

## **Shmanners 468: Lee Miller**

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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:** How are you?

**Teresa:** I'm well. How are you? You're all West Virginia today.

**Travis:** Yeah. I did notice that when I put it on. I have my Huntington hat and my West Virginia shirt. And I'm enjoying your Magnus Rushes In shirt.

**Teresa:** You're welcome.

**Travis:** Thank you.

**Teresa:** We rep the OGs around here.

**Travis:** We do. Uh, West Virginia being one of those.

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** Now, tell me, my wife...

**Teresa:** Yes?

**Travis:** What *is* our topic today?

**Teresa:** Well, we have a biography today.

**Travis:** A biography.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. And her name was Lee Miller.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I—

**Travis:** That's one of those names where...

**Teresa:** Yeah. Yeah, go ahead.

**Travis:** It does not immediately evoke a person to me, so much as it's like... "I think I could think of eight Lee Millers, if I wasn't thinking about it," you know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** It just seems... Lee Miller.

**Teresa:** Well, we will get to her most famous image, okay?

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Which is something that I recognized when I saw it. Not knowing that it was her, but I did recognize it.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I believe that our audience will, as well.

So one of the things that we've been going through lately, right, is that these people that we know in one way kind of leading double lives. Like, we talked about Tippi Hedren, right?

**Travis:** Sure. And her obsession with lions.

**Teresa:** Yes. Also, there are other people like this. Hedy Lamarr, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Another person who, through their Hollywood stardom, we also learn about different facets of them.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** And this is another example of a person really looking like one type of person, and then living a totally different life.

**Travis:** Like Hannah Montana.

**Teresa:** [pause] ... Yes? [giggles]

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay.

**Travis:** I don't know that I've ever seen an episode of *Hannah Montana*.

**Teresa:** Oh, really?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I think I've seen a few.

**Travis:** I think it was right after my time.

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** Of prime Disney teen kind of stuff.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Okay.

**Travis:** That's why this episode is about Hannah Montana.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** No, okay.

**Teresa:** Lee Miller was born Elizabeth Lee Miller on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1907 in Poughkeepsie, New York.

**Travis:** Ah, Poughkeepsie!

**Teresa:** Poughkeepsie.

**Travis:** I don't know it at all, but the name is fun to say.

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** It's like Boise. Poughkeepsie, Sheboygan. It's one of those good city names.

**Teresa:** It is one of those good city names.

She was the middle child of two brothers. And it was reported that she was her father's favorite.

**Travis:** That's how it always happens. I would say the middle of three siblings, especially if there's a brother on either end, the middle is always the favorite and the best...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And the coolest.

**Teresa:** Speaking from the point of view of...

**Travis:** No, this is just true.

**Teresa:** Of two middle children.

**Travis:** This is just *science*.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** This isn't from *my* point of— This is quantifiable science stuff.

**Teresa:** Cool.

**Travis:** Everybody knows it.

**Teresa:** So, speaking of her dad. He was an engineer, but had a lot of different hobbies, including photography.

**Travis:** Now, I've heard of this.

**Teresa:** Yes. Which would influence her greatly, over the course of her life. In fact, she often modeled for him. And so this hobby would be the one that influenced Lee over most of the course of her life. She had a little bit of a "wild child" personality.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Especially for that time frame, we're thinking—

**Travis:** What time period was this? I don't remember—

**Teresa:** So she was born in 1907.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** Right? Um—

**Travis:** So she wore pants?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Is that what you mean by "wild"? She wore pants?

**Teresa:** A little more than that! She often ran away from home, she was expelled from nearly every school in her town.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah, so a little more than just trousers, if you know what I mean.

**Travis:** Okay. Yeah.

**Teresa:** And she also had a pretty tumultuous home life, because... as is normal for the time, her parents were not always faithful to each other.

**Travis:** Sure. Hey, I've heard there's people even *now*...

**Teresa:** Oh!

**Travis:** Yeah. That that didn't stop in, like, 1907.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** But occasionally, there's still unfaithfulness.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Disfaith... The lack of faith.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** At one point, Lee began to accompany her mother to New York City to see theater!

**Travis:** New York City?

**Teresa:** [with accent] *New York City!* And this helped repair their relationship a little bit, helped them bond. Because it opened her eyes to theater as an art form.

