

## *The Willows Gazette*

### **Esther Leidolf**

Barbie Millicent Roberts, from Willows, Wisconsin turned fifty this week. She attended High School in Willows and New York City. Even though Barbie has changed careers over eighty times since she left [Mattel] University, her professional salary has grown from \$3200 dollars per-year in 1959 to the \$1.5 billion dollar-per-year industry it is today. Barbie ran for US President twice; and was a model recruit for all branches of the military. She enlisted as a medic in Desert Storm and will appear in uniform for anyone who cares to dress her. [All of her uniforms have been approved by the US Pentagon]. Barbie has traveled into space on three separate occasions, and she is an avid animal lover. Over the last fifty years, she has cared for over 21 dogs, 12 horses, 3 ponies, 6 cats, a parrot, a chimpanzee, a panda, a lion cub, a giraffe and a zebra.

Friends and family gathered from forty-five different nations to the star-struck town of Willows to celebrate this milestone. You see, Barbie has had a difficult life. In spite of her many accomplishments she was a late bloomer. She didn't speak until she was nine but suddenly mastered both English and Spanish. Barbie has overcome enormous physical challenges. Her legs didn't bend for the first six years of her life. When we first met Barbie in 1959, she was introduced as "the only anatomically perfect doll manufactured today." Her measurements at the time were 36-18-38 and she was 5-foot-9. Sometime later she shrunk to a more feminine 5-foot-6 and her measurements changed to 39-21-33. Barbie started using a wheelchair

amidst these changes, but later appeared standing tall with her current measurements, 34-22-33. Even now she lacks the 17 to 22 percent body fat required for women to menstruate. Still in question are her vague genitals. And don't forget, Barbie did not have a belly button until she was forty-one year old. After years of physical therapy she was able to bend at the waist and move the rest of her joints by 1970. She went on to become an Olympic athlete in 1975, and again in 2000-even while running for president. Wow, what a gal!

Barbie has overcome some emotional burdens as well. In her early years she was known to wonder toy stores nationwide babbling nothing more than, "I love shopping!" "Math is hard!" "Will we ever have enough clothes?" No wonder she has battled with anorexia her entire life. Barbie copes through shopping therapy and adds one hundred new outfits to her wardrobe each year. She has acquired more than a billion pairs of shoes, all high-heels because her feet have never rested flatly on the floor. Surviving these challenges with no signs of wear has undoubtedly turned Barbie into the icon she is today.

Researchers at Bath University found that, "Barbie provoked rejection, hatred and violence" in young girls. The feelings were attributed to Barbie being a feminine icon, "plastic" and an unwelcome reminder of their childhood. Many girls aged seven to eleven subjected Barbie to "maiming and decapitation that range from removing her hair, burning, breaking and even

microwaving.” “It's as though disavowing Barbie is a rite of passage and a rejection of their past,” said Dr Agnes Nairn.

Supporting her through all this has been her loving family. Her parents, George and Margaret Roberts returned from a cruise to celebrate with the rest of the family. Her siblings: Skipper, 45 and Tutti with her twin brother Todd, 43 performed old favorites from Barbie's Rock Band. Tutti later became Stacie but this transition remains a topic the family will not discuss. Barbie's other sisters Kelly, 14 and Krissy, 10 reside at the family home in Willows. Barbie's dear friend from the civil rights era, "Colored Francie," photographed the affair. The party was far more intimate than her sweet sixteen, when a section of Times Square is renamed Barbie Boulevard for an entire week.

Barbie's mentor, German sex-toy/fashion doll Bild Lilli did not attend the event. Lilli, a curvy and heavily made-up beauty, could not leave the country because she was being investigated for wearing a banned two-piece swimsuit. Lilli was taken into custody when she quipped, “Which piece do you want me to take off?”

Always by her side is her common law husband Ken Carson. Ken, two years her junior, has been known as Barbie's boyfriend for his entire life. After forty-three years together Barbie dumped Ken when she met an Australian hunk named Blaine. Ken buffed himself up, got a new look and won her back two years later. Like Mickey and Minnie, they never married but entertained impressionable youth for decades.

Despite her Midwestern upbringing Barbie has lead a checkered past. She rode with a motorcycle gang that was thrilled to have a pink Harley-Davidson in the pack. In 1989

the Barbie Liberation Organization was formed; a coalition of *Teen Talk Barbie* and *Talking Duke G.I. Joe*. Little is known about what went on at board meetings but the BLO would return from weekend retreats in an altered state. Children had to adjust to Barbies who yelled, “Vengeance is mine!” and G.I. Joes who daydreamed, “Let's plan our dream wedding!” The Barbie Disinformation Organization, a subversive marketing firm, attempted to change Barbie's image. They redesigned traditional packaging with appliqué's on Barbie products. Soon “Barbie's Stylin' Salon” packaging was replaced with “Barbie Lesbian Barber Shop.” “Lipstick Lesbian Betty” was an attempt to coerce “Barbie's Best Friend Betty” into a new market. According to the SurReview, one critic was delighted to see Barbie in a cheerleader outfit reading the adventures of “Theme Hooker Barbie.”

Barbie is not yet revealing her plans for the future. Gosh! She has done like so many totally awesome things that there is little left for her to try. Financiers are submitting proposals for the “Alternative Lifestyle Barbie Collection,” but she thinks that's yucky. She nixed the line of “Breast Feeding Barbie” because, well, Barbie has no nipples. Ken wanted to branch out on his own with “Safe Sex Ken,” but his penis being molded to his body rendered him dysfunctional for the role. “Totally Stylin' Tattoos” Barbie was a hit in Sacramento where she is also testing, “Gender Bender Barbie,” accessorized to promote fluid gender expressions. One of her cousins wants to come-out as “Intersex Barbie” but the family is keeping the condition a secret. Besides, none of them know how to explain it.

Those of us who have known Barbie all our lives might like to see “Menopause Barbie,” with distinctive wrinkles, who sometimes wets when she sneezes. Or “Hot Flash Barbie,”

fashioned in stylish layers with matching handheld fans. “Baby Boomer Barbie” would have a knee brace and a stock portfolio that shrinks, “before your very eyes.” “Obama Barbie” would look even younger than any previous Barbie and promote self esteem by telling young people, “Yes We Can!”



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Whatever Barbie decides for her future we’re convinced she will leave a lasting impression. Even in this economy Barbie feels secure because this year [2009] every second, two Barbie®dolls are sold somewhere in the world.

WOW! What a gal.

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