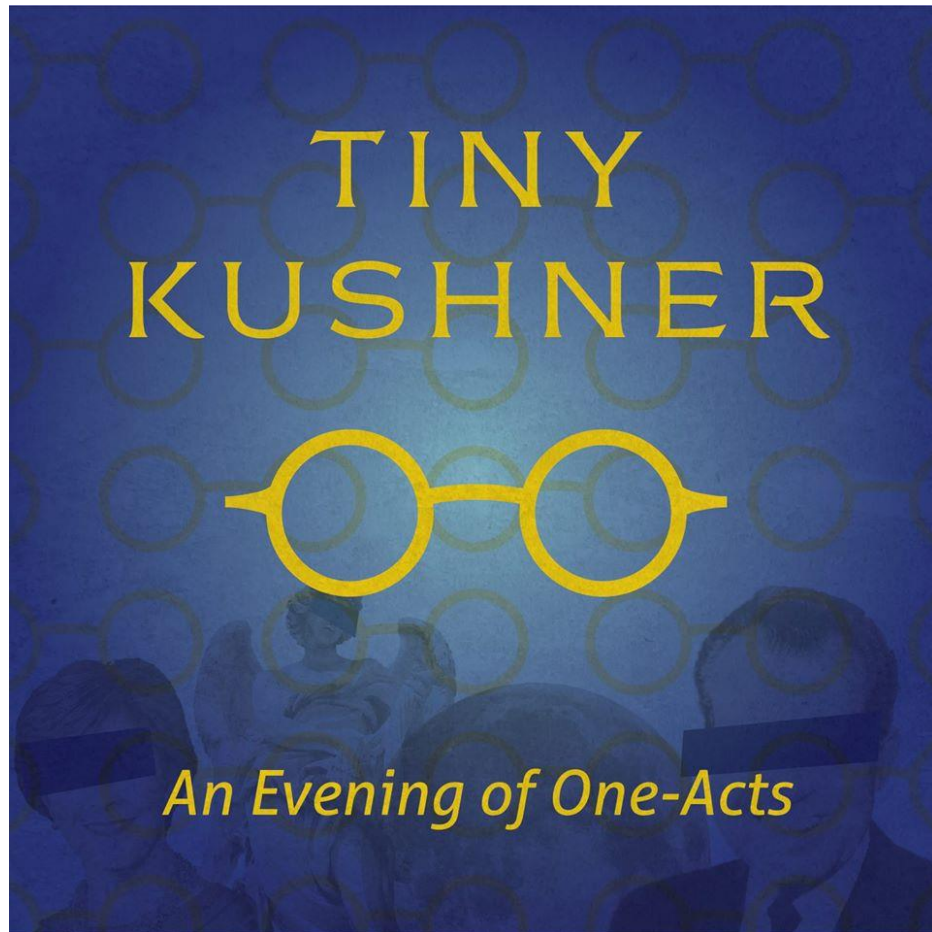


FLIP, FLOP, FLY



Tiny Kushner Dramaturge Guide
compiled by Lindsay Kujawa

LUCIA PAMELA AND QUEEN GERALDINE AT A GLANCE

Lucia Pamela was born in 1904 in St. Louis, MS. From a young age she was identified as a gifted musician and attended the Beethoven Conservatory of Music and Voice.



When she returned to America she joined Flo Ziegfeld's "Broadway Follies" and went on to win "Miss Saint Louis" in 1926. She also is featured in the Guinness Book of World Records for memorizing 10,000 song and poems. Ms. Pamela went on to create and lead the first all-female orchestra, *The Musical Pirates*, and hosted her own radio show, *The Encouragement Hour*. She is best remembered however, for her album *Into Outerspace with Lucia Pamela*, which was inspired by her apparent trip to the moon in 1962. Her album was a cult phenomenon and was met with much confusion from critics. She also created a color book about her trip to the moon entitled *Into Outer Space With Lucia Pamela*. In 1994 the pop group, Stereolab

created a tribute album to her, *International Colouring Contest*, that also contained sound bites from her original album.