**Travis:** Mm. Okay.

**Teresa:** And so she took it up as an extracurricular, and find a way to explore her identity in a safe space. I think this is probably the outlet that she was looking for. When people are described as troubled children, they need creative outlets, right?

**Travis:** I would say a fairly common theater experience.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Of, like, "Oh, I didn't fit in." Maybe not always they got in trouble a lot. But theater was the place that I was able to explore, and find myself, and understand myself better.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** It makes a lot of sense.

**Teresa:** She was also, obviously, itching to get out of her small town. And so a place like...

**Travis:** She had dreams.

**Teresa:** ... New York really—

**Travis:** She had stars in her eyes.

**Teresa:** She felt like she fit in better, I think.

**Travis:** And \$5 dollars in her pocket, and a dream in her heart.

**Teresa:** Yes. [giggles] But outside of formal education, she was very varied in her topics, right? The things that she liked to do. She liked to build things with her brother, she liked to do science experiments, she loved reading. So she was a good kid, deep down.

In 1925, when she was 18, she was invited to spend a summer in Paris with her French tutor.

**Travis:** [with French accent] *Paris!*?

**Teresa:** Indeed! Ooh, la la!

**Travis:** The City of Lights?

**Teresa:** Yes! And studied—

**Travis:** The Jewel of France?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** The Cincinnati of France?

**Teresa:** N... No.

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** I don't think that's what they say.

**Travis:** You don't think Paris is as good as Cincinnati?

**Teresa:** [bursts out laughing]



**Travis:** Wow, Teresa. A bold swing! Wow.

**Teresa:** I think that Cincinnati is not even on the radar of Parisians.

**Travis:** That— It's *that* far ahead!?

**Teresa:** [laughs uncontrollably]

**Travis:** You think Cincinnati is *so much* better than Paris that Paris isn't even on the same radar. Wow. Some hot takes here, folks. To our Parisian listeners, I'm sorry for my wife's wild statement. She doesn't speak for me. I think Paris is great. Me?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I think Paris is a perfectly fine city.

**Teresa:** [amused] *Alright*. Where she studied stage craft. So, you know, like lighting, and costuming, and design.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And... [laughs] Li'l tidbit here, the woman who was teaching her French still struggled a little bit with the language. And Lee, her teacher, and her teacher's companion spent the first three days of their trip at a perfectly nice hotel that just so happened to double as a brothel. [laughs]

**Travis:** Whoops!

**Teresa:** Whoops! [laughs]

Anyway, she said—

**Travis:** That does seem a bit like a wild excuse there. Like, "It's a what?" [feigning surprise] Aw, *what!*?"

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** "Aw, man, I need to learn the language better. [forced laughter] How embarrassing."

**Teresa:** She said, "It took my chaperons five days to catch on, though I thought it was divine. I was hanging out of the windows, watching everything. I felt like the whole world was opening up in front of me."

**Travis:** It's very Bohemian, it feels like. Doesn't it?

**Teresa:** Yeah, it is! Bohemian, I think, is a great way to describe her early life. So the next year, she returned to New York City to join Vassar's experimental theater program, which was taught by theatrical pioneer, Hallie Flanagan.

**Travis:** Okay. I don't know the name, but...

**Teresa:** And then she enrolled in the Art Students League of New York to study life drawing and painting. So very artistically minded.

**Travis:** Yeah! And it seems motivated in a way of actually pursuing these things.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Sometimes, you get a lot of biographies of people where it's like, "They were interested in it, but they didn't really know what to do. So they just showed up somewhere, and they were like, 'Hey, look at me!'"

But this seems like she was like, "I'm gonna study. I'm gonna do the work."

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** "I'm going to this thing. And then I'm enrolling in this thing, and I'm doing this thing."

**Teresa:** Yeah. But also, a girl gotta eat, so she got into modeling.

**Travis:** Oh, yeah. It's nice to have a fallback steady career like modeling.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Modeling.

**Travis:** When theater doesn't work out...

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** It's nice to have something steady to fall back on.

**Teresa:** A portrait of her drawn by French illustrator Georges Lepape graced the cover of *American Vogue* in March of 1927, a month before her 20th birthday. So...

**Travis:** Oh, wow. Okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah. I mean, she had a very thin figure, which was in at the time, the '20s. She had enormous eyes. So she was kind of the ideal flapper girl.

