

Shmanners 526: Kilts

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[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! It's me, your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: You're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: That's not normally what I say, is it? I don't say "Hello, internet. It's me..."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "... your husband host."

Teresa: "'Tis I."

Travis: Very declarative!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I think I just say "I'm your husband host." "It's me!"

Teresa: I think you're right.

Travis: "It's me! Your husband host, Travis McElroy."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I don't even know—sometimes...

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: If you can believe it, my mouth moves faster than my brain.

Teresa: Hmm. I can believe it.

Travis: And I'm like, "Where did that—what? What does that mean?"

Teresa: Just kind of bubbles up.

Travis: Yeah. Today I was talking with your sister about tea.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And she mentioned rooibos. And I said, "It's short for kangarooibos."

And she kind of looked at me. And I said, "I can't drink it. It makes me jumpy."

And I'm like, what is—what have I become? 'Cause kangaroo, makes you jumpy. I don't even know!

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah. [laughs]

Travis: I'm 42. I got two kids. I'm doing my best out here, folks. Trying to keep it edgy, that twisted, kind of [holding back laughter] South Park humor.

Teresa: [laughs] Exactly. Are you ready?

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Okay. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. We are going to talk about kilts today. This was a audience suggestion, so I'd like to thank you for this delightful suggestion from fanner Casey B.

Travis: Thanks, Casey.

Teresa: Thank you.

Travis: Thank you!

Teresa: And remember, feel free to email Alexx any topic ideas, and she will be delighted to hear from you. Shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Alright. Tell me about what you know...

Travis: [simultaneously] my kilting experience.

Teresa: ...about kilts.

Travis: So, we did kilts for my older brother's wedding.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And I was I think 22 at the time. And first of all, it's great. Wearing a kilt rules. You get a little purse in the front. It's great. We had, like, the tux jacket and kilts, a little purse, tall socks. I was best man. All the groomsmen, it was great.

It was a Catholic ceremony.

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: And that involved all of us sitting on the diocese? The dais? The stage.

Teresa: The stage. [laughs]

Travis: Facing the audience. So I was very aware of keeping my knees together the whole time so as not to give the paparazzi a chance. And we also did imbibe a little bit pre-wedding, because we all had flasks. And then I kept—

Teresa: Did you keep your flask in your little purse?

Travis: I did! And I kept leaning over to Justin during the ceremony and making jokes, 'cause it's what I do.

Teresa: That's what you do.

Travis: And eventually he leaned over to say, "Hey, you're very funny, but I'm trying to get married."

And I said, "Oh, right." And I let him focus up.

Teresa: [laughs] So, did you wear undergarments?

Travis: I did?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Okay. That is a debate that we will—we're gonna settle it today. On the podcast.

Travis: I wouldn't make that bold a statement, but okay.

Teresa: I mean, we're gonna settle it as far as etiquette goes.

Travis: We're gonna settle it as far as the two of us goes.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: As far as we're concerned...

Teresa: With etiquette. Yes. You may not be familiar with kilts, so let me describe it for our audience. It is a knee-length wraparound garment with a pleated back and a flat front that is traditionally woven from wool into a plaid or tartan pattern. It's typically worn at formal events and cultural gatherings as a tribute to Scottish heritage. So, that makes sense that you would wear it at a wedding.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: You guys have a little bit of Scottish in your bloodline.

Travis: Listen.

Teresa: Listen.

Travis: It depends on which one of us you ask. By which I mean, did you ask me, Justin, and Griffin, or Dad? And today, the kids were like, "Well, we're, like, Scottish-Irish, right?"

I was like, "Not by any—like, not by any way that matters." Right? It's not, like, yeah. But the thing is, McElroy is a fairly common derivation—basically, a lot of names—people have gone with McElroy if they've decided to change them, or whatever, based on their original name. Like, there's McIlroy with an I, there's a bunch of 'em, right?

So the Scottish version of McElroy, one of 'em is McGillivray.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Which if you asked my dad, he's like, "That's our clan." Based on what? I simply do not know. And the family motto for that one is "Touch not this cat."

Teresa: Interesting!

