

Photo Gallery of Barbara Brabec's Childhood Collection of PAPER DOLLS

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A supplement to Barbara's website article, "**Childhood Amnesia: Lost Memories of a Paper Doll Collection,**" which is reprinted in this document.



This old Christmas card box housed my collection of paper dolls, a collection I'd completely forgotten in my old age.



The autograph book inside the box contained paper dolls within all the pages of the book. This was the first page.



The story of this collection and how I got it back after many decades is told in the article.



Each doll's page carried the doll's name, but I think dolls were sometimes put back in their wrong "compartment."



This is the doll and some of the dresses shown in the first picture



I designed dresses for many of the dolls. My original designs appear at right.



I loved to design formal gowns for my dolls, like the pink and yellow dress at right.



This is only a sampling of the 33 dolls in my collection.



Two more of my evening gowns at right.



The yellow top/pink-bottom gown is my creation, as well as the red and yellow dress to its right.



THE FOREGOING COLLECTION of photos was created to illustrate the article I posted on my website titled “**Childhood Amnesia: Lost Memories of a Paper Doll Collection.**” (See below for a reprint of that article.) This article adds “rest-of-the-story” information that couldn’t be included in my biography and memoir about my mother. *Marcella’s Secret Dreams and Stories—A Mother’s Legacy* was [published in paperback on Amazon](#), November 2017.

For more information about the book—which has a large and growing department of its own— [visit this page on my website](#) for more articles and a link to the book’s ONLINE PHOTO ALBUM. ([See Table of Contents here.](#))



WRITING THIS BOOK taught me more about memory and the things we forget as we grow older. In Mother’s memoir, she mentioned that Mary loved to play with her collection of paper dolls, a fact I didn’t question. But when my sisters visited me in 2017 to celebrate our “landmark birthdays,” Mary brought with her a surprise gift for me: the collection of paper dolls that I had completely forgotten was once mine. She had ended up with this keepsake when Mother closed our home in Buckley and had turned it up when she was downsizing her life for a move.

I remembered that I loved to draw as a child and recognized my own artistry in the collection, but I still have no memory of cutting out paper dolls from the newspaper or drawing my own paper dolls and designing wardrobes for the 33 dolls in this collection. What surprised both of us was that neither of us had any memory of ever playing with these dolls, though from the size of the collection it was surely a major childhood pastime. All I remember to this day is that I loved to draw as a child and carried my artistic talents into adulthood.

This memory failure prompted me to do a Web search on childhood memories, and I soon found several articles on the topic of “childhood amnesia,” something that has apparently puzzled psychologists for more than a century. *If this prompts you to ask yourself what your earliest memories are, you’ll find additional perspective by searching the Web for this phrase and “secrets of childhood memories.”*

I believe we all have selective memories and choose to remember certain places and life events that had a great emotional or physical impact on us, like my stepping on a nail when I was about six and Daddy sticking my heel in a cow pile. As an adult when I first told Mother I remembered being on a paddlewheel boat as a child, she said I was only three at the time. But I can still see that paddlewheel turning in my mind today. *[End of excerpt.]*

Barbara's Childhood Paper Doll Collection ~ The Rest of the Story ~

WHEN MARY HANDED ME my special birthday gift in an unwrapped Christmas card box that looked very old and worn, I had no idea what to expect when I cautiously removed the lid. Inside I found what looked like an old autograph book with something between its pages. When I opened the book and saw what it contained, I was flabbergasted. "This must be yours," Mary said, "because it sure isn't mine."

Within the pages of this little book, I found 33 paper dolls, each between four and four and a half inches tall, and I was rather impressed by my creative filing system for the collection. Each doll had her own page with her name written at top. Although the title on the above page indicates this is a Tillie doll, I think it's actually a Brenda Starr doll. It's now obvious to me that we didn't always put the dolls back in their original "compartment."

I've never forgotten how much I loved to draw as a child, so I immediately recognized my own artistry in the collection. I used to draw a lot of pretty long-haired girls in beautiful dresses, but I was stunned to realize that I had no memory of ever cutting out paper dolls from the newspaper or drawing my own paper dolls and designing wardrobes for them and many of the other dolls in this collection.

I think I probably outgrew this childhood pastime to move into sewing dresses for my tiny Hollywood Doll, at which time Mary, being five years younger than I, began to play with the doll collection. Since few adults retain childhood memories before the age of seven, perhaps this explains why neither Mary nor I remember playing with these dolls. They were probably just one of many things that occupied our time in those days.

Famous Paper Dolls

SEVERAL DOLLS IN THE COLLECTION are ones that I drew myself, but they are simply different poses of the three commercial dolls I was cutting out of the newspaper, namely, Brenda Starr, Tillie, and Mopsy. Each of the commercial dolls came in different poses, usually with two or three different outfits. Using colored pencils, I designed larger wardrobes for most of the dolls. As I enjoyed looking through my collection, I researched paper doll collections on the Web and tracked down some interesting history about the comic strips that inspired the three dolls I collected:

- The "Brenda Starr, Reporter" comic strip was created in 1940 by cartoonist Dale Messick, according to the caption on a *Chicago Tribune* photo. Messick was a greeting card artist from South Bend, Indiana who changed her first name from Dalia to Dale when told that "editors and readers would be more receptive to a gender-neutral moniker." Brenda Starr was named after a 1930s debutante, and the doll looked a lot like actress Rita Hayworth.

- "Tillie the Toiler" was created by cartoonist Russ Westover, who based this character on a strip originally titled "Rose of the Office." When he changed the title, King Features Syndicate bought the strip and ran it from 1921 to 1959.

- The "Mopsy" comic strip was created in 1939 by Gladys Parker, a writer and one of the few female cartoonists of that era. The idea for the strip was prompted by a comment from cartoonist Rube Goldberg who said her hair looked like a mop. Mopsy was portrayed as a

working girl like her creator, one who was always surrounded by admiring men who appreciated witty comebacks, something Parker was famous for. There were different dolls in the “Mopsy Modes” collection, each of which had different hair colors and styles of dress to fit a particular profession. The strip ran for three decades.

The Market for Vintage Paper Dolls

MY WEB RESEARCH revealed that there is a large market for paper doll collectors, especially for those dolls that are still uncut on the old newspapers. On the Kovel's website I found this information:

“The first American paper dolls were published by Crosby, Nichols and Company of Boston, Massachusetts, in 1854. By the 1880s, sheets of printed paper dolls and clothes were being made. The first paper doll books were made in the 1920s. Collectors prefer uncut sheets or books or boxed sets of paper dolls. Prices are about half as much if the pages have been cut.

In talking with a couple of neighbors about my paper doll collection, I learned that their grandchildren now play with plastic dolls that have magnetic dresses. And when I mentioned this to my sister Mollie in one of our Skype conversations, she said “Wait a minute,” and then came back with the stand-up cardboard dolls she played with as a child. One had magnetic qualities where you would rub the doll or the dress to magnetize it and it would stick to the doll. She also has two stand-up “Teen Time” dolls that apparently date back to the late fifties and early sixties.

The older I get, the more value I find in reminiscing about the past and thinking about the things I did at different stages of my life. Now in what I believe to be the last chapters of my life, it's comforting to see that what I loved to do as a child are still things I love to do now. I still like to draw, still have colored pencils and chalk and acrylic paints in my art and crafts collection, still love to design something new and work with my hands.

It was pure fun for me to have a spot on my website to write about one of my childhood pastimes and share some pictures of a few paper dolls in my boxed “autograph book collection.”



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