any kind of sport fishing, right, in which I guess I'm grouping anything where it's not, "Oh, we need to fish to feed our family or to make a living."

Teresa Mm-hmm. Right.

Travis: You are pretty much accepting, "I don't know. Maybe I won't even get anything. I'm just gonna stand out here *all* day and wait."

Teresa Because the sport encompasses the *entire* activity, not just the actively standing in the river...

Travis: Sure.

Teresa Right? So it's about researching the lures, and making the lures, and finding the perfect spot. And going with your friends, but not to talk, because not to scare fish. But... Like, it's the whole thing.

Travis: Doesn't that seem like a great way to keep people— Like, "Hey, no. Shh, you'll scare the fish—" [laughs] Like—

Teresa [giggles]

Travis: "No, I'm just— I wanted to say, like, how's your life going? I know you were going through—"

"No, shh! The fish. Don't scare the—"

Teresa [giggles]

And that type of activity has been around for *centuries*. In fact, there is evidence that the very first fishing lures were created in the second century of Rome.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa Yeah, right?

Travis: Once again, there are many things that we talk about where it's like, the creation of this is fairly, what we would call, ancient, right?

Teresa Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it makes sense to me. Because most of the time, it's like, I can see the direct link that somebody out there watching a lake, or whatever, would see different bugs or what-have-you land on the water, or near the water, or whatever.

Teresa Right.

Travis: And see the fish go for them, and think, "Oh. I could make something that looks like that bug that the fish would be attracted to."

Teresa Right. And like so many things, fly fishing was a leisure time sport for... I mean, forever. It's always been that. Because you're not fishing for food. Right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa You have to have the time, instead of working, to—

Travis: It seems like the least efficient way to fish for food.

Teresa [chuckles]

Travis: Big net? Efficient.

Teresa [laughs]

Travis: Tie a weird, spinny golden thing on the end, and it's like, "I don't know. [laughs] Maybe."

Teresa Yeah.

Travis: "I'm just gonna stand in some water for a while. Don't come near me."
"Shh! The fish. Don't scare the fish."

Teresa [giggles] So what we have, in the 13th Century England, we have people crafting specialized lures of hooks and feathers as a pastime, right? And so you make the lure float on the water, like you said, to emulate their prey. And then by the 15th Century, we have Brits all over enjoying this leisurely activity, and starting to improve upon the gear.

Travis: It's also interesting because in my brain— Especially when we talk about the Brits, right?

Teresa Mm-hmm.

Travis: I think of, when I'm thinking of Victorian Era, even in your Bridgertons, your regencies as well...

Teresa Even before that.

Travis: But I think of them as, like, hunting. You know?

Teresa Oh, okay.

Travis: It's like, "Oh, we're going on a fox hunt. And we've got the people, and we're driving it out." Right? Which seems like a much... bro-ier thing than, like, "I'm gonna go fly fishing."

Teresa Sure.

Travis: "And it'll be me, and maybe my friend Tom about 100 yards away. He's also in the water."

Teresa Well, we got the extrovert bros that go the huntings.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa And then we've got the introvert bros that do the fishing. [chuckles]

Travis: This is what I'm saying. This is what I'm saying. In the end result, you're still trying to catch an animal.

Teresa That's true.

Travis: But it seems like a much more, for lack of a better word, sensitive version of it.

Teresa [laughs] I guess so!

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa Sure. More introspective, at least.

Travis: Sure! Time to think. Time to feel. No time to talk— "Shh! The fish."

Teresa [laughs] In 1613, a man named John Dennys wrote *The Secrets of Angling*, which is one of the earliest pieces written on fly fishing. And in the footnotes, he becomes the first person to coin the phrase, "Cast a fly."

Travis: Okay.

Teresa So he says, "The trout gives the most gentlemanly and easiest sport of all, if you fish with an artificial fly, a line twice your rod's length of three hairs' thickness, and if you have learnt to cast a fly."

Travis: "Three hairs' thickness."

Teresa I know, right?

Travis: I miss the old ways of measuring things.

Teresa [giggles]

Travis: You know? Where you're like, "Uh, three fingers of this. Two apples high. Up to a horse's shoulder." Or it's just like, "I dunno, man..."

