



AMERICAN *Celebrity*

Hear their stories in
their own words!

Interactive
Theater

CHAUTAUQUA FESTIVAL

JUNE 6-17



Presented by:

Greenville Chautauqua Society
Greenville SC

**Spartanburg County
Public Libraries**
Spartanburg SC

**Friends of Transylvania
County Library**
Brevard NC

**Free
Shows!**

Albert Einstein	p. 4
Babe Ruth	p. 6
Josephine Baker	p. 8
Lucille Ball	p.10
Erma Bombeck	p.12



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AMERICAN Celebrity

By Larry Bounds

This year's Greenville Chautauqua Festival explores the nature of celebrity in 20th century American culture. What makes a person a national celebrity? What are the privileges of this adoration? What are the problems?

In the early days of the United States of America, with slower communications and a less educated population, it was the rare individual who could achieve national celebrity. Benjamin Franklin and George Washington managed to overcome these barriers due to their impact on society and the spreading of their fame in print (Poor Richard's Almanac and The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin), in story (the cherry tree myth), and in song ("Yankee Doodle Dandy").

By the 19th century with the westward expansion of the nation and the utilization of the steamship, locomotive and telegraph, news traveled faster and national celebrity status was more common. We celebrated Andrew Jackson as a war hero, Ralph Waldo Emerson as a touring public speaker and writer (America's first superstar), Edwin Booth as the Shakespearean actor, P. T. Barnum as the great American showman, and Jenny Lind as the Swedish Nightingale.

The 20th century brought an explosion of new media with radio, movies, television and the internet as well as faster travel with cars, planes and even spacecraft. With this explosion of technology came an explosion of celebrity. More individuals became better known and more celebrated by more people nationwide than ever before.

We began our exploration of American celebrity in the Winter Chautauqua by visiting with Charlie Chaplin. He was a movie superstar who rose to international fame with his sympathetic Everyman character, The Tramp.

Now we continue to learn about the nature of American celebrity from the lives of five others:

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) was told by Charlie Chaplin that he was famous "because no one understands you." Einstein's image established the icon of the lovable, thoughtful, wise and cerebral modern scientist. He made us think.

Babe Ruth (1895-1948), the major league baseball star pitcher and record-setting batter, was acclaimed as the Sultan of Swat and the Great Bambino. A true baseball superstar, he gave us a goal to aspire to achieve.

Josephine Baker (1906-1975) was born in St. Louis but she did not achieve her celebrity status until she made her mark internationally by acting, singing and dancing on stage and screen and by becoming a hero of WWII. She proved that prejudice could not beat talent and drive.

Lucille Ball (1911-1989) rose from chorus girl to film star to television superstar both in front of and behind the camera. We all loved Lucy!

Erma Bombeck (1927-1996) wrote one of the nation's most successful humor columns by finding the funny in everyday life. She, like Einstein, made us think.

Come and meet these Americans who weren't famous for being famous but who achieved renown by hard work, talent, diligence and originality.



Scan code to visit our website.



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FESTIVAL SCHEDULE JUNE 6-17

GREENVILLE COUNTY, SC

FRI	6/6	7:30p	Albert Einstein Greenville Tech, bring lawn seating
SAT	6/7	2:00p	Lucille Ball Hartness Performing Arts Center on the Christ Church School Campus
		7:30p	Babe Ruth Greenville Tech, bring lawn seating
SUN	6/8	2:00p	Erma Bombeck Hartness Performing Arts Center on the Christ Church School Campus
		7:30p	Josephine Baker Greenville Tech, bring lawn seating
MON	6/9	10:00a	*DISCUSSION: Josephine Baker Senior Action, 3715 E North St
		7:30p	Erma Bombeck Greenville Tech, bring lawn seating
TUE	6/10	10:00a	*DISCUSSION: Lucille Ball Senior Action, 3715 E North St
		11:30a	Albert Einstein Centre Stage, 501 River St
		7:30p	Lucille Ball Greenville Tech, bring lawn seating
WED	6/11	10:00a	*DISCUSSION: Babe Ruth Senior Action, 3715 E North St
		7:30p	Babe Ruth Mauldin Cultural Center, bring lawn seating
THU	6/12	10:00a	*DISCUSSION: Albert Einstein Senior Action, 3715 E North St
		7:30p	Albert Einstein Mauldin Cultural Center, bring lawn seating
FRI	6/13	10:00a	*DISCUSSION: Erma Bombeck Senior Action, 3715 E North St
SAT	6/14	2:00p	Josephine Baker Hartness Performing Arts Center on the Christ Church School Campus
SUN	6/15	2:00p	Babe Ruth Hartness Performing Arts Center on the Christ Church School Campus

***DISCUSSION:** During the June Festival, we gather together to pick the brains of the historical performers. No costumes, no script, just a chance to have some personal time and dialog with the performers and get to know them and what they think about their characters.

Indoor Shows — Only Spartanburg events require advance reservations. The other indoor events have limited seating. Come early to get a seat. First come, first served. Doors open one hour before show time.






Outdoor Shows — Inclement weather plan (extreme heat or rain)

Greenville Tech Barton Campus — Show will be moved indoors (seats require climbing stairs). You will need to come early to get a seat. First come, first served. Doors will open 45 minutes before show time.

Mauldin Cultural Arts Center Amphitheater — Show will be moved indoors. Doors will open at 7:15 pm.

SPARTANBURG, SC

Spartanburg County Public Libraries —
Headquarters Library
151 South Church St, Spartanburg, SC 29306

MON	6/9	3:00p	Albert Einstein* 
		7:00p	Albert Einstein*
TUE	6/10	3:00p	Josephine Baker* 
		7:00p	Josephine Baker*
WED	6/11	3:00p	Erma Bombeck* 
		7:00p	Erma Bombeck*
THU	6/12	3:00p	Lucille Ball* 
		7:00p	Lucille Ball*
FRI	6/13	3:00p	Babe Ruth* 
		7:00p	Babe Ruth*

Doors open 30 min. before show time.

*registration required at all Spartanburg shows

Go to: <https://www.spartanburglibraries.org/Events>

 ASL Interpreted shows

BREVARD, NC

Rogow Room, Transylvania County Library
212 S Gaston St, Brevard, NC 28712

SAT	6/7	6:00p	Erma Bombeck
TUE	6/10	6:00p	Babe Ruth
THU	6/12	6:00p	Josephine Baker
SAT	6/14	6:00p	Lucille Ball
TUE	6/17	6:00p	Albert Einstein

GREENVILLE VENUES

Senior Action

3715 E. North St, Greenville, SC 29615

Centre Stage

501 River St, Greenville, SC 29601

No on site parking.

