

Wanda Clark

Moving from OKC to California gave Wanda the opportunity to work with one of Hollywood's most loved stars of the '50s an '60s—**LUCILLE BALL**.

Chapter 01 - 1:09

Introduction

John Erling: Born on August 6, 1911, in Jamestown, New York, Lucille Ball got her start as a singer, model, and film star, before becoming one of America's top comedic actresses with the 1950s TV show *I Love Lucy*, costarring on the show with her husband Desi Arnaz. Making its debut on October 15, 1951, the show was an immediate success and set the stage for a generation of family-related sitcoms to come. Lucy's groundbreaking work and comedy paved the way for future stars such as Mary Tyler Moore, Penny Marshall, Sybil Shepherd, and even Robin Williams.

For four of its seasons the sitcom was the number one show in the country. In 1953, the program captured an unheard of 67.3 audience share, which included a 71.1 rating for the episode that featured Little Ricky's birth, a turnout that surpassed the television audience for President Eisenhower's inauguration ceremonies.

Our storyteller is Oklahoman Wanda Clark who moved to California from Oklahoma City and eventually became a special assistant to Lucille Ball for twenty-eight years.

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Chapter 02 - 4:00

Life Before California

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is August 5, 2015. Wanda, would you state your full name, please.

Wanda Clark: My name is Wanda Clark.

JE: Do you have a middle name?

WC: Lou, Wanda Lou Clark.

JE: Wanda Lou Clark. Your date of birth?

WC: 3/19/34.

JE: That makes your present age?

WC: Eighty-one.

JE: We're recording this here in the recording facilities for voicesofoklahoma.com. Wanda, just at the outset, you were Lucille Ball's personal secretary for how long?

WC: Twenty-eight years, and I'm still involved. I was one of the founding board members of the Lucy Desi Museum in Jamestown, New York. And I'm still very close to her children, so I think I'm still involved with Lucy.

JE: Yeah. With us here and help us tell the story is a big fan of Lucille Ball.

Rita Howell: The biggest fan ever.

JE: Yeah, Rita Howell. And we should point out that you're with the University of Tulsa. In what capacity?

RH: Right, I'm the Instruction Librarian at McFarland Library.

JE: We should also point out, you are the daughter-in-law of Dr. Bruce Howell.

RH: That's correct.

JE: Who has appeared here at voicesofoklahoma.com. And your husband's name is?

RH: Michael.

JE: How did you meet Wanda?

RH: Well, I met Wanda through Bruce and Kay. Kay had met Wanda at the lake.

JE: Kay would be Bruce's wife?

RH: Bruce's wife. She knew that I was the biggest fan ever of *I Love Lucy*, so she said, "How would you like to meet Lucille Ball's secretary?"

And I was just ecstatic, I couldn't believe it. So I went to the lake and we met.

WC: Well, they came to my house, I know Kay through the garden club, mainly.

JE: Yeah.

WC: It was a lot of fun having them at the house.

RH: It was so fun, I could have stayed there all day and chatted about Lucy.

JE: Well, you're going to stay here all day and chat now.

RH: Yea!

JE: So, Wanda, a little about you. Where were you born?

WC: I was born in Vandervoort, Arkansas, which is barely over the border near Mena, but we moved to Idabel, Oklahoma, when I was three. Lived there until I was fifteen and we moved to Oklahoma City. That's where I went to school.

JE: Your mother's name?

WC: Vernice, Vernice May Wright.

JE: And she grew up in?

WC: Little towns around Oklahoma. My dad was from Arkansas, but my mother lived in several little towns around Idabel.

JE: And then your father's name?

WC: Marion, M-A-R-I-O-N, Wright.

JE: And he grew up in Oklahoma? Or—

WC: He tried peanut farming in Arkansas, but that wasn't doing well. And when he moved to Idabel Daddy just took jobs. He worked at the grocery store, the filling station, and he was drafted in World War II. He was older and had three babies, well, I wasn't a baby, I guess I was about ten, but I did have an infant sister, and they still had to draft him because they were drafting everybody in those days. So Daddy spent time in the navy and came back to Idabel.

Then he got a job in Oklahoma City and that's why we moved and where we stayed until my parents passed away.

JE: So you went to elementary school where?

WC: Idabel.

JE: And then on to Junior High School?

WC: In Oklahoma City, Jackson Junior High.

JE: And your high school?

WC: Grant, U. S. Grant in Oklahoma City.

JE: And what year was that that you graduated?

WC: '54.

JE: 1954. You graduated out of high school, then what?

WC: I worked at Traveler's Insurance Company for six years, handling group hospitalization claims. Then I had the opportunity to go to California.

JE: What was the opportunity?

WC: My sister and brother-in-law were in the Air Force at Vandenberg. And they said, "Why don't you go home with us?"

And I said, "Why not?"

JE: And that was the beginning of a long journey.

WC: Very. I stayed there almost fifty years and loving every minute of it. But I knew I couldn't live there on retirement income, so I always knew I'd move back to Oklahoma.

JE: You are an Oklahoman.

WC: Yes.

JE: No matter how many years you lived in California.

WC: Yeah, right.

JE: And that's why you're back here and you're living at Grand Lake.

WC: Right.

JE: How long have you been back?

WC: I moved back full time in 2004, but I bought my little house, I guess, about twenty years ago, knowing I would come back. And it was on the lake, my sister saw it from her boat, she knew I wanted to live on the water, so I bought the house. But didn't move full time until 2004.

Chapter 03 - 4:00

Wanda Gets a Job

John Erling: So you come to California, what's the first thing then that happens? You're ready for a job then, aren't you?

Wanda Clark: I had a job for a civilian contractor on the Air Force base. And the first Christmas we were there we were at Gaviota Beach in bathing suits having a picnic at Christmas. So I decided I liked it there.

JE: Yes, and you're twenty-five when you come to California?

WC: When my sister and brother-in-law came back to Oklahoma, soon as they were discharged from the Air Force they came right back. But I went to Los Angeles and started looking for a job. And I found one at *Look* magazine. I worked there a couple of years.

JE: And what was your job at *Look*?

WC: In advertising, secretary to the Advertising Department. The home office was New York City, of course, but they had an Advertising Department, Publicity Department, and an Editorial Department, and I worked for the advertising guys. My bosses just sold ads. And if you ever watched *Mad Men*, that's exactly the way advertising was in the '60s.

JE: But you didn't go looking for a job to be in advertising, you just came in and said—

WC: I just found a job at *Look* magazine.

JE: Right. And so you could type and all that. Where did you learn your skills?

WC: High school.

JE: So your first job then in Los Angeles is at *Look* magazine.

WC: Then I left *Look* and went to work for *Queen for a Day*, after a couple of years. And shortly after that *Queen for a Day* was canceled, after many, many years on radio and TV.

JE: Who was the MC?

WC: Jack Bailey.

JE: Jack Bailey?

WC: Wonderful man, wonderful man. The fashion director of *Queen for a Day* happened to be James Cagney's sister, Jean. She was a very nice lady and she was the Fashion Director of the show.

