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Lucille Ball Tells of Communist Link

Continued from Third Page

Wheeler: How long have you been engaged as an actress?
Miss Ball: Since '33, I guess; '32 or '33.
Wheeler: What is your educational background?
Miss Ball: Just school, high school.
Wheeler: Are you under subpoena or are you appearing voluntarily?
Miss Ball: I am appearing voluntarily.
Wheeler: You graduated from high school?
Miss Ball: No, I didn't even graduate.
Wheeler: You have been employed in motion picture work since that time, since you left school?
Miss Ball: No, I was in New York working.
Wheeler: How long have you been a resident here?
Miss Ball: '33.
Wheeler: You have pursued acting since that time?
Miss Ball: Yes.
Wheeler: For whom have you worked in the studios?
Miss Ball: Goldwyn and Columbia and RKO and Paramount and M-G-M.

Got $75 a Week

Wheeler: Where were you employed in 1936?
Miss Ball: It was, I think, RKO. It might have been Columbia.
Wheeler: What was your salary bracket in 1936, approximately?
Miss Ball: Well, if it was at Columbia I was getting $75 a week. If it was RKO I was getting $50.
Wheeler: Did you have any screen credits about that time?
Miss Ball: I might have been getting more in '36, maybe $75. No screen credits. Maybe a bit part here and there. I doubt that, even, in '36; possibly a bit part.
Wheeler: Did you ever reside at 1344 N Ogden Drive?
Miss Ball: Yes.

Rented Her House

Wheeler: Who owned that residence?
Miss Ball: We rented it. I don't remember who owned it.
Wheeler: When did you first register to vote?
Miss Ball: I guess the first time I ever did was in '36.
Wheeler: I would like to hand you a photostatic copy of a voter's registration and ask you if that is your signature.
Miss Ball: That looks like my handwriting.
Wheeler: You will note that the party that you intended to affiliate with at that time was the Communist Party.
Miss Ball: In '36?
Wheeler: Yes.
Miss Ball: I guess so.

Explains Background

Wheeler: You did register to vote then as a Communist or intending to vote the Communist Party ticket?
Miss Ball: Yes.
Wheeler: Would you go into detail and explain the background, the reason you voted or registered to vote as a Communist or person who intended to affiliate with the Communist Party?
Miss Ball: It was our grandfather, Fred Hunt. He just wanted us to and we just did something to please him. I did not intend to vote that way. As I recall, I didn't.

My grandfather started years ago—he was a Socialist as long as I can remember. He is the only father we ever knew, my grandfather. My father died when I was tiny, before my brother was born. He was my brother's only father.

Took Daily Worker

All through his life he had been a Socialist, as far back as Eugene V. Debs, and he was in sympathy with the working man as long as I have known, and he took the Daily Worker.

It never meant much to us, because he was so radical on the subject that he pressed his point a little too much, actually, probably, during our childhood, because he finally got over our heads and we didn't do anything but consider it a nuisance, but as a dad, and he got into his 70s, and it became so vital to him that the world must be right 24 hours a day, all over it, and he was trying his damnedest to do the best he could for everybody and especially the working man; that is, from the garbage man, the maid in the kitchen, the studio worker, the factory worker. He never lost a chance to do what he considered bettering their positions.

That was fine, and we went along with it wherever we could. Sometimes it got a little ridiculous because my position in the so-called capitalist world was pretty good and it was a little hard to reconcile the two. We didn't argue with him very much because he had had a couple of strokes and if he got overly excited, why, he would have another one.

Does Favor for Him

So finally there came a point where my brother was 21, and he was going to see that Freddie registered to help the working man, which was, in his idea then, the Communist Party. At that time it wasn't a thing to hide behind doors, to be a member of that party.

As I recall, because of this he influenced us. We thought we wanted to do him a favor. We thought we could make him happy. I at no time intended to vote that way. And I remember discussing it with my mother, how I could register and make him happy. When I go behind a curtain to vote, nobody knows who I vote for.

He also considered it a personal victory at the time, that he had the entire family to register. He didn't influence us enough at any time to vote; at least, he didn't influence me.

He influenced us, to give a great deal of thought to whether he was right or wrong, and we always decided he was wrong, because the things he was shouting about didn't seem to be practical for this country. He admired the working man and the peasants all over the world, the five-year plan and anything that was great for the working man.

'Got Very Confused'

Wheeler: He considered the Communist Party as a working-man's party?
Miss Ball: That is all I ever heard. I never heard my grandfather use the word "Communist." He never said that he read the Daily Worker. He always talked about the working man.

