

Assignment TV

By **TERRENCE O'FLAHERTY**

"Yeah, I take my tape recorder with me everywhere I go now," said Lucille Ball. "I even took it to Catalina — and that's a pretty dull little island as you know. I thought I might run into a fish that talks."

It's all part of the red-head's new job — a radio show, Monday through Friday, for the CBS network. Miss Ball was a radio star back with "My Favorite Husband." That was before she switched to television and the emphasis was taken off the husband.

"I find people wherever I can and we talk. I'm not profound in any way, but I hope to talk to fans and show a side of me they don't write about in the movie magazines. And I have some friends that I'll talk with like Benny and Danny Kaye and Hope."

THE FIRST question that comes to mind is—why would a star as rich and as busy as Lucille Ball want to undertake a daily radio show in addition to her weekly television show and her duties as the head of a major Hollywood studio?

I suspect that part of the answer lies in the restlessness and need for activity that is part of the nature of a performer. But Miss Ball told me something else that is meaningful:

"Sometimes I think that an actress knows more about the average public than the poll people do. After listening to them talk and reading their letters for many years I find an astonishing similarity. They ask the same things; they almost seem to be the same people."

"One of the things I find 'out there' is boredom. I hear from a lot of bored people who don't know what to do with their spare time. This makes me mad and I've got a helluva list for them."

THE PUBLIC can be very kind, but they can also be awful. I remember one time I was walking with my two children. Now, everyone had heard about my son because he was practically born on the television show, but a woman came up to me and nodded toward my daughter and said in a loud voice 'Is she adopted?' Can you imagine that?"

The memory of the incident brought Miss Ball to her feet. She walked over to me and shook her finger in my face. "Well, I went up to her and I said 'No, she's NOT adopted, but if she WERE, and I hadn't TOLD her, YOU would be in very great trouble at this moment, MADAM!'"

"Part of the show sometime I'd like to devote to the problems of being a child of a celebrity. With all of the obvious advantages there are a lot of terrible disadvantages. My youngsters go to a school with other celebrity children and it's not easy."

AT THIS point her husband, comedian Gary Morton, popped into the room and immediately started to talk. "I first met Miss Ball three years ago. I remember it well. It was a pizza parlor. . . ."

"Quiet you idiot!" said Miss Ball good-naturedly.

"May I have the afternoon off?" he asked.

"So long," she said and he was gone.

I asked if her husband would be on the show with her.

"No thanks! I've had THAT bit! Right now I'm involved in a movie based on the Beardsley family. When we first made the deal with them they had 19 children. Now they've got 21. I figure we'd better hurry up and make the movie or the public won't believe it. Fred MacMurray has the script with him in the High Sierra and I hope he reads it before the animals eat it up. . . ."

Suddenly I realized what is perhaps the best reason why Lucille Ball is doing a daily radio show: she likes to talk. And she does it very well.



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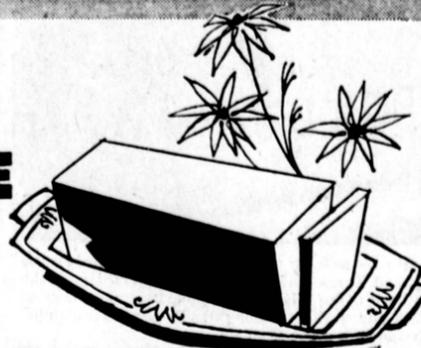
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