Teresa [laughs]

Travis: "You get it! You know what I'm *trying* to say. It's about *yay* tall." I want more of that back.

Teresa Okay. Through literature, we see that there—

Travis: You can just not acknowledge— "Okay" is a great—

Teresa [bursts out laughing]

Travis: You don't *have* to say anything after I say something real dumb.

Teresa [gasping laughter]

Travis: You don't have to be like, "Okay." [thud] Right? I get it... I threw my phone on the ground... [laughs] You can just let some of those balls sail *right* past. I get it.

Teresa [holding back laughter] There's a definite leisurely break between 1642 and 1651, because of the British Civil War.

Travis: Yeah. I could see where, maybe, it would be harder to find time.

Teresa To wade into a river, and commune with mother nature?

Travis: Yeah. Yeah.

Teresa Yeah, yeah. So British Civil Wars were disputes between the Crown and Parliament about how England, Scotland, and Ireland should all be governed. So there was a tentative peace that emerged again in the early 1660s.

And this is when we see a vivid resurgence. Because people were like, "Oh, my gosh. We're so tired of fighting. Let's go back to nature." We see it in sport, we see it in literature. It is, like...

Travis: It happens all the time.

Teresa Yeah.

Travis: I mean, a lot of the modern-day American hobbies were that, right?

Teresa Right.

Travis: Coming home, and baseball then becoming a big thing. Or coming home, and football, or working on your cars, or taking care of your lawn. Right? Those kinds of things.

Teresa Right. This is when we start to see a big resurgence of literature about it, specifically. Here's one: a veteran of these civil wars named Robert Venables wrote a book named *The Experienced Angler, or Angling Improved, Being A General Discourse of Angling Imparting Many of the Aptest Ways and Choicest Experiments for the Most Sorts of Fish in Pond or River*.

Travis: Okay. Was he getting paid by the word on the cover?

Teresa I mean, I guess so. Man, they just love— They *love*, love to expound on the title, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa You would think that they could find three or four words, good title, and then maybe a little blip underneath. But...

Travis: You know what this is? This is the original— This is like the analog

version of when you're trying to find something, like, "Oh, I need to buy a costume piece for a goth character I'm doing."

And then it comes up, like, "Black dress jacket for men, goth, emo, punk..."

Teresa [laughs] Oh, yeah!

Travis: "... wearable by all, suitable, funeral."

Teresa Right, yeah.

Travis: And it's every word they could think of, of "Maybe this will catch the SEO. I don't know."

You know, it also occurs to me that many of these, coming home from war and taking up these new hobbies, and getting reinvested in stuff, he could've called the book *A Guide to Fishing, or How to Hyperfocus on a Hobby Instead of Going to Therapy and Dealing with the Traumas of Going to War*. "Instead, go fishing! Have fun, my friends. Bye!"

Teresa Right. So then we've got the 1600s, we're gonna say, were about gathering fly fishing information. The 1700s were about consolidating into a more streamlined sport.

Travis: Streamlined.

Teresa Ah!

Travis: Ah!

Teresa I got it. This is when we start to improve upon the hardware. Running rings began to appear on fishing rods.

Travis: This is the— You run the line through the rings, right?

Teresa Through the rings.

Travis: To give it more support and everything. Okay, that makes sense.

Teresa Exactly. It lines up the rod, right, giving you greater control over the casting line.

Travis: What were they doing before!?

Teresa I think maybe they just had the one, at the end.

Travis: Just hopin'. Just hopin' and pray— Turn it into a bow! You know what I mean? Ugh, come on, guys. You should've thought of that sooner.

Teresa We've got jointed rods becoming common with bamboo at the top, to give it more flexibility and strength.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa And then this is the time when fly fishing went industrial. And we know this—

Travis: To catch robot fish!

Teresa No! Not that kind of industrial. Fly fishing, like rods and tackles, started to pop up in haberdasheries.

Travis: In haberdasheries, you say?

Teresa Yeah! Men's clothing and hats stores, and stuff.

Travis: So they could be mass produ— You weren't getting your bespoke rod and reel. Now, you were able to buy them off the rack.

