

"How I Broke Into the Movies"

By
Lucille Ball

I suppose it all started when Flo Ziegfeld fired me. I can recall the incident just as clearly as if it happened yesterday.

"Lucille," he said, "you've just got to learn how to express yourself. Learn how to use your body. Relax. Don't be so mousy."

That's what you call getting the information straight from the horse's mouth. I left the theater. As soon as I eased myself through the stage door I began to cry.

It was a hot, muggy New York afternoon. And I'll never forget the time. It was exactly 5:10 P.M. To put it mildly, I was crushed.

I had spent two seasons on Broadway—in rehearsal. The girls used to call me "the rehearsal champ".

I never had any trouble getting a job as a show girl, but when it came to curtain time I was in the audience, not on the stage.

It was tough to land a spot—and keep it.

The competition was deadly, with the older hands not above a little skulduggery to prevent a newcomer from cracking the ranks. Generally, if a new gal was signed, it meant that one of the old steadies got the heave-ho.

Anyway, after leaving the theater, I started walking home, which at the time happened to be a dark, dingy one-room affair just off Columbus Circle.

I didn't relish the thought of spending the rest of the night in that trap. I was trying to decide whether or not

I should return home to my mother in Jamestown, N.Y., and give up the whole crazy idea, when the clincher came.

As I shuffled along the street I spotted Mr. Ziegfeld's right hand man walking ahead of me. I followed him for a couple of blocks, trying to think of something to say that would convince him I needed another chance. Finally, he noticed me, and without stopping he turned his head and said,

"'Montana,' why don't you go home and forget the whole thing."

That Montana Tag

I picked up the 'Montana' handle because I told an agent I was from Montana, thinking that