

Only Love for Lucy

Smith Memorial Library honors 'queen of comedy'

by Denise Grant
Staff writer

There are few people that don't remember local celebrity Lucille Ball. Generations have been exposed to the funny redhead who always attracted calamity but came out smiling.

The Smith Memorial Library is presenting "The Lucy Exhibit" in the Local Personalities Exhibit on the second floor. Mary Jane Price, education coordinator, of the Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Center in Jamestown, N.Y., set up the display.

Price works with many ages at the Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Center.

"It was interesting working with young children who have never seen the 'I Love Lucy' show. Watching their faces as a black and white program came on, they would look bored and then as the program continued, their faces would light up and the laughter was continuous," she said.

Lucy's life

Lucy was born in Jamestown, N.Y., on Aug. 11, 1911. Price said Ball's interest in acting began when she was as young as 6 years old. Her grandfather, Fred C. Hunt, enjoyed the theater and took her to various vaudeville acts at Celeron Park, which was very close to where she grew up. Hunt would encourage her to go home after these shows and put on her own plays in her living room. She also participated in plays while in school.

As she grew up, her grandfather and mother continued to encourage her acting career. At age 14, she enrolled in the John Murray Anderson School for the Dramatic Arts in New York City. This did not work out, but Lucy did not give up.

At 15 she traveled back and forth to New York City hoping to reach her goals she had set to be an actress. Her first attempts were not successful, and she went into modeling with designer Hattie Carnegie while continuing acting.

During the 1930s she had numerous small parts in movies. In 1933 she became a Goldwyn Girl in "Roman Scandals," and her career took off. But Lucy was never a big hit in the movies; her real fame started with television.

In 1940 she met Desi Arnaz during the filming of "Too Many Girls" and later that year they eloped. They had two children: Lucie Desiree and Desiderio Alberto, known as Desi Jr. Their marriage was known for being rocky and time spent apart while working on both careers was blamed for the problems. They later divorced in 1960.

"I Love Lucy" debuted in 1951 and ran through 1957. It still has a large following and is shown in more than 77 countries and 22 different languages.

Price said Chautauqua, Lakewood, Jamestown and even the downtown Bigelow's department store where she worked as a young girl were mentioned in "I Love Lucy."

Ball was in more than 80 films, four TV series and 16 other TV programs. She won numerous awards during her career, which spanned 57 years.

She died April 18, 1989, at age 77 in Los Angeles.

Beyond 'I Love Lucy'

"It seems to me that Lucy was always following her dreams," said Helene Yurth, director of Smith Memorial Library. "Sometimes it leads to great disappointment, but that didn't deter Lucy. Her complex life is so often hidden beyond the 'I Love Lucy' image that immediately springs to mind."

She said the exhibit shows a "glimpse into Lucy's life and career."

In the Lucille Ball exhibit, two glass display cases are filled with photos, memorabilia, Forever Darling jewelry, records and books. There is even a Forever Darling Candy box that her lifelong friend Pauline Lopus had for many years. It was recently acquired from the Pauline



Photos by Roger Coda

Fans of Lucille Ball can relive the career of the legendary comedienne and Jamestown native by viewing displays that feature publicity materials and other artifacts of her life at Smith Memorial Library.



Lopus Estates.

There is a display on the wall of newspaper clippings from the *Jamestown Sun* from the premiere of the film "Forever Darling" in 1956. Lucy and Desi created quite a stir when they arrived by helicopter. They landed in the yard of the Jamestown High School with 20,000 Jamestown residents waiting to greet them. There were several days of activities planned in Jamestown while the famed couple was in town, and Lucy was presented the key to the city.

Off to the side of the clipping display is a charcoal portrait of Lucy created by Gary Saderup in 1989. Lilacs, which were Lucy's favorite flower, sit under the portrait.

There is also information on the Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Center, which plans two events each year in honor of the famed star. Lucy-Desi Day is in May, and there is an event that celebrates Lucy's birthday in August. This year the event is Aug. 3 through 5.

The center has recreated television studios and has original props and costumes from "I Love Lucy." There are also videos and more on hand for viewing.

The Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Center is on Third Street and the Desilu Playhouse is on Pine Street. Hours for both locations are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Lucille Ball starred in Norton Hall production

by Denise Grant
Staff writer

Lucille Ball, at the age of 19, appeared in a play titled "Within the Law" by Bayard Veiller. It was performed June 27 and 28, 1930, at Norton Hall. This play, put on by the Jamestown Players, made the rounds in various locations in Jamestown, including the building that now houses the Robert H. Jackson

Center. Its local popularity led it to the stage of Chautauqua.

Norton Hall had recently been finished in 1929. The acoustic qualities led program directors to have high hopes for the building to make Chautauqua a center for summer drama and music.

The Cleveland Playhouse would begin their season as the Chautauqua Repertory Theatre in 10 days, but "Within the Law" would be the first event performed at Norton Hall for the 1930 season.

The play was about a young shop girl who is

accused of a crime she did not commit and is sent to prison. When she is released, she is determined to get revenge on those who blamed her and caused her grief.

Ball played the part of Agnes Lynch, a con artist, in the play. It was a small part, and her first entrance was not until the second act. But the review for the play in the June 1930 *Chautauquan* said that "Miss Ball gave one of the most impressive portrayals of the evening; she lived the part of the underworld girl with as much realism as if it were her own regular existence."

The play was a large success on the grounds of Chautauqua, according to the review. The reviewer also stated, "The high spot of 'Within The Law' was undoubtedly the start of the last scene with the interviews of Agnes Lynch and Inspector Burke, played by William Bemus Jr. The reviewer stated that "Lucille Ball played with even more enthusiasm than before and put her part across to the audience in the best manner of the evening in a role that required action, and a good deal of it. She exhibited remarkable maturity and poise."

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