Teresa Supposedly. Or I think it more is just the idea that we're centralizing the location of these things. You don't have to go to a specialist, or an artisan, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa They're conglomerating together.

Travis: Okay. And this is how you get your Bass Pro Shops, eventually.

Teresa [whispering] I mean... I mean... Yeah?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa [bursts out laughing]

Travis: This was the first— And to this day, the Bass Pro Shop still sells clothes, and hats, and fishing rods.

Teresa That's true!

Travis: So in many ways, you can still buy fishing rods in haberdasheries, if you think about it.

Teresa That's true. The town of Redditch in Worcestershire— Right? That's how you say it?

Travis: Is it [alternate pronunciation] Worcester...?

Teresa No...

Travis: [amused] I don't know.

Teresa I don't know. [wheeze-laughs] I've become very shy about pronouncing English towns and counties.

Travis: Once again, paid by the letter...

Teresa [bursts out laughing]

Travis: They *love* to throw silent letters in there, just to trip up us Yanks.

Teresa Was a town that had completely turned into a go-to destination for fishing tools.

Travis: This is something I have found, in my time in England or Scotland or Ireland. Is next to any town or village – I mean, smaller than a city, right – is like, "And here is the river [laughs] that you can go..."

Teresa Yeah.

Travis: And it's like, "Yeah, man. That is the place where you would go fly fishing. And we have worked really hard to keep it very nice."

Teresa Mm-hmm.

Travis: "With lovely bridges, and serene and everything. So that when you go in there and do it, it might as well be the 1600s and you're doing it for fun. That sight is sacred to us, now."

Teresa Speaking of a name that is difficult to pronounce, we've got now in 1761, [slowly] Onesimus Ustonson.

Travis: You know what? I think you nailed it.

Teresa Yeah? [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa Became a market leader in the...

Travis: I mean, the confidence could do a little work.

Teresa [laughs] ... in the fishing industry.

Travis: But I think pronunciation-wise, yes.

Teresa The reason that I have to mention him is because he invented the

multiplying reel. And he supplied fishing tackle to the naturalist Joseph Banks, who was on James Cook's second voyage.

Travis: So is this your reel where— 'Cause I have done a little fishing back when I was younger, before I had the ability to say, "No, I don't wanna do that."

Teresa [laughs]

Travis: Is you turn the reel, right, and it would be like you would turn it a quarter-turn. But inside, it would turn a multiple of that.

Teresa Yes.

Travis: So that way, you didn't have to reel it *all the way* to get the line, right? It had kind of a multiple pulley effect.

Teresa Like gears on a bike.

Travis: Right, exactly.

Teresa Yeah, totally.

Travis: Speaking of turning...

Teresa Whoa.

Travis: We're gonna take a turn... towards a word from another Maximum Fun show, and we'll be right back.

Teresa Scree!

Travis: That was a good turning noise.

Teresa [through laughter] Thanks.

[theme music plays]

Jackie: Jackie Kashian. Hi, and welcome to the MaximumFun.org podcast, *The Jackie and Laurie Show*, where we talk about standup comedy. And how much we love it, and how much it enrages us.

Laurie: We have a lot of experience, and a lot of stories, and a lot of times on our hands! So check us out. It's one hour a week, and we drop it every Wednesday on MaximumFun.org.

[ad break ends]

Travis: Okay. We're back.

Teresa Okay. So now, textile machines could make tapered lines for the fishing rod. So maybe you want it three hairs wide at the *end*.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa But at the *beginning*, you need it stronger, right?

Travis: Of course.

Teresa So your line doesn't break as you are...

Travis: Like, four-and-a-half hairs?

Teresa ... running it through your reel, right?

Travis: Maybe 5.3 hairs.

Teresa Because we have more tension through the multiplying reel. We have more friction, because of the way that we are running it through the lines. All that kind of stuff, right?

Travis: I bet it was waxed and stuff, too.

Teresa Probably. I mean, anything you could do to make it work better at this point.

By the 1800s, not only were several more books published about fly fishing and techniques, but fly fishing clubs were beginning to pop up, all over.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa Bringing fishers together.