Greenville Tech Barton Campus

Outdoors, 506 S Pleasantburg Dr, Greenville, SC 29607

Use 800 E. Faris Rd parking lot entrance.

Hartness Performing Arts Center

on the Christ Church School Campus

245 Cavalier Dr, Greenville, SC 29607

Mauldin Cultural Center Outdoor Amphitheater

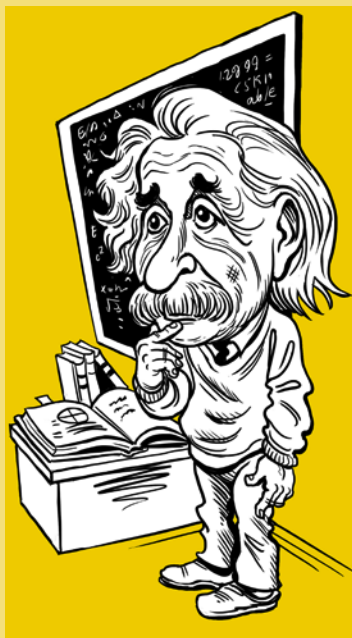
101 East Butler Rd, Mauldin, SC 29662



This program is funded in part by the Metropolitan Arts Council which receives support from the City of Greenville, BMW Manufacturing Company, SEW Eurodrive and the South Carolina Arts Commission.



This project is funded in part by the South Carolina Arts Commission which receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Albert Einstein (1879–1955)

- 1879** — Born in Ulm, Germany
- 1880** — Family started electric company in Munich
- 1892** — Became a freethinker - so no Bar Mitzvah
- 1901** — Granted Swiss citizenship
- 1903** — Married Mileva Maric
- 1905** — Published $E=mc^2$ and 3 other groundbreaking papers
- 1914** — Politically active as pacifist in Germany in WWI
- 1916** — Published General Theory of Relativity
- 1919** — Divorced Mileva, married cousin Elsa Löwenthal
- 1922** — Awarded Nobel Prize for Physics
- 1932** — Decided not to return to Germany
- 1936** — Wife Elsa dies
- 1940** — Granted American citizenship
- 1952** — Rejected offer of Israeli presidency
- 1955** — Died in Princeton, New Jersey



***"Thinking is hard work;
that's why so few do it"***

—Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein

by Larry Bounds

As a toddler Einstein worried his family when he was slow to speak, but then he surprised them when he began speaking in full sentences. It was as if he had been silently observing his world and, when he understood it all, spoke out. This was but the first of many surprises Einstein would share with the world.

In school he saw no sense in the repeated drill and practice exercises his teachers insisted he complete. Once he understood a calculation or concept, he studied further on his own. Reading many years ahead of his classmates' abilities, he did not wish to waste time at their level of training.

In the university he frustrated laboratory teaching assistants who complained that he did not follow the lab procedures but made up his own. "Mark his answers incorrect," the professor said. "We can't," they complained. "He gets the correct answers and in less time!" Einstein so annoyed his professors with his independence that they refused to recommend him for a teaching position when he graduated.

With the help of a friend, Einstein found a job as a Swiss patent office clerk. While a clerk, he continued his independent study of physics, the properties of light and the world of atoms. In 1905 he published four scientific papers in a highly respected journal. Their content included proving the existence and size of atoms; the nature of light as a particle, as a wave and as a source of energy (for which he would win a Nobel Prize); the amazing energy contained in atoms as shown in $E=mc^2$; and the special relationship of space and time.

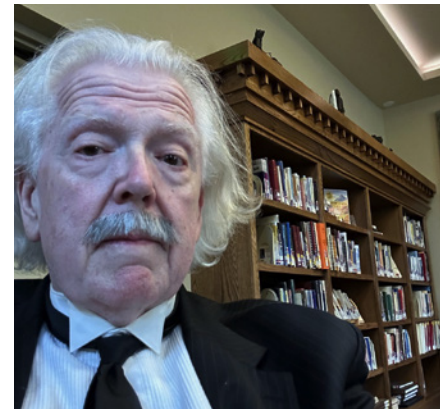
The "Miracle Year" of 1905 would elevate Einstein to international attention within the scientific community. Continuing his study and theorizing for the next ten years, he would stagger the world with his General Theory of Relativity which made him an international celebrity. He linked space, time and gravity and changed our understanding of the nature of the universe. He went from being an unknown clerk to being the most recognized scientist in the world. Now he was courted to be a prestigious professor and participant in international scientific conferences.

In 1921 he made his first tour of America, meeting the mayor of New York and visiting the White House, Columbia University and Princeton. He found Americans "friendly, self confident, optimistic, and without envy." Later that year he toured the Far East, meeting the Emperor of Japan.

In 1922, as he returned from the East, he visited Palestine for the first time. In 1925 he toured South America. He was now a recognized celebrity on four continents.

His unique look — the long and usually unruly hair, the bushy mustache and the casual sweatshirt or occasional tuxedo and never any socks — became iconic.

Over the next 30 years, through two world wars and the dawn of the Atomic Age, Einstein became the name synonymous with scientific genius



Larry Bounds as Albert Einstein

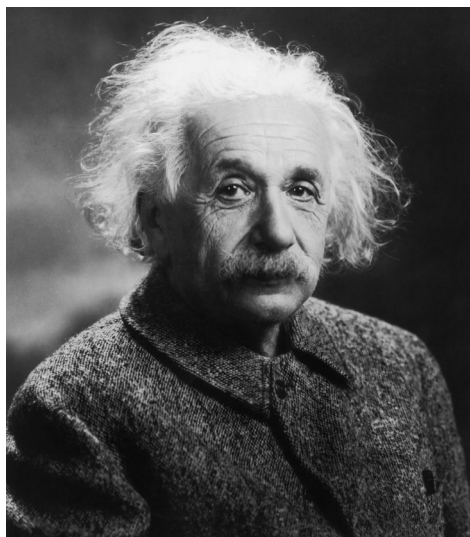
"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid."

—Albert Einstein

as Houdini had become synonymous with amazing magic. Using his celebrity status, he met with the great and the famous — presidents, movie stars, prime ministers and kings. He campaigned for world peace, internationalism and Zionism. He campaigned against the Nazis, against McCarthyism and against racism (which he described as a disease in America). He wrote philosophically about religion, politics and the role of scientists in the modern world. He lectured, continued to rub shoulders with the rich and famous and attracted crowds of curious and devoted audiences wherever he went.