Geraldine, Queen Albania was the daughter of a Hungarian Duke and American mother. When she was quite young when her Father died. Her mother soon remarried a French Officer,



but Geraldine's grandparents insisted she and her siblings stay in Hungary to finish their schooling. Shortly after her Father's death the family fortune had been squandered and she made a living as shorthand typist. A picture of the beautiful Geraldine made its way to the King Zog of Albania, and he insisted she come to court. Despite her Hungarian and Catholic background she won the heart of Zog and the Albania people. Within 10 days of meeting, Zog and Geraldine were engaged to be married. A year after their marriage they were sent in to exile due to the Italian Invasion of Albania. Zog, Geraldine, and their infant son, Leka, fled Albania and would spend most of their life after on the run. Zog would eventually pass away in their exile, and Leka would get involved in dangerous plots to overthrow the now

democratic Albania. In 2002 Geraldine and Leka were invited back to Albania, although they had been stripped of all titles and wealth. Geraldine would die just 5 months after her return.

More indepth information about these two women is found on the proceeding pages.

GERALDINE OF ALBANIA, 87, QUEEN WITH U.S. TIES, IS DEAD

New York Times

By DOUGLAS MARTIN

Published: October 27, 2002



Geraldine of Albania, who as the wife of King Zog was for one year her adopted country's first and only queen and the only member of European royalty with American blood, died on Tuesday in Tirana, Albania's capital. She was 87.

Her story reads as if it were a Hollywood fantasy. Though she was a countess, her family's fortunes had plunged so far that at 20 she was selling postcards in the Budapest National Museum. Then King Zog, who had been desperately seeking a bride, saw her picture. They met on New Year's Day 1938, and 10 days later were engaged.

The wedding was triumphant. Her veil trailed from a high diadem of orange blossoms and her white satin gown was embroidered with pearls. Fifty thousand children in native costumes applauded, and enemy clans shared wine. The wedding gifts included a Mercedes from Hitler.

The plot turned. Just a year later, Italy invaded Albania, and Geraldine, still bleeding after giving birth, fled with her infant son in an ambulance over tortuous mountain roads to Greece. The king and 115 members of his court, carrying 10 heavy cases of valuables, followed.

Geraldine's dreams of founding a dynasty were dead. The tall, graceful queen turned down an offer to be in movies. The couple began the long country-to-country odyssey -- this month a chateau at Versailles, next month a palace in Egypt -- so drearily familiar to banished royalty.

At the time of his escape, King Zog was believed to have made his situation easier by adding Albania's gold reserve to his large personal fortune, previously deposited in Swiss and English banks. His last act before fleeing was to broadcast an appeal to his people "to fight to the last drop of blood for Albanian independence."

Geraldine Apponyi was born a countess in Budapest on Aug. 6, 1915. Her father was the Hungarian nobleman Count Gyula Apponyi de Nagy-Appony and her mother was the former Gladys Virginia Stewart, a member of an old Virginia family. Geraldine's grandfather had been a high official of the Hapsburg Court.

But Central European royalty had lost thrones, money and prestige after World War I. Geraldine's father died in 1924, and her mother remarried a French officer. The family insisted that Geraldine and her two sisters be educated in Hungary.

Circumstances dictated that the young women learn shorthand and typing, but they still went to balls. When she was 17, Geraldine's photograph was taken several times at a ball given by Hungarian monarchists. One of those pictures would change her life.



Meanwhile, King Zog, who had advanced from tribal chief to prime minister to president to Albania's first monarch and who was sometimes called the Balkan Napoleon, was miserable. He barely escaped assassination in 1931 as he left the Vienna Opera House, and his mother kept watch over the royal kitchen to make sure his food was not poisoned.

