

Shmanners 510: Autographs

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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 alright!

Travis: [as Linda Belcher] Alright!

Teresa: [as Linda Belcher] Alright! Get it? Linda?

Travis: I do. So—

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Today, we're talking about autographs.

Teresa: Oh, we are.

Travis: And I want to share a story.

Teresa: Please do.

Travis: When I was a lad.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I ate four dozen eggs— No.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: When I was a lad, my family and I went to Disney World. And for whatever reason, I cannot remember the crossover that caused this, but there were costumes. It might've been at Universal. Anyways, there were costume characters of the Ninja Turtles.

Teresa: Well, back when we were kids, there used to be MGM, right? Which was available at that point too.

Travis: It might've been. I can't remember.

Teresa: Could it have been from MGM?

Travis: But all that matters is...

Teresa: Anyway.

Travis: ... the Ninja Turtles were there.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And I was very excited. But we were on a tram – which, once again, *might* have been MGM or Universal. I can't remember. You know, one of those tours kind of rides, right?

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: And I was so excited to see the Ninja Turtles, and I wanted them to sign my autograph book, but we missed it. And then my dad was like, "I've got it!" And he took the autograph book, and he ran around the corner and came back, and was like, "I got their autographs!" Right?

And then some years later, I realize, I don't think he caught up to them at all. I think my dad just faked their signatures. And I was very upset.

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: And then, even more years later, I thought, "Why would I be upset about that? It's not like they were the real Ninja Turtles."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: He faked, potentially, signatures from fake [laughs] Ninja Turtles. And I was like, [through laughter] "Oh, Dad, how dare you!"

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: "These are worth nothing now!" I guess.

Teresa: I, too, recall being a child. And I have one of those autograph books from Disney, but it was never really what I was there for. I mean, I think it was fun to see the characters and hug them, but I didn't really— Collecting autographs, I don't think was my thing.

Travis: I don't even know if they do that anymore. We've been to Disney World since with the kids.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And they just hand you a postcard-size thing that's like—

Teresa: Well, we ate at that dinner, and they signed a placemat or something, remember? Didn't they— They had something that they signed.

Travis: But that's what I'm saying. The signatures are already on it. Anyways, none of this matters. We're talking—

Teresa: No, not at the dinner.

Travis: Are you talking about when *I* signed things for the kids?

Teresa: No.

Travis: The kids bring my headshot to me, and I'm like, "Of course. And what was your name? Who do I make this out to?"

Teresa: [giggles] I think that there's a mix. But they still do sign some things. Yeah, okay. I remember. The one that was at the contemporary – what's that Mickey buffet thing?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: They did sign things. But we've also been to a princess lunch where they *didn't* sign things.

Travis: They're busy princesses.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: They've gotta rule the kingdom.

Teresa: And twirl and stuff.

Travis: Anyways.

Teresa: Anyways.

Travis: Autographs.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: What are they?

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Nobody knows. It's a mystery. Some scientists believe they're when someone writes their name in a recognizable and fancy way, but no one's sure. You're just gonna let me keep going?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Please jump in.

Teresa: I just wanted [through laughter] to know how long you would go. It's a very ancient practice. Would you believe it?

Travis: I would.

Teresa: The word itself derives from ancient Greek. "Autos" means self, and "grapho" means write.

Travis: So you wrote it yourself.

Teresa: Yes! And the ancient Athenians in particular were famous for autographs. And back then—

Travis: You can't find 'em now. They're collectors' items, but—

Teresa: Well, I mean, they're pretty old.

Travis: Well, yeah.

Teresa: Really, really old.

Travis: Yeah. They're ancient.

Teresa: Yes. And it wasn't just the signature, right? Back then, autographs were full manuscripts. So actual writings of the masters, right? We're talking about philosophers and historians and theater-makers and things like that. All the people that we remember from ancient Greece, they would have called their manuscripts their autographs.

Travis: Okay. I'm gonna start doing that.

Teresa: Are you?

Travis: When I write my manuscripts.

Teresa: [holding back laughter] Okay.
There were so—

Travis: It's so funny. I've never thought about it before, but "autograph," right, is like "self-writing," right?

Teresa: Yeah. You wrote it yourself.

Travis: "Manuscript," where it's like "manual" and "writing."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So it's like, "I wrote it myself." Both things [laughs] mean the same thing.

Teresa: They do! And that's why they were the same thing.

