

Miss Mizzou Collection

Scope and Content Note

Newspapers, magazines, calendars, bookmarks, comics, photographs of material focusing on *Miss Mizzou*, a character created by cartoonist Milton Caniff and used in his popular *Steve Canyon* comic strip. Also included is *The Complete Steve Canyon* live action DVDs, 1958/1959, Volumes 1 and 2, and the Steve Canyon Special Edition DVD original 1958 live action TV series. Also references to Cartoonist and author J.B. Winter's book *Miss Mizzou: A Life Beyond Comics*, published August 13, 2014. Material covers roughly the years 1951-2015.

Provenance

The Miss Mizzou Collection was donated to the University of Missouri Libraries, Special Collections and Rare Books by Brad Winter on October 17, 2019.

Biographical/Descriptive Note

Milton Arthur Paul "Mitt" Caniff was born in Hillsboro, Ohio, on February 28, 1907. He did cartoons for local newspapers while studying at Stivers High School (now Stivers School for the Arts) in Dayton, Ohio. At Ohio State University Caniff joined the Sigma Chi fraternity and later illustrated for the Magazine of Sigma Chi and the Norman Shield (the fraternity's pledgeship/reference manual). Graduating in 1930, Caniff began at the *Columbus Dispatch* newspaper, but his position was eliminated during the Great Depression. He moved to New York City to accept an artist job with the Features Service of the *Associated Press*. He did general assignment art for several months, then inherited a panel cartoon named *Mister Gilfeather* in September 1932, when cartoonist Al Capp quit the feature.

In 1934, Caniff was hired by the *New York Daily News* to produce a new strip for the *Chicago Tribune* New York News Syndicate. *Daily News* publisher Joseph Medill Patterson wanted an adventure strip set in the mysterious Orient. Knowing almost nothing about China, Caniff researched the nation's history and learned about families whom piracy was a way of life passed down for generations. The result was *Terry and the Pirates*, the strip which made Caniff famous. One of his most memorable creations from this series was the Dragon Lady, a pirate queen. She was seemingly ruthless and calculating, but Caniff encouraged his readers to think she had romantic yearnings for Pat Ryan, another character in the series.

Caniff's next major comic strip was *Steve Canyon*, an action strip with a pilot as its main character. Canyon was portrayed originally as a civilian pilot with his one airplane cargo airline, but he re-enlisted in the Air Force during the Korean War and remained in the Air Force for the remainder of the strip's

run. It was a successful comic strip with a greater circulation than *Terry and the Pirates* ever had. A short-lived *Steve Canyon* television series was produced starting in 1958. The title character's dedication to the military produced a negative reaction among readers during the Vietnam War, and the strip's circulation decreased as a result. Caniff nonetheless continued to enjoy enormous regard in the profession and in newspapering, and he produced the strip until his death in 1988. The strip was published for a couple of months after he died, but was ended in June 1988, due to Caniff's decision that no one else would continue the feature.

Milton Caniff based many of his characters on real life people. For example, he designed Pipper the Piper after John F. Kennedy, and the character of Miss Mizzou after the actress Marilyn Monroe.

He was one of the founders of the National Cartoonists Society and served two terms as President, 1948 and 1949. He also received the Society's first Cartoonist of the Year Award in 1947 for work published in 1946, which included both *Steve Canyon* and *Terry and the Pirates* as well. He would be named Cartoonist of the Year again, receiving the accompanying trophy, the Reuben, in 1972 for work done in 1971, again for *Steve Canyon*. He was also awarded the Inkpot Award in 1974. Caniff was inducted into the comic book industry's Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 1988. He also received a number of *other awards in recognition for his work*.

Milton Caniff died on April 3, 1988 in New York City.

Source: Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milton_Caniff

New York cartoonist Milton Caniff was inspired to create the character of **Miss Mizzou**, a blond bombshell wearing only a trenchcoat, as a result of a visit he had to attend a journalism conference at the University of Missouri, Columbia, in 1949. While at the conference, he heard someone refer to the school as "Mizzou" and liked the term. The character of Miss Mizzou was originally inspired by Marilyn Monroe, a popular actress at the time. Later, a chorus girl named Bek Stiner became the face of Miss Mizzou. Miss Mizzou became a hit on the University of Missouri campus in the 1950s. A month after her character's debut, Stiner came to Columbia and received a key to the city. Miss Mizzou's popularity continued into the middle of the 1950s, leading to the first Miss Mizzou competition. These contests continued until dwindling interest led to its ending in 1971. The character of Miss Mizzou, and her creator, were often the subject of much controversy, such as the one-time intention of naming the now Providence Road in Columbia, Caniff Blvd.

The character of Miss Mizzou played a recurring role in Caniff's *Steve Canyon* comic strip about an Air Force Pilot serving in the Korean War. Fleeing her employer, Miss Mizzou boards a plane with Canyon and four others. The plane goes down in Canada, and the story unfolds.