Travis: Which I think means, like, don't mess with us. But it's also, like, oh, I wouldn't—I wouldn't touch that cat.

Teresa: She'll claw at you.

Travis: That cat? Ooh. That cat is real grouchy. That's a grouchy cat. Don't touch this cat.

Teresa: So, where did the kilt come from? I will tell you.

Travis: Okay. Thank god, 'cause I have no idea.

Teresa: The garment first came about as we know it today in 16th century Scotland. That is not to say that some other form of tunic or even skirt wasn't worn before then, but the kilt specifically as we know it today dates back to the 16th century.

Members of the great Scottish clans would take a long piece of wool, usually in their family pattern, and wrap it around their hips and over their shoulders. Several dress historians have proposed that historical Highlanders would do this by taking a four to six yard long piece of wool that was about two yards wide, gather it into pleats, pass the plaid around the body, and then secure it loosely with a belt before tightening it after the final adjustment of the pleats.

Travis: You know what I picture right away?

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: Brave. The film Brave.

Teresa: Oh, certainly.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: I think about Brave.

Teresa: There are some really great videos online of people putting on the kilts. You have to, like, kind of put it on the ground and fold it up.

Travis: And roll over it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: What, really?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You lay down on it and roll over?

Teresa: I mean, yeah, kind of. You lay down on top of it and kind of, like, fold it around yourself.

Travis: Okay. But you don't roll yourself up like a pig in a blanket.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: No, no, no.

Travis: That's what I was picturing.

Teresa: 'Cause you pleat it in the back.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And you kind of, like, sit on top of it and then wrap it around.

Travis: I love that.

Teresa: It's very cool. Look it up.

Travis: You look it up!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Read a book.

Teresa: So this method of wearing the kilt is known as the belted plaid or the big wrap.

Travis: I would also point out, as a kind of running theme I guess throughout Shmanners, this is another example of the idea of things being gendered being completely ridiculous and made up.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: When you think about, like, Greeks.

Teresa: Togas.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Tunics, yeah.

Travis: Spartans, they wore leather skirts basically, right? For movement. Scottish kilt, that kind of thing. The idea of, like, "Skirts are for girls!" Is, like, no. That doesn't matter. None of this matters. It's all made up.

Teresa: It is important with the long kilt that you do it properly, right? And it is a skill that one must develop. Because it lacks fasteners, right?

Travis: You don't have, like, the pins and stuff? You know, the metal circles with, like, a thing through it up here?

Teresa: I mean, sure, at the top. I'm talking about around the waist.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: So, the modern kilt, which is referred to as the philibeg, is a small kilt or a walking kilt, which was invented in the 1720s.

Travis: Oh, this? This is my walking kilt. This is my everyday comfort kilt.

Teresa: Right. And this is what you would see with the kind of, like—

Travis: [simultaneously] By Bonobos.

Teresa: [laughs] With the—like, the adjusting straps on the sides to hold it up a little better if you didn't quite understand how to do all the folding and rolling, right? And so, how did the walking kilt come about?

Travis: You're going to tell me that too, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay. Thank god. Phew!

Teresa: It was invented by an English Quaker named Thomas Rawlinson.

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: Because he wanted to make money.

Travis: Ohh! Kind of like cowboy hats.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: He was one of the managing partners of his family's ironworks in a small Scottish village. And so the story goes that he observed that the great kilt, the one I told you about that you had to kind of put on the ground—

Travis: [simultaneously] All the work, yeah.

Teresa: All the work. Was, quote, "A cumbersome and unwieldy habit to men at work."

Travis: Not the kilt of the future! [singing a tune]

Teresa: He wanted to, quote, "Abridge the dress and make it handy and convenient for his workmen."

So he made a redesign.

Travis: "It takes my workers so long to put on their kilts in the morning. When they go to the bathroom and they come back, it's, like, 30 minutes! To sit on it and do all the pleats. This is taking forever!"

Teresa: He got rid of the upper portion that would go around the shoulder that you could actually use as a cloak or a blanket.

Travis: Then where do you put your merit badges?

Teresa: I don't know, man. And closed up the back pleats at the top, right? So it's looking more like a skirt instead of, like, a draped kind of thing, right?