Travis: Fly Guys was one.

Teresa [laughs]

Travis: Reel Winners was another one. Um... Um... Um, Defensive Tackles. I'm out.

Teresa [through laughter] You're out.

Here's one that is notable: 1836, *The Fly-fisher's Entomology*. And here is why. Alfred Ronalds. Ronalds was a big fan, of course, but his particular skill made this stand out.

He was a talented engraver and printer. So the book was not only supported by shis thoughtful words, but with 20 colorful plates illustrating everything from fishing techniques, to river diagrams, to fly-making instructions.

Travis: It had pictures!?

Teresa Yes.

Travis: And he invented putting pictures in books!

Teresa No. [chuckles]

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa It didn't just have pictures, like illustrations, right? It was able to be well-ly— "Well-ly." [through laughter] It was able to be... [laughs] Sorry. Really tickled pink.

Travis: You got there. You got this!

Teresa I got there. It was able to be mass-produced in a reputable way.

Travis: So that you could then look at the diagrams, look at the things, and recreate the thing?

Teresa Absolutely.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa There's— It was game-changing, right? Because it was the first comprehensive work that dedicated time to the actual *insects* that one was replicating. Because it was very detailed, and you were able to be like, "Oh. This lure is supposed to look like *this* insect."

Travis: But that seems so important to the thing. I know very little. Mostly what I've watched, I remember—

There was a time, children, where Saturday mornings, the cartoons would end. And for some reason— Well, at least on the TV stations I had growing up, the cartoons would end, and *immediately* following it was sport fishing shows.
[laughs]

Teresa Oh!

Travis: Almost every time. As if the TV station said, "Okay, we know your dad has been hovering, waiting for cartoons to end. Here you go." But the thing is, is—

Teresa It was different in my neck of the woods. We had this old house, so it was like... building shows.

Travis: But still.

Teresa Yeah, yeah.

Travis: The theory stays the same.

Teresa The theory does stand.

Travis: But anyways, a lot of it is not only do the flies need to *look* like the insects, but recreate the movements and behaviors in some ways. Right? So you get those ones where, as it moves through the water, it has spinning things. So you get the spinners, because that kind of looks like how they move, or they stay on the surface. And you get instructions on, like, "Pull it, let it rest. Pull it, let it rest."

Teresa Mm.

Travis: So you get that movement. And it doesn't just *look* like it; it *behaves* like the thing as well.

Teresa Ronalds is said to have had one of the major milestones in the entire literature of fly fishing. And with—

Travis: He caught the first fish. [chuckles]

Teresa [laughs] With his entomology, the scientific method as reached angling was in full flower. Ronalds was completely original in his content and research, setting the yardstick for all subsequent discussion and illustration of aquatic fly hatches.

Travis: See, this is what I'm saying. So instead of just, "I don't know, make it look like this..."

Teresa Yes.

Travis: It was like, "Let's test these out. See why they work, how they work, what we can improve on, all that stuff." Okay.

Teresa Exactly. More improvements! We've got the bait— Let's see, we've got the first American-made design, 1810. With lighter woods that they actually

imported to England, right, to give the rod more flexibility. We've got tackling improved in the 1880s when people started to use silk lines...

Travis: Ooh, la la!

Teresa ... instead of horse hair, giving you a better casting distance.

Travis: Can I tell you? It's just occurred to me, when you said "horse hair," that when they were talking about hair sticks, they were using actual hairs, and not just guesstimating the width of it. Like, "Oh, this is— Eh, I dunno. If you put three of my hairs together, it's about there."

It was literally three hairs thick, 'cause there was horse hair, probably woven together. That makes a lot more sense. Okay, go on. [laughs]

Teresa [singing] The more you know!

Travis: Yeah. Mm-hmm! Mm-hmm!

Teresa [giggles] So then, because we get everything— Like, the silk is getting smoother, but it could also be waterlogged pretty easily. Or tangled, because it's so thin. This is when the invention of the regulator, right, which evenly spooled the line along the rod...