In the face of the rise of German fascism, Einstein chose to leave Hitler far behind and take a research position in America at Princeton University. There Einstein continued his scientific explorations. He was in pursuit of an elusive unified field theory — a single, simple equation that would explain all the phenomena of nature from the sub-atomic to the cosmic. It was a goal that has still not been achieved after the nearly 70 years since his death.

In 1948 Einstein had surgery to at least temporarily protect him from problems associated with an aortic aneurysm. In 1955 he found himself facing his final illness. When offered yet another dangerous surgical option for treatment, he replied: "I want to go when I want. It is tasteless to prolong life artificially. I have done my share; it is time to go. I will do it elegantly." And he did.



Albert Einstein, 1947
Unattributed, Public Domain,
via Wikimedia Commons



Larry Bounds has presented Einstein for Chautauqua audiences since 2011 in South Carolina, North Carolina, Colorado and Florida. He has also presented other Chautauqua programs since 2002 including Churchill, Disney, Cronkite and Houdini for audiences across the country.

Larry has a BA in theater from The University of Tennessee and an MS in English Education. He is National Board Certified with 35 years of classroom teaching experience including many years as an Advanced Placement instructor. He was honored as his school's Teacher of the Year and in 2019 was named as one of Upstate South Carolina's Most Influential Educators.

He is a member of Mensa, the high IQ society, and serves on the Executive Committee of his regional Mensa chapter. He is chair and artistic director of the Greenville Chautauqua Board of Directors.

GOOD READS

**American Notes
Einstein on Politics: His Private
Thoughts and Public Stands on
Nationalism, Zionism, War, Peace,
and the Bomb**

by Albert Einstein (2013)

A vivid firsthand view of how one of the twentieth century's greatest minds responded to the greatest political challenges of his day

The World as I See It

by Albert Einstein (2018)

Addresses, letters and occasional writings presenting a mosaic portrait of Einstein through his views on progress, education, peace, war, liberty and other problems

Albert Einstein: A Biography

by Albrecht Folsing (1997)

Describes how the genius's achievements color everyday modern life and delves into his development both personally and as a scientist

Einstein: His Life and Universe

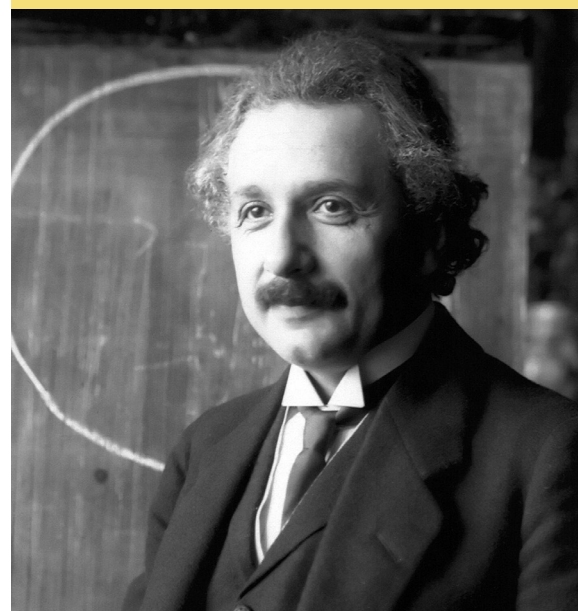
by Walter Isaacson (2008)

An exploration of the mind of a rebel and nonconformist and the mysteries of the universe he discovered

**The Einstein File: J. Edgar Hoover's
Secret War Against the World's
Most Famous Scientist**

by Fred Jerome (2002)

Story of the anti-Einstein campaign conducted to undermine Einstein's influence and destroy his prestige



Albert Einstein during a lecture in Vienna in 1921
Unattributed, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Babe Ruth (1895–1948)

February 6, 1895 — Born as George Herman Ruth Jr. in Baltimore, Maryland

1902 — Sent to St. Mary's Industrial School for Orphans by his parents where he learned baseball from Brother Matthias

1914 — Signs his first professional baseball contract with the minor league Baltimore Orioles and later makes his Major League Baseball debut with the Boston Red Sox as a left-handed pitcher

1915 — Wins his first World Series with the Red Sox

1916 — Leads the American League in earned run average (ERA) as a pitcher for the Red Sox and pitches a 14-inning complete game victory in the World Series against the Brooklyn Robins

1918-1919 — Begins transitioning from pitcher to full-time outfielder and hitter, leading the league in home runs with a then-record 29

1920 — Traded from the Red Sox to the New York Yankees in a historic and controversial deal where he breaks his own home run record with 54 for the Yankees in his first year on the team

1923 — Hits his 100th career home run and helps the Yankees win their first World Series; Yankee Stadium opens and is dubbed "The House That Ruth Built"

Mid-1920s — Participates in barnstorming tours with teammate Lou Gehrig, most notably the "Bustin' Babes" and "Larrupin' Lou's" tour in 1927

1927 — Hits an astounding 60 home runs, a record that would stand for 34 years

1932 — Allegedly points to the center-field bleachers before hitting a home run in Game 3 of the World Series against the Chicago Cubs — the "called shot"

1935 — Signs with the Boston Braves and hits three home runs in a game against the Pittsburgh Pirates, his final career home runs

1936 — Inducted as one of the first five members of the Baseball Hall of Fame

1948 — Attends the ceremony where his number 3 jersey is retired by the Yankees

August 16, 1948 — Dies of cancer in New York City at the age of 53

Babe Ruth

The Sultan of Swat

by Kevin Treu

In the annals of American sports history, no name resonates as profoundly as that of George Herman "Babe" Ruth. Known as the Sultan of Swat, Ruth wasn't just a baseball player; he was a cultural phenomenon. His unprecedented hitting and larger-than-life personality transformed him into America's first true national sporting celebrity. His career coincided with the rise of mass media and the Roaring Twenties, creating a perfect storm for the birth of a new kind of American idol.

Prior to Ruth, sports heroes were largely regional figures. Baseball players enjoyed a degree of fame within their cities, but their recognition rarely extended beyond. However, the early 20th century witnessed a revolution in communication. The rise of the national newspaper, the expansion of the telegraph and the burgeoning popularity of radio all served to connect people across vast distances. This newfound ability to share information on a national scale paved the way for a national sports hero to emerge.