And my job there, I worked for the Travel Department, the travel for the queens that encompassed everything from a trip to Disneyland to Japan.

JE: That was their reward when they were crowned Queen for a Day.

WC: Yeah, whatever—and my job and the lady I worked for there arranged the travel for the Queen for the day.

JE: Some interesting people came through there.

WC: Very interesting, and it was so much fun. I've been very, very lucky, I'll tell you that for sure with some of my other jobs.

JE: That was a very big, successful television program.

WC: Very, but when I heard that *Queen for a Day* was being canceled I called my friend Cleo Smith. I met Cleo Smith at *Look* magazine. Cleo happened to be Lucy's cousin, actually, but she was raised as Lucy's sister. Lucy called her sister until the day she died. Cleo's mother and Lucy's mother were very close and loving sisters and Cleo's mother died when she was very young. In fact, Cleo's mother and Lucy's mother were living together at the time.

Lucy's father died when she was four, so Dede was pregnant with her son Fred. Lucy was about four years old and Cleo's mother had left her husband. So the two sisters were living together with their families. And so Lucy really raised Cleo and called her sister.

In those days, there was no question about Dede raising Cleo, she was already living with her.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: So she raised Cleo as a sister. And that's how Lucy and Fred both thought of her.

So anyway, I called my friend Cleo, who by that time was working for Lucy at the studios. And I said, "I'll be looking for a job soon. If you hear of anything, call me."

And she said, "Well, Lucy is looking for a secretary." They had shared a secretary, but he went with Desi when they split up. His name was Johnny Achison. I got to know him very, very well. So Lucy didn't have a secretary. She said, "What do I need a secretary for? I just do my job."

But after a few department head meetings and questions that needed to be answered, she was head of the studio by that time, she had bought Desi out and he'd gone his own way. So she decided maybe she did need a secretary. Cleo said to her, "I know a girl, do you want to interview her?"

And Lucy said, "No, if you like her she's hired." So I got the job without an interview and stayed twenty-eight years.

Chapter 04 - 4:15**Wanda Meets Lucille**

John Erling: Tell me about your first meeting with your new boss, Lucille Ball.

Wanda Clark: I was supposed to start work on a Monday, but that Saturday, Lucy had an interview with *Look* magazine, as a matter of fact. Doug Kirkland was the photographer, and oh, he's a brilliant photographer. Award-winning, beautiful photographs. So anyway, Lucy said if I wanted to come to the house and be there at the photo shoot I could but I didn't have to. I could wait till Monday.

Well, do you think I'd pass that up? I went to the house, knocked on the door, the maid let me in, but Lucy hadn't told her I was coming so I said, "My name's Wanda Clark." And it wasn't that she didn't believe me but I waited in the hall while she went to tell Lucy I was there.

And Lucy came down the stairs and said, "Hi, honey, I'm Lucy." And that's how I met her for the first time.

JE: By that time, what show was she into then?

WC: The second season of *The Lucy Show*, which was the second series Lucy did. Still with Vivian Vance. Lucy had two children, Vivian had one, they shared a house. Gale Gordon was still there as Mr. Mooney, the head of the bank that handled Lucy's trust from her late husband. And it was a very cute show.

JE: Yeah, so here is somebody that you had to be in awe of because this is a star.

WC: Yes, and I had not seen an *I Love Lucy* show before I started working for Lucy. Because my folks didn't have a TV in the '50s. And I was grown and gone from the house before they ever got a TV. But I certainly knew who Lucille Ball was because she'd done movies for twenty years before *I Love Lucy* ever started.

JE: She must have had a way about her to put you at ease as you came into the house?

WC: Oh, she had a wonderful way. And the fact that Cleo brought me, Lucy was very family oriented. She loved her family, kept them close to her. When she first came to Hollywood, Sam Goldwyn's Goldwyn Girls, Lucy just lucked out and got that job. And as soon as she got here and started working she got a contract at RKO and she started bringing her family out from Jamestown, New York, because family was so close, so important to Lucy.

JE: Family at that time would have been?

WC: It was her mother, a brother, and Cleo.

JE: And hadn't had children yet by that time? Or—

WC: No, she hadn't met Desi by that time.

JE: Okay. Through the course of this you met many, many stars. Bob Hope and Jack Benny.

WC: Everyone that ever did Lucy's show I got to meet and spend a little time with.

JE: Any of them stand out in your mind as being—

WC: Well, Carol Burnet was just the nicest lady, the nicest lady. She still is, she was so nice. Bob Hope and Jack Benny were close friends of Lucy. Lucy loved working with them. Jack Benny was a neighbor, and Jimmy Stewart was a neighbor on the other side.

There was a story in some magazine, it could have been *Life*, many years ago that that block on Roxbury Drive where Lucy lived had more celebrities than almost any other in LA.

Lucy told stories all the time, she told the story about Jimmy Stewart. He bought two lots, his house was on the one, the other he kept for a beautiful garden of trees, plants, and even vegetables. He enjoyed that. He would come to Lucy's house, he never went to the front door, he'd come around to the side door, and he had a basket of vegetables, which she had a new Chinese cook at the time. And he opened the door and says, "Oh no, we have vegetable, man," and he shut the door.

So Jimmy went back to his home and called Lucy and he says, "Wh-wh-what? You don't want my vegetables anymore?"

Lucy told that story on Jack Paar and Johnny Carson and everything. And then she told the story about Jack Benny, who did live next door to Lucy's driveway and Jack's house. So one night the family was at dinner, the kids were still young and at home, I wasn't there, I wish I had been. But I know somebody who was there and they told me this too, in addition to Lucy telling the story on every show. Jack came across that driveway, came in the back door, through the kitchen and the dining room playing his fiddle. Walked around the dining room a couple of times and Lucy was falling on the floor she was laughing so hard. He never broke character, he walked out the kitchen door and went back home without saying a word, just played his fiddle while they were having dinner.

JE: That's a great story.

WC: Oh it is a great story.

Chapter 05 - 5:45

Wanda Goes Showbiz

John Erling: You were working in an office someplace, I would imagine. Right?

Wanda Clark: We always had an office at Desilu Studios. When we were on hiatus, not shooting a show or something, and Lucy was home, I would take a folder full of work and go to the house and spend the day, just mainly to answer the phones. But after she sold Desilu Studios we went to Universal Studios and had an office there for about five years, I think.

From Universal we moved to Warners Hollywood. It had been the Goldwyn Studios but while we were there the name was changed to Warners Hollywood.

From Warners Hollywood we went to Fox Studios. That move was because Marvin Davis owned Fox Studios, and Marvin had been a friend of Gary Morton's, and consequently, Lucy's. They always went to the Davis's big, big parties.

When we left Fox Studios we had an office in a beautiful building at Sunset and Doheny, right at the edge of Beverly Hills. We had an office there for three years when Lucy passed away.

JE: You must have been an exceptional secretary because you caught on with her. She kept you. They could have said, "We have our own here," or whatever, and she could have dumped you and she didn't.