**Travis:** How big!?

**Teresa:** I mean...

**Travis:** 12 inches wide.

**Teresa:** No! Just regular eye size, but large.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Sir. [chuckles]

**Travis:** If you had seen the image that popped in my head...

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** ... of a very thin woman with eyes the size of dinner plates. I was *horrified*.

**Teresa:** [bursts out laughing]

**Travis:** But I get why people would wanna take photographs of her!

**Teresa:** Alright. So top photographers from all over the country wanted to shoot with her, and she was glad to oblige. And she would always direct most of her attention towards the cameramen. Because she was *very* interested. She was constantly asking questions, trying to figure out how she could improve her own craft behind the lens.

**Travis:** I like that. Also, it's just nice to be nice to people.

**Teresa:** Certainly!

**Travis:** Show interest in people's work.

**Teresa:** She was featured in a Kotex ad. And if you look this up online, you can see it. It's a very mundane picture, right? She looks lovely.

**Travis:** Kotex is a tampon, pad brand?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Feminine products. And so she is just standing, kind of leaning one shoulder against a wall. And she's very 1920s dressed. She has, like, a li'l cloche hat, and a drop-waist dress. And she looks *lovely*.

But because it was so scandalous to promote that type of sanitary product in a magazine, that was pretty much the end of her industry career? Because no one wanted to shoot the Kotex girl.

**Travis:** That's so wild. I mean, listen. It's easy, sometimes, to forget about social morays and stuff that have changed. And you see ads for cigarettes and stuff from the '20s and '30s, and you're like, "Whoa. Things are different."

But the idea of, like, "Yeah, listen. We all know that you guys use them."  
[chuckles]

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** "But the *very idea* that you as a business—"

**Teresa:** "We know that we use them. We know that we have to buy them. And yet..."

**Travis:** "But even that you, as a business, would dare... [laughs] to let people know you sell them? How dare you."

**Teresa:** "I know. And use a real person in your real photograph?"

**Travis:** "How dare you."

**Teresa:** "Instead of an illustration? Ugh."

**Travis:** "Anyways..."

**Teresa:** "Scandalous."

**Travis:** "Go smoke eight cigarettes for lunch."

**Teresa:** [laughs] So she was not worried about it. She just went back to Paris. She was like, "Alright. Let's go to Paris about it." And apprenticed herself to Man Ray, who was a—

**Travis:** A manta ray.

**Teresa:** No...

**Travis:** Are you sure? Can you tell me, beyond a *shadow* of a doubt, that he wasn't a manta ray made human?

**Teresa:** Yes. I have seen a picture; he is a human.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** A human person.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Who was a wildly prolific photographer at the helm of the Dada and Surrealist movements in Paris.

**Travis:** Ah! Okay.

**Teresa:** Right. And so they became collaborators. And lovers, as one does.

**Travis:** Ah. That old trope, "Collaborators to Lovers."

**Teresa:** Well, this is indicative of the time, right?

**Travis:** Bohemian!

**Teresa:** Exactly. So she was a brilliant creative visionary, but most of these businesses were filled with men. Right? So I'm not saying that that was her only option. I think that getting involved with people in your field is very commonplace. Artists are drawn to other artists, certainly. But I think that it is important to mention that everyone who talked about Lee Miller talked about her as an artist *first*.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Even though they may have been lovers.

**Travis:** Well, during the time, we were especially, in the art scene, the idea of objectifying someone just was the norm.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** So the idea of even showing appreciation to a woman, they would often discuss her as, like, "She's my muse!" Right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Or I bet they talked about her the same way one might talk about, "Oh, I like painting this river bank, because the scenery's great. Not working with someone as a collaborator, and as an equal." Right? So...

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** It was a tough time.

**Teresa:** I get it. There's actually a documentary about Lee Miller where her granddaughter speaks about this issue. Saying that, yeah, Lee did feel like a person who was trapped inside a beautiful body. But is also quick to point out that Miller's brilliance was undeniable, even to the most misogynistic of men.

Man Ray, who I told you about earlier, signed a proof of one of their photography collections. And wrote, "To Lee Miller. Without your enthusiasm and aid, this album would not have been possible. Gratefully, Man Ray, 1931." So yeah, they were lovers, but he could have just signed it, "To my darling." Right?