Source: The Adventures of Columbia's Comics-Illuminating the City's Inky Character, by Max Havey, *Vox Magazine*, July 9, 2015

J.B. Winter, author of the book, *Miss Mizzou: A Life Beyond Comics*, is a cartoonist and designer living in the American mid-west. He's published various mini-comics over the years, but is probably best known for his 50 state Jam comic featuring cartoonists from every state in the U.S.A. *Miss Mizzou: A Life Beyond Comics*, is Winter's first foray into writing narrative nonfiction.

Source: [goodreads.com/author/show/8458508.J_B_Winter](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/8458508.J_B_Winter)

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Collection Details

1.04 linear feet

Series Descriptions:

Newspapers

Series One – Newspapers with references to Miss Mizzou

Inventory

Series One – Newspapers

Box #1

FF 1 The *Columbia Missourian*, September 24, 2014. “The Making of Miss Mizzou,” by Caitlin Bush. The comic strip character sparked celebration and controversy for MU and the city of Columbia. Now a book tells her story.

The Maneater, October 22, 2014. “Caniff’s Miss Mizzou, Revisited,” by Taylor Ysteboe. Cartoonist J.B. Winter delves into the nonfiction to explain how Miss Mizzou captured hearts across the nation.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch A&E, September 28, 2014. Harry Levins. Cartoonist J.B. Winter, a Columbia resident, tells the story of the character in “*Miss Mizzou: A Life Beyond Comics.*” a

brief, richly illustrated self-published paperback available through amazon.com. Caniff always depicted Miss Mizzou as wearing a trench coat, with some hints that beneath the trench coat, she wore nothing at all. That saucy side contributed to a decision by Columbia's city fathers against naming a major thoroughfare in honor of Caniff. Still, for a couple of decades, Mizzou students recalled the salute with contests and calendars in Miss Mizzou's honor.

Ovation: Columbia Daily Tribune, September 28, 2014. "Portrait of a Curious Local Lady," by Aarik Danielsen. Local artist J.B. Winter tells the tale of a comic-strip ingenue that captivated our city in his new book: "Miss Mizzou: A Life Beyond Comics." Miss Mizzou played a memorable supporting role, entering the world of Caniff's hero, a military man named Steve Canyon, in five storylines between 1952 and 1978. However, she became central to Columbia, exerting a certain gravitational pull on her "hometown."

Series Two – Magazines

Box #1

FF 2 *Vox Magazine*, December 18, 2014. Page 13. "Along Providence, The Intersection of History, Identity and a Changing Community." *Columbia's History: Caniff Boulevard*. When Columbia was building a road connecting U.S. Highway 40 to Memorial Stadium, controversy ensued, according to a *Missourian* article. People objected when the Columbia Chamber of Commerce suggested that the new road be called "Caniff Boulevard" in honor of Milton Caniff, the comic strip author and artist who created the Marilyn Monroe-inspired character Miss Mizzou. The road was later named Providence Road instead.

Vox Magazine, July 9, 2015. Pages 6-7. "The Adventures of Columbia's Comics, Illuminating the City's Inky Character," by Max Havey. In 1949, New York cartoonist Milton Caniff visited MU for a journalism conference. The trip lasted only 24 hours, but during that time, Caniff heard someone refer to the school as "Mizzou." He liked the term, and three years later the nation met Miss Mizzou.

A local cartoonist named J.B. Winter started exploring the adventures of Miss Mizzou after discovering the character on a blog in 2006. As he researched the history, Winter found that Miss Mizzou was a hit on campus in the '50s. In 2014, Winter's fascination with the character culminated into a book titled *Miss Mizzou: A Life Beyond Comics*, which details her history and controversy.

Inside Columbia, December 2014. Pages 30-31. "See You in the Funny Pages, A New Book Celebrates a Comic Strip Legend.," by Kevin Walsh. The article discusses comic artist J.B. Winter's book: *Miss Mizzou: A Life Beyond Comics*, detailing the history of the *Steve Canyon* comic strip creator Milton Caniff's comic strip character Miss Mizzou and the various promotional tie-ins the character inspired in the 1950s and 1960s.

Mizzou Magazine, Fall, 2015. Page 48. "Beyond the Funny Pages." Columbia Cartoonist Examines Miss Mizzou's Many Dimensions, by Kelsey Allen. The article includes mention of the model for Miss Mizzou, Bek Stiner, appearing at the Tigers-Southern Methodist football game on October 11, 1952, when at halftime she revealed what was underneath her trench coat (a leopard print mini-dress). The article also discusses J.B. Winter's motivation for writing his book: *Miss Mizzou:*

A Life Beyond Comics, and the life-size chalk drawing of Miss Mizzou which hangs in the Reynolds Alumni Center on the University of Missouri, Columbia, campus.

Saga, True Adventures for Men, December 1952. Pages 37-39. "Steve Canyon's Girls," Pictures by Globe. The Peachcakes for Milton Caniff's famous cartoon are just as lovely in real life. The article includes pictures and discussion of the real-life models for the female characters in Milton Caniff's *Steve Canyon* comic strip, which include the characters Summer Smith, Doe Redwood, Princess Sunflower, and Miss Mizzou.

