

Calendar

Did She Get a Divorce?

Barbie Discussion and Appraisal

Members of the Golden Girl Doll Club await sister-member Cathy Braun's report from the Barbie collectors' convention. Braun, 47, of Oceanside, went to the convention in Chicago earlier this month. She has been to six in a row of these annual gatherings where she buys Barbies, outfits, and accessories both old and new.

How old is old? Some of hers date from 1959, the first year that Barbies were manufactured. But she doesn't have the first model,

LOCAL EVENTS

the coveted number one — only a number

two. The difference? Very little or very much, depending on whether or not you are a Barbie collector.

Braun says she has over 1000 Barbies in her collection. The divorced mother of four boys keeps her collection in her bedroom. "I have a ledge on my wall, where they're stacked six deep. My dad built shelves in a little alcove, and I think they're ten deep in there." The collection includes the first Barbie she got as a kid — one she actually played with, before she became a collector.

Another club member, Mary Envall, 50, of Vista, characterizes her collection this way: "I like vintage, from 1959 to 1968." What changed in 1968? "The manufacturer's location. I pretty much collect only Japanese-made Barbies. Later they were manufactured in Hong Kong, Mexico, and elsewhere, and I don't like the quality as well."

The condition of Envall's collection distinguishes it. "I try to find things that are pretty mint," she says. "Other people may buy a large collection that's been played with and be okay with that. I tend to buy nicer quality." Envall says, however, that she is not so picky as those who want NRFB: "Never Removed from Box." NRFB is a step up from MIB. "If it's 'Mint in Box,' it could have been taken out, but it's still nice. NRFB is perfect."

Three club members, including Envall, have loaned their dolls to an exhibit of some 30 pristine Barbies at the Mission Branch Library on view this month. This weekend the three will be there for a discussion and informal appraisal of Barbies that the public is



Number two Barbie, 1959

welcome to bring.

Envall has lent two of her number three Barbies from 1960. "One is wearing [an outfit called] 'Plantation Belle' — that's a pink, dotted-Swiss full skirt to the knee and a big hat. The other is in 'Sorority Meeting,' which is a brown sheath dress with a brown sweater vest and pillbox hat."

Lee Parker, an accountant who lives in the Normal Heights area, is the lender of the sole number two in the exhibit. A generation older than Braun and Envall, Parker didn't play with Barbies as a kid. "She came too late for my generation,"

says Parker, who started collecting in the 1970s and has about 500. What attracted her to this particular collectible? "The clothes," Parker says.

It was difficult to find whole outfits when Parker began to shop for them at flea markets and doll shows. "You had to hunt and peck to put an outfit together." Later, dealers got smart and started putting the outfits together themselves, then charged more for them.

The number one Barbie, lent to the exhibit by 75-year-old Mary Lou Voigt, was introduced in 1959 wearing a zebra-striped bathing suit, hoop

earrings, stiletto pumps, and sunglasses with blue lenses. One of its earliest outfits, called "Picnic," consisted of denim pedal pushers, a red-and-white-checked shirt that tied at the waist, and a red hat with a frog on top. The props that came with the outfit were a picnic basket and fishing pole from which dangled a plastic fish.

When Ken came along in 1961 he was first sold wearing red bathing trunks with a white stripe and cork sandals. A little yellow towel was also included. The Ken outfit "Dream Boat," circa 1963, was olive-green slacks, a patterned shirt, a mustard-colored jacket, and a red-banded hat. "Rally Day" came with a set of tiny keys and a road map.

What's the map of? Envall has one but says, "I've never unfolded it. With these things, considering their age, you sort of use the white gloves."

Have there been many others besides Ken in Barbie's life? "There's someone new right now," says Envall. Did Barbie and Ken actually ever get married? "Well, she has many wedding gowns. People also ask us: 'But did she get a divorce?' The answer is: 'I don't know.'"

Envall bought one of her number twos for \$375; the other, misdescribed on eBay as a number four, was a bargain at \$89. Owners of ordinary Barbies who plan to bring dolls to the library on Saturday shouldn't get their hopes up about values, warns each of these collectors.

What would they like to see come through the door? "A black Francie is very rare," says Envall. The white version, Barbie's cousin, was introduced in 1966; the so-called "Colored Francie" came out in 1967. "And an 'American Girl' would be nice" — from 1965 and 1966. "They have bangs, shoulder-length hair in lots of different colors, and bendable legs."

— Jeanne Schinto

**"Collecting Barbie Dolls":
Discussion and Informal
Appraisal
Saturday, August 28
11:00 a.m.
Mission Branch Library
3861-B Mission Avenue
Oceanside
Free
Info: 760-435-5640**

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