Travis: My gosh. You've blown my mind.

Teresa: And a lot of these now are considered priceless artifacts. But at the time, they were treasured for just being— Like, “Somebody famous touched this.” A lot like our autographs are today, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And they’d be displayed in temples and stuff around the city. Aristotle was known to be a private collector of these original works and maps and stuff, and formed one of the first major libraries out of his private collection.

Travis: Mm!

Teresa: And so their—

Travis: Like someone who collects Smurf memorabilia.

Teresa: Sure!

Travis: Exactly the same.

Teresa: I was thinking more like first-edition comic books.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Because those are written by people who usually go on to write for lots of famous comic books of stuff.

Travis: Yeah. Like the guys who wrote *The Adventure Zone*?

Teresa: Yup.

Travis: That graphic novel?

Teresa: That graphic novel.

Travis: And they went on to write *Journey into Mystery*, and I think a *Sonic* comic, if I remember correctly.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. When Aristotle died in 322 BCE, he left his papers, his library, to his successor, who willed them to another Aristotle disciple who took the papers with *him* to modern-day Turkey, where his heirs kept them safe in a cellar until the first century BCE, when a wealthy book collector named Pelicon of Taos purchased them to return them to Athens.

Travis: Mm!

Teresa: Then, when Athens fell under Roman rule in 86 BCE, the dictator Lucius Cornelius Sulla took the entire library of Apelicon, including Aristotle's papers, back to Rome, so they could be published by Adronicus of Rhodes.

Travis: And now, they've been willed to me. And they're in my collection, in a stack of stuff. I need to sort those.

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: I need to put those somewhere. They're just in a loose pile in my office.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I should take care of that.

Teresa: You really should. By the way, Sulla, this brutal dictator, was not great. Did some terrible stuff to Athens, but felt it was important to keep history intact. So he's got that going for him.

Travis: Yeah. They're always worried about legacy and stuff, you know what I mean?

Teresa: I guess so.

Travis: They're a part of history.

Teresa: Well, I mean, but you get to other places where dictators are like, "Burn all the books! Get rid of every history before me."

Travis: I mean, sure.

Teresa: At least this guy didn't.

Travis: And then you had Julius Caesar, who's like, "Let's add extra months to the year." You know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Everybody does wild stuff.

Teresa: *Anyway*, we have to mention the Library of Alexandria, right? Which was another stronghold of these priceless manuscripts. It was founded by Alexander the Great in the 4th Century BCE and became *legend*, right?
[pause] I need some confirmation. Yes?

Travis: Yeah! Oh, yeah, sorry.

Teresa: Yes. Okay.

Travis: I was just engrossed in the thing.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But also, part of my brain was like, "When do we get to 'Marilyn Monroe signed this?'"

Teresa: Not yet. Not yet.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It's estimated that there were as many as 700,000 manuscripts in the library, many of which were original autographed manuscripts written by the masters themselves. This Library of Alexandria had original *or* second-edition manuscripts [laughs] by Plato, Aristotle, Euripides, Hippocrates, all those people. Right? Euripides, sorry. Not Euripides.

Travis: No. 'Cause that sounds like "You rippa these pants."

Teresa: [laughs] So this is around the time that those people were actually writing stuff, right? Or it was, in recent memory, enough that it was kind of like, "I'm a disciple of this guy, and I wrote down all the stuff that he said."

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: But when you've got all these scholars of those people collaborating on their works, you've got several editions, you've got amendums and all this kind of stuff. Alexandria obviously became a hub of intellectualism for scholars. And it was so famous that it didn't really matter how you got the stuff that you put in the library.

Travis: Wait. So you're telling me that there was a time in history where maybe some stuff of antiquity was obtained in a not-so-cool way?

Teresa: Yeah. Definitely.

Travis: No! This is the first I'm hearing about this!

Teresa: Mm-hmm!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Other than a lot of these original classical things, there's not much evidence of autographic work being done, other than the monks, who would copy these. Right? Especially during what is commonly referred to as the Dark Ages or the Middle Ages, right? And then the Renaissance would revitalize Europe's enthusiasm for this classical literature. So these

manuscripts were then the idea of the master's own hand, right? That is where autographs resurface as super cool.

Travis: Alright! We go from the Dark Ages to the dork ages! Am I right, everybody? They were always reading. [laughs]

Teresa: Always reading.

Travis: I'm busy out here playing old Grecian football.