He got very confused in his latter years, when Russia and—who got together—Russia and Germany got together and he got so he couldn't answer our questions at all of then. And he would get mad and change the subject. He never quite could find out what had happened to the working man after that, I guess.

We were never able to keep a maid, although we paid the highest prices we could afford or they were getting at the time. My grandfather would walk out into the kitchen and see a maid and would say, "Well, what is your name? How much are you getting?"

Just a Fanatic

"Oh, $20 or $25 a week," or whatever they were being paid.

And he would say, "That is not a working wage. What are you doing here?"

And after a few times of that, you know, they would leave. That is just one instance.

He was always talking to the garbage man early in the morning, or anybody doing any kind of a menial task, he would say, "Why are you doing that? Why aren't you doing something else?"

He was just a fanatic on bettering the world. That is as far as we knew, and that is why we could endorse it at all.

Never a Red

Wheeler: Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?
Miss Ball: No, not to my knowledge.
Wheeler: Have you ever been asked to become a member of the Communist Party?
Miss Ball: No.
Wheeler: Did you ever attend any meetings that you later discovered were Communist Party meetings?
Miss Ball: No.
Wheeler: Do you know whether or not any meetings were ever held in your home at 1344 N Ogden Drive?

Asked About Freed

Miss Ball: No, I know nothing of that. I don't believe it is true.
Wheeler: How old were you in 1936?
Miss Ball: I am 42 now; 24.
Wheeler: I would like to introduce the affidavit of registration as Ball Exhibit No. 1, Registration No. 847584. (The document referred to was marked Ball Exhibit No. 1 and was received in evidence.)
Wheeler: This affidavit of registration is signed by Lucille Ball and dated the 19th day of March, 1936.

Have you ever known an individual by the name of Emil Freed?

Member of Committee

Miss Ball: I never heard the name before, to my knowledge, as I recall.
Wheeler: Have you ever known an individual by the name of Jacob or Jack Breger?
Miss Ball: Not until I read it today.
Wheeler: Are you aware that you were a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party for the year 1936?
Miss Ball: Was I aware before you told me, you mean?
Wheeler: Yes.
Miss Ball: No.
Wheeler: Well, I would like to hand you a document entitled "Appointment of Members of the State Central Committee Meeting at Sacramento in the Year 1936." It is stamped "Communist Party" and this document discloses that Emil Freed was a delegate by nomination to the State Central Committee of the Communist Party for that year. And he appointed three individuals as delegates.

Has No Explanation

Those appointed, according to the document, are Jacob Breger, 822 N Orange Drive; Fred Hunt, 1344 N Ogden Drive, and Lucille Ball, 1344 N Ogden Drive.

Now, I would like to hand you this document and have you give any explanation that you desire.
Miss Ball: I have no explanation. I haven't signed it. I don't know where it came from or what. My name is misspelled. The address is right; that is all.

I don't know Emil Freed. I never heard of Emil Freed and if Emil Freed appointed me as a delegate to the State Central Committee it was done without my knowledge or consent.
Wheeler: I notice your grandfather, Fred Hunt, was also appointed as a delegate for the year 1936. Were you aware of that?

Didn't Attend Meeting

Miss Ball: No. I was not aware of it.
Wheeler: Do you know who could be responsible for your name appearing on this document?
Miss Ball: Possibly my grandfather, Fred Hunt.
Wheeler: Do you recall if anyone contacted you in 1936 in regard to obtaining your proxy to vote?
Miss Ball: No, except my grandfather. Is that what you mean?
Wheeler: You stated that you were appointed without your knowledge or consent, is that right?
Miss Ball: That is right.
Wheeler: I assume you did not attend the meeting of the State Central Committee at Sacramento.

Introduced as Exhibit

Miss Ball: I didn't even know there was one. I still don't know what it means.
Wheeler: Do you recall whether or not you were contacted by any individual to obtain from you your voting proxy at the Central Committee meeting in Sacramento?
Miss Ball: Never.
Wheeler: I will introduce this as Ball Exhibit No. 2. It is dated the 15th day of September, 1936.
Miss Ball: I should say never, to my knowledge.
(The document referred to was marked Ball Exhibit No. 2 and was received in evidence.)
Wheeler: I might say, for the record, that the last document was obtained from the files of the Secretary of State in Sacramento.

No Record of Proxies

Also, there is no record of the proxies filed by different delegates in the office of the Secretary of State.