Travis: I will say right now, I am kind of, like, did y'all not think about, like, sewing the pleats in place early on?

Teresa: I think that—

Travis: Do you think it was part—was it part of it?

Teresa: It was part of it. It would be, like, this utilitarian piece of cloth, right? I think the closest thing that comes to mind is a sari, right? Where, like, it's about the wrapping and the pleating, and the way that you can change the design a little bit, wear it differently if you need to.

Travis: And you got a blanket if you need one.

Teresa: Exactly. Right?

Travis: I will say, like, that's a thing I think about a lot. The idea of girding oneself for, like, battle, for example. Right? There's so much procedure. Like, if you were a knight, right? That went into getting your armor on. There was so much procedure to putting on one of these kilts. There was so much

procedure to, like, getting ready for the thing that it becomes almost, like, meditative. Like, a chance to, like, switch.

Teresa: [simultaneously] Yeah, I can see that.

Travis: It's one of the reasons, like, I started painting my nails. Especially when we do live shows. Or, like, doing makeup for live shows. Because it feels, like, meditative. Like I am getting ready for this. There is a process I am following to get ready for this. You know what I mean?

Teresa: His associate, Iain MacDonnell, was chief of the MacDonnells of Inverness.

Travis: I bet that's a big one. Just those two combinations of words.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I'm like, I kind of recognize one of those and I definitely recognize the second one.

Teresa: He had high standing in his clan, and so the new fashion caught on very quickly with others in the community.

Travis: Now you've made me think, speaking of knights, of A Knight's Tale, when Heath Ledger comes in in the sleeker armor that was designed for him by the lady blacksmith, and everybody's like, "Hey, [unintelligible]!" And then he just, like, swings over the horse on his own without help, and everybody shuts up. Anyways.

Teresa: Anyways.

Travis: That's just what you made me think of.

Teresa: The redesign—

Travis: It's a great movie. Can we talk about Knight's Tale?

Teresa: [laughs] No!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The redesign also coincides with a change in looms. So, up until this time period, you would have the warp weighted loom. Which, if you've seen The Odyssey...

Travis: Which I haven't, and you know that.

Teresa: Which you haven't... is the same one that Penelope uses. Right? It's the one where it's vertical strings that are weighted at the bottom. In favor of horizontal looms.

Travis: The weft.

Teresa: Which makes a garment that actually has a narrower width.

Travis: Isn't that what it is? Warp is up and down, weft is across?

Teresa: I believe so.

Travis: I believe so too.

Teresa: And so you didn't have as much wool to play around with, right? And so to throw it over your shoulder or to use it as a blanket—

Travis: [crosstalk] soldier.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Would be difficult, because it wasn't as wide. So, this small kilt has been pretty standard since the 1720s.

The second most important part of the kilt is the pattern on the kilt.

Travis: The tartan.

Teresa: Indeed. And this is kind of like a square is a rectangle type deal. A kilt is tartan, right? That's the specific name for the design. And plaid is a

name for the type of design. So, all tartans are plaids, but not all plaids are tartans.

Travis: Like checker and gingham?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. Very similar. Gingham has a similar property where the colors of the gingham, where they overlay, they make another color, right? Usually just a darker hue. Tartan is very similar. Where the colors of the tartan overlay, they should make another color.

Travis: Because it's, like, the different strands being woven together.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Not just, like, and then the pattern changes here, right? It's like, okay.

Teresa: Right, yes.

Travis: The blend.

Teresa: The other thing is the size of the plaid is specific for tartan, because it has an identical crisscross design of horizontal and vertical stripes that repeat symmetrically. And so we've got, like, 90 degree angles of different colors, in the repeating pattern.

Travis: So ideally you would be able to cut one set of the pattern and then just lay that out in a grid, and it would make it, right? That it would all fit together.

Teresa: It would all fit together, 'cause you could also turn it 90 degrees and still sit it the right way.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, then, what we've got for the different tartans is they represent different specific... ?

Travis: Specific.

Teresa: ...clans or families or regions, right? So it's not—

Travis: Now you got me second-think—guessing. specific—specificity? Specificical. That's nothing. That's not a word.