Teresa: So then the Renaissance hits, and 14th-Century scholar, poet, and humanist Petrarch was one of the people leading the charge to search for these ancient manuscripts or autographs.

Travis: And he started signing headshots.

Teresa: Not yet.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Not yet. But it did become very popular in a similar way of that, right? He wrote, "Each famous author of antiquity whom I recover places a new offense to the charge of earlier generations who, not satisfied with their own disgraceful barrenness permitted the writings that their ancestors had produced by toil and application to perish through insufferable neglect."

Travis: Man of few words, Petrarch. Monosyllabic, that guy.

Teresa: [laughs] So it was super cool to find this ancient stuff, and everybody wanted to get their hands on it. And they were mad that somebody pushed it to the side.

Travis: That's true. Sort of like dinosaur bones.

Teresa: I guess so.

Travis: Where it's cool find them, but they're all *buried*.

Teresa: [laughs] But that's the fun part, right? Is uncovering them?

Travis: I mean, I guess.

Teresa: We talked about the bone wars!

Travis: But how cool would be if you just— If you were just walking around and just found a dinosaur bone, and you were like, "Ah, cool!" I think that would be *way* cooler than having to dig for one.

Teresa: I guess.

Travis: Now, if that happened a lot, you'd be like, "What is happening?"

Teresa: [laughs] That'd be like, triple—

Travis: "Why are there dinosaur bones suddenly everywhere?"

Teresa: "I'm stumblin' over these dinosaur bones!"

Travis: "What huge event happened that I missed where there's dinosaur skeletons everywhere, in the middle of Cincinnati?"

Teresa: I don't know, man.

Travis: I would assume a big truck full of dinosaur bones toppled over.

Teresa: Just— [laughs]

Travis: And they just spilled out all over the street, and we're playing in them like children.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And that's what we need right now! The world could use a little bit more frolicking in spilled dinosaur bones, before they become—

Teresa: How about autographs?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Let's get back to those. Okay. So Petrarch's work reignited society's reverence towards preserving these works of the past. And so institutions began to offer resources to preserve original manuscripts. And in fact, a lot of the religious orders that protected these essential relics would keep them in the same cabinets with their saintly relics.

Travis: I'm going to bet— I'm going to make a connection.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: That after printing presses started being used, to be authenticated of "This was written by the master's hand," they would sign them.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: And that's how autographs became your signature.

Teresa: I mean, that's a pretty cool idea.

Travis: Is that not what your research is? 'Cause I was waiting for you to be like, "Exactly! Eureka! He's done it!"

Teresa: That is often the way of this, but that's not exactly what the research indicates. But that makes *sense* to me!

Travis: Okay. That's not exactly what I was looking for.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: Thank you, though.

Teresa: Sorry, sorry.

Travis: No, I'll take it. But it's not like the ticker-tape parade and roses I was hoping for. But when is it ever? In life, I'm underappreciated, and— I don't know where I'm going with this.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: You keep letting me talk too long!

Teresa: [through laughter] I'm sorry!

Travis: I don't always have words to finish the sentence, 'cause I expect to be cut off.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I start, and I lose steam.

Teresa: Sometimes, I worry that I cut you off too early! So I just—

Travis: No! There's no such thing!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I *never* know what I'm about to say!

Teresa: Okay. So the earliest known *album* of autographs as we know them, right, so the signatures—

Travis: Is the Declaration of Independence.

Teresa: No. It was compiled in 1466, and it was the ancestor of millions

upon millions of autograph albums to come! So this tradition of keeping the book of signatures was really established in earnest after a Bohemian scholar compiled one in 1507. The original album was called *Album amicorum*, which translates to the book of friends!

Travis: Aww!

Teresa: And the point was to gather the signatures and maybe— Like, yearbook style.

Travis: “Stay cool,” yeah, yeah.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: “Have a great summer, BFF.” “Too cool to be forgotten.”

Teresa: Little quips, and little...

Travis: “I’m the one who signed your crack.”

Teresa: ... [crosstalk] things.

Travis: You ever get that? “I’m the one who signed your crack.”

Teresa: No.

Travis: Where the yearbook cover would open, and they would sign right down the spine—

Teresa: Is that a joke about derrieres, sir?

Travis: Well, yeah.

Teresa: Anyway. The mid-16th Century, [laughs] it’d become fashionable for students and members of the upper class to keep an autograph album, especially in Germany...? I don’t know why! Just was.

