

QUITE A GREETING

Lucille Ball--She's the Fairest of All

BY HAL HUMPHREY

© 1964, Los Angeles Times

NEW YORK — Every television star searches for some gimmick this time of year to let the viewers know that his or her show is about to begin a new season.

Jackie Gleason rented a special train amid much press-agent fanfare to move himself and cast to Miami, where he will do his shows this season.

Busy Traveling

Others are busy traveling to what the industry calls "key rating cities" to be interviewed and hosted by the city fathers.

Biggest of these publicity splashes was made here last week by Lucille Ball, who has less need for it than anyone because for 13 years she has had a majority of TV fans watching her.

"Lucy Day at the New York World's Fair" was her gimmick, nevertheless, and it has paid off handsomely. With a press entourage bigger than a Presidential candidate's, Lucy toured the Fair and did everything but kiss babies (there were none around).

Lucy Day

The reason (as if one was needed) for "Lucy Day" at the Fair hinged on the fact that her TV shows now are seen in 44 different countries. On her 14-hour fair tour she visited many of the pavilions representing those countries.

The schedule was so tight there frequently wasn't time for the press entourage to follow Lucy everywhere. "Skip Switzerland and go right to Morocco!" yelled a harassed press agent to the Fourth Estaters at one point.

By the end of the day Lucy was weighted down with awards. She passed up the exotic drinks offered by each country's official greeter. "I'd have had the biggest international hangover of all time," she explained later.

At the end of "Lucy Day" she was in considerably better shape than most of her followers, still posing for news pictures and generally whooping it up with indefatigable zest.

"The Lucy Show" begins its new season Monday Sept. 21 at 9 p.m. which is a return to the same time spot she and Desi Arnaz turned into a

national institution for six years.

It was this old "I Love Lucy" show which was responsible for inspiring a cycle of situation comedy series on TV. After that came the western cycle, and now this season the comedy cycle is returning. Except for Red Skelton and Jack Benny, Lucy is the only comic surviving TV from those early days.

On the flight from Los Angeles to New York a preview of Lucy's first show for this season was shown over American Airlines' new Astrovision system, a combination of TV and stereophonic music brought to passengers via nine-inch screens and headsets at your seat.

TV Transmission

With the approaching advent of regular TV transmission by Telstar or Syncom satellites, Astrovision will bring the airline passenger a selection of TV programs from around the world. It is very likely that "The Lucy Show" will still be one of the most popular.

At the Fair's Indonesian pavilion we were shown film clips of Lucy episodes which had been dubbed into French, Japanese and Italian for TV viewers in those countries. Lucy's expressive pantomime made translations unnecessary.

As one watches the expansion of TV and its entertainment around the world, and even into airplanes, he becomes more and more impressed with the medium's force. What he doesn't know is whether it is to be for good or evil.

At least we know that Lucy's comedy has not hurt it.