Teresa: That's not a word. What I mean is...

Travis: Individual.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: [laughs]

Teresa: But also not exactly, right? Because they could kind of overlap, where you could have several different tartans that you could use. Where, like, you could use your clan tartan, you can use your community tartan, you could use your regional tartan. Like, they just kind of overlap in a way.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: I think that's what I'm trying to say, yes. But they are officially cataloged. So you can go to any number of purveyors of tartan and look up specifically what you're looking for to do with your culture that you want to represent. And there are also several open tartans that anybody can wear.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: So, here's the thing. I talked about the overlaying colors, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: But it becomes part of, like, an identity. And so you would recognize specific tartans, and that inherently is political.

Travis: Yeah. Okay.

Teresa: Yes. Because—

Travis: It's part of the reason, too, for the repeating pattern.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: The idea that if I see you at a distance I'm like, "That person belongs to blank."

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Travis: If, I guess, if I'm someone with a photographic memory of tartans.

Teresa: I guess so.

Travis: Which if there's, like, a neighboring clan that you're like, "We hate them," you would learn what their tartan looked like pretty quick!

Teresa: Right. And this becomes important with the Jacobite uprising of 1745.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: The rebellion was organized and led by Prince Charles Edward Stuart, also known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. And was the final attempt of the banished Scottish clan Stuart to take back the throne of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Travis: How'd it go?

Teresa: Not well.

Travis: Ugh.

Teresa: The clans were defeated in 1746, and England launched a campaign to, quote, "Pacify the Highlands."

Travis: Aw, beans.

Teresa: Pacify has almost the word peace associated with it, but it was not.

Travis: Was it possibly a euphemism?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: For kind of break their spirits?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It was said that the Scots would be made peaceful, beginning with fire and the sword, and leading on to social engineering of various kinds.

Travis: Boo, gross.

Teresa: Right. So, in other words, first we'll fight you, and then we'll take away anything that could unite you.

Travis: Beans.

Teresa: Beans. One of the symbols that they came for was the kilt. August of 1746, the Diskilting Act went into effect.

Travis: Excuse me?

Teresa: I know.

Travis: Wow. Does what it says right there on the tin, huh?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Banning Highland costume from civilian life. Because, why do you need to connect to your clan when you are supposed to serve the crown?

Travis: I'm gonna say horse apples. That's horse apples.

Teresa: Indeed. Indeed.

Travis: There was one exception to the Diskilting Act. If you were a Scotsman serving in the armed forces, England would allow you to wear belted plaid, but you still had to look like the British Army, so you also wore the red coat on top.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So they had a small leather sporran, which is what the pouch is called, red and white knee-length socks, black buckled shoes, the red coat, and then the tartan kilt.

Travis: Now, I've heard of these redcoats before.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Iconic.

Travis: The term seems familiar.

Teresa: The Highland Society of London worked to get the Diskilting Act repealed in 1782, but like a lot of things, because it was banned, it became more of a symbol of rebellion, right? So people wearing it were already wearing it, because it was banned.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: To show that they wouldn't kowtow to the crown, right?

Travis: Yeah. Listen, I wouldn't claim to be an expert on the Scottish. But I imagine that there was a good number of them that when you were like, "Hey. The British Crown has decided you're not allowed to wear your kilt anymore."

That a good number of 'em were like, "[blows raspberry]"

Teresa: [laughs] "Up yours," right?

Travis: Yeah, right? Like, I doubt there were many Scots who were like, "Oh! Yeah, we had no idea! Oh my god, I'm so embarrassed. Yeah, please. Let me go home and change. I didn't—yes, of course."

Teresa: So, in a way, the kilt might have actually fallen out of fashion faster if it hadn't been banned, right? Because people started wearing it to show that they would not be subservient. And in a weird way, that happened again later.

As kind of, like, the punk scene of the 80s and 90s started coming out, tartan and kilts became part of the kind of rebellion that everyone was putting into the culture and the music.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Which is pretty cool. After the Diskilting Act...

Travis: I'd love to find out what happened after the Diskilting Act. But first, here's a word from another Max Fun show.

