While Berman heads for the top, swimmer prepares to "act" fear of sharks

NEW YORK (AP) — This is the land that pays for laughs.

In 1961 Shelley Berman will gross about $750,000 — several times President Jack Kennedy's take-home pay—by being funny.

A very few years ago Shelley and his wife, Sarah, a former actress, hitch - hiked together across the continent looking for work.

Today Berman, a U.S. Navy veteran, is one of the darlings of the sophisticates. He has been paid $15,400 for a one-night stand. He has earned $12,500 for a seven-minute appearance on television.

It all wound up with Berman being one of the highest - paid comedy performers of his generation. He re - pioneered the field of recorded humor with three discs, each of which brought in $1,000,000.

Before he hit the big time with his wry protraitures of civilized man adjusting to the wry problems of civilization, Shelley worked as a cab driver, a speech teacher, a drug clerk, a ball room dancing instructor, and a free-lance writer.

What has success meant to him after a dozen years of failure which he still remembers as "the jinx time?"

GAINED SELF-RESPECT

"There are a lot of superficial differences," he said. "You eat better and you wear better clothes, but the big difference is that I now have a wholesome self-respect.

"I foundered for a long time and envied people around me who had found what they wanted to do and were content.

"And now I am. Well, anyway I am more content with my discontent. I am doing something."

Berman is one of the hottest attractions in the U.S. night club circuit. Shelley's humor is based on the ordinary man's plight in this extraordinary time. He jokes about taking an airplane flight, beatniks, the problems of parenthood. His only props in his "concert" appearances are a high stool, a pack of cigarets and a lighter.

In one show he lights about five cigarets, really smokes only two — but feels completely dependent on them.

"Without those cigarets, I might as well not come out," he said. "The cigaret is my escape from the audience. It gives me a chance to think . . . to listen . . . to present a kind of action while I am deciding what to do next"

SHARK WATER SWIMMER

Following the film waves of Johnny Weismuller and Esther Williams is a bright-eyed Amazon named Greta Anderson, now in Honolulu.

Greta is the human propeller who has conquered just about every long distance swim normally navigated, including a two-way stretch in the Catalina Channel. She is here to swim the Molokai Channel, 26 miles of tortuous currents. Her first try failed January 28.

She also is getting in the movie swim with a 90 - minute documentary about the feat. It is being filmed by a crew headed by Jerry Courneya, veteran producer of travel and sports films.

"We'll make the Molokai Channel the heavy," he says. "We'll show all the preparations for the swim — Greta's fear of sharks and all that. We'll build up suspense and the swim will be the climax of the picture."

SHE'S EASY-GOING

How does Greta feel about all this? She's an easy-going (on land) Dane who seems willing to try anything.

"I've never done any acting," she admitted. "But that's going to be easy. It's the swimming that's difficult."

Greta is 31, 5 feet 7½ and a muscular 140 pounds, though she dropped 17 on the Molokai try. When she isn't in the water, she lives in Long Beach, Calif., with her husband, swim coach John Sonnichsen. They run a swim school and she lectures with a film of her achievments.

Long - distance swimming is not a big-money enterprise, she admitted.

"I have averaged $15,000 to $20,000 a year from it," she said. "But by the time I pay expenses and Johnny leaves his job for three months, there isn't much profit."

TEST BORINGS TO START SOON

QUEBEC (CP) — Test borings probably will start next week at Trois-Rivieres as part of a government survey on the construction of either a bridge or tunnel across the St. Lawrence River. Public Works Minister Rene Levesque made this announcement Wednesday in the legislative assembly. He said the survey would take at least a year. The provincial government would pay the costs of the bridge, which he did not estimate. The river is about a mile wide at Trois-Rivieres, about halfway between Montreal and Quebec City, on the north shore of the river.

FORT WORTH, Tex. (CP) — Two Canadian riders Thursday took top honors in day and night rounds of the Saddle Bronc competition at the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show Here.

Marty Wood of Calgary placed first in the day round and Ellie Lewis of Penticton took top spot in the night round.

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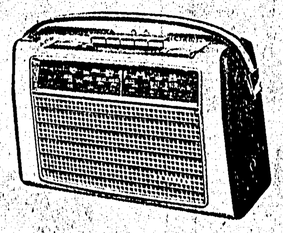

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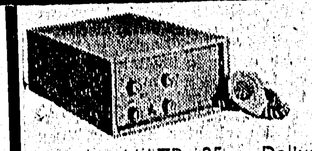

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