WC: Well, Lucy liked keeping her family close and her friends. And she didn't like change. And I do know how to keep my mouth shut. I know how to handle situations. There's a million people that can type as good as I can, I'm sure, but I had other qualities. And I think the main thing was keeping my mouth shut.

JE: Nothing leaked through Wanda Clark?

WC: Nope, that's for sure, and people did try.

JE: To get you to talk?

WC: Oh golly, those awful yellow tabloids called all the time with something just the most outrageous to see if they could get some information from me. Fishing, just fishing for something to print.

JE: They just wanted a sentence out of you, didn't they?

WC: Anything, it didn't matter if it was true or not, they didn't care. They would be something else the next day.

JE: Did you have a standard answer to them?

WC: Don't know anything about that. Bye. I mean, I didn't encourage talking to them at all.

JE: So she knew that you were doing that. You also performed in an episode, actually, of *Here's Lucy*.

WC: That I did because, again, Lucy is so known for her authenticity. We shot the show from start to finish after four very full days of rehearsal. Over and over and over again, that's how Lucy worked and that's what she wanted from everybody else.

Dean Martin said once he thought Lucy was going to kill him because he was used to strolling on the stage, singing a song, and strolling off to the golf course. Where with Lucy it was ten to six—

JE: Four days of rehearsals?

WC: ...four days a week of rehearsals and then film the show on the end of the fourth day.

JE: Wow.

WC: She demanded that from everybody that worked for her. But this particular show, it was a *Here's Lucy*, where her own children played her children.

JE: And that would be Desi Arnaz Jr.

WC: Desi Arnaz Jr., and Lucie Arnaz. Lucie spelled L-U-C-I-E. There's kind of a story about that too because Lucille wanted to name her daughter Susan, and I don't know why she chose Susan. She had a caesarean because she was forty before she had her children. And while she was out, Desi named the baby L-U-C-I-E, Lucie. And it's right, Susan just wouldn't suit Lucie Arnaz.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: But anyway, back to my story, the script was Lucy was supposed to hire someone to help her in the office. The script called for a really fast typist, really, really fast. And Lucy found out at the first read-through around the table that the actor they hired for that part could not type. Lucy says, "Get Wanda down here."

They called me and I went down and I did that part. But the funny thing is, I'd been typing on an electric typewriter for many years by that time. And electric typewriters don't have a carriage sling and that's what Lucy wanted, the clang, clang in the sling. So what I typed that day was gibberish, but I had the rhythm and that's what Lucy wanted. The rhythm of that typist. So anyway, it was a lot of fun, I'm glad I got to do it.

JE: And if you hadn't of developed a rhythm she probably would have found somebody else.

WC: Oh yeah, if I couldn't have managed that manual typewriter she would have found somebody who could.

JE: When we see those shows, maybe we think it's adlibbing or some of it, but it was really—

WC: Oh yeah.

JE: ...strictly written.

WC: Very—

JE: Most shows back then, I think, were anyway.

WC: I think most of them were. I think today they do a lot of improvisation or something.

JE: Right.

WC: People still tell me now, my friends, cousins, will say, "Oh well, that was mostly adlib." Not a word of it was adlibbed. Lucy always gave her writers credit too. The writers were so important to Lucy, the story was important.

I always said from the very first time I started working for Lucy, these crazy escapades that Lucy got into, there was a really good reason for her to do that. And she believed that. I mean, she played it for real, that's what made it last, made it so funny. There was a reason that she got into every one of those—

JE: A bunch of it was from her real life too, wasn't it?

WC: I can't say that Lucy Ricardo was real life, actually, not in that strict sense.

JE: Did she take anything that happened to her out somewhere and bring it to the table? She probably didn't. It was the writers doing it all, right?"

WC: The writers. Bob and Madelyn, Bob Carroll Jr. and Madelyn Pugh Martin Davis, because she was married to Quinn Martin at the time there in the mid '50s, I think. They were the original writers for the radio show that *I Love Lucy* was taken from. It was called *My Favorite Husband*. Richard Denning did it.

Chapter 06 - 3:05

Desi and Gary

Wanda Clark: When they wanted to bring it to TV Lucy agreed if they brought the original writers, and if they cast Desi Arnaz as her husband. And nobody wanted Desi for that. They said, "Oh, he's got an accent." But Lucy insisted because Desi was touring the country with his dance band. He wasn't home, she wanted him home, they wanted a family. She always said, "You can't start babies over the telephone," or something like that. She was pretty fun about that.

But anyway, that's how Lucy fought and insisted and Desi got to play Ricky Ricardo. Can you imagine anybody else ever playing him?

John Erling: No, no, and Desi was eight years younger.

WC: I had heard eight years over the years, but Lucy looked as young.

JE: Right.

WC: I mean, Desi was very handsome and very charming. And then when they divorced she married Gary Morton. He was even younger, but they made him a little older and made her a little younger so that there wouldn't be such a twelve or fourteen gap.

JE: No kidding?

WC: She was married to Gary Morton longer than she was married to Desi. They were married about twenty-two years before Lucy died.

JE: While we're talking about those two men, do you think her heart still was with Desi?

WC: Oh I'm positive it was. So does most other people I know. She just couldn't live with Desi, he was terribly indiscreet. I'm not telling tales out of school.

JE: Yeah.

WC: Everybody knew. They met during the filming of *Too Many Girls*, and Lucy always said, "That was the truth, too many girls."

Gary did not embarrass Lucy in public ever, but Lucy went to Desi, she called him until the day he died, for advice, and he freely gave it. He could solve anything. Desi

was a visionary. And Lucy always gave him credit for the success. He was the one who managed it, he took that show and before CBS agreed to air the pilot they had said it wouldn't work. And Lucy and Desi did a sort of vaudeville type. They took it on the road and went to theaters across the country. It was a huge success.

JE: Yeah.

WC: Lucy, in real life as a child, did always want to be in show business, and that was part of *Love Lucy*. Ricky wanted her to stay home and Lucy wanted to be in the act, that's where a lot of charm and funny things came from in the show.

JE: How about Gary Morton and Desi? They probably were together at some time. Did they get along?

WC: Well, they got along, but I think that was because Gary Morton was smart enough not to object. Gary would call Desi his husband-in-law. And the kids were very close to their father. And the fact that Lucy did depend on him, because she could trust Desi's advice, where Gary, Gary would just say, "Whatever she wants. Go ahead, whatever Lucy wants let her do it," because he just wanted to keep things running smoothly. He just didn't have the insight.

JE: But he brought other things to the table, maybe? Nothing? Okay.

WC: He was there, he didn't embarrass Lucy in public and she just wanted to work and do her job.

Chapter 07 - 6:15

Lucille's Childhood

John Erling: Let's talk about Lucille's childhood because it wasn't always the greatest. She was born in Jamestown, New York, and her parents were?