Travis: That's another one that I think about. Like, as you're turning it, when it goes in and you can see it kind of move around as it goes. So instead of just the reel going, it kind of moves back and forth. Almost like when you wind up a garden hose.

Teresa Right.

Travis: To make sure that it tracks back and forth, instead of just in one place.

Teresa Totally.

So then, we get to the latter half of the 19th Century. We've got the Industrial Revolution making all of these things—

Travis: When the machines turned against us.

Teresa No! Making [laughs] all of these things readily available and mass-produced. So not just for the elite. Now, *everyone's* deciding that now that they have leisure time, because the machines are working for us...

Travis: For now.

Teresa For now. We can all go fly fishing, and have a great time. More affluent hobbyists would now move to places like Norway for salmon, right? But if you could get a fishing pole and walk to the river—

Travis: Can I tell you how wild it would be? Imagine I came to you.

Teresa Yeah?

Travis: And I said, "Teresa, I think we should move." And you said, "What? Why?" And I said, "I wanna move to Norway, so I can fly fish for salmon."

Can you imagine your reaction to that?

Teresa I would say, "Uh, no. See you in six months, bye." [laughs]

Travis: I know! That's what— I'm sure they weren't... Either they were getting vacation homes there, or I'm sure there were maybe other reasons that they were moving there. And not just, "Oh, you guys have salmon in Norway? Mm, bye! Bye, everybody! I'm moving."

Teresa Oh, you just— Just a quick jaunt, I think, to Norway.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa Like you said, every little village had their own little river. And so if you could get your hands on the equipment, you could fly fish too.

Travis: I also have to imagine that around this time is when you started to get a lot of the loosening of the, like, "This is the estate of the lord of this area."

Teresa Sure.

Travis: "You're not allowed to hunt there, and you're not allowed to fish there," or whatever.

And it was probably like, "Ehh. It's easier to fish in a stream that runs right next to village, than have to go into the woods surrounding the estate." Because it's like, yeah, fish move up and down the whole thing.

Teresa Mm-hmm.

Travis: We don't have to— As long as it's quiet enough. You do it early in the morning, or late at night.

Teresa Mm-hmm.

Travis: You can have access to it without having to, like, go *to* the woods where the animals hide.

Teresa And you know what? We had those in America, too.

Travis: What?

Teresa Rivers.

Travis: Oh, yeah!

Teresa [chuckles]

Travis: I knew that one!

Teresa So in the 1920s, fly fishing was all the rage in the US. Specifically Maine, Vermont, and the spring creeks of Wisconsin.

Travis: Sure, sure.

Teresa Which got a pretty good bump from Ernest Hemingway.

Travis: So Ernest Hemingway...

Teresa Yeah. *The Sun Also Rises*.

Travis: Oh, my God! *Ugh*.

Teresa [wheeze-laughs]

Travis: I had to do that one for high school summer reading. *Overrated*, Ernest Hemingway.

Teresa Alright, alright...

Travis: I didn't care for it! I didn't care for it one bit.

Teresa You don't have to care for it.

Travis: I'm just saying, I don't care for his writing style. I don't care for his writing. I don't care for his whole deal. Only good thing that guy ever did? Take care of polydactyl cats. He had a bunch of polydactyl cats, which are cats with six toes, living in his estate. And I believe they have bred and thrived in his home in Florida. But other than that, I don't get it.

Teresa Alright, alright...

Travis: What's the big deal? Old men and sea? Boring! [laughs]

Teresa Once again, another dip in leisure time during the Great Depression and World War II, right, in the US here. But then in the 50s, when everyone was eager to get back to relaxing, right...

Travis: Well, and hiding away from therapy.

Teresa And hiding away from therapy. Fly fishing became popular again in the US, and pop culture contributed to this new resurgence. Like Robert Redford's *A River Runs Through It*.

Travis: This is what I'm saying. Okay.

Teresa Exactly.

Travis: It's not *that old*, though, right?

Teresa No, no.

Travis: *A River Runs Through It* isn't from the 40s.

Teresa No.

Travis: Okay. [relieved] Hoo!

Teresa But it continued to gain popularity amongst that kind of culture, you know what I mean?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa Alright. Speaking of fly fishers, I would love to name some celebrity fly fishing enthusiasts for you.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa Reba McEntire.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa Henry Winkler.