It said he offered a "handsome fee" to a marriage broker to find him an attractive bride with an income of \$1 million a year. Then he saw the photo. The Muslim king fell in love with a penniless Roman Catholic.

He invited her to Albania, and she arrived after Christmas in 1937. She was made a princess after accepting his New Year's Day proposal.

Geraldine charmed the Albanians. When the country's vice president gave her a velvet pocketbook containing the equivalent of \$500,000, she directed that it be given to the National Albanian Charities, The New York American reported.

Geraldine remained a Catholic and was wed in a civil ceremony on April 27, 1938. The circumstances of the wedding hinted at the scheming politics that would abruptly end Geraldine's fairy tale in a year's time. The New York Herald Tribune observed that Geraldine, then 22, "seems to be marrying the Rome-Berlin axis as well as her king." It added that she was "certainly marrying Mussolini's foreign policy."

But in April 1939, Italian troops invaded and the king and queen fled. Count Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian foreign minister, who had been King Zog's best man, arrived in a bomber. The immediate pretext for the invasion was the Italian accusation that the king was misusing Italian money, but many suggested that Mussolini was jealous of Hitler's conquests and that Albania was nearby.

The crown passed to King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy, and the couple's wandering began. They passed through Greece, Turkey, Romania, Poland, the Baltic states, Sweden, Belgium and France before landing at the Ritz Hotel in London. Then they moved to Egypt, where King Farouk welcomed exiled royalty.

When Farouk was overthrown in 1952, they moved to Paris, where King Zog, who had survived numerous assassination attempts, died in 1961. Geraldine then lived in Spain and South Africa before returning to Albania at the invitation of Parliament four months ago.



MOON LADY: THE LONG, WONDROUS LIFE OF LUCIA PAMAELE

By Aimee Levitt

Wednesday, Mar 10 2010

Riverfront Times

In the spring of 1969, several months before Neil Armstrong and Apollo 11, an American nightclub singer and radio personality named Lucia Pamela built herself a rocket ship, fastened her seat belt, said a quick prayer and blasted into outer space.

The first stop of Pamela's fantastical voyage was the moon. She landed in a place called Moontown, inhabited by moon people who dressed like cowboys. They welcomed her warmly and invited her to an Eskimo wedding. To show her appreciation, Pamela did what came naturally: She picked up her accordion and sang.

Eeny-meeny-miney-mo,

Moontown is a place to go.

Whether it's hot or whether it's cold,

The weather on the moon is the best, I'm told.

On the highways and byways and valleys, it's true,

There's no finer people than the moon people to you!



With the help of her new lunar friends, Pamela made a recording of "Moontown" and a dozen other numbers. She played fifteen instruments, including the piano, clarinet, drums, cymbals and what sounds like a theremin. The sound quality was poor, and Pamela's voice occasionally wavered offkey. "The air is different up there, you know," she later explained. Still, the old pro belted out her songs with gusto. It had been 60 years since her stage debut in her hometown of St. Louis, and there wasn't much that could faze her.

After returning to Earth, Pamela released her lunar recordings on Gulfstream Records, a small label in Hollywood, Florida. She called the album *Into Outer Space with Lucia Pamela*. It sold well enough to warrant a re-pressing in 1970. Then it fell into obscurity until 1992, when a New Jersey DJ named Irwin Chusid recognized it as an unheralded classic and included a chapter on Pamela in his book *Songs in the Key of Z: The Curious Universe of Outsider Music*.

It's difficult to describe *Into Outer Space with Lucia Pamela*, though many earthbound music critics have tried. "Imagine an LP of a peyote-soaked klezmer band, recorded with Joe Meek passed out at the console, wavering on your turntable between 31 and 35 rpm," wrote Chusid.

It has "the feel of a warped bebop children's album," Neil Strauss ventured in the New York Times. R. J. Smith wrote in *Los Angeles* magazine that it sounded "like a Dixieland band carrying boxes of silverware stumbling down a staircase."