I would like to refer to the report of the un-American activities in California for the year 1943, and refer to Page 127 of that document, which is a portion of an affidavit submitted by Rena M. Vale. The affidavit begins on Page 122 and continues through Page 176, and bears the date of the 23rd day of November, 1942.

I would like to read a portion of Page 127. In this affidavit she has admitted she was at one time a member of the Communist Party and she is discussing how she became a member.

'Guests of Actress'

"That within a few days after my third application to join the Communist Party was made, I received a notice to attend a meeting on N Ogden Drive, Hollywood; although it was a typed, unsigned note, merely requesting my presence at the address at 8 o'clock in the evening on a given day, I knew it was the long-awaited notice to attend Communist Party new members' classes;

"That on arrival at this address I found several others present; an elderly man informed us that we were the guests of the screen actress, Lucille Ball, and showed us various pictures, books and other objects to establish that fact, and stated she was glad to loan her home for a Communist Party new members' class;

"That the instructor introduced himself as Sidney Martin, but I later knew him by the name of Sidney Davidson, which he stated was his true name;

Actor at Meeting

"That there were about seven or eight other members of this class, but the only names I recall are those of Herb Harris, an actor, whom I encountered from time to time within the Communist Party, and who took part in the play 'The Blackguard,' which ran for several years in Los Angeles around 1938 and 1939, and Libby Jacobson, who, in 1939, was active in consumer co-operatives in Los Angeles."

Do you have any knowledge of any meetings held in your home, Miss Ball?
Miss Ball: None whatsoever.
Wheeler: Are you acquainted with Rena Vale?
Miss Ball: I never heard the name before in my life.

'Never Left Alone'

Wheeler: Are you acquainted with or have you ever been acquainted with Sidney Martin or Sidney Davidson?
Miss Ball: No, sir, I never heard the name.
Wheeler: Are you acquainted with or have you ever been acquainted with Herb Harris?

MISS BALL'S QUIZZER—William A. Wheeler, West Coast investigator for the House Un-American Activities Committee, checks over a copy of the testimony which he obtained from Actress Lucille Ball. Times photo

Miss Ball: I never heard the name.
Wheeler: Are you acquainted with Libby Jacobson?
Miss Ball: I never heard that name.
Wheeler: Do you know whether or not your grandfather, Fred Hunt, held meetings at the home?
Miss Ball: Not to our knowledge ever, and he was always with someone. As we look back now, we can't remember at any time he was ever alone, because he had had two strokes and we had a nurse that lived there at the time, and there was—he was never alone that we remember; no evidence of any meeting ever being held in our house when we were out. This is something we knew nothing about.

Mother Also Registered

Wheeler: I also have a photostatic copy of an affidavit of registration for the year 1936 for Mrs. Desiree E. Ball, and it discloses that she also registered to vote as a person who intended to affiliate with the Communist Party on the 12th day of June, 1936. What relation is Desiree Ball to you?
Miss Ball: My mother.
Wheeler: Do you know whether or not she was ever a member of the Communist Party?
Miss Ball: Not to my knowledge.
Wheeler: I have a second photostat here, a voter's registration, signed by Fred E. Hunt, who also intended to affiliate with the Communist Party.
Miss Ball: Fred E. Hunt?
Wheeler: Well, it looks like an "E." What is his middle initial?
Miss Ball: Fred C.

Changed His Affiliation

Wheeler: Fred C. Hunt, rather. This document is dated the 12th day of June, 1936, and also shows he changed the vote to Democrat Nov. 18, 1940.

I believe you testified that Fred C. Hunt was your grandfather?
Miss Ball: That is right.
Wheeler: Is he living?
Miss Ball: No.
Wheeler: I have a third document here, a photostat of an affidavit of registration, bearing the signature of Fred H. Ball, who intended to affiliate with the Communist Party in the ensuing election of 1936. It is also dated the 12th day of June, 1936. What relation is Fred H. Ball to you?
Miss Ball: Brother.
Wheeler: Do you know whether or not he was ever a member of the Communist Party?
Miss Ball: Not to my knowledge, nor to his.
Wheeler: Where is your brother presently residing?
Miss Ball: Scottsdale, Ariz.
Wheeler: Do you know whether or not he has ever been investigated by the government or any agency or employer who does government contract work, in regard to this Communist registration?
Miss Ball: Yes, he has.
Wheeler: What was the outcome of this investigation?
Miss Ball: He has always been cleared.

