

Buying craze long over, but collecting continues

Cabbage Patch Kids still going strong as doll collectors gather in Oakville

By Melanie Cummings

SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

A Cabbage Patch Kid collector is a rare breed. The puffy-faced, big-eyed, yarn-haired dolls aren't seen primarily as untouchable financial investments, but conduits to carefree childhoods.

As a point of etiquette, they are not 'dolls', they're 'kids' and collectors don't 'buy' them, they 'adopt' them.

So was the lesson learned Sunday at a backyard picnic on Munn's Avenue, where about 15 women and 50 'kids' dressed in their finest attire gathered on a blanket to be adored and photographed.

It has been 20 years since the kids hit the marketplace in a frenzied buying craze that prompted long line-ups in retail shops. Stores do still sell them, however in much smaller quantities these days.

Jan Czuba is anxiously awaiting the arrival of a newly-released Cabbage Patch Kid at her local toy store. It'll be another showpiece among the 300 she has already amassed since the hobby consumed her two years ago.

It's a hobby for which Jan and her daughter Jennifer, 23 share a passion. In their Burlington home they've designated a Cabbage Patch Room where all their adoptees and their accessories are on display.

Like the women gathered Sunday, the Czubas are members of an on-line International Cabbage Patch Kids Hangout that has 600 enthusiasts.

Jane Salt and her daughter, Leah, 30 are avid collectors too, with about 400 between them. They are also Cabbage Patch Kids experts and appraisers.

Leah was the first to create a Web



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Sonia Herdman and Nancy Sabo celebrated the 20th anniversary of Cabbage Patch Kids with a special backyard picnic.

site in 1995 and in 1999 she started organizing massive gatherings that have drawn collectors from around the world.

The two know the lineage of all kids, their history and value. The family tree is determined by the industrial origin or, shall we say, 'hospital' in which they were born: Coleco, Mattel — and their location: in factories in Spain, Japan and China.

But Sunday's community get-together was an opportunity for the Salts to take the officialdom out of their hobby and just enjoy the fruits of their labour. They tell stories of rescuing homeless kids from garage sales and flea markets and of lovingly bathing and cleaning them, and replacing their tattered togs for homemade outfits.

Czuba's favourite is a formerly forlorn-looking, red fuzzy boy she snapped

up for \$1.99 in an estate sale.

Leah Salt's is Analise, which took her five years to find. She bought it off the Internet and paid \$60.

"It's so much more rewarding to restore a Cabbage Patch Kid than buy," said Jane Salt. "Mint condition is boring, we like to carry them around and let them live."

And that is the marked difference between a collector and investor.

"It's not weird for grown women to collect dolls," said Leah Salt. "Dolls are among the top five collectibles in the world."

In fact she just sold a Cabbage Patch Kids conductor's outfit on the on-line auction service for \$150 US, double her expected price. "I think that in this sometimes crazy world to find a hobby in which so much uninhibited joy is derived, is great."

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