

# Forty Years of Showme

By DEBBIE SHELL

## 1921

THE SHOWME  
SHUFFLE NUMBER JANUARY



Vol. I, No 4

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

Price 5c

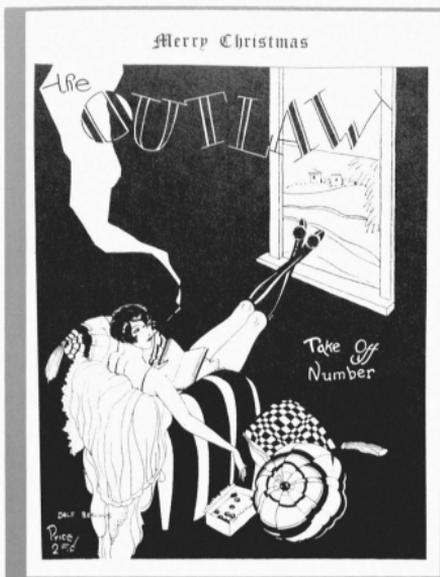
## 1946

MISSOURI  
Showme

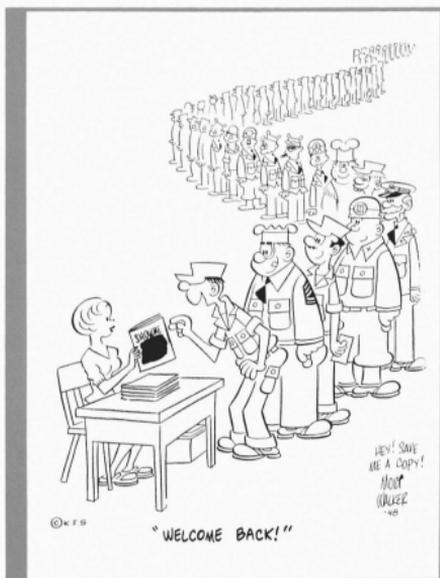
NOVEMBER 1946  
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# 1928



# 1960



Most men like girls who refuse to wear short skirts any longer. — *Showme*, 1925

**SOME THINGS** never seem to change.

Gather together 100 college students from any era, ask them what their main interests are, and you'll likely get the same answer: the opposite sex and beer.

Starting a Missouri humor magazine based on these subjects seems an easy, natural thing to do. Keeping it going, however, proved to be a little harder.

Resembling more a master magician than a college publication, *Showme*, Mizzou's famous contribution to humor, pulled several disappearing and reappearing acts during its five-decade life span.

*Showme* arrived in October 1920. Appropriately enough, the first issue was called the "Debut Number," and featured long, prosaic jokes, cartoons, and various amusements "borrowed" from other campus humor magazines of the time.

It took longer to tell a joke during the Roaring Twenties. The 35-cent issues contained such gems as "The Grand Pas-

son":  
Quietly she lay at my feet, her eye amorous with desire, green points of light boring remorselessly into my very soul, awakening dead passions and stirring into open flame the smoldering ashes of a yearning, long suppressed. A low moan, half of entreaty, half of aching want, escaped her. And I did it. Yes, I did it — shamelessly, defiantly. Stooping tenderly, I picked the damn cat up and put it in bed with me. — *October 1920*

No wonder the price was so high. *Showme* was off and running.

Never a magazine to avoid controversy for long, *Showme* slipped in and out of trouble throughout its years of publication. The staff kept one ear tuned to the wants of students and one ear cocked for the protests of University officials.

When the administration banned a dance called the Shuffle, *Showme* responded with the "Shuffle Number." One of the comments on the notorious dance claims:

I shuffle because  
It isn't considered nice.  
Because it's absurd.  
Because chaperones don't like it.  
Because it's forbidden  
— and the chaperones are not watching me. — *January 1921*

*Showme* won the battle, but lost the war two years later when "Confessions of a Coed" confessed a little too much in the eyes of officials, who kicked the magazine



# MISSOURI Showme

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TAKE HOME TO  
MOTHER ISSUE

Swami, divine inspirer and short joke overseer, was created by Mort Walker. He also had started a centerfold drawing that focused on a University activity. Many of *Showme's* cartoons began appearing in other humor magazines. The October 1948 "Election Issue" cover was reprinted by 800 newspapers as an editorial cartoon.

