



## **Paul's Toy Museum**

Jon Paul - hello.

Paul Hello.

Jon I'm at your house. Not every house is a museum, so why toys?

Paul When I met Maureen, my, my wife, 25 years ago, we discovered a mutual interest in toys. She was making bisque dolls (dolls made of china) and I was.... had a few toy trains and toy soldiers and so we put the....we got together this idea that we would start collecting toys. Then we discovered that we had too many toys. We had boxes of toys. It's got to the point now that we had thousands and thousands of toys and we couldn't just leave them in boxes because you can't enjoy them there. And so we wanted somewhere to display them, so the museum really is just a place for us to enjoy our, our toys and our toy collection and share it with friends if they want to come round.

Jon It's actually crammed with exhibits. We have a box with Muffin the Mule.

Paul Yes, an actual boxed, Muffin the Mule puppet from the early days.

Jon And he would date from?

Paul This was from the early 1950s, because this one..... Muffin didn't exist until nine, late 1940's and so the puppet is from the very early 1950s. It's made of metal, with strings and it means that a child could watch Muffin the Mule on television and then actually have his or her own, own Muffin the Mule and, uh, and play with it at home.

Jon We've wandered off by the, the schools' section here Paul and we're looking at some Victorian school books. What can we say about how educational toys have changed?

Paul Some of these are toys and some of them are actual materials from, from schools of the time. For example, there's a copy book, um, where children where scholars were learning to write. This is from probably an older child, probably 14, 15 - by copying copperplate writing and reproducing it on the opposite page. This, this particular one dates from 1873 and the letters are remarkable, the quality of the copperplate writing is, is beautiful, and it has, at the beginning of the book, the name of the scholar and the name of the school. This was St Cuthbert's School - I've no idea where that was; maybe somebody else will know and it's got the master's name and the scholar's name and the date and it was the 3rd March 1873.

Jon So it wasn't your book!

Paul No, no, no actually no. I'm probably ... probably I'm a little bit younger than that. How insulting!

Jon It is lovely. It's almost impossible to say what is the, what is the original and what is the copy.

Paul Yes, that's right. The copy... the copperplate copy is so neat and so beautifully done you can, you can hardly tell which was the printed version and which was the, the scholar's written version.

Then we have ink pens and nibs here as well so we can understand the kind of things they were working with.

Jon Well, that's right. With those kinds of pens it's very difficult to regulate the flow, isn't it?

Paul Yes, that's right, that's right.

Jon You get blotches everywhere.

Paul Absolutely.

Jon But not on your book.

Paul No.

Jon What else do we have here?

Paul We have Charm School, which was a series of comic strips in the Girls' Eagle Annual to teach girls to be charming and to be attractive girls. And so....the writing, the writing is very small and it's difficult to read it but there's one here telling girls how to look after their skin, how to clean the blemishes, making sure they've got lovely white skin and what to eat to make their skins healthy, for example.

Jon So this book would date from what year?

Paul It's from 1950's.

Jon And what's a healthy diet according to the 1950s?

Paul Oh - it's not bad actually.

Jon Oranges?

Paul We had - cod liver oil, citrus fruits and as much butter as possible. I'm not quite sure about that. However, butter is becoming more popular again now, isn't it?

Jon It is. Would that be a low salt variety or just straight forward butter?

Paul It doesn't specify what kind of butter - no. It recommends vanishing cream - used during the day will stop chaffing and wind burn because at night her skin is inclined to flake and wrinkle so Daphne should ask her mother for a little nourishing skin food. So it's full of useful tips for, uh, for young ladies to become charming and beautiful.

Jon And over in this corner we have some dolls starting with Barbie. Now, what's the chief distinction between the Barbie and the Cindy, for example?

Paul Well, Cindy was a British doll. She was the answer to the American doll Barbie. Much more homely, originally much more homely and much more the 'girl next door'. So, more acceptable they thought. Whereas Barbie had a reputation as being something of a bimbo. She was, uh, rather sexy looking, uh, looking, a very teenage doll with very long legs - an impossible figure.

Jon I can see from this one here, for example. So would Barbie be the original Bimbo?

