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"Murder in the malls of America"

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(YellowTimes.org) – There are children dying of starvation all over the world, even as I type, and their parents will often follow suit if they haven't already led the way. People drink filthy water, frequently soiled by their own waste; for those unable to produce enough waste of their own, there is always some corporate polluter to help them out. Armed conflicts occurring worldwide (the ones that the mainstream media seems mostly to have overlooked) kill thousands of people every day. Natural disasters of varying magnitude are an almost daily occurrence -- in short, for a lot of people in a lot of places, life is not very good.

So, in the grand scheme of things, this seems like an insignificant subject to draw me to my keyboard. And yet, I found myself powerless to ignore the plight of one of the most famous women on earth and the tragedy that has befallen her best friend. The woman is a hero to an entire generation of women and girls and has been a significant part of Western culture for over forty years. She is one of the world's most recognized and cherished people.

The woman's name is Barbara Roberts but we all know her on a first name basis; most people simply call her Barbie. Ms. Roberts entered our lives in 1959 and most of our mothers or wives or sisters grew up with her. And she is a doll.

Barbie's best friend is named Midge and they first met in 1963. Midge was a freckle-faced redhead who soon became Barbie's best friend and Ms. Roberts was there when Midge married her high school sweetheart, Alan, in 1991. Soon after, they had a child, a son they named Ryan, and now Midge is in the family way again.

When I was younger, an unmarried woman or teenager who became pregnant was said to be "in trouble" but Midge has found herself in trouble despite being happily married these past eleven years. She has incurred the wrath of some exceedingly misguided people who have in turn influenced one of the world's most powerful nations (Walmartania) to condemn Midge to oblivion.

Let's understand a little of Midge's biology. How the baby got there is strictly between her and Alan but I presume the usual activity can account for it. For most women, babies arrive through one of two methods of delivery but Midge has a

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magnetic stomach which pops off to allow for an easy confinement with minimal labor and no need for hospitalization. According to Barbie's parents, the Mattel Corporation (who are also Midge's god-parents), Midge is part of their Happy Family series designed to satisfy the desire for nurturing play by young girls. They also say that Midge serves as a useful tool for human parents to role-play family situations, especially in families anticipating the arrival of a new sibling.

Apparently, Wal-Mart was convinced by a few shoppers that Midge's pregnancy is a travesty and that sales of Midge will encourage teenage pregnancy. Huh? Midge is hardly a teenager and she is married so I would have guessed having a second baby was okay for her. Apparently, I would have been wrong.

In a newswire story from Philadelphia, the manager of a toy shop in one of that city's shopping malls says Midge has been selling well. He says further that there have been no complaints, although he has heard a few shoppers laugh. In another Philadelphia outlet of the same store, that store's manager says Christmas shoppers were reacting negatively. One 29-year-old woman shopper was quoted as saying: "It's a bad idea. It promotes teenage pregnancy. What would an eight-year-old or twelve-year-old get out of that doll baby?"

Wal-Mart does not say how many complaints they received or where the complainants live but they have pulled Midge from all their shelves across the United States in a form of plastic abortion. Not only that, they pulled Alan and three-year-old son Ryan from the shelves along with her, in a clear case of mass murder with the sins of the mother being visited upon the whole family. There remains some confusion over this issue; some news reports indicate that shoppers were upset because Alan and Ryan were sold separately rather than with Midge and this is what made them suspect that she was a pregnant teenager. Others were just appalled by the pregnancy itself, perhaps not realizing that is where babies come from or being afraid that their own children might learn the truth.

Now I don't personally own a Barbie (not even one of those new "adult" Lingerie Barbies) but children of my friends do. And my granddaughter does and, frankly, I would be far more concerned that Barbie might encourage her to become tall, blonde, and large-breasted rather than that a happily married Midge experiencing the wonders of childbirth might corrupt her moral compass.

There is no indication if Midge has been banished from Wal-Mart's stores in the more heathen countries but let's see if I understand the logic to all of this. In a nod to complaints about family values, Wal-Mart deports this happily married and happily expecting young woman from their shelves. But I can still purchase a variety of military role-playing toys, violent movies, violence-based video games, a variety of toys that center around blowing things up and killing, and even such culturally bereft things as Celine Dion CDs.

But, most important, they still sell guns and ammo. I guess that makes pretty clear what Wal-Mart thinks Americans hold as family values.