

The Duo Behind I Love Lucy: Madelyn Pugh and Bob Carroll Jr.

By Kaushik Raghavan

Writers Madelyn Pugh and Bob Carroll Jr. forged a partnership that lasted more than 50 years. Together, they would write over 400 television programs and roughly 500 radio programs. But who were they outside of the writing room?

Madelyn Pugh was born in 1921 in Indianapolis, Indiana, to banker I. Watt Pugh and Louise Huff. She was the youngest child, with two older sisters, Audrey and Rosalind. She attended Shortridge High School, where during her final year, she co-edited the school newspaper with classmate Kurt Vonnegut. She then attended Indiana University Bloomington's School of Journalism, where she would graduate in 1942. She would then receive her first professional writing job with WIRE, an Indianapolis-based radio station, writing short radio segments. She and her family would soon move to California, and she would get work as a radio writer for NBC and eventually CBS. In most writers' rooms, Pugh was usually the only woman, and was usually hired as "the girl writer."

Bob Carroll Jr. was born in 1918 in McKeesport, Florida. His family moved to St. Petersburg, Florida, as his father Bob Carroll Sr. made a living buying and selling real estate during the Florida land boom. Bob Carroll Jr. would get into writing when he happened upon a scriptwriting contest sponsored by the local radio station when he was 21 years old. Carroll then moved to California where he worked as the front desk clerk for CBS Radio. From there, he worked his way up the ladder of the publicity department, becoming a junior writer and then a senior writer. He met Pugh when she was a writer at NBC and he was a junior writer at CBS. Eventually, they worked together on the CBS radio sitcom *The Couple Next Door*.

After that experience, Pugh and Carroll started writing for comedian Steve Allen's radio show. However, they found themselves more

interested in writing for *My Favorite Husband*, Lucille Ball's new radio show. They submitted a script for the show and were brought onto the team, writing for the show for the remaining two and a half years of its run. In 1951, they were approached by Ball and her husband Desi Arnaz to write for their upcoming comedy show, *I Love Lucy*. Pugh and Carroll tackled upwards of 39 episodes per season for the entire run of the show, from 1951 to 1957. They were nominated for three Emmy Awards, a number that experts theorize would have been much higher if the Academy had awarded Emmys to writers before 1954. After *I Love Lucy* ended in 1957, 13 one-hour long episodes written by Pugh and Carroll were released from 1957 to 1960 under the name *The Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour*.

Pugh and Carroll continued to work together after the end of *The Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour*. Some of their credits include *The Tom Ewell Show*, *The Paul Lynde Show*, and *The Mothers-in-Law*. They served primarily as executive producers, but also did some writing for *Alice*, which won them a Golden Globe. In 2005, Bob Carroll worked with Madelyn Pugh one final time, co-authoring *Laughing with Lucy*, Pugh's memoir. Carroll passed away at 88 in January 2007 from illness. Pugh passed away at 90 in April 2011. Their partnership was instrumental in the creation of many of the tenets of modern-day sitcoms and TV.



BOB CARROLL JR. WITH DESI ARNAZ AND MADELYN PUGH