

Adorable Dolls...Our Childhood Friends

Dionne Dolls Captivated

IN 1935, when I was 7, the world was agog with the Dionne quintuplets. News of the quints was everywhere. They were babies, they were cute and, miracle of miracles, there were five of them, born in 1934 in Canada.

Imagine my friend Jean's and my delight when we saw ads in the Chicago papers offering Dionne quintuplet dolls—for \$1, all five for \$1!

Shaking the piggy bank, counting pennies and nickels, I had a dollar and so did Jean. We were ecstatic when our savings each turned into five little babies, each dressed in a different color: Annette was in yellow; Marie, pink; Yvonne, blue; Cecile, green; and Emilie, lavender.

Jean and I played many happy hours with our five little babies, dressing and re-dressing them and making up games. I had our mother label my dolls with their names so that I could get the correct colors on them. I wore out the dresses and, later, Mother knit little outfits for each.

I still have those treasured 20-cent dolls. Pennies went a long way back in 1935.

—Dorothy Smith, Madison, Indiana

Just Wait...

SANTA CLAUS brought matching dolls, "Gary" and "Larry," to my brother Tom Payne and me for Christmas, in 1951. Tom was 4 and I was 8, and he always wanted what I had.

After we unwrapped the dolls, Mother whispered that if I just waited a couple of days, Tommy would tire of his doll and it would be mine. She was absolutely right, and she made several matching outfits for

the twins.

When I was young, I do not remember anyone else having twin dolls, so I felt that I had something unique. I think that's why I have taken such good care of them.

—Nancy Wilson, Chillicothe, Illinois

Prayers Were Answered

MY FATHER, Merle Beck, had a meat shop in the back of a Thriftway store in Portland, Oregon in 1957, when I was 10. If Mom needed the car during the day, she had to pick Dad up after work, and we kids always thought going along was an adventure. Our treat was often a wiener from the meat case.

One early December night, as I walked along the sawdust-covered floor, I almost lost my breath. There, high on a shelf above the cooler, was the most beautiful doll I had ever seen .

I couldn't even talk, much less take my eyes off her. I wanted her so much for Christmas.

Every chance I got, I went with Mom to the store to get Dad, just to get a look at that doll. I was one of five kids and we didn't have a lot, but I prayed for her.

On Christmas morning, I was eager to go to the living room but also scared that that doll wouldn't be under the tree.

My brother and I tiptoed down the hall, and he said, "Lynnda, I think I see 'Penny.'" (I had already named her.)

Even today, I can feel the tears in my eyes and the lump in my throat when I saw her standing in our living room. I'll never forget the wonder of it all.

—Lynnda Beck Isles, Hood River, Oregon

Hard Times, Lots of Love

IN 1959, when I was 5, all I wanted for Christmas was Patti Playpal. I talked about her all the time.

Dad had been laid off and money was tight, so Mom got a part-time job at Winkleman's clothing store in Livonia, Michigan so they could get me that doll.

Mom said just seeing my face light up that Christmas morning was worth all the money in the world.

I dressed Patti in my clothes and took her everywhere I went. She still holds a special place in my heart.

—Sandy Felt, Plymouth, Michigan

Truly Pitiful Pearl

"I first set eyes on Poor Pitiful Pearl on Christmas 1957, when I was 5," says Jacqueline Miraglia, Farmingville, New York. "She came dressed in a blue peasant dress with white polka dots with a red patch on it and a matching scarf. She also had a party dress. In the '60s, my sister Corann teased Pearl's hair in a beehive, which was popular then. It took me years to get all the knots out. She now proudly sits on my guest bed in her original dress, showing off that sheepish smile that I first saw her with, 50 years ago."

She Was Gone!

I WAS ALMOST 10 as Christmas 1948 approached, and Mother always took me to the town toy store to pick out a doll for Christmas or my birthday, December 27.

At the store, I fell in love with a Madame Alexander doll dressed like Alice in Wonderland. Every chance I got when I was in town with Mother or my girlfriends, I would stop by the toy store and visit my Alice. I was worried that someone else would buy her before Christmas.

