

# **Beauty Isn't Fleeting**

**By Reg P. Wydeven**  
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Each year ‘Star Wars’ nerds, like myself, look forward to the New York Toy Fair. At the Fair, Hasbro unveils its slate of new action figures for the upcoming year. It’s always very exciting to see new incarnations of our favorite heroes and which obscure characters will be immortalized in plastic.

Unfortunately, this year looks like another great year for collectors, as there will be a bevy of awesome figures. Following the Fair, the Internet was abuzz with photos of this year’s lineup, many with 14 points of articulation (compared to the 6 points the figures had when I was a kid). While Star Wars has some really cool, very realistic action figures, they still can’t compete with the belle of the Fair.

In 1959, Barbara Millicent Roberts made her debut at the New York Toy Fair. So even though she turns 50 this year, Barbie is hotter than ever.

The top-selling doll of all time was created by Mattel co-founder Ruther Handler, and modeled after a sexy German doll named Bild Lilly. To commemorate the golden anniversary, the Mattel executives at the Barbie Design Center outside Los Angeles are releasing a tribute to the very first Bathing Suit Barbie. What’s even more impressive is that for a limited time, Mattel is paying homage to the original price of a Barbie in 1959, by charging just \$3 for the doll.

The toy maker obviously hopes the birthday blowout will increase sales. Like the rest of the country, Mattel is impacted by the recession. Sales during the 2008 holiday shopping season were actually down 21 percent.

If Jeff Eldridge has his way, sales will be down even further this year.

Eldridge, a Democrat from the West Virginia House of Delegates, introduced a state law that proposes to ban the sale of all dolls that “influence girls to be beautiful.” The bill would make it illegal to sell Barbie dolls “and other similar dolls that promote or influence girls to place undue importance on physical beauty to the detriment of their intellectual and emotional development.”

According to the Charleston Gazette, Eldridge introduced the bill because he believes Barbie dolls and others like her encourage girls to place too much value on physical appearance. He feels children need to know “beauty from the inside” is just as important as outer beauty.

Apparently Eldridge was unaware of Barbie’s role in the women’s movement. M.G. Lord, author of the book “Forever Barbie,” feels that Barbie “was in a lot of ways the first feminist. She kind of pointed the way out of the kitchen for little girls.” After all, she’s been busy for the last half-century; Barbie has had 108 careers, including a nurse, astronaut, doctor, Marine and, most recently, a TV chef.

If Eldridge’s bill does pass, maybe that will just turn more little girls on to Star Wars action figures. After all, at last year’s Toy Fair, Hasbro premiered a figure fans waited 25 years for: Yarna d’al’ Gargan, a six-breasted, wart-covered, morbidly obese woman in a skimpy outfit featured in 1983’s ‘Star Wars: Return of the Jedi.’ She clearly does not place undue importance on physical beauty. However, if, like me, these girls grow up and still collect when they’re in their 30s, maybe Star Wars figures do have a detriment on emotional development.