Wanda Clark: Her dad was a telephone lineman. In those days when Lucy was born in 1911, they were not wealthy at all. Dede worked as a sales lady at department stores in Jamestown. And there were in, I think, a town in Wyoming, when her father became ill. He had, I think, typhoid fever. They called it something else in those days, but he died and Dede was pregnant. So she went back home to Jamestown with her four-year-old daughter and had Fred Ball, Lucy's brother, there. A young widow, she did have to go back and go to work.

Dede remarried somewhere around that time to a man named Ed Peterson. They were married for awhile, not a long time. They divorced and by that time Dede had gone home to her parents, the Hunts, in Jamestown. Grandpa Hunt was kind of the only father Lucy knew because she was so young when her father died. They lived in Celoron by that time.

Celoron, New York, which is just a few miles from Jamestown is on Chautauqua Lake. The Chautauqua Institute is there, it's kind of a famous place.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: But at the time when Lucy was a girl, they had a huge Ferris wheel and a dance hall, big dance hall with a ball in the ceiling. So Lucy was exposed to all of that as a child, but there wasn't any money. Lucy would do school plays, she would cast them and direct them, mainly starring herself. She'd drag furniture from the home into the school auditorium to have the plays.

JE: It would have been a high school, I suppose, about that time.

WC: High school, yeah. It's still there, I've seen it when I've been back to Jamestown at museum events.

And then when Lucy got a little older she started running away from home to go to New York to get on stage. A lot of people think Lucy had a career as a showgirl or something but she didn't, she modeled. She modeled hats and fashions.

And a casting lady she knew, or an agent, saw her on the streets of New York one afternoon and said, "Are you working? Do you have a job? Because one of the girls hired for the Sam Goldwyn's movies mother won't let her go to California."

Lucy said, "I'll go." So that's how—

JE: Just saw her on the street?

WC: Yeah, she knew her.

JE: Oh, she did know her. All right.

WC: She knew her from, you know, working in jobs.

JE: Right.

WC: That's how Lucy got to California the first time.

JE: But she went to a drama school in New York.

WC: She did, and they told her her mother was wasting her money and sent her home. Betty Davis was in the class and the star pupil but Lucy is a different actress than Betty Davis. Whoever headed this drama school didn't get Lucy's talent.

JE: I have a quote from Lucille, she said, "I was a tongue-tied teenager spellbound by the school's star pupil, Betty Davis."

WC: Yeah. I've heard her say that too.

JE: So when the young people listen to this and they know about the stardom, all of these stars at one point had a tough time. And they weren't automatically tabbed, "You're going to be a star."

WC: Right. Right.

JE: They had to work through it, and she didn't let that stop her.

WC: No she didn't let that stop her at all. Nothing had stopped her. Cleo told me so many stories that I probably would never have heard otherwise since she was raised there. But

she told one story. Lucy's mother was so busy and Lucy was still just a little girl, five-ish or so. And her mother hooked her up to the clothesline outside so she wouldn't run away because Dede was busy. And Lucy told a neighbor, she said, "Could you help me? I got caught up here."

So the man unhooked her and she ran off looking for something. Anyway, precocious, I guess, is a word somebody might use.

Lucy started doing what they called B movies. She made about eighty-eight movies before *I Love Lucy* ever started. And at the beginning, some of them were pretty small budget movies. But Lucy, if it was funny, she would do it. And she got a great reputation among the directors and the powers that be that this pretty girl would take a pie in the face or a seltzer or a prat fall. And so many beautiful women in those '30s movies didn't want to take a pie in the face. But Lucy didn't care, if it was funny she would do it. She got the reputation, "If you want a hardworking girl that can do the job, this girl can do it."

JE: Day to day, around you and other people, was she funny?

WC: Lucy always said herself, "I'm not funny, I don't think funny, I can do funny things."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: But she loved a good laugh. She was funny, very funny.

JE: But not necessarily funny quips and all that kind of thing going on.

WC: She didn't have—no, no, no, no. That was the beauty of those *I Love Lucy* shows. They just didn't take one old gag and beat it to death for the whole show. There were four or five stories in an *I Love Lucy* episode. And she was a sketch player, not a gag person. And she didn't go around cracking jokes.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: But she loved to laugh, loved to have a good time.

JE: She had to have tremendous timing then to have pulled those things off.

WC: Oh—

JE: And that was the key to her delivery—

WC: Her timing was so—Vivian Vance was that good too. Lucy always said Vivian was the best script doctor in town. If something wasn't working in a script, those two ladies could put their heads together and make it work.

Lucy always gave credit to Buster Keaton for teaching her how to use props. Buster Keaton told her, "Don't ever let anyone handle your props but you. That way you know what to expect, you won't get any surprises." And Lucy loved working with props. She could take a prop and just run with it.

JE: When you say a prop, what prop do you mean?

WC: Well, a prop, a chair, a coat.

JE: Make it funny out of anything?

WC: It's just a prop. Let me think, oh, my friend who does an Internet TV show out of Los Angeles showed an episode of Lucy and Vivian putting up the TV antenna. That episode was filmed before I started working for her. I had seen it but I wasn't there when it was being filmed. It was so funny. Those two ladies on the rooftop with this TV antenna. And that's what I mean by a prop. Lucy could have spent the whole day putting that prop up and make it funny.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 08 - 2:20

Lucille's Hair

John Erling: What was the true color or her hair?

Wanda Clark: Brown. Not too dark a brown. She was a platinum blonde for awhile in the movies. The story I hear, Sydney Guilaroff, who was head of makeup at MGM during the Technicolor days, got the red.

JE: He suggested.

WC: Sydney Guilaroff.

JE: Because of the coloring made her a redhead?

WC: Yeah.

JE: Did she go to a dresser every week?

WC: Oh she had—Irma Kusely was Lucy's hairstylist forever. She met Irma on a movie set and it might have been *Stage Door*. I'm not too sure about that because Irma did do Katharine Hepburn and she did Judy Garland, she did so many other people. And that's how Lucy met Irma Kusely.

And Irma got her start in Hollywood by working at Max Factor making wigs. Lucy always wore a wig when she was on camera because her own hair was fine and it would just melt under the lights. So she always had a wig. And Irma, one week she would do henna, real Egyptian henna, and the next week she would do a Clairol color. I used to know the formula, I probably might still find it in some old book or something. But when Lucy became a redhead was in the mid '40s.

JE: And then she did wear a wig?

WC: Always. When she was working.

JE: It was always a wig, we never saw her real hair.

WC: It was just like the wig, same style and everything.

JE: Yeah, right. Yeah.

WC: Same color, same style.

JE: How did Desi and Lucille meet?

WC: They met on the set of *Too Many Girls*. George Abbott was a famous, famous producer of stage work and movies. Desi had done the Broadway stage show of *Too Many Girls*. He played a football player at a college. And Lucy was hired to do the movie as the young female actor. And the two met at Paramount Studios in Los Angeles. Boy, that was history making.

JE: Was it from first sight, do you think that they connected immediately?