One day, just before Christmas, I stopped and my beautiful doll was gone. My heart ached.

On Christmas morning, I opened my presents, and there was Alice. I treasured her so much that I never played with her, just took her out time after time to hold her and look at her. I didn't want to ruin her.

Mother made me a dress identical to Alice's and even had a picture taken with her at a photo studio.

Today, Alice is still perfect, although her box disintegrated. I'll always treasure her.

—Patricia Scairpon, Ortley Beach, New Jersey

Hospitals Helped Them Both

MY SPECIAL DOLL came into my life in the hospital in 1940, when I was 10 and recovering from an appendectomy.

My dear teacher, Mrs. Wilma Grainger, surprised me with a visit, carrying a big box containing this beautiful doll. I gave her the name "Priscilla."

Mother donated her wood plant stand, and we padded it for a crib.

Many years later, my daughter renamed the doll "Joanie" and, being a toddler, dragged Joanie around the house and down the stairs, which did considerable damage to her composition head.

After my daughter married and was living in Minneapolis, she came home for Thanksgiving one year, carrying a large box.

"Mom, I can't wait for you to open your Christmas present," she said.

So I opened the box and shouted, "It's Joanie!"

We both cried. She had taken the doll from the attic, then to a doll hospital, and Joanie was just like new.

Not too much later, we got an invitation to the Graingers' 50th wedding anniversary, so I took Joanie to show dear Mrs. Grainger. She was so pleased.

—Fran Parker, Plover, Wisconsin

What a Prize!

AT THE END of the Great Depression, everyone was working hard to get back on their feet. I was almost 4 years old, and I went door-to-door with my mother, selling household cleaning products.

There were monthly prizes for top sales, and the month my mother won had the best prize ever—a Sonja Henie doll! She was the most beautiful doll, with her blonde hair, white skating dress with fur trim and white shoe skates.

Sonja Henie was a very popular figure skater who won gold medals in the 1928, 1932 and 1936 Winter Olympics.

When the pond near our home froze over, my doll and I would skate. Oh, what a great time we had! She was my best friend, and we had many secrets. When I moved to Florida, in 1942, she was by my side and even went to school sometimes for show-and-tell.

To honor this doll for many years of joy and loyalty, she rests on my buffet, looking as pretty as ever, although a little worn.

—Ruth Davis, Largo, Florida

Shirley Waited for Her

DURING the 1936 Christmas season, I had scarlet fever and was quarantined for 6 weeks. On Christmas morning, my mother stood outside my grandmother's home (my grandmother was taking care of me) and showed me what Santa Claus had left for me—the Shirley Temple doll I had wished for.

I had a very long wait before I could hold her. She went through many moves, even after my marriage.

When my husband went into the Marines, during the Korean War, I stored Shirley in the attic. Unfortunately, the Florida heat melted her, but at least I still have an old photo of me and her, taken in 1937, in Tabor, Iowa.

—Elaine Sweat, Jacksonville, Florida

Longtime Friend

“I received my Patti Playpal on my ninth birthday, in 1960. She’s been sitting in my bedroom in several homes since that day,” says Lani Vasileff, Minneapolis, Minnesota. “I named her ‘Wendy’ after the character in Peter Pan. She’s a life-sized doll and wears size 2 clothing. She has a suitcase full of clothes, some new, some vintage, which I change with the seasons. I know she’s worth some money, but I would never part with her. After all these years, she’s become a part of the family.”

Changed Her Mind

SOMETIME DURING the 1936 holiday season, I saw a pretty baby doll in the toy department at J.C. Penney’s. She would open and close her eyes and say “Momma” when picked up.

Before I left the store, I had Santa’s promise to bring me the doll.

A few days later, December 1, my baby brother was born. I was so thrilled that I told everyone that I wouldn’t need a doll for Christmas because I had a real baby.

I was 6 and by Christmas, I was secretly wishing for the doll. After all, my baby brother cried and slept a lot, and I couldn’t play with him all the time.

Santa kept his promise, and I have had my “Merrie” for over 70 years.

—Doris Gosnell, Lawrenceville, Illinois