Travis: Okay. I can see it.

Teresa Gordon Ramsay.

Travis: Huh!

Teresa And Harrison Ford.

Travis: Harrison Ford doesn't surprise me at all.

Teresa Yeah.

Travis: I get that, yeah.

Teresa *And* Emma Watson!

Travis: Huh. Okay!

Teresa That's pretty cool, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa Apparently, she ties her own flies as well.

Travis: I zip my own fly. And I don't brag about it, you know what I mean?

Teresa [laughs]

Travis: You don't hear me—

Teresa Different flies.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa Yeah. Okay. And I would like to mention, at this point... As you all know, our writer/researcher, Alexx...

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa ... has a very special connection to this episode.

Travis: She's a fish!

Teresa No. [laughs] Um...

Travis: She's a Mr. Limpet kind of thing. She... She's a reverse limpet, where she started off as a fish who became human, instead of the other way around.

Teresa No. Not about fish. About fly *fishing*.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa So two of her favorite people: her father-in-law Rick Robinson, and basically uncle at this point, Fire Chief Wade DeHate, are passionate fishermen and actually wrote a book called *A Fish Ate My Homework: A Beginner's Guide to Fly Fishing*.

Travis: Oh, excellent!

Teresa Where she actually got a shout-out. Which is pretty cool, right?

Travis: There you go.

Teresa Yeah! Let's go over a few terms and etiquette.

Travis: And basics. I have here, this is a basic cast...

Teresa Okay.

Travis: You wanna loosen up. You begin by getting loose and relaxed. And then your footwork, you wanna position your feet apart. And then you want arm movements. Move your arms in specific patterns, mimicking the hands of a clock. 10, 2, and a quarter to 3. And then you wanna jump into the air, twisting your body while in the "I'm a little teapot" pose. And then wind up the fishing rod. Thrust the rod forward, releasing the line.

And that's how you do the perfect cast from *A Goofy Movie*.

Teresa [bursts out laughing]

Travis: I had to look it up, but I think it's important information.

Teresa It's important to know. Okay.

Some terms. The pole, right? There are different parts of the pole. The fly rod, right? So this is part of it. The whole pole that you hold when fishing, it is the central part of the gear, right?

Everything works together. You have the fly reel, which is the piece of the rod that sits part way up the rod's handle. It's the casting that holds the lines when you cast. And all the lines are wound up carefully in the reel.

Travis: Right.

Teresa You got the backing, which is the series of strong strings that strengthen the rod and help catch fish. It's like a support string, right? It supports the main line, and helps it remain intact during intense fishing moments.

We have the Arbor knot, which is the knot that ties the backing to the reel. Without a good Arbor knot, the backing will slip and fall off the reel.

Travis: I've always said that.

Teresa You've got the fly line, and the Albright knot. The fly line is the main line that carries all the different parts of the line, and then holds a lot of weight when catching a fish. And the special knot, the Albright knot, helps that line stay on the reel.

Travis: Very important.

Teresa Another part is the leader line, which is the next part of the main line, right? Which attaches to the fly line.

So you've got all of these descending in thickness, almost. And different parts of the line that help keep things light, but strong.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa And then the last part— Sorry, the second-to-last part is the tippet. It's

very thin and hard to see when in the water, which helps sell the legitimacy of the bait, right? And this one is important that it's easily replaceable, so you can change it out for a fresh one if it breaks.

And then you have the fly, which connects to the tippet. It's the bait that will draw the fish to bite on the hook.

Travis: Okay. [sarcastically] All of that made complete sense to me, and I've definitely memorized it.

Teresa [laughs]

Travis: Do you have— Give me some of that etiquette.

Teresa Okay. So we talked about it already.

Travis: "Shh!"

Teresa Yes.

Travis: "The fish are listening!"

Teresa The fish *are* listening.

Travis: "They'll steal your secrets."

Teresa Not only that, but it's like a whole nature thing, right?

Travis: It's zen. It's a whole zen thing.

Teresa It's totally zen. So, you know—

Travis: It's about mindfulness, being in the moment... Being ready to catch a fish with your bare hands, if you need to.