WC: Yes, I'm sure it was. And Desi was so charming, and Lucy was so beautiful, she really was a beauty. By the time she started *The Lucy Show*, she was already forty years old, and by some Hollywood standards in those days, that was kind of old.

So, *Too Many Girls*, I've seen the movie a million times. Ann Miller was in it. Lucy got Ann Miller, I think it was Ann's first job. Ann was very, very young.

Chapter 09 - 5:40

I Love Lucy

John Erling: On October 15, 1951, *I Love Lucy*—

Wanda Clark: Yes.

JE: ...made its debut and costarred Vivian Vance, William Frawley, as their two best friends. And then that set the stage for the storylines that dealt with marital issues, women in the work place, suburban living.

WC: Yeah, the older couple, landlords of the apartment building, were not in the original TV show that they did. And when they did enlarge the script and decided to have a couple, Lucy wanted to have Gale Gordon and Bea Benaderet. But both Gale and Bea had other commitments.

Mark Daniels was the director, the first director of *I Love Lucy*. And he knew Vivian Vance. She had been a stage actress and really kind of glamorous. She wasn't sure she wanted that part of the frumpy landlady, even though it made her a household name. But she and Lucy did become great friends and worked together so well.

Frawley had done a million movies, everything from musicals to gangster movies in the '40s and '30s. But he had kind of a bad reputation for drinking. And Desi was warned against hiring him. But Desi met with him, liked him, liked his look, wanted him for the part, and said to him, "I hear these stories about you. But if you ever show up drunk that will be the last time."

And Frawley said, "I never will." And he didn't.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: He didn't. He was just wonderful. But he also, he would tear his pages out of the script and learn his part. And I heard stories, a lot of these stories have been told to me by Cleo and Lucy and other people because I wasn't there, but Frawley would tear his pages out with his lines on it and learn them.

Then at one point, they were rehearsing and he said to Desi, "That's not funny."

And Desi said, "Well, if you read the whole script it would be." So—

Rita Howell: Wanda, was it true that Vivian Vance and William Frawley didn't really get along? At all?

WC: Well, that is true, and the story I heard about it, Frawley overheard Vivian say something to the effect that, "People really think I'm married to that old goat." And Frawley said, "Well, you ain't no peach, honey." But you know, you would never, ever know that they didn't like each other. They were so professional and it just never showed. They could do their job no matter what they thought of each other.

RH: Right. And also, Vivian Vance, was she actually younger and they made her look frumpier? Or was she actually older than Lucy?

WC: She was just, I think she was one year older than Lucy.

RH: Okay.

WC: Vivian Vance's sister, Lou Ann Graham, is a good friend of mine. I met her in the '60s. There's as much difference in Vivian and Lou Ann's age as me and one of my sisters, but Lou Ann was the baby and Vivian was the older one. And I'm the oldest in my sisters and my youngest sister is quite a bit younger.

But anyway, I met Lou Ann and we stayed in touch. Lou Ann has been to my house here at the lake visiting. She lives in Albuquerque and has for many years, but they were born just over the border in Kansas, Independence and Cherryvale.

WC: Oh wow.

RH: Both Vivian and Lou Ann were born up there. Kansas is very proud of their stars and they've invited Lou Ann up there to celebrate Vivian Vance Days or something. And when I saw Lou Ann quite a few years ago at the Lucy Museum, she told me that they were inviting her to come up to Kansas. I said, "If you do, I'll pick you up in Tulsa, you spend a few days with me, and I'll go with you." I got lots of cousins up there.

WC: Yeah.

RH: So that's what we did. She's been to my house twice now.

WC: Wow.

RH: And she says she's going to come again.

JE: Was everybody a quick study? Did they all memorize their lines in a hurry? Was one not able to keep up?

WC: Well, I think the actors were so professional they could learn their parts. It's just that Lucy made them go over and over and over it. She made them rehearse so much more than they were normally used to.

But I've heard the stories that when Tallulah Bankhead did the show, Tallulah was a famous stage actor and an excellent stage actor. But at rehearsal, sitting around the table and even on their feet moving, Tallulah, she knew what to do, but she said, "Well, yeah, I'll do it that way at the show."

And Lucy wanted it done that way from the very beginning. She worried and worried and worried and argued with Tallulah. They had disagreements over it, but I guess Desi probably talked her into, "Just let it go."

So on show night, Tallulah was so perfect. And it wasn't the way Lucy wanted to work.

But I saw it myself when Joan Crawford did our show. I guess it was a *Here's Lucy*. Joan was widowed by that time, she'd been married to the head of Pepsi Cola, I think. She was hired to play herself, but Lucy and Vivian had had car trouble and went up to the front door of this big, beautiful home and found Joan Crawford mopping the floor. And they thought she was on the skids and hard times and they were trying to figure out how to help her.

That was the storyline, but Joan would take a nip now and then. Early morning rehearsals, Joan would be taking a nip now and then. So Lucy said, "Fire her." Told Gary, she said, "You've got to fire her. It's my show and I can't be responsible for her not to do her job."

But Gary went, and Joan says, "Oh my God, I've never been fired in my life." She says, "I'll do it, don't—" So they didn't fire her. And she did turn in an absolutely perfect performance.

But that's how Lucy was just so insistent, you know, she was a perfectionist. But that's not a dirty word in my book.

RH: No.

WC: It wasn't in Lucy's book either.

RH: Well, it showed in the shows that they did.

WC: Yeah, it showed.

RH: The *I Love Lucy*, I mean, you could tell it was flawless.

WC: Yeah. Because of—

RH: They acted like they were just adlibbing it as they went along.

JE: First time, right?

RH: Yeah.

WC: Yeah.

RH: It was just amazing.

Chapter 10 – 4:05**Lucy's Favorite Show**

John Erling: The shows were done on film, they weren't live?

Wanda Clark: Uh, Kine—no, but that's another thing that Desi did. CBS wanted to do the show *I Love Lucy* in New York as all the other TV shows were done in the '50s. TV was new and Desi says, "No, no, we have to do it in LA. We have to do it in front of an audience." Because Lucy had been doing radio for many years and they always had an audience at the radio shows in those days. People would dress up to go to the radio show. He also insisted on filming on 35 millimeter film.

When they did the shows in New York, they would do it there and they called it Kinescope. They'd take a picture of the TV set, the show being aired, and ship that to the West coast. The quality was very poor so Desi wouldn't have it that way. He insisted on doing it on film. He insisted, they said it couldn't be done. The Fire Department says, "You can't have an audience in a movie studio. You have to have bleachers, you have to have an outside entrance, you have to have bathrooms."

And Desi says, "We'll do them." So he did all that. He was the visionary. There was no one to say it couldn't be done just because it hadn't been done before.

JE: Did he also offer to take a pay cut to make that happen?

WC: What they did, they agreed to pay for it themselves for something, which gave them the rights to the film, not tape or Kinescope. But when Lucy sold Desilu Studios in, I think it was '68, that's another thing I want to get to is some people don't know that Lucy was the one to green light *Star Trek* and *Mission Impossible*, and also *Mannix*.