At first, listening to the album is a painful experience. Yet there's something endearing about Pamela's raspy voice, her swingy piano-playing and her absolute conviction that she is, indeed, on the moon. "Ooooh, I see elves!" she exclaims impatiently at the beginning of the song "Walking on the Moon." "Let's take a walk on the moon! Come on! Come on! Come oooooon!"

"Her voice sounded like a woman in her second, third or fourth childhood," Chusid observes.

The tune is catchy. After a few choruses, it's difficult not to sing along:

As I was walking on the moon,

I met a little cow-ow-ow,

And this is what she said to me:

Da-da da-da-da-da da-da,

moo-moo-moo-moo moo-moo moo-moo-moo-moo!!!!

And that's what she said to me!

"I started playing her on the radio," Chusid remembers in a recent interview. "People *loved* her. There's a lack of inhibition

and *joie de vivre*. It's very sincere and genuine. You don't get the impression that she's trying to sound shocking and avant-garde. There's a sense of adventure."

Chusid and Erik Lindgren re-released a CD version of *Into Outer Space* on Lindgren's label Arf! Arf! Records out of Middleborough, Massachusetts. A new generation discovered Pamela, and though the album never sold more than 2,000 copies, it became a cult classic.

In the 1970s Pamela drew and released a coloring book intended to be a companion to the album. In addition to the people of Moontown, it includes pictures of the French-speaking residents of neighboring Nutland Village — Messieurs Walnut, Filbert and Cashew — and a man in a dog costume smoking a cigarette. She announced an international coloring contest open to all. "Children aren't the only people who like to color books," she insisted. (Because the contest had no deadline, a winner was never declared. Some suspect Pamela was waiting for entries from as-yet undiscovered parts of the galaxy.)

The British band Stereolab wrote a song about Pamela called "International Colouring Contest." It appears on their 1994 album *Mars Audiac Quintet*. Vocalist Laetitia Sadier writes in a recent e-mail: "There was something radically optimistic about her, that imagination was strongest of all and would conquer all, which was really inspiring."

A Belgian artist and filmmaker named Danielle Lemaire became so fascinated by Pamela's work and delightfully eccentric spirit that she traveled to Los Angeles in 1998 and spent several days with the singer collecting footage for a documentary about her life.

She later visited the site of Pamela's childhood home on Delmar Boulevard in St. Louis but found that it had been demolished. Though Lemaire finally finished her film last year, she hasn't been able to release it because of difficulties getting the rights to use Pamela's work.



Those rights are owned by the Rosenbloom family, which also owns the St. Louis Rams. The late matriarch, Georgia Frontiere, in another odd twist to the legend, was Pamela's daughter.

Sadly, Pamela never had much of a chance to enjoy her status as a cult figure, nor was she able to release the second album she had promised in the liner notes to *Into Outer Space*. In the early 1980s, says her grandson Kenny Irwin, she suffered a stroke in her house in Fresno, California. "She was in a state," Irwin remembers. "She wasn't Nana Pam anymore."

In 2002, the year Pamela died at 98, playwright Tony Kushner paid tribute to her life in the *New York Times Magazine* with a short play called "Flip Flop Fly!" Titled after one of her songs, it has since been incorporated into a collection of one-act plays called *Tiny Kushner*, which has been performed at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and the Berkeley Repertory Theatre in California.

Kushner portrays Pamela as the embodiment of the can-do American spirit and, in the end, her enthusiasm and optimism are so overpowering that even the war-weary Queen Geraldine of Albania joins her in a song-and-dance number.

No one who knew Lucia Pamela ever doubted that she'd been to the moon. As Marshall Klein, who worked for the Rams for 21 years and now serves as a media consultant to the Rosenbloom family, puts it, "If she said it, I believe it. In 1908, barely out of toddlerhood, Lucia Pamela Beck made her concert debut in St. Louis. She sang an Indian love song she had written herself. The song appears in altered form on *Into Outer Space* as "Indian Alphabet Chant." It begins, "A-a-a-a-i-o-aidy-addy-o-o-o" and proceeds, somewhat erratically, through the entire alphabet.



