

Remembering Melinda

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It's been years since I last saw Melinda, though I recall her fondly. That kind of looks like her, standing with her sister Linda. How many absorbing hours of enjoyment and wonderful stories the two of them gave my sister and me, during our last few doll-playing years. They were the stuff that childhood was made on.



We lost track of Linda and Melinda once we gave up acting out their adventures – I suppose they went to play with our younger sisters – but we never forgot

them or their stories. So I got quite a jolt of nostalgia a few years back, when I spotted Linda's familiar face on a thrift store shelf. I'd have known her anywhere.

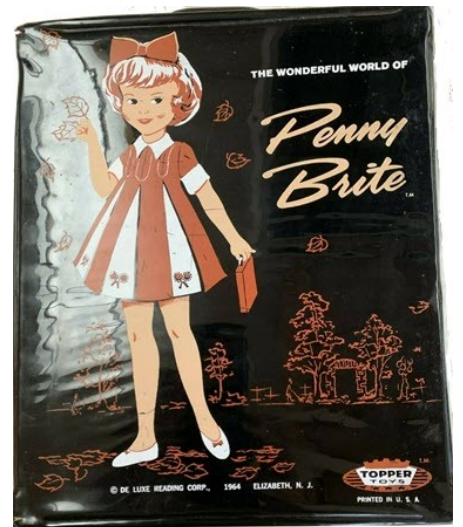


For some stupid reason I didn't make the purchase, and afterwards kicked myself. It would have been so much fun to gift her to my sister, who recalls our games as vividly as I do myself. I decided to go looking for Linda and her sister Melinda.

It turned out to be easy to locate Linda; she is actually a well-known branded doll: Penny Brite, who back in the 60s was as popular as

Barbie's competitors Tammy and Sindy. (Barbie, of course, has outlasted them all, while the others are mostly forgotten).

Penny Brite was 8" tall, a pre-adolescent like Scooter (Barbie's little sister) or Pepper (Tammy's little sister).



To my delight, I was able to purchase two of these dolls on line, one for my sister and one for myself.

That was 10 years ago. I'd hoped to find Melinda too, but though I've been searching, I have not yet seen her.

Here's what I remember.

Melinda was shorter than 8" Linda, and looked like a younger child. She stood between 5" and 6" tall, with a chubbier appearance. She had quite flat feet and was balanced so that, unlike Linda, she could stand on her own.



Melinda looked quite a bit like the doll at right, with a similar expression. Like this one, she had straight rooted hair, cut fairly short.



The body shape I recall was similar to Regal's Kimmie, a popular doll from the 60s that came in two sizes and a whole range of variations. But Melinda wasn't one of those: for starters, as far as I know, the smallest Kimmie was over 9" tall, much bigger than Penny Brite. And the face, though impishly cute, isn't quite right.



I distinctly remember Melinda's body shape as having been very round, but is it possible that I'm confusing her shape with the round tummy and bum of the Kimmies? (My sister recalls her similarly, but since I've had no luck finding her, I'm starting to question those recollections.)



My sister and I have speculated that Melinda may have been a knock-off of Ideal's Bam-Bam doll, like these. The faces are certainly close to the one I remember, but these aren't Melinda: both these dolls are 12" tall, and Melinda wasn't more than 6" at most.

She *could* have been a Bam-Bam knock-off, but I've been unable to find any small enough to have been her.



My doll collector friend suggests that Melinda may have been one of the many unbranded Japanese imports that flooded into Canada after World War II, and on that basis she figures it may be all but impossible to find Melinda. I'll keep trying, but in the meantime . . .



I did manage to find a doll that resembles Melinda in the face. She's quite a bit larger, though – about 9" tall – and the body shape isn't quite what I remember. But she looks like Melinda, and like Melinda she can stand on her own.



Thinking to include her in my seasonal decor, I dressed her for Christmas, complete with a badge that reads "Santa likes ME best!"

But it dawns on me now that I could display her all year round, along with my few other vintage dolls. In that case, she may need another outfit.



Although this doll isn't actually Melinda, looking at her still inspires precious memories of playing with my sister, acting out our stories of Melinda and *her* sister Linda. How inventive we were, and how completely absorbed in the moment: happy children at play.