

# All Dolled Up



Club member Cheryl Power in the middle of her Barbie room, holding the crown jewel in her collection, an original Number One from 1959.

■ Club member Cheryl Power, DWP, is one of the country's premier Barbie collectors.

For Cheryl Power, it's all about the childhood memories. What was once lost, has now been found. And then some.

"I came home from school one day, and my grandmother had given away all my Barbie stuff," Cheryl says, surrounded by Barbie magazines and photos. "She said I was too old to play with Barbie dolls."

But they hadn't really been given away. Just stored away, out of the reach of young Cheryl, who's now a meter reader in the Truesdale Street/Sun Valley DWP office.

"Then, back in 1990, the trunk with all my Barbies was found in the attic of the family home. I opened up the trunk, and it was like a trip down memory lane. The dolls, the clothing, the little accessories, they were all there. Immediately I put the clothing back on the little hangers and hung them up in the doll trunks."

From that grew an obsession that rages on to this day, with eBay packages arriving and departing, collector magazines piling up, Barbie clubs joined, conventions (about one a year) and publicity events attended, and a Barbie Room overflowing with vintage ephemera.

And it all stems from her very first Barbie, a Number One, to those in the know.

"It was the very first series," she said. "My dad bought it for me at the Tinkerbell shop in Disneyland in 1959," the year Barbie came to be.

Does she still have it? "No, I don't. It was well-loved."

But it has been replaced: At a Barbie convention (a "Festival") in Orlando in 1994, she found another Number One, complete with the box and all the accessories, and the price was



Cheryl's Barbie Club, the Tickled Pink Barbie Club of Ventura County. This image courtesy of the Tickled Pink club, photograph by Rebecca Lynne.

right. So it came home with her.

Her mint-condition Number One, the gold standard of Barbie collecting, remains her most valuable treasure and one that she keeps in a safe away from her home with the other extremely-valuable, including several Number Threes, a Side Part American Girl (you know you love Barbie if you know what that means), and other vintage collectibles. While her collection spans the entire Barbie era, the vast majority of her stash is considered "vintage," or, more specifically, the era in which she grew up, 1959-66. She has more than 300 dolls ("easy," she says) including Barbies, Kens, Midges, Skippers and a few reproduction lines, and surely thousands of collateral pieces. She doesn't collect the play line, which is intended for children. She goes after only the swanky Collector's Series and the ultra-swanky Silkstone Series, both aimed at adults. ("Barbie and Ken might have just broken up, according to Mattel," she says, referring to a recent "news announcement" from the maker of Barbie. "But they will always be together in the Collector's Series," she says. "Ken is the ultimate accessory to Barbie.")

"I can look at an outfit and remember my mother and father buying it for me," Cheryl explains. "I can remember where I was, when it was, when I received it."

"I can remember the last piece of clothing given to me as a child. It was a Matinee Fashion, a red linen suit. My mother gave it to me when I went up to visit her in Santa Barbara. I looked in the trunk, but it wasn't there. I had to buy it on the secondary market. I found it at a convention in 1997."

"When I opened the trunk in 1990, there were some pieces missing that had most likely been sucked up by the Hoover vacuum cleaner 40 years ago," she explains. "So I went out to just complete some of the outfits and ... heh heh heh, here we are."

"Fifteen years after first opening the trunk, my collection is still growing. It's an investment I get to enjoy." She knows about how much her collection is worth, but it remains her secret, at least for now.

Is there anything left for her to discover?

"Oh, sure," she says. "Mattel at the time licensed so many Barbie products to so many companies. Just when I think I have everything, I find something on eBay that I've never seen. I can always find something that interests me, but I can't afford it. Barbie is why I have a day job!"

Which would be her favorite?

"I guess my newest acquisition would be my favorite, whatever that happens to be," she says. "Although the Number Threes would have to be my favorites, I guess. They have that little,

demure look. I just love that."

At work in the Truesdale office, she is well known for her Barbie obsession. Her office space is decorated with all things Barbie, the backside of her ID card has a photo of Barbie as a DWP employee, and people in the office even bring her little outfits from time to time.

"Not long ago, a co-worker told me he was watching a documentary about Barbie on TV, and wondering if I had ever seen it. Then he told that, 15 minutes later, he saw me on the program! And I said, 'What were you doing watching Barbie for 15 minutes?' He had no answer."

Cheryl doesn't know of any other City employee or Club member with a similarly strong passion for all things Barbie. But if you're at all interested, or you have something you might want to sell, you can e-mail her at cherylinla2@yahoo.com

What about a DWP Meter Reader Ken? Does she own that?

"No," she laughed. "But that would be great if they made that, wouldn't it? A Ken with little blue shorts and a yellow shirt. That would be a cute one!"

"I'd love to see a Tom Cruise Ken, from any of his movies. I don't care which one. I just love Tom Cruise."

Is it a good hobby?

"Well, I think you have to have some bond with the doll," she says. "Or a love of fashion. But it's a fun hobby, with lots of nice people."

"I collect for the love of the doll. It's that simple."



Even Cheryl's car proudly proclaims her as an official Barbie nut.



Cheryl's Barbie room. Photograph by Cheryl's friend, Chris.

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