Her mother, also named Lucia, was a concert pianist and composer and taught her young daughter how to play. Their house in the old West End neighborhood had two pianos, remembers Pamela's son Ken Irwin, who is now 80 years old and lives in Palm Springs, California. "There was a grand piano and a huge rosewood Steinway. They used to play two-piano concertos." Pamela gave her first recital with the Philadelphia Philharmonic when she was seven years old.

A year later she met Ignacy Paderewski, the pianist, composer and future prime minister of Poland, who, she wrote in the liner notes of *Into Outer Space*, "was so amazed and enthused that he went back stage and gave a note...to Lucia's mother....In this note one of the phrases was, 'Your daughter is a natural born pianist, and she will be the finest pianist in the world when she grows up.'" (The liner notes, though written in the third person, are Pamela's own work and the closest thing she had to an autobiography.)

Pamela didn't simply attribute her success to natural musical talent, but to a freak childhood accident. When she was two years old, she told Chusid, she reached for a cookie that was sitting on a hot stove, and all her fingers melted together. Her doctor "used a knife to slice my melted hands into ten fingers," Pamela recalled. "He didn't give me any thumbs, so it made me a better piano player."

Pamela's father died before she reached her teens, and her mother supported the five children by teaching music and publishing a newspaper, *The Public School News*, in the basement of their house on Hamilton Avenue. Pamela helped out by going on tour with a fellow pianist named Charles Kunkel who she claimed was "the first cousin of the great Beethoven." Kunkel died one night in the middle of a performance. Pamela finished the concert alone. "Charles would have wanted it that way," she told Chusid.

After Kunkel's demise, Pamela attended Soldan High School on Union Boulevard. She applied to study at the Beethoven Conservatory of Music and Voice but was rejected. "The people in charge of the conservatory in Germany, after hearing her play and sing, told her mother she was already so much advanced there was not much they could do to teach her," she wrote.

So Pamela went home to St. Louis, where she studied music at Washington University and earned extra money recording paper rolls for player pianos. Eventually, she abandoned classical music and taught herself to play the accordion. "Jazz was kind of exciting and more fun to play than Beethoven," explains Ken Irwin. "She got a lot of resistance from her mother, the music teacher."

In 1926 Pamela was crowned Miss St. Louis, beating out 2,000 other contestants. News of her victory spread as far as New York City. The Broadway producer Florenz Ziegfeld invited her to sing in his famous *Follies* and threw a party in her honor.

"So," she wrote, "the steps on the ladder of success started to go up, up and up for LUCIA PAMELA."

Fact or fiction?

"I'm not sure what is true," Chusid admits. "It's storytelling. And I don't want to know. She had a very overactive imagination. She spoke with a certain confidence of what she was telling me was true. It's possible she'd been telling those stories for so long, they became fact. It was her reality."



When Chusid visited Pamela in 1991, however, she showed him old newspaper clippings from the Miss St. Louis pageant and photos from her days performing with her band, Lucia Pamela and the Musical Pirates. They show a slender young woman with delicate features and long hair arranged in elaborate curls on top of her head. "She had beautiful hair," remembers her grandson Kenny Irwin. "It was reddish, golden hair, wavy and thick as can be. Late in 1926, after rejecting a career in vaudeville, Pamela married an insurance man named Reginald Irwin, who would be the first of her three husbands. Their daughter, Georgia, was born in November of 1927, and Ken came along two years later.

Motherhood did not impede Pamela's musical career. Ken Irwin remembers her performing throughout his childhood with the Musical Pirates, the first all-girl orchestra in the United States.