Travis: Okay! It's gotta start somewhere. Also, this is pre pictures, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So once again, this just seems to me to be—

Teresa: Although drawings of people were also included in a lot of these, little caricatures.

Travis: Yeah, but to authenticate an interaction, right? I could be like, "Draw me with this famous 15th-Century guy," and somebody could do it. And there's no proof that I was ever actually there with them.

But if I get their signature, and you can compare that signature other things they've signed, and it's like, "Yeah, you really met them!" That's the deal with autographs. And so it makes sense to me that this would come about as a way to say, "I met this author, and they signed the manuscript," or whatever, to prove that you met them.

Teresa: Absolutely. One that Alexx wanted to make sure that we included was a man named [unintelligible], who has an illustration in his 1661 autograph book called *Simeon's Ode*. And the person who drew that illustration? Rembrandt!

Travis: That's a good one!

Teresa: Signed right underneath there.

Travis: That's a good one to have. I'd like to have that one. Or some little two-line quip from Shakespeare would be fun, you know?

Teresa: [giggles] So—

Travis: Just a little zinger.

Teresa: Students really loved these books. Also, travelers really loved this

book. And one of the things that travelers used these for was for communicating friendships from other town, right? For example, if you met a guy in Paris and he was like, "Oh, man! I have a cousin who lives in Burgundy, and you're going there next? He could totally put you up for a few days!" So he would write a little note in your book, and say, "Go find this guy in Burgundy. He'll give you a bed and some bread," or whatever.

Travis: Like a reverse guestbook.

Teresa: Kind of! And then you would take it with you to Burgundy, and find that guy, and be like, "Hey, look! Your cousin in Paris..."

Travis: "He promised you would do this."

Teresa: "... said that you would be good for this."

And the guy would be like, "Oh, you met that dude? I love that guy. Yeah, come on in!"

Travis: Or he'd be like, "Why does that guy keep sending people to me?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And that "We have hung out – I mean, he's my cousin. But I barely know him, and our parents don't get along or anything. But I keep having to put people up, and give 'em bread and a bed and stuff. Ugh!"

Teresa: Well, but this idea, this autograph book that you took with you, literally opened doors for you. Right? It was a cool thing to have, and a way to meet people, and a way to start conversations, and things like that. So by the 17th Century, keeping these albums had become *very* commonplace. And it was super cool, even the kings had them.

Travis: I bet it was easy for them to get signatures. I bet they weren't ever nervous like, "Yeah. And just before you go, could you sign my book?" It's like, "Yeah, man!"

Teresa: Totally.

Travis: "You're *the king!*"

Teresa: Absolutely. The kingly ones were more or less about preserving interest and historical passion. Like you said earlier with Julius Caesar naming months after himself, it became a kind of way of chronicling your personal history. Where you've been, and who you've met, especially if you're the king.

And it became, since the king loved doing it, European aristocracy *loved* anything that the kings did. And so they wanted to do it too. The French minister of state, Antoine Loménie de Brienne, I believe, Amassed 340 enormous *volumes* of his favorite manuscripts and autographs.

Travis: Wow!

Teresa: It was so enormous that King Louis the... 8th?

Travis: Is it VII?

Teresa: No, it's XIII. That's—

Travis: 13.

Teresa: 13th later obtained it, and used it as the basis for a royal library.

Travis: Listen, baby. There's only one thing in life that I'm better at than you.

Teresa: [laughs] Is it reading Roman numerals?

Travis: And it's Roman numerals. I don't know why; I just know what they are right away.

Teresa: Why did I say 8th? He's not a famous guy at all.

Travis: I don't know, but please don't take it away from me. You can just say the letters out loud, and I'll tell you what the number is. It's like the *only thing* I've got going for me!

Teresa: [laughs] Oh, man.

Travis: Another thing we've got going for us?

Teresa: I'm [laughs] turning red here.

Travis: Another thing we've got going for us is a word from another Max Fun show! We'll be right back!

[theme music plays]

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[toddler babbles]

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[ad break ends]

Travis: And now we're back. See, I told you. Okay.

Teresa: Alright. So yes, preserving your personal history, very important. But also, socially flexing your muscles, also very important.

Travis: Which we still do now.

Teresa: Sure!

Travis: I mean, I take selfies if I meet people I'm a fan of, or cool people that I'm like, "Look at this guy!"