Paul Probably was, yes. Very vampish in the early... - we've got an early one here and you can see the very heavy make-up round the eyes and the pouting lips, the very long legs and the extraordinary figure - she was.... got a very bad reputation and so Mattel, who made her, tried to make her more respectable by having Dentist Barbie and Doctor Barbie and Vet Barbie and Teacher Barbie.

Jon Neuro-scientist Barbie.

Paul Absolutely - Space Barbie an Astronaut - yes.

Jon How did she actually acquire this bad reputation then - was it simply the shortness of her skirt?

Paul It was partly the shape, which was quite extraordinary and this, this shape happened - although Mattel have never admitted this - she's actually a copy of a doll called Bild Lily which was a German doll and this was a sort of sex toy. It was... Lilly was a comic strip character in the newspaper 'Bild' and she was a young lady who kept losing her clothes and having strange, risqué adventures, rather like 'Jane', a similar comic strip in UK newspapers, and they made a doll of her with interchangeable clothes and lingerie, um, really for men, it was only sold in tobacconists' shops and a lady, a lady director from Mattel saw the doll, didn't realise its history and so took it back to America and said to Mattel "let's make one of these ourselves." And so they did, without realising they were actually making a sex toy.

Jon And catering for a male fantasy.

Paul Absolutely.

Jon And Barbie caught on very well with girls.

Paul Indeed yes. It's become the best selling toy of all time. More Barbies are sold than any other toy in the world.

Jon Incredible. Right, let's move towards your trains now then, Paul.

Paul OK.

Jon Very much 'toys for the boys' aren't they? And this particular one we're looking at?

Paul I think girls like trains as well - I find they do. But this particular one is an American train. Lionel is the big maker of trains in America. And it shows some very early ones. Push-along trains made of, uh, made of cast iron as well as modern ones which are plastic track and plastic bodies and race around making a tremendous noise. Let's get one going!

Jon Oh, yes.

Paul And these are quite big trains because American houses have big basements often and so they can have big railway lay-outs and so these are large sized trains – these are O gauge trains.

Jon And it's very realistic isn't it ? We have lots of little lights flashing.

Paul Yes.

Jon And every carriage is illuminated, or was, when it was going.

Paul And very attractive buildings. Copies of American road-side buildings as well. So it's a whole lay-out here of Americana.

Jon OK. And I've just seen a carriage there with 'Baby Ruth' written on it. So that's dating from the 20s I think, he was a baseball star in the late 20s?

Paul Yes, although it was actually a candy bar - Babe Ruth candy bar that, uh, that was marketed and went in the, uh, these trucks were carrying large quantities of Babe Ruth candy bars. But, yes, I think it was based on the..... the name came from a baseball star, you're right.

Jon And this next one?

Paul This is a very big layout of Hornby O gauge tin-plate trains. And these particular ones, because they run better are electric ones, which were very expensive and were really for bishops and lawyers - people with lots of money and big houses who could have a lay-out as big as this and they also make a wonderful noise as they rattle round now.

Jon Much clankier than the other one, isn't it?

Paul Yes, it's because they're metal rather than plastic and so it makes a lovely 'click clack click clack noise, just like a real train going round.

Jon Yeah.

Paul And amazing detail. It's a whole railway in miniature. You could buy engine sheds and goods sheds and stations and all the station accessories - the signals, the footbridges, the water towers to put water into your engines, turntables - fantastic!

Jon You've got most of those things here, and as you say it would have cost a lot of money back in - what year are we talking about?

Paul 1920s up to about 1950s. The rise of British toy trains really was from 1920 onwards. At the end of the first world war, after the first world war, Germany had been the big supplier of toy trains and tin trains in particular, but at the end of the first world war nobody wanted to buy German toys and so it made an opening for, for British manufacturers and Frank Hornby of Meccano fame stepped in. He started making toy trains and Hornby trains have been famous every since.

Jon Brilliant! Paul, thank you very much for showing us around your museum - it's a fascinating place.

Paul It's a pleasure. It's a pleasure to show people round.

Jon Thank you.

