



All Dolled Up

by Jean Edsall

"Dolly Diary"

My name is Bleuette. My name means "a spark that lights a fire."

I was conceived in 1905 in France for the initial intent to be given as a premium for a new magazine for girls. The magazine, titled "*La Semaine de Suzette*," (Suzette's week) was published weekly. There were 20,000 of us made and all were sold before the first issue was published.

The magazine included stories, games, crafts, recipes, instruction in social graces, and patterns to fit me. (By the way, I am 10 5/8" tall, my head is porcelain, and my body is composition.) I was made to be played with, and as a teaching tool, unlike some of the other French dolls.

My mama and I learned the values of the Roman Catholic Church, the fine art of homemaking, good manners, and how to be fine French ladies through play, fashion, and etiquette.

We also were taught how to make many new items for my wardrobe from patterns included in the magazine. If she had been able to make one of each of the patterns published, I would have had 1060 garments over the 55 years when dolls like me were made.

I wanted so badly to have outfits to match each of my mama's varied costumes so we could do everything together. And of course, I had to have hats, stockings, shoes, belts, undergarments, outer wear, collars and cuffs, aprons, jewelry, (of course that requires a jewelry box!) scarves, and various accessories for each. Don't you?

I was very busy. Also, I was the first doll to have slacks as well as sports costumes for we were active in boating, tennis, swimming, fencing, I even have an aviator's costume. Of course, I had to have party dresses, a dress for First Communion, and years later, a wedding gown.

We learned to knit and crochet. We designed and made furniture. There were patterns and instructions for gloves, parasols, fans, lace mittens, hat boxes: anything and everything my mama had, I should have.

If you study my costume styles for any period, you are able to see how fashion was affected by the changing role of women.

My mama taught me many things, and

I taught her how to be a good wife and mother when she grew up.

I survived two world wars and at times I had to do "without" things to which I had grown accustomed.

I guess dolls like me are difficult to find now—45 years after the last one was made in 1960.

Even if you could find one, she would be very expensive.

If you are lucky enough to own one of my sisters, treasure her.

I am very popular today, however, because of the books telling my story and copies of the magazine that have been found. Many doll collectors and doll makers are having a great time making dolls like me and using the old patterns to make wardrobes for us. Sometimes it is a challenge to find authentic small printed fabrics, small trims, buttons, and accessories proportionate to my small size.

I'll bet dollmakers have a good time getting together to work on their dolls, their many costumes, and making all the fun things that I require. I don't think women are any different than they were in the early 1900s, in that they need to have fellowship, fun and be creative.

I hear that there are at least 3 different heads that can be used for a modern day "Bleuette". If there is a doll studio in your area, you, too, can learn how to make a porcelain doll. Once you've made your doll, *then* you will want to begin making a wardrobe for your own dolly.

She will love you for it!

Also, if you just cannot find a studio, or for some reason are not able to have this much fun yourself, there are professional dollmakers available to make one for you. Either way you would be able to choose her wig style and color, as well as her eye color.

I'm pretty sure several dolls have followed in my footsteps, and many little girls have had all the accessories necessary for successful play. I hope that learning to create does not become a lost art.

Did you have a favorite doll?

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