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** But he didn't. He went out of his way to write on the front of it how much her collaboration meant to him.

**Travis:** We're gonna take a quick break for a word from another Max Fun show, and we'll be right back.

[Shmanners theme music plays]

[ad break]

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[ad changes]

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**Alexis:** Or coffee, Ella. We're not all Brits.

**Ella:** [laughs] Then join us...

**Alexis:** Every Thursday at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

[ad break ends]

**Travis:** She's working with a manta ray turned human.



**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** And then what happened?

**Teresa:** She also worked with Pablo Picasso at this time, too. Anyway—

**Travis:** Who?

**Teresa:** Pablo... Picasso.

**Travis:** Oh!

**Teresa:** Noted Cubist.

**Travis:** No, it's not...

**Teresa:** No?

**Travis:** [sighs] Not ringing any bells.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** Ugh, I'm trying... Was he one of the Ninja Turtles?

**Teresa:** Maybe. Anyway, so she modeled to pay the bills, right? In particular, she did a lot for the head of *French Vogue*, who taught her about what major magazines expected from their photographers. So during her time in Paris, she was not only the subject of very beautiful, surrealist images. She'd also create several iconic photographs of her own.

And then, she decided she wanted to move to London.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939.

**Travis:** Huh! Now, that exact date doesn't ring a bell, but the year does.

**Teresa:** On Monday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, England declared war on the Nazis.

**Travis:** Oh, okay! That— Okay. Okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So not the best timing, especially since she was American and didn't have work visa. [wheeze-laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah. Wasn't great.

**Teresa:** Not great at the time.

**Travis:** Not great at the time.

**Teresa:** Um...

**Travis:** There was a lot going on.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Let's leave it at that.

**Teresa:** She—

**Travis:** What a reductive way to talk about World War II.

**Teresa:** [through laughter] World War II...

**Travis:** "World War II? Ugh! There was a lot going on."

**Teresa:** Oh, we're gonna get into it. Don't worry. We will not be reductive. This is just a chance to have a little brevity.

**Travis:** Just an amuse-bouche.

**Teresa:** She was not deterred, by bad men or by war. She posted up at *British Vogue* and volunteered as a photographer, and very quickly became one of the main artists and contributors. Not just to *Vogue*, but to a host of other magazines and patterned books advertising ways women could knit or create their own high-fashion styles at home. Right? As was needed at the time.

**Travis:** Oh, yeah! That must've been a huge thing, especially with rationing and...

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** And having to not get as much nylon and other fabrics, or whatever. The idea of, "Make it yourself, here's how."

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Must've been *huge*!

**Teresa:** And her work at the time was prolific, right? Her photographs were *everywhere*. She— Anybody who was trying to help with the war effort, she was at the front lines behind the scenes. You know what I mean?

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** So then the government realized that, with every man being busy...

**Travis:** A lot going on.

**Teresa:** A lot going on. Women were taking over the day jobs, right? And they didn't read newspapers as much as they read *magazines*.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And so her work was even more important. Because in *British Vogue*, right, Lee would find herself shooting monthly safety tips on everything from

keeping your hair out of your face, so it's not hazardous to your work in a factory, to making your uniforms more fashionable. There was even one very famous picture of her in front of a bunker, wearing these— That she painted pink, by the way. [chuckles]

**Travis:** Can I just say? I think Pinterest would have *thrived* at this time.

**Teresa:** Yes. Yes, definitely. That do-it-yourself...

**Travis:** That idea of just, "Hey, listen. It doesn't have to be drab."

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** You know what I mean? "Just because we're in a World War doesn't mean you can't be fabulous." I think it would've done great at this time.

**Teresa:** Right. But she's wearing these clunky utilitarian goggles, but made it fashion.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** You know what I mean?

**Travis:** I love this.

**Teresa:** And so it was a practical way to incorporate messaging about how people could help the war effort. Which I think was really cool! It's not where her story ends, though.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** She wanted to become a war correspondent. She also attempted to sign up directly the British Army, and they said no. [chuckles]

**Travis:** 'Cause she wasn't, you know, British?

**Teresa:** And also, she was not a man.

**Travis:** Oh, they didn't have...?

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** *No?*

**Teresa:** Not near combat.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** She wanted to be out there, war corresponding out in the field, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And that was not allowed with them at the time. But America allowed women to serve as war correspondents, so she was granted the ability to follow the Allies around and document what she saw.