Then I put it on my Instagram, and everyone's like, "Oh, my gosh! Travis knows Justin McElroy." Right? And it blows people's minds.

Teresa: So by the 1800s—

Travis: I just namedropped my own brother, and I get *nothing*? No?

Teresa: [chuckles] Hey, on one hand, you tell me to make you stop talking.

Travis: You're right.

Teresa: And on the other hand, you're like, "Acknowledge me!" [laughs]

Travis: I'm— I am a mystery.

Teresa: You are.

Travis: Wrapped in an enigma.

Teresa: Indeed. It was all about creating a community where a very small number of wealthy scholars and historians and, you know, hobnobbers were interested in the manuscripts of very *famous* people. And I think this is where people start to think about autographs having *value* besides the historical preservation and personal history.

Travis: From a collecting standpoint.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: In the 1820s, people were still passing down collections, but those

were more or less private. But once we start getting to the 1830s, there's a market for these manuscripts.

Travis: Mm. I'm surprised it took *that* long.

Teresa: I know, right? Somebody figured out that they could make money doing this.

Travis: You know what I bet, just thinking about the timing-wise? That's where a lot of the idea of aristocracy and passing along family lines, and instead starting to be a lot more like, "I'm gonna make my own way! And then I have amassed fortune, even though I have no bloodline to speak of!" Right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And this idea of a lot of established family starting to hit hard times, and having to sell things off. And I bet, once those got sold, everyone was like, "Hey, wait a minute. [laughs] People are paying a *lot* of money for these books of people's names."

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: "Hey. Everybody, sell your books where people wrote their names down."

Teresa: Thomas Thorpe was one of London's best-known booksellers, and became the first official autograph dealer, creating full catalogs of all his wares. By 1841, he had offered 16,000 pieces to his customers. And this is one of the things that really caught on in Europe way before it did in America. There was not the simultaneous "We have to do everything that they do" fervor around autographs that there was around other things.

Travis: I would— Once again, I'm making a lot of wild conjecture. But I would bet that that had a lot to do with America being a much larger place.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: And a lot more focused on other stuff, at that point, in the 1840s.

Teresa: Nation building.

Travis: Yeah. And civil unrest brewing, and slavery being a problem. And England being far smaller, so the idea of "I recognize that name, I know who that person is. We have a longer history, so something that's 200 years old from England means a lot to me in a way that something that's 30 years old, 40 years old in America wouldn't hold the same thing." I could see that.

Teresa: The first major collector in the states was a man named William B. Sprague, who was a tutor and a clergyman. And the way that he got a lot of his best signatures was because he tutored members of the Washington family. You know, George.

Travis: Yeah. I'm aware.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I didn't think you meant Kerry Washington of *Scandal*.

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Maybe! I don't know.

Teresa: Just wanted to namedrop George Washington.

Travis: It's not really a namedrop, baby. He's quite famous.

Teresa: Anyway. He was given permission to pick freely from a collection of General Washington's correspondences.

Travis: *Ooh!*

Teresa: And he was like, "Yes. I'll take this, and this." And the only stipulation was that he had to leave copies of them.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And so by the time he passed away, he collected the largest and most valuable library of autographs in the United States of America. His collection included upwards of 40,000 pieces.

Travis: *Wow!*

Teresa: So now, it's now moved to the United States, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And then we've got this literary boom that happens. The romantics of this time period started writing their horror stories. Transcendentalists were waxing poetics about the American landscape. And then we've got Mark Twain, right, who redefined comedy in the young country of America.

Travis: And his evil twin, Samuel Clemens.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: People don't talk about that. Everybody's convinced they're the same person, but I'm not. Welcome to my Trav Talk. Samuel Clemens and Mark Twain were twins.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: One of them evil, one of them good.

Teresa: [chuckles] So now, we've got this explosion of literature again, so people are now starting to want autographs from them. And the author of *Last of the Mohicans*, James Fenimore Cooper, wrote a letter to his friend,

Grace Fish, that if she wanted, he could have no trouble sending her a *dozen* of his autographs. Because he received requests for his signature almost daily.

Travis: "Also, I'm sorry I wrote such a boring book that Travis had to read for high school summer reading, and it took him several tries just to get past the first page. Please pass it along to Travis' ancestors that I'm sorry about that one."

Teresa: 1860, Abraham Lincoln received so many inquiries about his signature that he has a small team of secretaries to deal with it. Right?