Enter Babe Ruth. Ruth's arrival in New York in 1920, after a trade from the Boston Red Sox to the New York Yankees, coincided perfectly with this new media landscape. His prodigious power hitting — with home run totals unheard of at the time — captured the national imagination. Newspapers across the country splashed stories of his exploits on their front pages. Sportswriters, recognizing the public's fascination, embellished his legend, turning him into a larger-than-life figure.

Ruth, however, wasn't a passive participant in his own fame. He understood the power of the media and actively cultivated his public image. He became a master of self-promotion, readily engaging with reporters and photographers. Ruth's relationship with his fans was also a key component of his celebrity. He was known for his generosity, often visiting hospitals and orphanages, and he was always willing to sign autographs and engage with the public. This accessibility helped to build a loyal fan base and reinforced his image as a man of the people. Ruth's popularity transcended the sport of baseball, making him a national icon and a symbol of the American Dream.

The Roaring Twenties provided the perfect backdrop for Ruth's rise. The nation was booming economically, and a spirit of optimism and excess permeated the culture. Ruth's flamboyant personality and outsized persona resonated with this mood. He wasn't just a baseball player — he was a symbol of American exuberance and the pursuit of pleasure.

Ruth's celebrity transcended the sports page. The commercialization of his status was a pioneering moment in the history of American sports. He was one of the first athletes to capitalize on his fame through endorsements and public appearances — his image plastered on everything from bubblegum cards to breakfast cereal. As a popular pitchman endorsing a variety of products, he fur-



Kevin Treu as Babe Ruth

ther solidified his connection to the exploding culture of consumerism and, in so doing, became a household name.

Ruth's willingness to embrace endorsements and public appearances laid the groundwork for the modern athlete-entrepreneur. While previous athletes had occasionally dabbled in endorsements, Ruth was one of the first to fully grasp the commercial potential of his fame. He understood that his image was a valuable commodity and he actively sought opportunities to leverage it. This approach, pioneered by the Sultan of Swat, continues to define the careers of many modern athletes who have built lucrative empires that extend far beyond their on-field performance.

His influence wasn't limited to commerce, however. He became a social icon, attending lavish parties and hobnobbing with celebrities from the worlds of entertainment and politics. Newspapers, eager to feed the public's insatiable appetite for details about his life, documented his every move, for the first time blurring the lines between athlete and entertainer.

Ruth's fame also highlighted the complexities and contradictions of celebrity culture. While he was adored by millions, his personal life was often tumultuous. His struggles with excess, his stormy relationships and his eventual decline in health were all part of the public narrative. This duality of public adoration and private turmoil is a recurring theme in the lives of celebrities, and Ruth's life was a precursor to the way modern celebrities are both idolized and scrutinized.

Despite these challenges and distractions, Ruth's impact on American culture remains undeniable. He redefined what it meant to be a sports celebrity. Before him, athletes were admired for their skills, but Ruth became a national icon, a symbol of American success and the pursuit of dreams. He ushered in a new era of sports fandom where athletes were not just admired for their athletic prowess but also worshiped as cultural icons. This shift, pioneered by the Big Fella, continues to define the relationship between fans and athletes today.

Babe Ruth's legacy as a foundational figure in the history of American celebrity is undeniable and extends far beyond the baseball diamond. He was not only a transformative athlete but also a cultural icon who helped to define the role of the celebrity in modern American society. His ability to navigate and exploit the media landscape of his time set a precedent for future generations of athletes and entertainers.

Perhaps most importantly, Ruth showed the American public the intoxicating allure of celebrity, a concept that continues to captivate us to this day. His life reflects the complexities of being a public figure in an age of media proliferation. His enduring popularity and his place in the pantheon of American icons underscore his significance not just as a baseball player but as a trailblazer in the history of American celebrity.

GOOD READS

The Big Fella: Babe Ruth and the World He Created

by Jane Leavy (2018)

Though she covers Ruth's life, Leavy focuses primarily on the three-week barnstorming tour that he and teammate Lou Gehrig took across America in 1927. Coming after his record-setting 60 home run season, it was the biggest show in America at the time. Also focusing on his partnership with manager Christy Walsh, this gives a terrific description of Ruth's life and times as well as a glimpse into the birth of our modern celebrity culture.

Babe: The Legend Comes to Life

by Robert W. Creamer (1974)

Considered one of the classics of the sports biography genre, longtime Sports Illustrated senior writer Robert W. Creamer covers Ruth's entire life with detail and insight. From Ruth's early days in a Baltimore orphanage to the glory days with the Yankees to his later years, this biography looks behind the legend to reveal the complexities of the man that Ruth was.

The Glory of Their Times: The Story of the Early Days of Baseball Told by the Men Who Played It

by Lawrence S. Ritter (1966)

This is an oral history of the game of baseball in its early days, told by the players who knew and played with Babe Ruth: Honus Wagner, Ty Cobb and other of the earliest stars. For baseball lovers, this is an invaluable reference. Ruth is only one of the players covered, but the book benefits from having multiple views of each of its subjects, taken from the priceless stories told by the players who were there.

"Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game."

— Babe Ruth



Kevin Treu has been a Professor of Computer Science at Furman University since 1992 and has served as chair of the Department of Computer Science since 2004. In 2023 he was honored with the Chiles-Harrill Award for contributions made to the lives of students.

Away from Furman, Kevin has been an actor, director and playwright in the local upstate theater community for nearly 30 years. He has played "Iago" and "Col. Jesse" among other roles and recently received Director of the Year honors for *Hank Williams: Lost Highway* at the Spartanburg Little Theatre.

He has been the head coach of the Devenger Dolphins summer league swim team for more than 20 years and regularly competes in open water swim races all over the country. He is a passionate lifelong baseball fan, but unfortunately his Pittsburgh Pirates haven't won a World Series in almost 50 years.