FF 3 *Focus*, Volume 5 No. 1 January 1955. "The Miss Mizzou You Can Reach Out and Touch. Pages 22-25. Article featuring real life model Joan Scott who poses for the character of Miss Mizzou for artist Milton Caniff and his *Steve Canyon* comic strip.

Pageant, May 1953. "The Art of Milton Caniff." Pages 142-161. The article discusses how Caniff creates his cartoon strip characters from real-life people. Miss Mizzou included on pages 150-151.

Eye, People and Pictures, Volume 3 No. 8 August 1953. Pages 4-11. "Broadway's Most Beautiful Show Girl." Article on Bek Stiner, who later became the real-life Miss Mizzou, one of artist Milton Caniff's characters in his *Steve Canyon* comic strip series.

TV Guide, October 17-23, 1964. Pages 20-21. "Vroommm and Off You Go." Article on actress Bek Nelson (Stiner) which includes a mention of being seen by Milton Caniff at the Copacabana night club in New York and being made "Miss Mizzou" from the *Steve Canyon* comic strip.

Series Three-Calendar, Bookmarks, Newsletter

Box #1

FF 4 Dateline: Miss Mizzou calendar, c.1960s. Miss Mizzou: A Life Beyond Comics bookmarks, *At Your Library*, Daniel Boone Regional Library newsletter, June-August 2015. Page 10 "Meet the Author of "Miss Mizzou" book signing and discussion, June 15, 2015, and handout of the event.

Series Four-Comics

Box #1

FF 5 *The Man Beyond Tomorrow! The Adventures of Superman*. August 1997. Page 12, character dialogue, "Not with his new powers, Miss Mizzou." *Arn Saba's Neil The Horse Comics and Stories*. Volume 1 No. 6 February 1984. "Great Women of the Comics Costumes," Miss Mizzou Paper doll clothes. Volume 1 No. 3 June 1983. "Great Women of Comics Paper Doll Series," Dragon Lady by Milton Caniff costume. Volume 1 Nos.1, 2, and 4,5 contain paper doll costumes of other women comic series characters, 1983.

FF 6 *Milton Caniff's Steve Canyon*, No. 17, Kitchen Sink Press, Inc. August 1986. "Terry and the Pirates," original publication in 1940. *Steve Canyon*, July 25th to December 7, 1952, includes Miss Mizzou. *Milton Caniff's Steve Canyon*, No. 20, Kitchen Sink Press, Inc. March 1988. *Steve Canyon, by Milton Caniff*, May 1st to August 5th, 1954 and August 6th to November 8th, 1954, includes Miss Mizzou character.

- FF 7** *Milton Caniff's Steve Canyon, April 9, 1952 to May 14, 1953*, Checker Book Publishing Group, 2006. Includes Miss Mizzou. *Milton Caniff's Steve Canyon, August 6, 1954 to August 8, 1955*, Checker Book Publishing Group, 2007. More Miss Mizzou.
- FF 8** *Milton Caniff War Games, September 25, 1957 to January 22, 1958, and January 23 to April 7, 1958*, Kitchen Sink Press, 1992. Miss Mizzou in second series Canyon adventures.
- FF 9** *Milton Caniff Steve Canyon Death by Land and by Sea, 1951-1952*. IDW Publishing, 2013. Miss Mizzou character in August 1952 comics.

Series Five-Photographs

Box #1

- FF 10** **"Where's Miss Mizzou?"** "Readers of "Steve Canyon" which appears in (name your paper) would swear the toothsome trenchcoated blond is up in the north woods with Milton Caniff's comic strip hero. But airmen at Nellis, Nevada, Air Force Base know better. That's original "Miss Mizzou" right there on the wing of that jet fighter plane. She's Bek Stiner, a chorus girl at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas, who posed for the first Mizzou drawings when Caniff introduced the character into the strip." September 17, 1954.
- FF 11** **This is It! Caniff Blvd?** "Columbia, Missouri: As if in response to National news interest, this sign made its appearance 8/20 morning at intersection of Highway 40 and inner loop of Columbia. Motel operators and service station operators have had tremendous number of inquiries about the street and controversy over naming it for Milton Caniff, cartoonist of *Steve Canyon*, in which Miss Columbia Mizzou is a frequent visitor. Bob Martin, Columbia, is one of first to notice sign when he turned corner. The sign was taken down at 11:00AM on complaint of State Highway Department." UPI Telephoto, 8/20/1958.

Series Six-DVDs

Box #1

- FF 12** *The Complete Steve Canyon on TV, Volume 1, 1958/1959, 2 Disc Set*. Live action adaptation of Milton Caniff's popular comic series. DVD, 2008.
- FF 13** *The Complete Steve Canyon on TV, Volume 2, 1959/1959, 2 Disc Set*. Live action adaptation of Milton Caniff's popular comic series. DVD, 2008.
- FF 14** *Steve Canyon Special Edition DVD. Original 1958 Live -Action TV Series*. DVD, 2007.