



**Volume 20**

**Number 001**

**Lucille Ball**

**Lead: Her earliest dreams were of life on the stage, but Lucile Désirée Ball, aka Lucy Montana, aka Diane Belmont, succeeded beyond her remotest imaginings.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts**

**Content: Her childhood was not an easy one. Her father died when she was three, her mother for a time abandoned her to the care of her new husband's mother, a harsh disciplinarian, and then the reunited family**

lost their home in a legal action. Despite these hardships, Ball never left behind her desire to perform. She studied for a time at the Minton-Anderson School of Drama in New York City, but the introverted Ball, homesick and ironically, intimidated by the school's star pupil, Bette Davis, departed but she did not give up and remained in the City. Odd-jobs and her own natural physical beauty led eventually to a relatively successful modeling career and finally an offer to film with Eddie Cantor a Hollywood movie, *Roman Scandals*. Six weeks in Hollywood led to a half century and one of show businesses most successful careers.

She worked for several studios and gained the reputation as a sex goddess in secondary productions, the "Queen of the B Movies" – over 20 in number. Her run, however, slowed as the movie business began to change after World War II. She was the

star of a radio sit-com, *My Favorite Husband*, for CBS, but with her new husband, Desi Arnaz, she convinced a reluctant network to feature them in a comedy based on their marriage. *I Love Lucy* premiered in October, 1951 and for its full run topped the ratings. Negotiations with CBS led to their ownership of the show, the formation of Desilu Productions and eventually Ball's assumption of company ownership following their divorce in 1960. Under her leadership Desilu became one of the most successful independent production companies in Hollywood history churning out such successes as *Mission: Impossible* (1966), *Mannix* (1967), *The Untouchables* (1959) and *Star Trek* (1966). She continued to act in series for CBS usually bearing her name and the occasional film. She died in 1989. Ball's determination, intelligence and plain hard work brought the dreams of a little girl from Jamestown, New York, living a hard-

**scrabble life, to more than she could have hoped for.**

**At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.**

**Resources**

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