Josephine Baker (1906–1975)

- 1906** — Born in St. Louis, Missouri, the first child of Carrie McDonald, a washerwoman
- 1919** — Leaves home at 13 to travel with Clara Smith and the Dixie Steppers
- 1925** — Travels to France at 19 to perform in Caroline Dudley Reagan's show, *La Revue Nègre*, and becomes a star
- 1926** — At 20, meets "Pepito" Abatino, her lover and manager, who changes her stage persona
- 1937** — Marries Jean Lion and becomes a French citizen
- 1939** — Joins the French Resistance and becomes a wartime spy at 33
- 1950** — Begins adopting her "Rainbow Tribe" at 44
- 1951** — Refuses to perform to segregated audiences in the United States; begins speaking out about racism in the United States
- 1963** — Speaks at the March on Washington
- 1969** — Loses her chateau, Les Milandes, and is given a home by Princess Grace of Monaco
- 1975** — Dies at age 68 from a brain hemorrhage three days after a triumphant comeback in Paris; Princess Grace has her buried in Monaco
- 2021** — Inducted into the Panthéon, but her remains stay in Monaco

Josephine Baker

by Becky Stone

Josephine Baker never let reality hold her back. She brightened her drab existence in the black ghetto of St Louis with the shows she saw at the Negro theater in her home town. She memorized every song, dance and skit she saw; practiced them in her moments alone and performed them for her siblings and the neighborhood children. A trombone player was needed by the Jones family quartet? Josephine (known by her nickname, "Tumpy") learned how to play the trombone and toured the Strawberry Road Circuit with them. She was not good enough to be in the show? She was happy to travel



Josephine Baker, 1960
Unattributed, Public domain,
via Wikimedia Commons

with Clara Smith and the Dixie Steppers as Ms. Smith's dresser/companion. And thus, she was able to leave the harsh reality of her life in St. Louis and begin her career in theater at the age of 13. By the time Josephine was 19 years old, she was an up-and-coming star of the black vaudeville circuit as a comic chorus girl. She was featured in Blake and Sissle's "Shuffle Along," Broadway's first all-Black hit. Her work in that show led to her being cast as the star of "La Revue Nègre," an American-produced show that was to run in Paris, France. It was 1925. The Roaring 20's had brought all of its jazz to the French people who were entranced by the exoticism and eroticism of all African art and music. Imagine that you are a 19-year-old black girl who is barely literate but full of hopes, dreams and confidence and you step off the boat in a country that lets you eat in any restaurant, sleep in any hotel, shop in any store, live in any neighborhood. After growing up under the Jim Crow oppression of the United States, every dream of equality is suddenly within your grasp. It is a new reality. The young Josephine loved France and France adored her. For the rest of her life, Josephine claimed that it was France who made her because it was France who first loved her. She never lived in the United States again.

Josephine tried to launch a career in the U.S., but she simply could not accept the racism she faced at home. She was conflicted about that. She resented how she was treated here but was always plagued by the thought of how all American Negroes must suffer daily.

Josephine played to sold-out venues all over the globe but was not welcome in the U.S. Americans heard stories about her but had never seen her. (The one exception was her engagement with the Ziegfeld Follies in 1936 which was, by everyone's account, an artistic disaster.) Josephine Baker was notorious: one of the most beautiful and desired women in the world, hobnobbing with royalty and world leaders, wearing gowns by Balenciaga, Poiret, Chanel, Dior and Balmain. If unaware of her business success with her

"I have never really been a great artist. I have been a human being that has loved art which is not the same thing."

—Josephine Baker

Chez Josephine nightclub and her hair product Bakerfix, Americans did know about her menagerie of pets - the most famous being her Cheetah Chiquita which she adorned with a diamond-encrusted collar. African-Americans joined the rest of the world that marveled at her effort to prove human brotherhood through the adoption of 12 toddlers of different ethnicities. She called them her "Rainbow Tribe." Her celebrity was unparalleled. Yet she and "her people" continued to be subjected to the degrading humiliation of Jim



Becky Stone as Josephine Baker

Crow while the rest of the world moved on. That is, until 1951, when Josephine Baker refused to sign a contract to perform in a segregated venue in Miami, Florida. The club owner finally succumbed to her demands, doubting that any Negroes would show up where they had never been welcomed before, only to discover that he had a sold-out run of integrated audiences without any racial incident. And Josephine discovered that her people could finally see her perform in her home country and that they loved her. Not only did Baker integrate venues in the U.S., she applied pressure to the U.S. government to outlaw segregation by speaking out against the racism that existed in our country.

She spoke out in the U.S. but also in other countries. Josephine traveled widely, was respected, interviewed and quoted everywhere she went. The U.S. government could do little to stop her because she was a French citizen. (The U.S. had revoked her American citizenship when she married a Frenchman. It was the U.S. law regarding American women marrying foreign men.) Josephine had become a hero to African Americans. The NAACP honored her by naming May 20, 1951 "Josephine Baker Day" in Harlem, celebrating her with parades, luncheons and galas. And in 1963, she was the only woman to speak at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. She was an international celebrity who was finally a hero in her own country. Her celebrity gave her power and influence and she used it.



Becky Stone attended Vassar College where she honed skills as an actor and singer. She went on to earn a masters degree in Elementary Educational Counseling from Villanova. Becky has lived and worked in Western North Carolina for more than 40 years.

She is known in the region as an actor and storyteller. When the Greenville Chautauqua needed a scholar to present Pauli Murray, they called the Asheville Library and asked if staff knew a storyteller who could do the research required for Chautauqua. The library referred them to Becky Stone.

Becky presented Pauli Murray, her first Chautauqua character, for Greenville in 2003. Other characters in her repertoire are Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Maya Angelou, Josephine Baker and Stagecoach Mary Fields.

GOOD READS

Josephine: The Hungry Heart

by Jean-Claude Baker
and Chris Chase (1993)

Readable and entertaining compilation of the most reliable information about his amazing mother

Josephine

by Josephine Baker and Jo Bouillon,
translated by Mariana Fitzpatrick
(1977)

Their story, in their own words, giving a marvelous feel for who Josephine and her last husband were

The Many Faces of Josephine Baker: Dancer, Singer, Activist, Spy

by Peggy Caravantes (2015)

The full story, well written, illustrated with interesting photographs for young adults

Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker by Patricia Hruby Powell with illustrations

by Christian Robinson (2014)

Great fun illustrations in a good biography for young adults; interspersed with lively quotes from Josephine herself

Agent Josephine: American Beauty, French Hero, British Spy

by Damien Lewis (2022)

Replete with details about this period of her life; the first book in English about her wartime adventures as a spy

"I cannot work where my people cannot go. It's as simple as that."

