



ESTABLISHED 1920

Let Reliable's Toter

"CARRIE"

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D. L. DAVIES

General Sales Manager.

Carrie: The hottest tot to hit the tills

By PAUL GOLDSTEIN
Star staff writer

Whatever happened to Baby Carrie?

She's the hottest babe ever to hit the nation. She rocketed to stardom in the shortest time of any Canadian doll—sales wise, that is, says her maker. She's also causing an isolated case of panic in the U.S.

And all this WITHOUT any advertising or promotion.

It's the psychological bit, folks. She fills an emotional need, says one child expert. Another agrees with the first, that "a vacuum" has been created by many toymakers with the walkie-talkie-bawling-giggler type of dolls.

No, she doesn't look like Mae West or Liz Taylor. She doesn't really look like anybody, except various other dolls made by Toronto's Reliable Toy Co. They're all cute.

She does blink, drink and (blush) "tink"—but so do many other dolls today. But that's all, folks.

Pretty dull, eh?

In the old days, before those technological wizards below the border started inserting mechanized anatomical parts in dolls, the best sales gimmick was to design one that looked like a star performer. How about it Big M?

Remember one of the world's greatest sellers—the Shirley Temple doll of the Thirties? Not that old? How about Canada's own sweetheart on skates of the Forties—Barbara Ann Scott?

Reliable also designed and made the skating queen doll in 1949, which burst all sales records for a Canadian-designed and produced doll. We're talking of standard sized dolls and up—not the stamped out variety that sells for a buck or less. Carrie sells for about \$7.

Remember Barbara Ann?

The Barbara Ann doll made 48,000 kids happy in '49. But Barbara baby, hang up your skates; loveable, anonymous-looking Carrie has put you on ice already—and Christmas sales are still to come.

Carrie hit the stores about Aug. 1. In just over three months she's gone to 80,000 little girls in Canada alone. Reliable's happy president Mannie Grossman sees an easy climb to 120,000 by year-end. Estimates are being boosted daily, he says.

"In all my years in the toy business (and Mannie's been around) I've never seen any doll—big or small—move this fast."

Reliable licensed a New York firm to produce Carrie for the U.S. market—and the American is wailing because he didn't produce enough on the initial run. Reliable flew the 2,600-pound mold to New York and back again after two weeks, because their backlog was being eaten away by the big merchandising chain stores.

But it's not the mold of the doll. The U.S. firm made up a similar looking doll. The mold is for an accessory which, according to one of our as yet unnamed experts, rocketed Carrie to stardom without promotion.

About 25,000 have been made in the States—but 48,000 have been "sold." The New Yorker wants that mold back. But Reliable's production line just keeps on humming—a molded piece every 30 seconds. The Yank may be lucky enough to get the mold back at the end of the month.

The secret

So what's the magic accessory?

The runaway sales jolted Reliable's president to ask an expert. He's Jerome Diamond, executive director of Toronto's Jewish Family and Child Service.

The following are excerpts from a taped interview between Mannie and the social worker.

But first: the accessory. It's a plastic realistic-looking infant's seat or toter complete with full harness, quilted mattress and spinballs.

Disappointed?

That's because you're not a head-shrinker. You got two tots or more? Watch the others while you feed one in an infant's seat. The real seat itself took the market by storm.



BABY CARRIE, A LITTLE GIRL'S DELIGHT

A bit of 'mothering' from Ruth Plummer, 4, (pigtails) and Corretti Labano, 3½

Now for the long-awaited explanation. Here's Diamond:

"One of the things that we (in the Family Life Education Program) began to realize was that today's toys weren't suiting the needs of children in preparing for later-life tasks.

"That's one of the important features of play. In former days, one was prepared for one's life. And in this area of family living, a vacuum has been created by the trends in children's toys . . .

"You know the trend towards teenage dolls and other kinds of dolls met one kind of need for certain kids.

"But the baby dolls were losing their appeal because they were getting less related to the reality of the actual caring process

that this kind of package (Carrie and seat) . . . represents to kids," added the social worker.

The chairman of the Canadian Toy Testing Council was recently quoted by The Star as saying much the same thing. Prepare the child for later life and help it develop through educational and co-ordination toys.

"The things that last are the good old standbys," said Mrs. P. J. Pocock of Ottawa, council chairman. "Many times the gimmicks are not worth buying."

Reliable's president, after the interview, summed it up with a question:

"What could a child offer a doll that has everything?"