Travis: To forge his signature?

Teresa: To *deal* with it?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: [laughs] I don't know.

Travis: Sure. Honest Abe. Wink!

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. Alright.

Travis: "Just send 'em a penny!"

Teresa: And so we have found—

Travis: 'Cause his face was on it.

Teresa: Right. Exactly.

Travis: Not at that point, probably.

Teresa: Not at that point. The Victorians, they never go in for half-measures, right? As far as discovering things...

Travis: Oh, those fools collected—

Teresa: ... and naming things, and collecting things. They loved doing that.

Travis: They collected hair and blood and stuff, right?

Teresa: Oh, absolutely.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Absolutely. There was the appetite for all of these signatures, and people *really* started to capitalize on it, right? So not only were you dealing with getting the signatures of famous people. You were dealing with copies, and copycats, and illegitimate signatures, and all kinds of things like that.

Travis: People's dads faking Ninja Turtle signatures.

Teresa: Yes!

Travis: That happened all the time in Victorian England.

Teresa: Exactly. And so autograph shops sprung up in the 1870s and 80s, so that they could ply the masses with what they wanted to have.

Travis: And also that way, you can get reputable ones and irrepu— Un— And ones you don't trust.

Teresa: [wheeze-laugh] Yes! Yes, absolutely. The first autographed manuscript store was started on Broadway by a man named Walter R. Benjamin. He started putting out ads about how he could tell the right signatures from the wrong signatures, and he was not only reputable about dealing with replicas, but also you could sell your manuscripts to him, and all this kind of stuff. He was your guy.

Here is what he said in his ad campaign: "It is no use trying to coax an autograph from a Gladstone. An application will only result in the receipt of a lithograph on a postcard."

Travis: Mm-hmm. I've always said that. All of that.

Teresa: This is funny, because it's Victorian for the Gladstones were a famous family of British politicians, so you might want an autograph from them. But the joke is if you ask them for one, they'd be too busy, so they would just send you a replica of their own signature that they didn't even do themselves.

Travis: Hilarious.

Teresa: But *he* was saying that he could get you a bona fide signature.

Travis: Wow. Hilarious.

Teresa: Hilarious. [giggles]

Travis: What a great quip.

Teresa: Okay. So today, autograph collecting is still a very enjoyable hobby for people throughout the world, not just at Disneyland and Disney World.

Travis: No, I've signed autographs.

Teresa: I know! I know.

Travis: Yeah. But maybe they don't. I'm a pretty big deal!

Teresa: [wheeze-laughs]

Travis: Ask— Why'd you laugh at that?

Teresa: [through laughter] Ask anybody!

Travis: Ask anybody. I'm a real D-list internet celebrity.

Teresa: So here's the thing.

Travis: Used to be F-tier, but I moved up! [laughs]

Teresa: Now, people place a lot more credence to collecting physical signatures *themselves*, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: It's not enough to just get a reproduction, or people don't often send for autographs anymore. It's a whole industry, especially at conventions and stuff, for people actually *meeting* the person whose signature they are collecting.

Travis: When I was a kid, the library had a book called *Who's Who in America*.

Teresa: Mm!

Travis: And that's how you looked— You would go to the library, and you would look up celebrities, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it would give you either their PO Box, or like...

Teresa: Like their manager's office, or whatever.

Travis: ... their manager's stuff. And you could mail them a request for a headshot with a signature. You'd have to send in a self-addressed stamped envelope that they could mail back to you. It was a whole thing.

Teresa: Yeah. And that was pretty good for the time, but now, people want that interaction.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: So here are some etiquette tips for people amassing autographs. At a meet-and-greet, or at a con, this is something that you usually pay for. Right? You pay for the privilege to talk to them for a few minutes, to get a signed headshot or whatever it is. And so most of the time, if you meet someone at a con who has an autograph *event*, it is not very Shmannerly to ask them when you see them not at that event. You know what I mean?

Travis: Yeah. I'll also say, that's true with photographs a lot too.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And I've had to do this, right? Where it's like, if I'm doing a photo session through the convention, it's not that I don't *want* to.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: It's that if I *did*, the people that are paying for it, or the convention, you'd get upset. I just feel wrong doing that. But that's also part of the way that we are able to pay for travel to things like that.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Of like, I have to get paid to do it, or else I wouldn't *be* here, kind of thing.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I've never been offended when someone asks. Right?