*"I shall dance all my life...
I would like to die breathless,
spent, at the end of a dance."*

—Josephine Baker



Lucille Ball (1911-1989)

- 1911** — Born in Celeron, NY on August 6
- 1915** — Father dies of typhoid fever
- 1930** — Becomes Chesterfield cigarette girl
- 1933** — Arrives in Hollywood as a Goldwyn Girl
- 1940** — Meets Desi Arnaz on set of the film *Too Many Girls*; they marry in November
- 1948** — Begins work on radio sitcom *My Favorite Husband*
- 1951** — Daughter Lucie Arnaz born and *I Love Lucy* premieres on CBS
- 1953** — Son Desi Arnaz Jr. born and Little Ricky born on *I Love Lucy*
- 1957** — 180th and final new episode of *I Love Lucy* airs
- 1960** — Files for divorce from Desi Arnaz and later marries Gary Morton
- 1963** — Buys Desi Arnaz' half of Desilu Studios
- 1967** — Sells Desilu to Paramount/Gulf and Western for \$17 million
- 1989** — Dies at age 77

Lucille Ball

by Leslie Goddard

When it comes to fame, few celebrities have ever topped Lucille Ball. In the 1950s, much of America came to a grinding halt every Monday at 9 p.m. Telephone companies noted a sharp decrease in usage. Taxis in New York City became impossible to find. One Chicago department store changed its evening hours from Mondays to Thursdays. Everyone, it seemed, was watching *I Love Lucy*.

Lucille Ball's dazzling comedic talent helped make *I Love Lucy* the most-watched show in the U.S. for four of its six seasons. It never ranked below number three, and it was the first show to end its run at the top of the Nielsen ratings.

What is perhaps most striking about the worldwide celebrity she achieved on *I Love Lucy* is that, when it debuted, Ball had already been in show business for nearly twenty years. After enjoying some success as a model, she made her film debut in 1933 and went on to appear in more than 75 movies. She took on radio work too, starring in the popular comedy *My Favorite Husband*.

When television executives at CBS approached her about developing *My Favorite Husband* into a television series, Ball had one primary demand. Rather than cast her radio costar as her husband, Ball asked that the series hire her real-life husband, Cuban bandleader Desi Arnaz.

CBS balked. No Latino actor had ever starred in an English-language primetime TV show. Arnaz's thick Cuban accent would alienate audiences, they said. No one, they said, would believe an all-American white woman would be married to a Hispanic man.

Ball refused to concede. To prove their partnership could work, she and Arnaz created a vaudeville act and toured the country, playing to packed houses of cheering fans. CBS was convinced and hired Desi Arnaz to play Lucy's husband on the show. Television executives could hardly have known it then but that decision paved the way for the full flourishing of one of America's most talented comic performers.

In the 1930s and 1940s, when Ball worked in the movie industry, few actresses did stunt comedy work. Beauty and charm mattered more than slapstick. But on television, Ball's gift for physical comedy blossomed. Her impeccable timing, fearless physicality and broad facial expressions, combined with the show's masterful writing and the absurd situations they put her in, proved unbeatable. Within six months of its 1951 debut, *I Love Lucy* had become the nation's most popular television sitcom.

As Ball's fame grew, so did audiences' inability to separate her television character and the real woman offscreen. The show actively promoted this, blurring the line between the character Lucy Ricardo and the person Lucille Ball. When Lucille Ball gave birth to Desi Jr. in real life, Lucy Ricardo gave birth to little Ricky on television. Audiences nationwide celebrated the births, showering her with letters and gifts.

Ball's skyrocketing celebrity enabled her to wield significant influence on the making of *I Love Lucy*, both in terms of production and technology. Since she performed best in front of spectators, *I Love Lucy* was shot in front of a live studio



Lucille Ball in a 1955 film still for *I Love Lucy* episode "Face to Face"
Unattributed, Public domain,
via Wikimedia Commons

audience. This required the show to pioneer new filming techniques, using three cameras to capture wide-angle, medium and close-range images. These techniques and the resulting advances in editing and lighting they necessitated set precedents still used in television production today.

CBS also yielded to Ball and Arnaz's demand that *I Love Lucy* be made in California where they lived. This required *I Love Lucy* to be shot on 35mm film, something unheard-of in those days when live television dominated. CBS executives hesitantly agreed to rebroadcast some prior episodes thanks to their good quality; audiences surprisingly tuned in. The ratings success of those reruns launched new possibilities for syndication.

Lucille Ball's celebrity even cushioned her when threats of Communism were leveled at her. Years earlier, as a concession to her ailing left-wing grandfather, she had signed a Communist voter registration card. Despite never having voted Communist, she was identified as a "Red" and had to defend herself. Eventually she was released from charges of actual Communist activity. That scare, despite the pain and trauma it incurred on so many others, had little effect on the ratings of *I Love Lucy*.

As with many celebrities, Ball understood that maintaining her status required constant work. When Arnaz stepped down as president of Desilu, their production studio, in 1962 and sold off his ownership shares, Ball stepped in. She bought his shares and became the first woman to own and run a major television production studio.

Although she balked at being seen as a lady executive and never enjoyed it, she proved a competent leader. She hired talented people and didn't shy away from tough decisions. Under her leadership, the studio backed some of the era's top hits, including *Mission: Impossible* and *Star Trek*.

More than six decades after *I Love Lucy* ended, Lucille Ball remains one of America's most beloved entertainers. Numerous fan clubs are still going at full force. The Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum in her hometown of Jamestown, New York drew 47,000 visitors in 2019. A quick search for Lucille Ball memorabilia on the auction website eBay recently turned up more than 23,000 items.

Lucille Ball's celebrity has stood the test of time. Small wonder that in 1996, *TV Guide* chose her as the "Greatest TV Star of All Time."



Leslie Goddard as Lucille Ball

GOOD READS

A.K.A. Lucy: The Dynamic and Determined Life of Lucille Ball

by Sarah Royal (2023)

Great photos and fun trivia in this most recent biography exploring a different aspect of Ball's life in each chapter

Ball of Fire: The Tumultuous Life and Comic Art of Lucille Ball

by Stefan Kanfer and Alan Moorehead (2003)

Thorough, sometimes exhaustive, biography including the grittier aspects of Ball's life

Laughs, Luck ... and Lucy: How I Came to Create the Most Popular Sitcom of All Time

by Jess Oppenheimer (1996)

A short, sometimes dated but fascinating book showing how *I Love Lucy* episodes came together

Laughing With Lucy: My Life with America's Leading Lady of Comedy

by Madelyn Pugh Davis with Bob Carroll Jr. (2007)

Insightful memoir by one of the few female comedy writers in the 1940s and 1950s

Love, Lucy

by Lucille Ball (1997)

Essential for die-hard fans, Ball's lost autobiography, published posthumously

Lucy! How Lucille Ball Did It All

by Amy Guglielmo and Jacqueline Tourville (2024)

Charming children's picture book focusing on how Ball overcame the odds by staying true to herself



Leslie Goddard is an award-winning historian, author and actress who has been presenting historical portrayals for more than 20 years. She has performed for Greenville Chautauqua audiences as Amelia Earhart, Mary Pickford, Bette Davis, Alice Paul, Jackie Kennedy and Georgia O'Keeffe.