Asked About Work

Wheeler: You mean he retained his employment?
Miss Ball: I think so. I don't know. He can tell you more about that. I don't think he has always retained his employment, no. If during the war there was a hint of that suspicion, the investigation probably went on, but you didn't retain your employment.
Wheeler: I notice now that your mother and your brother and grandfather all registered on the 12th day of June to vote, and you registered on the 19th day of March. Is there any significance to that?
Miss Ball: See, I didn't go. They were trying to recall to my mind where we might have registered and I couldn't remember.

Isn't this what he is talking about? I couldn't remember having gone down where they said they went. They said they went way downtown, where Grandpa wanted us to go, way downtown near Main St. I don't ever remember going down that far.

Doesn't Know Where

I really racked my brain over a 17-year period and all I remember was something like a garage and a flag, like a voting day. They said it didn't tie up for registration. I can't explain it. But that bears me out, I didn't go on that trip.

I don' know where I registered. I would have said, if I hadn't talked to you last year, that I voted. You said you had no record of my voting. I would have said I voted when I went in there.

I remember feeling very foxy about the thing, because I registered. We had a very bad feeling we had done that. I always felt I would be all right if I didn't vote it, just to appease Grandpa.

Voted in Primary

Wheeler: The affidavit of registration discloses you voted in the primary for the year 1936. That would be, I assume, in June. However, you did not vote in the general election.
Miss Ball: That could have been what I did there that morning.
Wheeler: The Deputy Registrar of Voters, who signed this document, is a Mrs. Dodd. Does she mean anything to you?
Miss Ball: What did you say she was?
Wheeler: Deputy Registrar of Voters.
Miss Ball: No.
Wheeler: She is the Deputy Registrar of Voters. She would be the individual who you would sign that document in the presence of.

Signed Two Petitions

Well now, the affidavit of registration on the reverse side discloses that you signed two petitions for the year 1936, the Freed nominating petition for the 57th Assembly District, or, rather, it is a sponsor certificate. This document was also obtained from the files of the Secretary of State and I will introduce it in the record as Ball Exhibit 3.
(The document referred to was marked Ball Exhibit No. 3 and was received in evidence.)
Wheeler: I will read the following from the document:

"I, the undersigned, sponsor for Emil Freed for the Communist Party nomination to the office of member of the Assembly 57th District, to be voted for at the primary election to be held on the 25th day of August, 1936, hereby assert as follows:

"My knowledge of the said Emil Freed is sufficient to warrant my urging his election to the office of member of the Assembly, 57th District, and in my opinion he is fully qualified, mentally, morally and physically for the said office and should be elected to fill it. I am a qualified elector of Los Angeles County and I am registered as affiliated with the Communist Party and am not at this time a signer of any other certificate nominating any other candidate for the above-named office, or in case there are several places to be filled in the above-named office, I have not signed more certificates than are places to be filled in the above-named office."

Part of Appeasement

I would like to refer to the second page of this document, under Line 23, and there appears the signature of Lucille Ball, 1344 Ogden Drive, and occupation, artist. It is dated 6-16-'36. Is that your signature (indicating)?
Miss Ball: I would say it was.
Wheeler: Do you recall signing the document?
Miss Ball: No, but I recall at that time doing what I could to appease Grandpa and this is just part of it.

At that time it didn't probably seem very important to appoint this man.
Wheeler: You will note what I read to you, that before signing the document it states that you know the man and he is morally, physically and mentally qualified.
Miss Ball: It is something I signed without looking at it, or if I looked at it, it didn't seem like a big thing at the time.

Grandfather Signed, Too

Wheeler: I believe your grandfather's signature appears on there, as well as the whole family?
Miss Ball: Yes, Fred, myself and my mother and my grandfather. My name appears on the second page of this document. Our names appear there. It is possible that this was handed to us just as a list of names, without the strong-sounding sponsor certificate on the front of it.

I don't recall that I ever heard anything which right now sounds very strong and impossible to sign at this day and age, but I might have because at that time I was of a mind to try to do something that would please Daddy. It just didn't seem like an important, awful thing to do, like it does these days. But, to my knowledge, I didn't ever see the first part of this certificate I signed.
Wheeler: Are you familiar with the words or the phrase "criminal syndicalism"?

'Word Sounds Pretty'

Miss Ball: No, but it is pretty. What does it mean?
Wheeler: Criminal syndicalism?
Miss Ball: What does it mean?
Wheeler: According to the voter's registration for the year 1936, the reverse part of it, you signed a petition 164-F.

This particular petition was for the Repeal of the Criminal Syndicalism Act in California.
Miss Ball: What does it mean?
Wheeler: The Communists were taken to court and tried for criminal syndicalism, and—
Miss Ball: And I signed something else?
Wheeler: You signed this petition to take the Criminal Syndicalism Act off the statutes of the State of California.