**Travis:** On behalf of America?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay. "Listen, we've decided to forgive the Kotex thing..."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "... and let you go to the front lines. You're welcome!"

**Teresa:** So her photographs of World War II are some of the most haunting, harrowing, and dazzling images of her entire legacy. Her shooting style was very personal, which gave dignity and space to the subjects of some of the worst human atrocities on record.

**Travis:** I think it's very interesting, because I think you see a kind of culmination of a bunch of experiences that she's had that probably led to that. One, the fact that she had worked in front of the camera, as well as behind the camera. The fact that she had this theater background, where there's a lot of emotional depth,

and understanding the character's emotions, and getting into character, and stuff like that.

**Teresa:** And being part of the Surrealist movement.

**Travis:** Yes! Exactly, where it was a lot of, "We are distilling the emotion down, and understanding this. This is what you feel when you see this thing."

**Teresa:** Exactly. One of the subjects that she is most famous for documenting is the liberation of Dachau, one of the first and longest-running concentration camps. I'm not gonna talk too much about it, but there were lots of rumors at the time. And everything that she showed in the photographs was ten times worse than the rumors.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** She went to Munich after a lot of her front line stuff. And she had heard about an apartment in Munich that had coal, running water, and electricity. Can you think of who, at the time, might have been the owner of some fancy apartment in Munich?

**Travis:** Hitler?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Okay. That's the name that popped in my head first. And then I was like, "Now, that can't be it." [laughs]

**Teresa:** So she gets into the Führer's apartment. And it had already been taken over at this time.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So he wasn't there. [chuckles] He was actually already in the bunker.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** But she was given permission to go into the Führer's house and take a bath.

**Travis:** ... Okay.

**Teresa:** So they set up their camera. And the famous picture is of her in Hitler's bathtub, taking a bath. Now, it's not just any bath. Right? She is, obviously, bathing. But it's the composition of the photograph that's so important.

So in front of the bathtub, on the bathmat, are her dirty combat boots. And it's obviously muddied the bathmat. And then next to her, on a chair, is her combat fatigues. Also very dirty. They also took a picture from another part of the house of Hitler, and placed it on the edge of the bath, to give some context to the photograph.

And then there's also a nude statue, I think it's marble, that they moved. It's like a desk size.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** That they moved into the frame as well, from another part of the house. To make sure that you got the idea about the kind of surreal juxtaposition of the things that Hitler had done, and how he lived his life.

**Travis:** The perspective [crosstalk] are really good.

**Teresa:** Yes. It is an amazing photograph. And she's there, in the bath, scrubbing her face.

**Travis:** And I'll tell you, when you said this— I'd never seen this photo. And the first thing that popped into my head was, "That's oddly glamorous." And then I *look* at it, and I'm like, "No!"

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** If anything, it's quite the opposite of that. It's very human, and real, and she looks so *small* in this big bathtub, in this very... What's the word I'm looking

for? Parallel lines and everything, that's all kind of focused in on her in the center. And it makes her look very small, and human.

**Teresa:** Absolutely. And so this photograph would become iconic. Obviously, there were people who really felt moved by the photograph. There were people who were really disgusted by it. It evoked a lot of emotions.

**Travis:** When you first said it, I think the thing it made me think of is when people take, quote unquote, "funny photos" in serious places.

**Teresa:** Mm, yeah.

**Travis:** Of, like, "Isn't it wild that I'm taking a bath in Hitler's bathtub?" But that's not the vibe of this at *all*.

**Teresa:** No. It isn't. In 1953, Lee Miller's final photojournalistic piece would run before she stepped away from the camera.

**Travis:** Never to be seen again.

**Teresa:** Well, no.

**Travis:** Oh, okay. She didn't— Okay.

**Teresa:** No, she was seen again.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** But she didn't feel like, after what she had seen of war, that she was able to go back to shooting pretty dresses. You know, fashion plates and things like that. She wasn't able to reconcile, in her mind. And in fact, she probably suffered from PTSD. Because she was never the same. And I don't think that anybody who goes through those kinds of things really is.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** They didn't have the same kind of mental health awareness then that we



do now. Not saying that the people who have PTSD from combat get all the help they need now. But they certainly didn't give her any kind of help.