During more than a decade working as a museum educator and director, she developed a passion for mid-century American history, popular culture and women's history. In 2013, she launched her own business as a full-time solo performer and lecturer and now regularly presents more than 400 programs annually.

A lifelong resident of Illinois, she has written three books on Chicago history. She graduated from Stanford University and holds a master's degree in theater from the University of Illinois as well as a PhD in interdisciplinary studies from Northwestern University.

"People always expect me to be funny. I was never funny; the writers were funny. What I am is brave."

—Lucille Ball



Erma Bombeck
(1927-1996)

- 1927** — Erma Louise Fiste is born in Dayton, Ohio
- 1942** — Works as a copygirl at *Dayton Journal-Herald* while attending Patterson Vocational High School. Meets Bill Bombeck, a copyboy
- 1949** — Graduates from the University of Dayton and marries Bill
- 1953-1958** — Erma and Bill have three children
- 1964** — Hired by *The Kettering-Oakwood Times* to write a weekly humor article
- 1965** — Hired by the *Dayton Journal Herald* to write a humor column "At Wit's End" which is syndicated by *Newsday* a month later
- 1966** — At Wit's End syndicated in 38 newspapers
- 1970-1978** — At Wit's End is syndicated in 500 newspapers; publishes *I Lost Everything in the Post-Natal Depression*, *The Grass is Always Greener over the Septic Tank*, and *If Life is a Bowl of Cherries, What Am I Doing in the Pits?*
- 1978-1982** — Serves on the Presidential Advisory Committee for Women; works for ratification of the ERA
- 1979-1983** — Publishes *Aunt Erma's Cope Book* and *Motherhood: The Second Oldest Profession*
- 1985** — At Wit's End syndicated in 900 newspapers
- 1987-1990** — Publishes *Family: The Ties that Bind (And Gag!)* and *I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise*
- 1996** — Dies following complications from a kidney transplant

Erma Bombeck

The Myth about Legends

by Susan Marie Frontczak

Erma Bombeck has two things in common with celebrities of Art and Sports: (1) they make it look easy; (2) it's not.

Let's look at a few American legends from the mid-20th century. Between 1951 and 1968, Mickey Mantle made slugging yet another homer out of the park seem a breeze. Peggy Fleming executed her flawless programs on the rink through five U.S. titles, three world titles and a gold medal at the 1968 Olympics as if it was no sweat. Operatic soprano Beverly Sills hit coloratura-embellished, pitch-perfect high notes like child's play. And Erma Bombeck, time and again, made us laugh with her simple observations on the everyday absurdities of being a wife and mother as if it were a piece of cake. We might easily assume all she had to do was turn on her IBM Selectric and the words just typed themselves.

The image of effortlessness, however, is a myth. It's not that these stars didn't have talent. But talent alone did not earn them the esteem in which they are held today. The appearance of ease that is the hallmark of expertise belies the discipline and hard work that led to their success.

Isn't Erma just chatting to us across the kitchen table over a cup of coffee? Nay, her words only read like silk off a spool because she has first put them through the wringer of editing. She quipped that under "Occupation" on her driver's license she entered "Rewriter." She would search for the lead to lure us in, sift the words to find the perfect turn of phrase, play with sentence length to guide the readers' timing and then bop us playfully on the head with her ending. Even when the ideas came easily as when she attended a basketball game with her daughter who accidentally dropped an earring down the pants of the man in the next row, molding the memory into a story required focus, finesse and a good bit of mental elbow grease.

Another myth we like to ascribe to accomplished celebrities is "overnight success." So, perhaps it is not surprising that Erma Bombeck is often touted for her "instant" rise to fame. Less than a month after her column At Wit's End first appeared in the *Dayton Journal Herald* in 1965, it was syndicated by *Newsday*. This narrative gives the impression that one day Erma – fed up with ironing sheets, removing yellow wax buildup from her kitchen floor and packing peanut butter sandwiches in her kids' school lunches – sat down at a random typewriter, discovered her sense of humor, gave a cry of "Eureka!" and overnight became a columnist as widely read as Mark Twain. Presto!

A 25-year rise to success is closer to the truth. Young Erma Fiste cut her teeth



Erma Bombeck
Courtesy of Erma Bombeck Writers Workshop

"How come the first thing I notice in a doctor's office is whether or not his plants are dead?"

— Erma Bombeck

writing snide humor articles for her school paper *The Owl* a quarter-century before *At Wit's End* saw the light of day. That was in 1940, at age 13. She wangled a half-time job at the *Dayton Journal Herald* as a copy girl at age 15 just so she could learn all the ins and outs of the newspaper business. She contributed funny articles to the University of Dayton's *The Exponent* while in college, helped her fellow employees at Rike's Department Store laugh via their company newsletter. She tried her hand at serious topics by editing flight manuals at (what later became) Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and writing newspaper obituaries. As a young wife and mother, her occasional column *Operation Dustrag* helped her hone her craft at tickling our funny bones while still working in relative obscurity.

But with *Operation Dustrag* Erma was ahead of her time. Post-World War II, women were expected to retreat to the hearth, relinquishing their jobs to the returning soldiers. Magazines extolled the virtues of keeping a perfect home, complete with all the latest appliances. Making fun of housework and motherhood just wasn't an acceptable form of humor. Viewpoints changed when Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* brought the plight of "just a homemaker" to national attention in 1963.

Rather than revolt, Erma Bombeck knew "if you can laugh at it, you can live with it." Housewives agreed. *At Wit's End* reached national distribution. By 1970, 500 papers carried her column, increasing to more than 900 by 1990. She appeared on *Good Morning America* and *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*. She also churned out a dozen books. In a speech at the University of Dayton, her alma mater, Erma remarked, "Writing a book is like giving birth. You figure the stupidest girl in the class did it, so how hard can it be?" As a mother and as a writer, she found out. We are the beneficiaries. With humor and heart, Erma helps us celebrate the ordinary. We get to feel special too.