[ad break]

Travis: And we're back.

Teresa: Yes. We are back, to after the Diskilting Act.

Travis: I never know how to do that.

Teresa: I don't know either. [laughs]

Travis: Because those of you at home, it's, like, two second break. And I never know how to come back in, and I often feel like a weird, like, morning show host. Like, "And we're back. With us now is..."

Teresa: Yeah. [laughs]

Travis: "... Billy the talking squirrel. Billy, come on over."

Teresa: King George IV was...

Travis: The fourth George.

Teresa: No. I mean, yes. But he made a very heavily managed and PR kind of, like, tour of a state visit to Edinburgh in 1822, and he wore full Highland dress, with the kilt and everything, right?

And so this publicity stunt made it extremely popular among not only the Scottish nobility, but also among the British aristocracy, to accept and wear the kilt.

Travis: Yeah. 'cause I feel like I've seen Prince Charles wear a kilt on several occasions.

Teresa: Indeed, indeed. Even the patron saint of our podcast, Queen Victoria—

Travis: King Charles, I guess he's King Charles now.

Teresa: He's King Charles now. Even Queen Victoria—

Travis: Prince starts to feel more like a nickname after a while. "That's Prince Charles," right? Like that's his first name. Charles is his middle name. You know?

Teresa: No.

Travis: I forgot—it's been my whole life that dude's been Prince Charles! You know what I mean? Now it's just King? It's gonna take me forever to update! I forget what year it is! You know what I mean? I write the wrong year on things all the time for the first five months. And now I'm just

supposed to remember that he's not Prince Charles anymore? It rolls off the—he should be King Prince Charles.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That would be way easier for me to remember.

Teresa: But very confusing.

Travis: Would it be more confusing than having to remember that he's actually King Charles now? Which sounds weird, 'cause it's the name of a Spaniel? Think about that.

Teresa: I will think about that. And I'll also think about—

Travis: I'm not even British. Why am I complaining about—this never comes up in my everyday life.

Teresa: It's true!

Travis: Why am I acting like this is a thing that bothers me all the time?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Now I'm mad at myself for being mad about it. Meta.

Teresa: That's totally rad, man. Far out. Out there.

Travis: I don't need whatever this is.

Teresa: [laughs] Queen Victoria also got on board during her reign. Prince Albert—

Travis: She wore kilts all the time!

Teresa: No. Not—not a kilt, but tartan. She had her own tartan developed.

Travis: Actually, that's true, 'cause I picture—I do picture the—yeah, she wore that a lot.

Teresa: She had several dresses fashioned from her very own Victoria tartan, because they spent a lot of time, her and Albert, in Balmoral Castle.

Travis: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Teresa: Right. She had her chambers decked out in it, wore dresses from it, and—

Travis: Got a big tattoo of it across her back.

Teresa: No. [laughs]

Travis: You don't know that.

Teresa: I know that Queen Victoria did not get a giant tartan tattoo!

Travis: No, it was the Lord's Prayer with, like, two cool pistols on either side and skulls to dot all the Is.

Teresa: Alright, alright.

Travis: She was hardcore.

Teresa: Let's skip ahead to World War II. Something radical happened. Women started wearing kilts.

Travis: That rules.

Teresa: Very scandalous, right? But middle and upper class women began to wear a simplified version of the kilt in the form of a pleated wraparound skirt. You may also see that this is the time where tartans become associated with private schools in England and America.

Travis: Yeah, okay.

Teresa: Uh-huh. Because it was meant to show your standing in the Scottish community, wearing the tartan that you wore. Right? So, like, that's why school uniforms often include plaid skirts that resemble kilts in a lot of ways. Like I said, they're usually not tartan. They are plaid. But this—it's all related.

Travis: My high school mascot was the Highlander, the Huntington High Highlander.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: And I'm only now realizing I never even thought to question what kind of tartan he was depicted as wearing. Like, never even questioned that guy.

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: What clan are you, Huntington High Highlander?

Teresa: Hmm, interesting. And so, like I said earlier, it went through the normal kind of, like, pendulum swing throughout history, right? Where you would wear it to show your standing, and then you would wear it as kind of a rebel, and then you could wear it as kind of, like, a military dress.