Nice to Daddy Week

Miss Ball: I did; that is, without my knowledge. May I see the signature?
Wheeler: Unfortunately, they have been destroyed, those particular petitions.
Miss Ball: By whom?
Wheeler: They are retained a few years, under law, and they can be destroyed.
Miss Ball: Was this the same time we were being nice to Daddy week?
Wheeler: It was in the year 1938. However, I do have a photostat of a sample copy of the petition which was dated July 10, 1936, and this particular petition was circulated by the California Conference for Repeal of the Criminal Syndicalism Act at 68 Haight St., San Francisco, Cal. Have you ever heard of that organization?
Miss Ball: No.

Has Heard of Group

Wheeler: It was also circulated by the Southern California Councils for Constitutional Rights, 129 W 2nd St., Room 326, Los Angeles, Cal. Have you ever heard of this second organization?
Miss Ball: No. I have since then, probably. I imagine that ties up with the un-American business activities; constitutional rights they are all standing up for now. Is that what it means?
Wheeler: Well, it means more or less like this: "An act defining criminal syndicalism and sabotage, proscribing certain acts and methods in connection therewith and in pursuance thereof and providing penalties and punishments therefor."
Miss Ball: If I ever seen that, I would have never signed it. Did I sign it?

Signing Indicated

Wheeler: Well, the voter's registration indicates that you did sign it. In other words, when a petition is signed they check each signature, to ascertain if the individual is a registered voter.

When it is ascertained the individual is a registered voter they mark on his voter's registration, this particular number, 164-F, which indicates the person who registered did sign that petition. However, I have been unable to locate the actual petition.
Miss Ball: Because you register you are in sympathy with all this (indicating)?
Wheeler: It would indicate as such. I mean, if a person signs a particular document requesting that the Criminal Syndicalism Act be removed from the statutes, it would seem to indicate to me that you would be against the Criminal Syndicalism Act.
Miss Ball: Well, anyway, I don't know what it means.
Wheeler: You were previously contacted by myself, an investigator for the House Committee on Un-American Activities?
Miss Ball: Yes.

Never Joined Committee

Wheeler: You recall the date as April 3, 1952?
Miss Ball: Yes.
Wheeler: Are you acquainted with the Committee of the First Amendment?
Miss Ball: Am I acquainted with it?
Wheeler: Yes.
Miss Ball: Not to my knowledge.
Wheeler: Or were you a member of the Committee of the First Amendment?
Miss Ball: Not to my knowledge.
Wheeler: Well, your name is mentioned in the Daily People's World, the issue of 10-28-47, page 1, columns 5 and 6, as one of the high personalities who were sponsoring or a member of the Committee of the First Amendment.

Can't Recall Signing

That committee was formed here in Hollywood to oppose the Congressional hearings in 1947.
Miss Ball: Refresh my memory on it. I can't imagine ever signing that. Did I sign that, too? Was it under an assumed name?
Wheeler: That I don't know. There was a reference to it.
Miss Ball: What is the People's World? Is that like the Daily Worker?
Wheeler: Yes, a Communist publication of the Western States.

Asks to See Copy

Miss Ball: In '47? That certainly was not for Grandpa. Grandpa was gone by then. I can't imagine doing anything for these people. If I was hoodwinked into it, with one of those long democratic souped-up names, that is something else. I would like to see it. Could I see that?
Wheeler: I don't have the copy of the People's World for that date.
Miss Ball: Am I supposed to have signed something as being in sympathy?
Wheeler: Your name was used as in—
Miss Ball: Was it used or did I sign something?
Wheeler: I have no knowledge of your signing.

Recalls Phone Call

Miss Ball: Fine. Then I have no knowledge of signing it. However, I do recall I was at a studio, and I was working on a picture and I got a call in the afternoon. I don't know who called me. I assume now—I did then—it was the Screen Actors Guild, but I can be wrong. I don't know who called me now. It was something that was through a union or the studio wouldn't have felt compelled to send me off a set and hold up production until I got back. It had nothing to do with me.

I got the call to go to a radio station. As I remember, it was MGM—it may not have been. I remember an executive excused me and sent me to this broadcast.

I got down there and said, "What am I supposed to do?"

She said, "Dorothy Petersen," —whoever she is—"she is ill. We have to go on the air."

Read a Petition

I haven't seen her in years; I don't know her.

She said, "Will you read this?"

It was a long petition, or whatever you call them, as I recall. As I recall—I am not

Turn to Page 18, Column 1

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