Susan Marie Frontczak as Erma Bombeck



Susan Marie Frontczak, in her 24 years as a Living History scholar, has given more than 875 presentations as Marie Curie, Mary Shelley, Eleanor Roosevelt, Clara Barton, Irene Castle and Erma Bombeck across 43 of the United States and abroad.

Susan Marie also works with both adults and youth to develop their own Living History presentations. She authored the Young Chautauqua handbooks for Colorado Humanities and taught at the Chautauqua Training Institute in 2022-23.

As a teen, Susan Marie competed with her mother to see which of them could snag the monthly *Good Housekeeping* first in order to read Erma Bombeck's column. With Bombeck, Susan Marie's challenge is to convey her humor along with the person behind the persona.

GOOD READS

Forever Erma

by Erma Bombeck (1996)

A collection of favorite *At Wit's End* columns, published posthumously

A Marriage Made in Heaven or Too Tired for an Affair

by Erma Bombeck (1993)

One of her last books, more autobiographically revealing than most

I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise

by Erma Bombeck (1989)

A humorous and life-giving account of children living with cancer

Erma Bombeck, Writer and Humorist

by Lynn Hutner Colwell (1992)

The only authorized biography of Erma Bombeck, intended for aspiring young writers

Erma also published ten other humorous books about everyday life



"If life is a bowl of cherries, what am I doing in the pits?"

"Housework, if done right, will kill you."

"Never lend your car to anyone to whom you have given birth."

—Erma Bombeck



From the very start of our Greenville Chautauqua Festival, we have striven to address the important humanities issues in our past that have remained important to us today. We have shared the views of a wide variety of significant figures from throughout our history. Their voices remind us of the ideas that have shaped our shared culture and give us a perspective on our past that can, hopefully, result in a clearer vision for our future. Here is a quick reminder of the history of our festival.

1999 American Humorists

Mark Twain, Will Rogers, Langston Hughes,
James Thurber, Dorothy Parker

2000 Southern Writers

Zora Neale Hurston, Katherine Anne Porter,
Mark Twain, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe

2001 American Renaissance

Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville,
Louisa May Alcott, Walt Whitman, Frederick
Douglass, Henry David Thoreau

2002 Conceived in Liberty

Thomas Jefferson, Elizabeth Freeman,
Alexander Hamilton, Henry Laurens,
John and Abigail Adams

2003 American Autobiography

Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams, Andrew
Carnegie, Pauli Murray, Mark Twain,
Eleanor Roosevelt

2004 American Visions

Martin Luther King, Jr, Eugene V. Debs,
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Thomas Paine, John
Winthrop, {Winter: Pauli Murray}

2005 The Civil War

Ambrose Bierce, Mary Chesnut, John C.
Calhoun, Sam Watkins, Frederick Douglass,
Abraham Lincoln,
{Winter: Bierce and Watkins}

2006 Great American Journeys

William Clark, Sequoyah, Herman Melville,
Harriet Tubman, {Winter: Mary Ingles}

2007 The American Stage

Houdini, Paul Robeson, Lillian Hellman,
Will Rogers, Mark Twain, {Winter: P.T. Barnum}

2008 America: The Land

John J. Audubon, Teddy Roosevelt, James
Beckwourth, Rachel Carson, Black Elk,
{Winter: Hudson River School Painters}

2009 America in Crisis

George Washington, Rosa Parks, Franklin and
Eleanor Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln,
{Winter: Wade Hampton/Robert E. Lee}

2010 American Imagination

Ben Franklin, Thomas Edison, Emily Dickinson,
Dr. Seuss, Langston Hughes,
{Winter: Thomas Jefferson}

2011 Ideas that Changed America

John Muir, Frances Perkins, Albert Einstein,
Mark Twain, W.E.B. Du Bois,
{Winter: Jefferson/ Madison}

2012 They Came to America

Winston Churchill, Golda Meir, Carl Jung,
Denmark Vesey, {Winter: Lafayette}

2013 American Legends

Davy Crockett, Susan B Anthony,
Herman Melville, Malcolm X,
{Winter: Benedict Arnold}

2014 Rising to the Occasion

Clara Barton, Patrick Henry, Robert Smalls,
Harry Truman, {Winter: Marie Curie}

2015 America at the Movies

Walt Disney, Gordon Parks, Mary Pickford,
Orson Welles, {Winter: Bette Davis}

2016 American Adventures

Amelia Earhart, Mark Twain,
Matthew Henson, Wernher von Braun,
{Winter: Meriwether Lewis}

2017 Power of Words

Abraham Lincoln, Walter Cronkite,
Maya Angelou, Cesar Chavez. Rachel Carson,
{Winter: Eleanor Roosevelt}

2018 Courage

Winston Churchill, Alice Paul, Francis Marion,
Harriet Tubman, Clara Barton,
{Winter: George Washington}

2019 It's Revolutionary!

Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Jackson,
Jackie Kennedy, Malcolm X,
Hamilton's Women, {Winter: Napoleon}

2021 Reinventing America

Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison,
Nikola Tesla, Rosa Parks, Hedy Lamarr,
{Winter: Teddy Roosevelt}

2022 Challenge Accepted!

General Eisenhower, Robert Kennedy,
Houdini, Georgia O'Keeffe, Pauli Murray,
{Winter: Julia Child}

2023 Secrets Revealed

James Armistead Lafayette, Mary Shelley,
Nellie Bly, Robert Ripley, Steve Jobs,
{Winter: Mark Twain}

2024 Image or Truth?

Charles Dickens, El Vaquero,
"Stagecoach Mary" Fields,
Maria von Trapp, Cass Elliot,
{Winter: Pablo Picasso}

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Review us on
Tripadvisor



Save the date for next year's events!

Winter Chautauqua
February 5-8, 2026

History Comes Alive Festival
June 12-21, 2026



Check our website, email blasts, and Facebook page for the latest information.





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JUNE 6-17, 2025



What to **expect** at a Chautauqua show

One character — minimal set — and the audience is the supporting cast! First, a nationally acclaimed historical interpreter transports you back in time to tell a famous person's stories. Then, the audience gets to join in to quiz the historical figure. Finally, the performer steps out of character and answers audience questions the subject couldn't answer — or wouldn't answer truthfully.

2025 characters:

Albert Einstein • Babe Ruth
Josephine Baker • Lucille Ball • Erma Bombeck

