



Photo: *The New York Times*



INDIANA
COMMISSION
for women

Writing Her Story

Madelyn Pugh Davis

Indianapolis, Marion County

March 15, 1921 – April 20, 2011

Madelyn Pugh Davis was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1921. While attending Shortridge High School, she served as co-editor of the school newspaper with classmate, Kurt Vonnegut. In 1942, she graduated from Indiana University School of Journalism and began her professional career writing short radio spots for WIRE, an Indianapolis radio station. After moving to California with her family, she became a radio writer, first for NBC and then for CBS, where she met her future writing partner, Bob Carroll. Together, they wrote over 400 television programs and roughly 500 radio shows. They also created a vaudeville act for Lucille Ball and her husband, Desi Arnez, which became the basis for the pilot episode of *I Love Lucy*.

Many times, Madelyn was not only the one who thought up the zany scenes in which the character, Lucy, found herself in, but also was the one who first try out the stunts to see if they would work for Lucille Ball. These iconic scenes included dangling from a hotel balcony, posing as a sculpture, stomping in a vat full of grapes, and guzzling a 46-proof health tonic, Vitameatavegamin. She and the rest of the writing team spent their time setting up visual comedy – or physical predicaments – for Lucille Ball to find herself in each week.

At a time during TV's early years and few women worked behind the screen, Madelyn was called "girl writer." However, through her talent, skill, and comedic sense, she was able to write for one of the most popular shows of all time. She "not only made her mark as a writer, but also opened the door for other women to follow in her footsteps," stated a spokesperson for the Paley Center for Media.

Madelyn Pugh Davis died on April 20, 2011, at the age of 90.

- For more *information* about Madelyn Pugh Davis, go to: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/22/arts/television/madelyn-pugh-davis-writer-for-i-love-lucy-dies-at-90.html>.
- For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Additional and more detailed references available at the end of Women's History Month