All was not rosy, however. *Showme* and University officials began skirmishing. One of Walker's cartoons, showing Josef Stalin lecturing a class of Josef Stalins on Campus, had to be cut with razor blades from 5,000 issues.

An even closer shave resulted from the "Sex Issue," which promised the results of a magazine staff-administered survey. After the administration got through with it, the only thing sexy in the entire magazine was its title. But it sold out.

One day Mort Walker was told Sigma Delta Chi would be completely taking over *Showme*, turning it into a monthly news magazine. The staff called the AP and UPI wire services, and the next day the rest of the country knew about the censorship attempt.

*Showme* was saved for the moment, but the staff lost its office. They were forced to publish from the "Catacombs": Terry Rees' parent's basement apartment on Maryland Avenue, where most of the staff members were living.

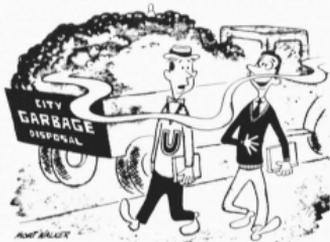
After the censorship attempt, *Showme* came under the supervision of the University Student Publications Board, originally created to help the struggling *Missouri Student* newspaper. "Our greatest fun was weekly gag sessions at the Shack, where we put together the centerfold," Terry Rees recalls. "When the University took over publication of *Showme*, it ceased to be fun."

But he got the last laugh as artist of the infamous "Take Home to Mother" cover. The drawing shows a male student hur-

"Just between you and me, I think we'd better petition."  
Bill Gabriel  
1949



"How are you getting along on your G.I. Subsistence?"  
Mort Walker  
1947



"But Mrs. Jones — but — but — suppose there's a fire."  
Herb Green  
1950



Ron Galloway  
1948



Lots and lots of beer at The Shack got the creative juices flowing for center spreads, like this one by Bill Gabriel.

riedly sweeping various things (including a box of male contraceptives and a used condom) under his bed as his mother comes up the sidewalk. When Loren Reid, professor emeritus of speech and dramatic arts and then chairman of the Publications Board, saw the cover, he called an emergency meeting in Switzler Hall, where 20 students stayed late into the night covering up the offending items with India ink. Later on, Reid says, "Students discovered India ink can be dissolved by alcohol, so it was rubbed off.

"The board was in an impossible position," Reid says. "You could not sell copies unless you had something a little off-center, but sophisticated."

*Showme* finally was banned in December 1957 because of two nude women in ads. Through it all, Swami had the definitive words on censorship:

Blessed are the censors, for they shall inhabit the earth. — September 1947

*Showme* was revived in October 1960 by a group of students who faithfully solicited cartoons from Walker and Gabriel. The first issue had a cover drawn by Milton Caniff (who does Steve Canyon).

There were jokes, but of a more intellectual nature:

Platonic love is like being invited down the cellar for a glass of ginger ale. — December 1960

The issues featured ambitious projects like an MU Oligopoly Game and a John Birch Map of a State University. There also were several mild pin-ups. Interest flagged. Monthly issues became quarterly issues, then petered out altogether at the beginning of 1964.

There are several theories for the demise of *Showme*.

Gabriel says they "died with the *Playboy* era. *Playboy* did everything slicker and better . . . and they had those center-folds."

Reid disagrees, "I think college magazines were dead and gone before *Playboy*. In *Showme's* case, content stopped being funny, there was no market, and the University refused to subsidize it."

The student gets the magazine  
The school gets the fame  
The printer gets the money  
The editor gets the blame. — October 1960