Teresa [giggles] Well, the rod is gonna make some— The rod and the line are gonna make some noise. You can't help that.

Travis: [makes buzzing sound] [pop]

Teresa Exactly.

Travis: [makes clicking sounds]

Teresa But it is gauche to celebrate a catch too flamboyantly, right? [at a low volume] "Yes!" That kind of stuff.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa But you don't want to shout, or whoop, or holler.

Travis: You just look at each other, and very quietly say, "Fish." And that's how you know!

Teresa *And* you don't want to draw attention by moving around too much, right? So no victory dances or whatever. They say that you must respect the fish because, quote, "Game respects game." Right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa Even in a competition, you should respect the opponent's will and determination on the field. Which is the fish, that's the opponent.

Travis: Obviously, yeah.

Teresa So the ones that you catch need to be— That's why they do catch-and-release. Because, you know... it's better to take a picture.

Travis: I bet there's nothing more embarrassing for a fish than you get caught, you get released, and you're like, "Ho! That was terrible. That's wild. I am still hungry, though. What's that over there?" And then you get caught a second time by a different fisherman, like 100 yards down the stream. And you're like...

Teresa Oh, man!

Travis: "Oh, man!"

Teresa [giggles]

Travis: "The guys are gonna give me such a hard time about this later."

Teresa You wanna make sure to give each other – not you and the fish, but you and your other anglers – plenty of room, because it takes a lot of room in order to even cast a fishing line. Right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa Because you gotta do all the...

Travis: The whipping around, yes.

Teresa The whipping around, and the throwing, and all that kind of stuff.

Travis: You whip your line back and forth, yeah.

Teresa Do you?

Travis: Mm-hmm! I think so, I don't know.

Teresa [giggles] Um, so you can discuss your fishing spots quietly, and plan accordingly. I think that earlier, you said about 100 feet. That seems a lot to me, but...

Travis: I don't know. Don't go off of what *I* said, baby!

Teresa Oh, okay.

Travis: I don't know what I'm *talking* about.

Teresa *I* see. Ample space, right? To avoid crossing lines.

Travis: Wait. Did you think I knew what I was talking about? Does anyone listening think I know what I'm talking about!?

Teresa [bursts out laughing]

Travis: Oh, my God. Oh, no!

Teresa Only occasionally.

Travis: I don't know what I'm talking about.

Teresa But you were talking about your perfect cast!

Travis: From *A Goofy Movie*!

Teresa [bursts out laughing]

Travis: I don't know! In *A Goofy Movie*, he casts a line and lifts his dad up from falling off a waterfall, spoiler alert.

Teresa [laughs]

Travis: I don't know that that's—

Teresa Doesn't need a— It's like 20 years old. There's no way you'd need a spoiler alert.

Travis: I don't— Older than that. I don't think it should be taken as scientific fact at all.

Teresa Oh, okay. Alright. But remember—

Travis: Except for the fact that Bigfoot's in it, and that's real.

Teresa Okay. Remember that it's not just about the sport, the fishing. It's about your experience doing it. So enjoy your time in nature. And even if you don't catch a fish, you still win.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us. Hey, thank you all for listening. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make the show. Thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could not make the show.

Thank you to you for listening. We could make the show without you, but that would be like going fishing and not catching a single thing.

Teresa Which I just said was just fine!

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa [wheeze-laughs]

Travis: Then we couldn't— Then we couldn't make the show without you. You're our rod and reel?

Teresa There we go.

Travis: Okay. Go check out McElroyMerch.com for all the cool merch over there that we sell. You can go to bit.ly/mcelroytours for upcoming stuff, including *My Brother*, *My Brother and Me* and *Adventure Zone* coming to Dragon Con in Atlanta and a bunch of other stuff. Go check that out.

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.

And as always, we are taking your topic submissions, your questions, your queries. You know, send it all! Even your idioms. Send those to shmannerscast@gmail.com, and say hi to Alexx, 'cause she reads every one.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us! So join us again next week.

Teresa No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa Manners, *Shmanners*! Get it!

[theme music plays]

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