Mannix was a very successful TV show but it didn't go on to the fame that *Star Trek* and *Mission Impossible* did. But when Lucy sold the studio she sold the rights to those shows. So she did not benefit in any of *Star Trek's* or *Mission Impossible's* subsequent fame and fortune.

Rita Howell: Oh.

JE: But there were other television programs that came out of Desilu Productions. Like *Our Miss Brooks*, *Make Room for Daddy*, the *Dick Van Dyke Show*, the *Untouchables*, *Star Trek*, and *Mission Impossible*, all came from Desilu Productions.

WC: Absolutely, and there were other shows, *Whirlybirds* was one that had a couple of seasons. That was a Desilu show. And *Petticoat Junction* and some others. At the time, and, well, and since, there has not been a TV production company that did more television work than Desilu did in the '50s and '60s.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: Even Aaron Spelling, when Spelling came along with all his success, it still didn't do as many as Desilu did.

JE: One of the TV episodes that is very memorable is when they touched on the theme of pregnancy, when she gave birth to Little Ricky. This was in 1953.

RH: That's my favorite episode of all times.

JE: All right, why don't you talk about it.

WC: It's my favorite too. And it was Lucy's favorite.

RH: It was—

JE: The same day the real life Lucy delivered her son, Desi Jr., by caesarean.

WC: Yes, yes.

RH: It was amazing. She had just found out she was pregnant, so all day she dreamed of the way she was going to tell Ricky that she was pregnant. He came home for lunch and she tried many different ways to tell him and never could get the words out. He was busy—

WC: He called her so—

RH: ...he got called back to work. Yeah, he went back and then that evening at the show at the club, the maitre d' slipped a note to Ricky and said, "Somebody here is pregnant. They don't know how to tell their husband and would you sing the baby song?"

WC: "We're Having a Baby (My Baby and Me)."

RH: "We're Having a Baby," yeah. So he walked around the club asking the women, "Is it you? Is it you?" because he wanted to bring the couple up to the front of the stage there. And he came around to Lucy, she was there, "Is it you?" And she nodded her head yes. And then the tears just start flowing because it's just so—

WC: Yeah, yeah. That's Lucy's favorite show too.

RH: Oh.

WC: People were always asking her and she would say that. And it certainly is mine, even though I wasn't there when they filmed that. But I've heard the stories. They had to film the ending a couple of times because the tears were streaming. And finally they just left the tears in there—

RH: Left it in, it was beautiful.

WC: ...because it was, yeah.

RH: Just a beautiful moment there at the end.

WC: It was.

RH: And he sings the song that he had written, "We're Having a Baby."

WC: "We're Having a Baby (My Baby and Me)."

RH: "(My Baby and Me)."

Chapter 11 - 2:35**A Communist?**

John Erling: Was she political, Lucille?

Wanda Clark: She really wasn't. At least not openly she wasn't. I think, and a lot of other people have told me too, it probably went back to the days when she was accused of being a Communist. And those were the days that were just frightening. Lives were ruined by those accusations.

Rita Howell: And can I ask, how did that even get started, because I've heard of that but I don't know the origin.

WC: Well, her grandfather was what they called—

JE: A socialist of some sort?

WC: Yeah, he was a socialist, but they called him some kind of a traveler. Anyway, Lucy had trouble because this was after she brought her family out to California, way before she married Desi. She'd have a maid or somebody to help with the ironing or the housework and he'd go and talk to them and say, "They're taking advantage of you," he said. "You stand up and don't take this."

She couldn't keep help because old grandpa was coming in there running her help off. But anyway, he did talk Lucy and her brother, Fred, into joining the Communist Party. But in those days, it wasn't, it wasn't dangerous. It was just people that were standing up for the underdog or something.

So she did join to satisfy her dear old grandpa, who was the only father she'd ever known. She never attended a meeting. There were stories around that she did and held meetings in her home. Well, that's all lies, it never happened. But when some tabloid published that, Lucy was very worried that her career was gone, CBS wouldn't stand by her.

But anyway, it's a long story and I wasn't there. I just know what people have told me. They went ahead and did the show after that news broke. I think Winchell broke it, he's also the one who broke that she was pregnant.

JE: That would be Walter Winchell.

WC: Walter Winchell, who was very powerful.

JE: Commentator, right.

WC: Um-hmm (affirmative). Reporter, newspaper, entertainment.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: But CBS said, "No, let's go ahead and do the show tonight. We'll film as usual." So the audience was there and Desi was out before the show started filming. And people were

applauding and screaming and he thanked everybody for coming and explained that there's been some publicity. But he says, "The only thing red about my wife is her hair and that's not real."

RH: I heard that. That's great.

JE: Well, I read where she said that she voted for Eisenhower.

WC: Well, she probably did. But anyway, Lucy just didn't talk politics the way today celebrities stand up for their politicians, which is fine, I think they need to. But Lucy didn't, she didn't talk politics. And I don't talk politics with friends or family, some of them.

Chapter 12 - 3:00

CEO Lucille Ball

John Erling: As I understand, when she was married to Gary Morton they bought out Desi. And then she took over Desilu Productions and so she became the first woman to run a major television production studio.

Wanda Clark: That's true, that's very true.

JE: And she had the ability to do that.

WC: And that's when she decided she needed a secretary.

JE: That's the point in time that you come in.

WC: When Desi left Desilu, he had an office on the Culver City lot of Desilu Studios for a long time. He directed a couple of seasons of *The Lucy Show*. He still worked, that's when *Mothers-in-Law*, that series, Desi was doing that series on the Desilu lots. He just sold the studio to her because he wanted out of the responsibility. And Lucy didn't want the responsibility but she did keep all the department heads. Nothing was changed when Desi left. She said, "As long as they do their job. Desi depended on them and I'll depend on them." That's when she decided she needed a secretary.

She sold the studios to Gulf Western, who owned Paramount at the time. Paramount and Desilu, in those days, were side by side.

JE: She sold it for seventeen million dollars.

WC: Mostly for Gulf Western stock.

JE: When she died, she died a wealthy woman, I mean, she knew how to handle her money, didn't she?

WC: She had people that advised her. They were conservative because they didn't want her to lose any. She probably could have made a lot of money had she been willing to invest. Like Bob Hope was richer than anybody because he bought half of California. People like

that made a lot more money than Lucy did. Because she'd rather keep what she had than risk losing it. But she certainly was a wealthy woman.

She has a trust set up for the children. Gary got the Palm Springs house and all the automobiles. The Beverly Hills house was set up in trust for the children, as was, oh, I don't remember where some of the other money was. But she certainly was a wealthy woman.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: Where Big Desi, he spent his money.

Rita Howell: Surprise. We recently visited Jamestown, the museum there, and she was buried originally in California. Is that right?

WC: She was.

RH: And then moved to Jamestown?

WC: She was buried near her mother in Los Angeles at the famous cemetery there. But several years later the children decided to move her to Jamestown. Now, Jamestown has one of the prettiest cemeteries I've ever seen in my life.