And then women started wearing it, and then it became, like, a uniform thing. And then, like I said earlier, it also was a symbol of, like, the punk era, right?

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: Younger, more liberal Scots felt like the British had used their heritage as a commodity, and this was one of their attempts to take it back, right? So you'll see kilts being worn as everyday wear, with t-shirts and sweaters and denim and, like, leather jackets. This is where we—

Travis: Safety pins everywhere.

Teresa: Yeah, mm-hmm. This is where we start to see—

Travis: It was so cool!

Teresa: ...tartans on dresses and skinny jeans. Bands like The Proclaimers, they wore their tartan [crosstalk].

Travis: Were they punk? No.

Teresa: Yeah, kind of. I mean, kind of!

Travis: [high-pitched] Aren't they the ones that sang "I would walk 500 miles"?

Teresa: I'm not sure. Did they?

Travis: I think so.

Teresa: Scottish comedian Billy Connolly...

Travis: Yes, okay.

Teresa: ...loves his tartan and kilts so much that not only does he—or had he often performed in them in his stand up shows, but routinely contributes to a charity called Dressed To Kilt.

Travis: That's a great name.

Teresa: That is a good one. He even walked the runway once in a denim jacket and a high fashion kilt. That's pretty cool.

Travis: I would do that. That sounds cool.

Teresa: In the 21st century, kilts became more popular with the success of Braveheart, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And the rise of events like the Highland Games. Or the televised form of the Highland Games. Highland Games had been going on for a very long time. But it remains kind of like—tartans specifically, and kilts in general, remain an everlasting tribute to the Scottish clans of old.

Travis: Here's some other ones. Rod Stewart, Simple Minds, Annie Lennox, Big Country. You said Billy Connolly. Uhh...

Teresa: People who wore kilts?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Is that what you're talking about?

Travis: Huh. The Scottish rock band Travis. What's up?

Teresa: Neat.

Travis: Aww, the Fratellis! I like the Fratellis.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I mean, like, the two songs I know of theirs.

Teresa: Let's go over the parts of a kilt. Okay? So, they—

Travis: The front! The back! The sides!

Teresa: Yeah, yeah, wait.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The front panel of the kilt that's meant to lay flat is called the apron. And it is often lined for extra comfort, usually a softer cotton behind it for comfort on your legs. Right? And other parts.

Travis: And your giblets.

Teresa: [laughs] Yes. There's the pleats, which are the folds in the back of the kilt allowing for ease of movement, and is distinctive look of the kilt. They can be styled in different ways, depending upon how you like it. We've got box pleats, military pleats, knife pleats, all kinds of different things.

There's the waist. The waistband of a kilt is meant to be worn without a belt—the walking kilt we talked about—which has leather buckles and straps that secure it around your waist. Typically—

Travis: On the sides to, like, tighten it up.

Teresa: Yes, exactly.

Travis: But not all the way around.

Teresa: Right. Typically there's one on the right and one on the left, fastening buckles, but there can be two on the same side as well. Then you've got tacking, which are the stitches that hold the kilt pleats in place during the construction. These are usually temporary and removed after the back pleats have been properly pressed.

Travis: Oh, sort of like the pleat in the back of a jacket.

Teresa: Yes, the kick pleat in the back of a skirt or a jacket, exactly. There's bar tacks.

Travis: Cut those open, people.

Teresa: You gotta.

Travis: Don't look like a doofus.

Teresa: The bar tacks are small, reinforced stitches that secure the top and bottom of the kilt's pleats that help it maintain its shape over time. Don't cut those.

And then of course the tartan is the fabric printing that the entire garment is made of. The fabric is usually woven from wool, and it can be a very exact

pattern or, like I said, there are lots of places you can go to reference open tartans.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: In general, we've got some kilt etiquette. Kilts in the 21st century are for both everyday and formal wear. However, it is possible to disrespect the garment by wearing it with, like, a pajama shirt or, like, a jacket that's dirty. Right?

Travis: Or as a costume.

Teresa: Or as a costume, yes.

