

**E-Newsletter | December 2014**

Pioneering Television Personalities

Did you know that a woman was the first to use three cameras on a television set? And that a woman revolutionized preschool education by bringing characters such as Big Bird and Ernie to the television screen? We are constantly amazed at the diversity of women's accomplishments and our collective lack of knowledge about half of our history - as women's



Lucille Ball

contributions to history are not told or acknowledged. This month, we bring to your attention the tremendous achievements of television pioneers Lucille Ball and Joan Ganz Cooney.

Known for her comedic persona on the beloved 1950s television show *I Love Lucy*, Lucille Ball was actually a tremendous force in the television world. A groundbreaking female executive in the television industry, Ball's *I Love Lucy* (which premiered in 1951) was the first show to use three cameras, a set and be filmed in front of a live audience. She broke barriers by being

shown on television when she was visibly pregnant. Ball was a pioneer in obtaining the rights and creative control over her television sitcom - called the most popular and beloved sitcom of all time.



Joan Ganz Cooney

Ball was also influential in ensuring that the television show Star Trek was made and kept on the air. She received many awards including Emmy Awards and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (posthumously) with a citation that read: Her face was seen by more people more often than the face of any human being who ever lived. Who can forget Lucy? She was like

everyone's next-door neighbor, only funnier. Lucille Ball was a national treasure who brought laughter to us all. Love Lucy? Sure. This nation is grateful to her, and we will miss her dearly. Ball has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

When Joan Ganz Cooney decided to start the Children's Television Workshop (established in 1968 and today renamed the Sesame Workshop), she was told that she could be the deputy, but that a man should be in charge. Her response was that if a man were in charge, she would not be involved. Today, Sesame Street has run for over 40 years, reaches hundreds of millions of children in over 100 countries, and has won more than 60 Emmys. Sesame Street was the first preschool program to integrate education and entertainment and featured a multicultural cast. Cooney arrived in New York City in 1954 and has worked in the television industry throughout her long and stellar career. She also created The Electric Company, 3-2-1 Contact, and Dragon Tales.

Today, Cooney continues her efforts to educate underserved

children through the Joan Ganz Cooney Center. Cooney received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her contributions to educational television, has received many honorary degrees, and has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Women have contributed significantly to all areas of our lives and culture. We are proud to stand on the shoulders of these giants in the world of television.

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Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America

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