RH: Yes, we've been by there.

WC: It's beautiful. And the rest of her family is there. Grandpa and Grandma Hunt and her father was there. His name was Henry Ball. You know, there's been a lot of talk over the years that Lucy's real name was Diane Belmont. That's been published as fact, but it wasn't. Lucy thought that Lucille was kind of dull and Diane sounded more exotic. She was on the train going from Jamestown to the city and saw Belmont, the city, and Belmont Racetracks, and so Diane Belmont she had for a short time. Not long at all. But her real name was Lucille Ball.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: Lucille Désirée Ball.

Chapter 13 - 2:45

Death of Lucille

John Erling: About her death in 1989, talk to us about that and what it was she died from.

Wanda Clark: Lucy had a ruptured aorta near the heart and they repaired that. And she was in the hospital recovering from that. On the road to recovery, and had a second one, another ruptured aorta that just took her instantly. So she wasn't ill.

Three weeks before she died she had been at the Academy Awards with Bob Hope presenting an award to somebody, looking like a million dollars. Going to the parties after, so she hadn't been ill.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound), she was seventy-seven.

WC: Yeah.

JE: When she died on April 26, 1989. Were you at the funeral?

WC: Yeah. Um, Gary wasn't going to have a—he said, “Lucy doesn't want a funeral.” Well, he didn't want a funeral.

Lucie Arnaz said, “This is my mother, I'll have a mass for her if I want to,” because the kids were raised Catholic because Desi was Catholic. So Lucie arranged a mass in LA, and one in Chicago, and one in New York, three different masses at the same time. I think it was on a Monday.

And I did go to the one in LA. Friends spoke and read things. We had a producer named Tommy Thompson. Tommy had been Associate Producer, Producer, and I knew Tommy so well. He was tall and gorgeous and the funniest man I ever knew. I'm very close friends with his wife too. She sold my LA house, in fact. But we all loved Tommy Thompson.

And at the funeral mass there was recorded music playing and, all of a sudden, there kind of went, “Clang.” We were walking up the aisle afterward and Tommy looked at me and said, “She was here.”

Rita Howell: You know she was.

WC: Lucie Arnaz is responsible for having those. Diane Sawyer hosted the one in New York City, I think. I can't remember the one who did the one in Chicago. I don't know—

RH: Did Gary attend?

WC: He didn't.

RH: Oh.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound). Who were her closest friends?

WC: Well, not always celebrities. She had some close friends that she loved working with. But Lucy had just friends that were not in show business. And people who would play backgammon with her. Lucy would play backgammon as long as somebody would sit in front of her and play. She would have little tournaments at her home, set up tables around and have backgammon tournaments.

And there was a private club named Pips, because that's a backgammon term, apparently. I don't know how to play and I never learned to play and it's a good thing. Had I known how to play backgammon we would never have gotten any work done.

There was lots of work. I typed and took shorthand and wrote letters. But I never learned to play backgammon, and it's a good thing.

Chapter 14 - 4:20**Lucy Episodes**

John Erling: Are there any episodes that come to mind?

Wanda Clark: Gosh, I've memorized every episode. I can watch the show and I say the lines before they say them. I have just love and affection for Lucy. But Vitameatavegamin, of course, is one of my favorites. She wants to be an actor and so she gets Ricky to get her a part doing a commercial for Vitameatavegamin, which was vitamins, minerals, vegetables, all in one little bottle, and it does have some alcohol in it, so they make her practice the commercial over and over. And by the time she finishes practicing she's looped out because of all the alcohol she'd been sipping the whole time. That's hilarious.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Rita Howell: Yeah.

WC: Of course, the chocolate factory is an all-time favorite.

RH: Yeah.

WC: All of California shows—

RH: Yeah, the William Holden with the nose—

WC: Yes. The lights lighting her nose on fire.

RH: Yeah.

WC: For years I have had a picture of her on my bookshelf as if she were one of the family.

RH: Yeah, with the family.

WC: With my kids and with my grandkids.

RH: Yeah.

WC: And there's Lucy, of course.

RH: And there is Lucy. So that's why I was so pleased to have met Wanda.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

RH: Because it just brings everything to life.

WC: That's just back to what I said about props. Setting that nose on fire, oh, didn't you believe that was an accident? That Lucy [inaudible/crosstalk...

RH: It was. And you know, every time I have watched those episodes, how many thousands of times, and I laugh every time as if it's the first time I've seen it.

WC: And just—

RH: Just unbelievable.

WC: ...because it still works. The grape stomping scene, Lucy rehearsed that constantly except for stepping in the vat of grapes. She wanted that to be a surprise. So they rehearsed it but she didn't step in those grapes until the show night.

RH: And did I hear that in one of the episodes when she got in a fight with somebody it was like almost a real fight.

WC: Well, the other grape-stomper from Italy didn't speak much English, apparently. She was an actor and she did the part. But I know Lucy, she'd tell a story and if it got good reaction, well, it would get a little better the next time she told it. And so I don't know if that lady really was holding her down and stepping on her in the grape vat. I don't know that for sure or not. Or if it was just part of the show.

JE: But as comedic as she was she was considered by Frank Sinatra in the cold war thriller, *The Manchurian Candidate*.

WC: Yeah.

JE: He felt that she had those kind of skills. However, the director had worked with Angela Lansbury and he insisted that she have the part.

WC: Yeah, yeah. Lucy was offered an awful lot of parts. She would have been terrific in that too, but nobody would be any better than Angela. In fact, when they gave Lucy *Mame*, she argued and said, "This is Angela's movie. This is Angela's story." But they wanted Lucy because she had a bigger movie star name. Angela had been mostly on stage at that time.

Anyway, I like *Mame*. I thought *Mame* was a real good movie, but it didn't get good reviews. Critics criticized her for getting old, not for acting. Lucy cried over those reviews sometimes.

RH: And wasn't her very last movie about the homeless?

WC: Now, that was a TV movie called *Stone Pillow*. It was filmed on location in New York City and the story idea was absolutely wonderful.

RH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: I can't remember who wrote the original idea. It was about a young woman whose mother was estranged, or even thought she had died. But this young reporter saw this old homeless person on the streets and thought, "My God, there's something about her." That story idea was so good, but it changed.

That's another one where Gary Morton was saying, "Give her what she wants." And Lucy wanted to do certain things. She'd named her Florabel because that was her grandmother's name. That's just not a—and Lucy was bundled up in layers and layers and layers of clothes and the hat. And the heat, Lucy got sick during that movie because the heat just got to her and the exhaustion.

But one thing that I was so disappointed in, those gloves she wore, she still had manicures, and that shouldn't have been.

JE: No.

WC: But anyway.

JE: But she had high praise for that as a homeless woman. It was in 1985, that movie *Stone Pillow*. It was not a smash hit.

WC: No. But, yeah—

JE: But she got critical acclaim for doing it.

WC: Well, she did, but there were a lot of critics and some people, fans, really didn't want to see her do anything except Lucy Ricardo. And that's too bad.