"They started as a novelty act," he says. "They were beautiful women dressed as pirates. But people would come to watch them perform because they were extremely talented musicians. In an age when a woman being able to vote or work wonderful jobs standing up in a telephone center was considered the height of achievement, [Pamela] was really unreal as far as breaking through glass ceilings."

The Musical Pirates played the rooftop of the Chase Park Plaza and the nightclub at the elegant Statler Hotel and eventually became the house band for the Odeon Theatre. They performed on KMOX (1120 AM), and Irwin says the violinist eventually went on to national radio.

When the Depression hit, though, the band had trouble getting gigs. The musicians' union wouldn't let them join, Ken Irwin says, because they were women. The Musical Pirates broke up, and Pamela went solo, performing as a featured accordionist with the Lionel Hampton and Paul Whiteman orchestras, two of the biggest dance bands of the '30s and '40s.

After her divorce from Reginald Irwin in 1943, she took her children with her on tour. Georgia, who had aspirations of becoming an opera singer, eventually joined the act. They called themselves the Pamela Sisters and were very popular on the USO circuit. (Pamela told Chusid she was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for her service.)

But Ken Irwin's most vivid memory of his mother from that time was from a show with Hampton in San Francisco during World War II:

"She was playing an accordion covered with diamonds," he recounted in *Los Angeles* magazine. "When the floodlights hit it, it absolutely lit up the stage. She did a back bend while leaning into the orchestra pit, playing that heavy accordion.



"She ran her hands down the keys so it sounded like the accordion was falling, and the floodlights cut out at exactly that moment. People in their seats all gasped, they thought she'd fallen, but then she would come back up playing the rest of the song, and the spotlight turned on again. That was a showstopper."

Pamela moved west to Fresno, California, in 1947. She never gave up singing, but the era of the big bands had come to an end, and the venues became considerably less grand: car-lot openings, bowling alleys and, memorably, the Moon-Glow Drive-In.

"I'm the only person who has ever had a vaudeville show at a drive-in movie," she proudly told the *Los Angeles Times*. "We played before the movie started, during intermission and when the cars were leaving."

She decided to embrace the then-new media and became (she said) the first person to appear on both radio and television. Her first show, *Gal About Town*, was a list of events going on in Fresno. On the second, *The Encouragement Hour*, says Ken Irwin, "she would take young people and train them, and they would appear on her show. She would coach them how to look and dress. It was like American Idol."

"My daughter was talking to the mayor of Fresno," he continues, "and he said of my mother, 'She made me who I am today.' He was on the show and said she taught him how to appear with people and be comfortable in front of an audience, to be a politician."

In 1962 Pamela took a job managing the Fresno amusement park Storyland where she also portrayed Mother Goose. After her retirement, she worked with several volunteer organizations.

She never divulged the details of her trip to the moon outside of what appeared in the album and coloring book, though she did once tell Chusid she considered recording some tunes on Venus but decided she didn't like the atmosphere. "All the music is true," she informed Neil Strauss in a 1992 article in *New York Press*. "Most of it is from experience."

Chusid and Erik Lindgren have tried to figure out how, exactly, *Into Outer Space* was recorded.

"The album is definitely the work of one person," Chusid posits. "I presume she had an engineer because the reverb is great. It has a real lo-fi sound. Bands used to spend tens of thousands of dollars to go into the studio and get crappy sound like that. I really don't know when it was recorded. For an album from 1969, it's not really pegged to what was going on musically."

"At this point," says Lindgren, "I really do think it was recorded on the moon."

The circumstances of the album's distribution are only slightly less mysterious. Gulfstream was a fairly well-known rockabilly label in the late 1960s and early '70s. "I can't see them signing her," Lindgren says. "I'm pretty sure it was a vanity project that she bankrolled herself. A year later, there was a second pressing on L'Peg. Apparently, she needed more copies. I'm fascinated that it had to be re-pressed. There were about 500 originally. I don't know if she sold them or gave them away."