Teresa: Yeah, but you do have to explain sometimes, "Hey, I have an actual

meet-and-greet event, so I can't really give you a photograph or an autograph right now."

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Also, if you find someone that you would like to have their autograph, and they are with their children, that's also inappropriate. You really shouldn't ask for them in front of their family, and things like that.

Travis: Can I jump in real quick?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I would also advise against a maneuver where you kind of hover, holding the thing you want signed, whether they're with their kids or just by themselves or whatever. Esp— Okay. When they're with their kids, don't hover, waiting for them to come on over. Right? It's a lot of pressure, feels weird. But if you see them, and they're just, say, at a convention or whatever, and they're looking at stuff, and you want to talk to them, hovering and waiting is— Just go over and say, "Hi," or walk away. Because they are doing something, right? And so if you want the interaction, you gotta start it.

And be prepared for them to say, "Oh, I can't right now." Right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But don't wait to be called over. I think it puts a lot of onus on that person to know. Because before— This has happened to me.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Where I've thought someone was waiting to meet me. And I was like, "Oh, hi! Did you want to get a photo?"

And they were like, "No. I have no idea who you are."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And that's *devastating*.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: So... I don't do that anywhere.

Teresa: Also, you probably shouldn't ask anyone for their autograph if they're actively eating. I mean, someone sitting at a coffee shop is different from someone in a restaurant, eating their meal. Don't do that.

Travis: If that happens, the cool thing to do is to flag over the server and pay for their meal.

Teresa: Oh, yeah?

Travis: I mean, I'm just saying, it's a real baller move.

Teresa: That is a baller move.

Travis: Also, this is a personal thing. I don't know if this is a rule for all people who do autographs, but I don't like signing blank pieces of paper with just my signature.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I will write *something*, right? Because one, I don't want people to be able to— I don't know that anyone would do this. This is not me saying, "Cause I'm hot stuff!" But the idea of being able to copy that signature, or anybody could write anything above it. Right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Like, "I eat my own farts!" And there's my signature underneath it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I don't need that kind of heat!

Teresa: No, a lot of people don't do that. I hear that there are celebrities that only sign in certain color of markers, or inks, or things like that.

Travis: I think that's been debunked— Because there was a thing of, "It's easier to photocopy if it's this color, so people don't sign with that color," so you're not just reprinting it.

Teresa: Mm. Oh, okay.

Travis: But I don't think that's true *anymore*.

Teresa: 'Cause photocopiers are so good these days.

Travis: Yeah. And you'd scan, right?

Teresa: So you can scan anything.

Travis: At this point, it doesn't really matter. But in general—

Teresa: But I definitely think that with the blank piece of paper, you—

Travis: Blank piece of paper. And people don't like signing things in sleeves, right?

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: So things in a plastic sleeve. Because the idea being you could then scan that with a picture, and then take that picture out, put a different picture in it, scan it again.

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: Because the signature's on the sleeve.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Right? So I know that that's a rule a lot of people have, where it's like, "I will sign the headshot or photo or whatever, but I won't sign the sleeve it's in. Because you could replicate that, and then sell it as prints."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: That makes it look like you have a bunch of signatures on a bunch of different photos.

Teresa: Speaking of a bunch of different signatures, in your experience, how *many* things should you ask to be signed at once?

Travis: It depends on how you're paying for it.

Teresa: Okay. So *paying*—

Travis: Right? Because there's some— Yeah.

Teresa: There's an etiquette to it. What if you just meet someone on the street, and you want them to sign every article of clothing you have?

Travis: No. One thing.

Teresa: One thing.

Travis: I've talked about it before on the show of the approach, the ask, and the departure.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Right? Of "Hey, I just wanted to say, I'm a big fan. Could you sign this for me? Thank you so much, have a great day." Right? You got the

interaction, you got the signature. Walk away. I would say, if someone is doing a free signing at a bookstore or something, gauge the amount of line.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Right? 'Cause it might be like, "Yeah, I'm sitting here, and we're in a lull, and you have three things you want signed? Sure, absolutely."

Teresa: And then there are some signings that are paid per piece.

Travis: Per piece. At *that* point, if you want me to sign 20 things, and you paid to have 20 things signed, that's great. But if there's a line of people behind you, and it's a free signing or whatever, and you're like, "Here's 20 things to sign," that's probably not going to get you the best interaction.