Chapter 15 - 4:55

Generosity of Lucille

John Erling: She was noted for a number of great quotes. "The secret to staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age." Did you hear her just make these quips every once in awhile, and you say, "Wow, that's something"? She said, "Love yourself first and everything else falls into line."

Wanda Clark: That's true, Lucy very much believed in the art of selfishness, is what she called it. She was a big follower of Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, in fact, Dr. Peale married her and Gary Morton. Lucy always said, "If you don't take care of yourself first then you can't take care of what else you need to do."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

WC: So she called it the art of selfishness, and she was very big about that.

JE: Was religion or faith any part of her life?

WC: Faith, she wasn't an organized church-goer. She sent her kids to be raised Catholic because of their father. But her mother, Dede, took them to mass all the time and did all the little Catholic child things. She had faith in many things. Hard work was one, but just like in politics, she didn't make a big thing out of her faith or her religious preference.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). She once said, "I'm not funny, what I am is brave."

WC: Yeah, I know that. She said that.

JE: So you talked about that?

WC: Yeah.

JE: She was the one who dared to do all these stunts.

WC: Yeah, yeah.

JE: Although there were many who would not do that.

WC: Right, right, that's true. And she had that reputation doing the movies.

I think one of her favorite movies was *The Big Street* with Henry Fonda. That was one of her favorite movies because she didn't have to do slapstick or anything. Even though she loved that, it was kind of a sad story too.

Rita Howell: That was a great movie.

WC: *The Facts of Life* was another funny movie with Bob Hope. That movie wasn't released out of the theater for many years. It had something to do with the rights. Hope had control over something, so it took a long time for that movie to come out on a DVD.

JE: In 1971, she became the first woman to receive the International Radio and Television Society's Gold Medal. In addition, there were four Emmy's, induction into the Television Hall of Fame, and recognition for her life work from the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

WC: And Lucy always regretted that they didn't include Desi in that Hall of Fame. She said, "They did Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy as a couple, they should have done Desi with me."

JE: I wonder why they left him out?

WC: I have no idea. Maybe because they were divorced.

RH: Divorced, maybe, yeah.

WC: The other couple were together forever and ever.

JE: And then she said, "It's a hell of a start being able to recognize what makes you happy."

WC: Yeah. And that's the art of being selfish. And she took care of people you just don't hear about. She saw that certain people that needed to get into the Motion Picture Country Home. The rules were pretty strict. She didn't do any grand gestures as to naming a billion dollar building after her or something. But she was always doing things.

As long as I worked for her, when she would do a *Johnny Carson Show* or a game show like *Password*, she loved playing *Password*, that money that she earned doing that always went to the Children's Hospital in LA. The orthopedic division.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound). You said she would help people.

WC: Well, mostly people that she knew. Me and Frank, the money that she had planned to leave us in her will, she gave to us earlier. And she did that for a lot of people she knew. Her first maid that she hired when she first came to LA was named Harriet. Harriet was ill and Lucy called up her tax attorney and says, "Give Harriet that money now, she needs it." So she was always helping people like that.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound). You and Frank?

WC: Frank is Frank Gorey. I mentioned the driver. Frank worked for Lucy longer than I did and we're still friends. Frank lives in LA.

JE: She wanted to make sure both of you were taken care of before she died.

WC: Yeah.

RH: Tell them about the ring you have on your finger, that's interesting.

WC: I have a ring that Lucy wore every day. I see it in pictures of Lucy, I see it when I'm watching film or something. When we were closing up the house, we had taken inventory,

Lucie Arnaz was deciding what went where and what charity got this and museum got that. And she gave me this ring.

RH: It's beautiful.

WC: Yeah. I don't wear much jewelry, I never wear jewelry except for my pearls and my ring. But I wear it because it was Lucy's and she wore it all the time.

Lucy gave me so many things over all the years. She would stop on the way to work, she drove herself to work until she broke her leg and then she was in that cast for awhile. After that she would let a driver drive her. She still drove, she would drive to the manicurist. But she would stop and buy me a present.

I always met her at the car with a whole list of things that had to be done that day and notes to put in the car. And she'd say, "Here, honey." She just was very, very generous.

JE: That sentiment is so sweet.

WC: Yeah, yeah.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 16 - 2:45

How to Remember Lucille

John Erling: Well, this has been fun to review her life, but it's been fun to have you, an Oklahoman, return to us after this great life that you lived with her.

Wanda Clark: I love talking about Lucy, I do.

JE: And to know about her behind the scenes and to admire her even more—

WC: Yeah.

JE: ...than what we did for her show business abilities.

WC: Yeah, yeah.

JE: That's just great.

WC: Yeah.

JE: How should we remember Lucille Ball?

WC: Well, she loved her work. She wanted to do good work. She loved her children. She's very much in my life just because I'm still so close to the kids. I see them often.

JE: Yeah.

WC: I was maid of honor at little Lucie's first wedding. She used to say a lot, she says, "Well, I don't have any girlfriends. I went to school at the studios. Wanda is my girlfriend." We played tennis. And she came to visit me, maybe three years ago now.

Larry Luckinbill is an Arkansas boy, he was born in Fort Smith and he went to school at Fayetteville. And he donated most of his work in archives to the University at Fayetteville. And he goes there and does a one-man show that he's so good at. I had been there several times to see him and I kept saying, "It's only another hour to come to my lake. Come see me sometime."

So one day Lucie went with him and she says, "We're going to go see Wanda." Now, Disney, Oklahoma, is not on most GPS maps. So I sent her a map with a mark from Fayetteville right down to my front door.

She said, "We drove there like we lived there."

They spent the night, we had dinner at home. I didn't want her to think I just wanted to show her off so we stayed home. My friend Celeste came to dinner that night. Celeste had met her. Just my sister and brother-in-law and Celeste and her husband and Lucie and Larry. And I think I cooked pasta, I'm not even sure.

JE: I'm telling you, that's a great compliment to you that you weren't just a secretary, you could type, you became a member of the family. And then the children knew how much Lucille loved you, so they recognized that and they accepted you too. So let's compliment you for being that kind of person.

WC: Well, well, thank you very much, John. And Lucy did treat me a lot like family. However, I didn't take advantage of it. I didn't try to pretend to be family, I just continued doing my job.

But I know little Desi said many times, "Wanda raised us," which is not exactly true, but it's nice of him to say that.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Rita Howell: Wow.

JE: Well, thank you.

WC: You're very welcome.

JE: For sharing all this. Rita, thank you for being part of this.

RH: It's been my pleasure, trust me. I enjoyed it.

JE: I appreciate it very much.

WC: I enjoyed it, John. Thank you for inviting me. I had a good time.

RH: Thank you.

WC: Any time you want to talk about Lucy you come to the lake and I'll show you my pictures.

JE: We'll do that.

Chapter 17 - 0:33**Conclusion**

John Erling: This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation-funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time, on *VoicesofOklahoma.com*.