Travis: I saw that as I talk about my Huntington High Highlander mascot. I don't know. I don't know where that falls.

Teresa: I don't know where that fits.

Travis: I don't think they were mocking Highlanders in any way, though. I remember it being very tasteful.

Teresa: Country Roads, West Virginia.

Travis: There's a lot of tie-in, West Virginia and Scotland.

Teresa: There's a lot of tie-in.

Travis: They're, like, sister... places.

Teresa: Your kilt and accompanying attire—

Travis: I was gonna say cities. That wasn't right. States? No. Countries? No, West Virginia is not a country, as far as I know. It's very country.

Teresa: Countrysides.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Sister soils.

Teresa: Ooh, I like it! TM, TM, TM.

Travis: TM, TM, TM.

Teresa: Your kilts and accompanying attire must match the dress code of the event you're attending, and must be neat and well-fitting. For example, like you did for a wedding, you would want to pair it with a structured jacket and a bow tie, and dress shoes, right? But if you're going to the Highland Games or, like, a cultural festival, or the pub, a simple shirt and well-kept sneakers are totally fine, right?

Always treat your kilt with care and respect, making sure it's properly cleaned and well-pressed and in good condition, because it comes with a very rich history, right? So you want to respect the traditions by making sure that the garment is well cared-for.

Travis: Yes. Even if it's brand new, if it's your family's tartan it should be thought of like a family heirloom, right? Because there's a history in that tartan that has been handed through generations and should be treated as such.

Teresa: Exactly. You should obviously learn to take care of your kilt correctly, right?

Travis: Especially if it's wool!

Teresa: Especially if it's wool.

Travis: Don't throw that in the washing machine! What are you doing?

Teresa: Make sure that when you purchase it or—

Travis: I'd like to think that someone's listening to this episode while doing the laundry, and they were kind of zoned out for a second, and they didn't hear the first part.

Teresa: "Oh no, my kilt!"

Travis: And they just heard me yell, "Don't throw that in the washing machine!"

And they're like, "What? This t-shirt?"

Teresa: [laughs] If you buy your kilt from a shop, there are definitely people to assist you to make sure that it is a good fit, teach you how to fashion it and properly align the pleats and the tartan pattern. Make sure that you take notes and pay attention, because you're being entrusted with this cultural garment, and you should take care of it.

Travis: And especially if you're getting, like, a real one, it's not like it's coming to you for, like, five bucks. You know what I mean?

Teresa: I know. It is expensive! We looked.

Travis: You need to invest—yeah, you need to invest in this and take good care of it.

Teresa: Right. And also, here's the thing. I know that there are lots of stereotypes regarding Scottish people behaving badly.

Travis: Everybody behaves badly.

Teresa: Everybody behaves badly. But think of yourself like you would if you were wearing, like, your company polo. When you wear a kilt, you're kind of a representative of the culture.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right?

Travis: And of your clan! That's the whole thing, right? Especially if you're wearing—

Teresa: Even if you're not Scottish, right? You want to make sure that you put the respect on it, and doing that means that you behave well while wearing it, because it is kind of like your company logo.

Travis: If you're putting on a kilt because you want an excuse to be rowdy, wear jeans. You know what I mean? You don't need that excuse. You know what I mean? There's been a bad rap for too long. Wear the kilt, and then help your neighborhood. I don't know.

Teresa: In the late 90s, there was actually some drama about this, because a bunch of soccer hooligans wearing kilts at the World Cup behaved poorly, right? And so there was a lot of, like, drama around "They don't represent us," and "That's not, like, representative of our culture," and "Those bad apples don't spoil the rest of our bunch, here." Right?

Here are a couple of questions about kilts. Can you wear one if you're not Scottish? Yes! You can. The kilt-maker of the Prince of Wales was asked—

Travis: I bet he makes giant kilts! For whales?!

Teresa: [laughs] No. Wales the country.

Travis: I know.

Teresa: Was asked by a London fashion house, who was allowed to wear the kilt? And his answer was succinct: anyone.

Travis: Okay. I'm not gonna question his judgment, but I would like also a second opinion from someone who doesn't make their living selling kilts.

Teresa: Okay. Sure.