So what she did was, she moved to a farm in Sussex. And this final journalistic piece was devoted to this new farm. It was a tongue-in-cheek piece called *Working Guests*, where she wrote about how beautiful it was to have her own farm property. And how much wonderful it was that she could make all of her famous friends come and do the work for her, in exchange for a holiday in the countryside.

**Travis:** That's great.

**Teresa:** Right. So again, very surreal. People doing things— You know, domestic images of visual artists, like her friends at the time. People that people would know were in the photograph, tampering with fuses, and planting corn, and do all of that kind of farm stuff. Each picture is alive with whimsy and hilarity, and the final [laughs] picture is titled, "The Hostess Takes it Easy," where she takes a self-portrait of her sleeping on the sofa.

She'd do, occasionally, a shoot here and there. But she mostly kept to herself. She, in fact, boxed up all of her work and didn't really talk about it to anybody around her. Eventually, she got rid of her kitchen dark room and started doing other things, like creative cooking and stuff like that, according to her family.

So she really found solace in this farm in Sussex until her death in 1977.

**Travis:** At what, 70 years old?

**Teresa:** Yeah, 70. She passed away from lung cancer.

And I think that, if we're gonna talk about her cultural contribution, these images, the ones that were published in the newspapers and magazines and stuff, that is definitely one part of it. But I think it's very telling about the time that a lot of her later life images, and all of the outtakes and the ones that didn't get published, were *all* boxed up in her attic.

And she didn't talk to anybody about those things. Her son, Antony Penrose, who I believe was born to her second husband around the time that she was about 40

or so, uncovered 60,000 negatives and prints in the attic. And had *no idea* that that was her life before him.

**Travis:** Wow!

**Teresa:** 'Cause she didn't really talk about it. Also, she didn't treat him very well. She was obviously suffering mentally, probably PTSD and clinical depression. And I don't think that that gives anyone an excuse, but it certainly is what happened.

**Travis:** It sounds like she was going through— Think, combined with that and this idea of this thing that we talked about earlier in the episode, that she was working towards in so many ways. And that was like, "Oh, then I'll do this, and I'll go do this, and I'll work here."

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** That suddenly, after it being associated with her time on the front and covering these horrific events, it being like, "I don't wanna touch that anymore."

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** That's very devastating, you know?

**Teresa:** It is. And I think that that had given her son, at least, some perspective. Because although his home life, his early life, was quite poor, he did dedicate himself to conserving her legacy. He started the Lee Miller Archives, and so now there are hundreds of exhibitions of her work around the world. Not just the ones that were published, but chosen specifically from the other negatives that they discovered in her attic.

There's also been a musical...

**Travis:** What!?

**Teresa:** ... countless biographies, and a motion picture in 2023 starring Kate Winslet as Miller. Her farm in Sussex is now a historical site.

**Travis:** You can't just say there was a musical, and not tell me what the name—

Uh, Lee Miller musical... called... uh... Here, *Six Pictures of Lee Miller*. Okay. Is the name of it.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Thank you.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Can't just be like, "There's a musical," and then *not tell people* what it is!

**Teresa:** So obviously, she left an unforgettable mark on the world as one of the most influential photographers of the 20th Century. And it's very safe to say she was more than just a pretty face.

**Travis:** Thank you, everybody, 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.

And I would say, if you have historical figures like Lee Miller or anyone else that we've covered in our biography series that you're like, "Here's a person that either most people don't know about and they should, from culture and society, or here's a thing that everyone thinks they know the story of, but there's a really interesting biography to her that no one knows about, or to them," please let us know.

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** I love doing these episodes. Let's see, *My Brother, My Brother and Me* and *Adventure Zone* are coming to Dragon Con in Atlanta. Go to [bit.ly/mcelroytours](http://bit.ly/mcelroytours) for all the information and ticket links there. What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

And like you mentioned, as always, we are taking your topic submissions, your questions, your queries, your biography suggestions. Please send those to [shmannerstcast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerstcast@gmail.com), and say hi to Alexx, because she reads every single one.

**Travis:** And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week!

**Teresa:** No RSVP required!

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

**Teresa:** Manners, *Shmanners*! Get it?

[Shmanners theme music plays]

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