Teresa: Yeah. Probably not. And you wouldn't be able to talk, 'cause you're too busy signing all the signatures.

Travis: Also, a lot of times – at least I do – I've seen this a lot.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Where there will be people on a team, working the line ahead of time, and they'll give you a Post-it note that you can write your name on, so that way, the spelling is correct.

Teresa: Oh, that's a good idea.

Travis: Because I try to always ask, because if somebody was like, "Diane!" And I'm like, "Got it." And then I write that out. And they're like, "It's got two Ns, and a Y!" And I'm like, "Oh, no." Right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So they'll give you the thing. So if you get up there, and you're

having anything personalized, be ready to hand them the Post-it note, so you're ready to go right away? Perfect.

Teresa: Right. Also, if someone doesn't have time to give you an autograph, just try and believe the best of them. They might have things to do. They might— Like you said, there might be a paid event later. This kind of almost fan-celebrity interaction is awkward at the best of times, and so getting upset about someone who doesn't have time to sign, I don't know, your phone case or whatever, is just not cool.

Travis: I would also say, conventions, I think, is a place where there's a lot of running into these people, so I keep referencing conventions. But I will say, sometimes the schedule is like, "I just finished this thing. I got ten minutes to get completely across the hall for my next thing."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And so if you see someone booking it down a hallway, right, and you're like, "Hey, can you—"

And they're like, "I'm sorry, I can't." They probably mean it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And just let 'em go! Say, "Okay. Just thank you for your work!" Right? It's different if you just see someone standing around, waiting for something.

But usually, if somebody's like, "I gotta go!" Right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Then that's, "Oh, bye! I just wanted to say, you're great!"

I will say, occasionally, I will get shouted at while I'm on the move. And somebody's like, "Hey, I love your stuff!" Makes me feel good every time!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I always love it!

Teresa: In general, we want to keep things calm and polite and respectful, right? Don't break any laws, trespass, or do something shady to get someone's autograph. This includes visiting people's home addresses, their children's schools, stalking them at red lights. I don't know. We all understand that there is a privacy threshold that a celebrity allows you to break in public, but we don't want to take that too far.

Travis: I would also say, if someone is at a signing, and there's someone – a staff member, or team member of theirs – working the line, if you have something unique that you want to get signed instead of a headshot that you bought there, or "I want him to sign my arm, and then I'm gonna get a tattoo!" Right? Ask the person, "Hey. This is what I have planned. Is that okay?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Because they might have rules against it, they might not be comfortable with signing those things. I can imagine—

Teresa: Like body parts.

Travis: Like body parts, or stills from a movie, I don't know, where maybe they're less dressed...

Teresa: Mmm!

Travis: ... than normal. And it's like, "Oh! I'm really not comfortable that you just brought this up to the table right now."

That kind of thing is like, "Is this okay?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: "Is it okay if I have asked them to sign this?"

Teresa: And lastly, without some sort of convention line or book signing, if you meet someone out in the wild, and there happen to be children also clamoring for autographs, let the—

Travis: Just shove those kids right out— Oh.

Teresa: Let the *children* go first.

Travis: Yeah, you're taller than them.

Teresa: Let the *children*—

Travis: You can reach over.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You know? If you see Milo Manheim, I'm taller than him.

Teresa: [laughs] No, you're not!

Travis: I'm not— Taller than kids, that's what I meant.

Teresa: No, you're taller than kids.

Travis: I'm taller than kids. I can reach over, and be like, "Milo!"

Teresa: Let the *children* go first.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It's only polite.

Travis: Hey, everybody, thank you so much for joining us. MaxFunDrive's coming up.

Teresa: Woo!

Travis: It starts the week of— Let me think. What's today? Today is the 8th. So 13th— The 20th!

Teresa: Woo!

Travis: 4/20.

Teresa: Oh, boy.

Travis: Yes. Everybody should be able to remember that, because 20 is divisible by four.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: And so we're gonna be putting out a lot of fun stuff. We recorded a really fun bonus content episode that we'll tell you about, and there will be streams, all kinds of things. Thank you to our editors, Rachel and Gino, without whom we would not be able to do the show. Thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom we wouldn't be able to do the show. Thank you to you for listening. You are the autographs that fill our book.

Teresa: Aw.

Travis: Thank you so much. 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 idioms, all of that stuff. Don't hesitate, if you have an inkling, to send

something in. Do send it, 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?

[theme music plays]

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