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Quick, Timely Reads
On the Waterfront

'I Love Lucy' – Plus a Field Trip

By David Frew
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Dr. David Frew, a prolific writer, author, and speaker grew up on Erie's lower west side as a proud "Bay Rat," joining neighborhood kids playing and marauding along the west bayfront. He has written for years about his beloved Presque Isle and his adventures on the Great Lakes. In this series, the JES Scholar-in-Residence takes note of life in and around the water.



Lucy and Ricky Ricardo with their New York apartment neighbors, Fred and Ethel Mertz

Even though I had mixed feelings about the family television set and generally preferred radio programs it was hard not to notice and enjoy “I Love Lucy,” a popular comedy sitcom that aired from 1951 to 1957, the general era of most of my Bay Rat adventures. Lucy was a master of physical comedy and played off of her Cuban bandleader husband, Ricky Ricardo, as well as neighbors Fred and Ethel Mertz. Fred and Ethel brought Vaudevillian experience to the show with short one-liners that always seemed to set Lucy up. Lucy was very clearly the star of the show. Fred, Ethel, and Ricky acted as straight “men” for Lucy’s crazy adventures.

Some of the episodes were much funnier than others and, luckily, I was able to view those special shows. My favorite featured Lucy and Ethel working on a chocolate factory assembly line to earn extra cash. Another was an episode in which Lucy was inside of a huge wooden tub at a winery, squashing grapes with her feet. Naturally, she managed to fall into the grapes several times. While the general theme of the show seemed to revolve about Lucy being controlled by her bandleader husband, Ricky, it was not difficult to see that the “actual creative driver of all of the shows was Lucy, herself. Playing off of traditional gender stereotypes, which we now know were not internalized by Lucille Ball, Lucy and Ethel were perpetually getting themselves into trouble with their husbands. But it was all in great fun.



Lucy and Ethel at the chocolate factory

Renewed interest in Lucille Ball was stimulated by a 2021 film that garnered an Oscar for lead actress, Nicole Kidman. That movie caused me to reflect upon the fact that Lucy was born and raised in nearby Jamestown, New York and that a museum had been established there to celebrate and commemorate her life. The success of the Lucille Ball Museum also drove the development of a companion institution in downtown Jamestown, the National Comedy Museum. These two institutions, which have both won national awards, seem to have created a renaissance in downtown Jamestown, helping redefine the old city as a modern tourist destination. If either museum, by itself, was unable to attract a viable

number of year-round tourists, the two together seem to have turned the tide. The Comedy Museum has taken over the physical space once dedicated to the town's railroad station, and it has become a sensation.



The Lucy and Desi Museum in downtown Jamestown, New York

Lucy was born in Jamestown but gravitated to the nearby suburb of Celeron, which is located at the southern end of Chautauqua Lake. Celeron was a Victorian paradise with swimming beaches, amusement rides, and a giant Ferris wheel. Lucy spent much of her childhood there and was first exposed to theater at the waterside park. Early 1900s tourist activities at Celeron's water park, amusement venues, summer cottages, bandstands, and theaters attracted visitors and overnight tourists from hundreds of miles away. Its popularity almost coincided with the growth and development of Chautauqua Institution just a few miles north on the western shore of the lake. While the missions of the two institutions seemed somewhat at odds, the new Jamestown museums complement ongoing programming at Chautauqua Institution, and they help to extend the season.



Bathing beaches at Celeron, New York with a grand tourist hotel in the background



The famous Ferris wheel at Celeron

After Lucy passed away, her daughter worked with the city of Jamestown to move her mother's collected archives and studio set collections to their current home. The museum contains set designs from both eras of the television show, the New York apartment with its familiar furniture as well as the Los Angeles studio sets. In addition to the re-created television studio sets the museum experience includes wardrobes of Lucy, Desi, Fred, and Ethel as well as hundreds of physical mementos. Special exhibits detail the early lives and careers of Desi, Fred, and Ethel.

In addition to establishing the museum and creating a permanent home for Lucy's extensive collections, her daughter had Lucy's remains removed from the Los Angeles cemetery where she was originally buried. Lucy was taken home to Jamestown, where she is now buried next to her mother.

As we were planning a trip to Jamestown and both of its museums, my wife Mary Ann and I decided to find a place to stay overnight. Trying to see both museums in one day would have been overwhelming. We eventually found the Chautauqua Harbor Hotel, a wonderfully modern and luxurious place located on the shores of the lake at Celeron. The hotel and its restaurant did not disappoint.



Lucille Ball near the end of her life



The Chautauqua Harbor Hotel

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by Dr. David Frew and Jerry Skrypzak

ACCIDENTAL PARADISE *13,000-Year History of Presque Isle*



By David Frew and Jerry Skrypzak

with

*Dr. Jerry Covert, Cheryl Heeneman, Brian Gula, Harry Leslie, Dr. John Lyons,
Bob North, and Dr. Jeanette Schwarz*

The beautiful book on Presque Isle published by authors David Frew and Jerry Skrypzak – **“Accidental Paradise: 13,000-Year History of**

Presque Isle” – is on sale at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center’s gift shop and through a special website, AccidentalParadise.com.

The book, priced at **\$35 plus tax and shipping**, can be ordered now through the website sponsored by the TREC Foundation, AccidentalParadise.com.

Presque Isle Gallery and Gifts on the main floor of TREC, located at **301 Peninsula Drive, Suite #2, Erie, PA 16505** will also handle sales **daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

For more information, send an email to aperino@TRECf.org.

To watch "Accidental Paradise: Stories Behind The Stories" click [here](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Historian and author David Frew, Ph.D., is a Scholar-in-Residence at the JES. An emeritus professor at Gannon University, he held a variety of administrative positions during a 33-year career. He is also emeritus director of the Erie County Historical Society/Hagen History Center and is president of his own management consulting business. Frew has written or co-written 35 books and more than 100 articles, cases, and papers.



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