Pamela promoted the album by driving around Fresno in a pink Cadillac emblazoned with bumper stickers that read: "*Into Outer Space with Lucia Pamela*." She claimed the Cadillac could fly.

These days, an original copy of *Into Outer Space with Lucia Pamela* is a collector's item, selling for as much as \$1,000.

The Arf! Arf! reissue has been far less profitable. "We've sold maybe 1,500, 2,000 copies," estimates Lindgren. "It's a pretty limited market. When one sells, it's a major victory." Chusid suspects that more have been downloaded through online file-sharing.

Most of the CDs have gone to fans of what Chusid has dubbed "outsider music," though some listeners may consider the term "music" a misnomer. Outsider songs are usually produced by people of limited ability or people such as Pamela who deliberately choose to ignore the conventions of popular music. Some practitioners are homeless or mentally ill.

Yet, as Chusid writes in *Songs in the Key of Z*, the definitive work on the subject, "despite dodgy rhythms and a lack of conventional tunefulness, these often self-taught artists radiate an abundance of earnestness and passion. Most importantly, they betray an absence of pretense. And they're worth listening to, often outmatching all contenders for inventiveness and originality."

The genre is perhaps epitomized by the Shaggs, a trio of profoundly untalented sisters from Fremont, New Hampshire, whose single album *Philosophy of the World* has inspired a cult considerably larger than that which surrounds *Into Outer Space*.

Some fans of *Into Outer Space* consider it a brilliant children's album, despite songs like "You and Your Big Ideas" in which Pamela laments that her boyfriend gambled away all their money in Vegas.

"Lucia was just all about fun and playfulness," says Lindgren. "It's like going back to childhood. I sing 'Walking on the Moon' all the time. I live on a farm. It really resonates here."

In her old age Pamela made plans to build an amusement park in Southern California that would feature a ride that simulated her 1969 trip to the moon. She lived quietly in Fresno with her third husband, Billy Angelo, a former prizefighter whom she married in 1960. She attended church and bingo games and amassed enormous collections of coins, stamps and antique keys. She continued to perform into her early 90s at retirement communities and piano bars.

"I'm going to live forever," she assured Chusid in 1991.

She sang her moon songs as lullabies to her grandchildren and told them stories about her adventures. "Did I believe them?" asks her grandson Kenny Irwin, now 35. "Well, come on, I was a kid at the time. I thought she was pretty amazing." Pamela, he recalls, loved to spoil her grandchildren, taking them on outings to ice cream parlors and arcades and buying them presents like a cigarette-smoking robot.

Pamela moved to Los Angeles after her stroke and took up residence in a tiny bungalow at the foot of the office building that housed the LA Rams' headquarters. She kept a Christmas tree up year-round. But both Chusid and Lindgren, who visited her there, remember that the main feature of the house was the grand piano in the center of the living room

"She was like an elf or an imp," Lindgren recalls. "She had a magical quality. I played the piano. She picked out a few notes. When she was playing the piano, she really came alive."

"Music was her life," says her son Ken Irwin. "You'd ask her to play a song written in the 1800s. She didn't remember until I played a few bars and then she could play the whole thing. I could never stump her." According to *Ripley's Believe It or Not!*, Pamela memorized 10,000 songs.

In "Flip Flop Fly!" Pamela appears as something of a showbiz huckster. In one speech, she declaims, "[Madonna's] the Lucia Pamela of her day. She may not be the best actress, but she believes in herself, and when you do that, everything's possible. You just gotta believe! That's what it means to be an American!"

To Ken Irwin, though, she was, more than anything, a free spirit.

"She had confidence," he says. "That's something women lacked in that generation. When she wanted to go onstage, my grandmother's argument was, 'Women don't do that. Men will be ogling you. They'll think you're not a nice woman.' Lucia said, 'They can think what they want. I'm going to play music and enjoy it.'"