Travis: Because at that point, you do want everyone to buy 'em.

Teresa: Like I said...

Travis: I'm just being sassy. I'm sure he's right.

Teresa: If you have a cultural tie-in, right? To a specific tartan, please do represent that culture that you are a part of. If you do not, like I've said, there are several open tartans that anyone can wear. Get a kilt made out of that. You know? That's basically the only etiquette regarding who can and who can't.

Travis: I would also say, just judgment call. If you're like, "I'm gonna go visit Scotland for the first time. And what do I know about Scotland? Kilts. So I'm gonna wear my—like, I'm gonna buy a bunch of kilts and wear 'em while I'm there."

Maybe hold off. Maybe get there, get the vibe of the place that you're at.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Don't roll up being a little too touristy, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Also, you want to make sure that you know about it, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Don't just buy any kilt from anywhere. You don't know what the tartan means. You might be saying something you don't wanna say, right?

Travis: There you go. Hey, get to the part about the underwears.

Teresa: Yes. This is certainly something that is brought up a lot. Traditionally, most Scottish men go, quote, "true Scotsman," as they call it, and don't wear undergarments with their kilt. This is a military tradition from a rather hilarious source.

Travis: Oh, please.

Teresa: So, the kilt, when it was included for dress of the Scottish branch of the British Army, there were no undergarments mentioned as part of the uniform. They were just omitted. It is not...

Travis: Not banned.

Teresa: Not banned.

Travis: Just not listed.

Teresa: Not listed.

Travis: So they said, "Oh, so we don't need to."

Teresa: It is possible that the people constructing these were more like, "Of course they'll wear their underwear! We don't have to write that down."

But they didn't write it down. So... instead of treating this as an oversight, the Scottish soldiers saw this as a challenge, and decided to, quote, "Go regimental," meaning they would just... let things go free.

Travis: Yeah. Their scotch eggs, if you will.

Teresa: [laughs] Their pickle jar.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So it is kind of like a culture-wide inside joke to not wear undergarments. But...

Travis: But not necessarily everyday dress that way.

Teresa: Exactly. Right? Scottish law does not address this issue, right? But some municipalities suggest underwear, quote, "Must be worn when wind speeds exceed 25 miles per hour."

Travis: Yeah. Listen, yeah.

Teresa: So, I mean, use your best judgment! Right? You can also wear your boxer briefs underneath your kilt, and nobody's gonna be mad at you.

Travis: Yeah. I think that's the key. Don't feel pressured into doing it.

Teresa: Don't feel pressured.

Travis: But I would also say, don't be a creep about it if you decide to go, as Teresa said, regimental. Don't be like, "Yeah, and I bet you're wanting—hey, I bet you're wondering—hey, I bet you're wondering." Don't be a creep about it.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: It's weird. Don't use it as an excuse to talk about your undercarriage.

Teresa: Exactly. Do what you want, but keep it to yourself.

Travis: Yeah! Hey, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us. Thank you to our researcher Alexx, without whom we couldn't do the episode. Thank you to our editors, Rachel and Gino, without whom we couldn't make the episode. And thank you to you for listening! You're part of the Shmanners clanners.

Teresa: [gasps] I love it!

Travis: Thank you. Thank you very 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 Shmanners Fanners Facebook group. That's fan-run, and if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

Also, this topic was suggested by a fan. You too, fan, can also suggest a topic!

Travis: Yes, you!

Teresa: Send your topic to shmannerscast@gmail.com, and say hi to Alexx, because she reads every single one!

Travis: If you want us to do an episode about A Knight's Tale, and point out...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ...where this is actually very accurate and, like, not so much this part... please.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: That would be a dream. I'd love that. If we can talk about the historical accuracies and inaccuracies of Knight's Tale.

Teresa: You know, we don't have to wait for a suggestion. If you want to organize this...

Travis: That's the Travis McElroy suggestion.

Teresa: If you want to organize that and present it, I would love this.

Travis: Hey, that's gonna do it for us.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Thank you for listening. That's gonna do it for us. Join us again next week.

Teresa: There it is. No RSVP required!

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

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners! Get it?

[theme music plays]

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