

Happy Birthday Judy  
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One day when the mail was delivered, to my surprise there was a little envelope addressed to me. At ten years old, the only mail I had ever received besides Christmas cards from distant aunts and uncles, was my monthly copy of "Calling All Girls" magazine.

With great excitement I tore open the envelope to find a birthday party invitation in honour of a girl who had recently moved in down the street. The card said "It's a surprise." I was just getting to know Judy, who was in my class, and wondered if my friend Karen would be invited too. As it turned out, she was.

After school the next day my mom and I walked up to the United Store on Wellington Street to look for a birthday gift. We found paint by number sets, paper dolls and India rubber balls, but nothing that really caught my fancy.

Our next destination was Beamish's, quite a few blocks further west on Wellington Street just past Holland Avenue. Some of the toys were the same but I found one I liked, Woolly Willy. Willy was a magnetic drawing toy. He had a hairless face and a bald head under a clear plastic cover. Metal filings were moved about with a magnetic wand to add hair, eyebrows, a beard or moustache. I loved Willy right away and insisted that that was the perfect gift. We picked up some wrapping paper and a card all for under two dollars, and headed home to wrap him up.

Finally the big day arrived. Wearing our party dresses, Karen and I walked over to Judy's house. Her mother told us that Judy was out with her dad, and showed us to the basement playroom where a number of kids of various ages were gathered. Some were cousins and a few were neighbours.

All were aware of the social importance of birthdays and were dressed accordingly, the girls in fancy party dresses and boys wearing bow ties. Suddenly Judy's mom appeared in the doorway hissing "Shh, they're here!"

In the silence we could hear Judy and her dad coming in and heading downstairs. As she came through the door to a loud "Surprise!" she stopped short and stared. Then she burst into tears, covering her face with her hands.

"What's the matter?" asked one little boy cousin.

"I'm just surprised that you're all here," Judy started to laugh.

"Let's have some games, then we'll open your gifts" suggested her mom. We played pin the tail on the donkey as we did at every birthday party, drop the clothespin in the milk bottle, and musical chairs.

Everyone was hot and flushed after all the activity. Judy sat in a chair surrounded by her gifts which she began to open slowly and teasingly. The guests watched with anticipation and envy as cards were read and papers were strewn about the floor to reveal each new burst of excitement and anticipation.

Obviously several people had been shopping at the United Store, both the paper dolls and paint sets appeared. Along with the India rubber ball there was a Bobbsey Twins book and another called "The Water Babies". Finally she opened Wooly Willy. She was delighted, and everyone wanted to try drawing some hair for Willy.

We trooped upstairs to the dining room where the table was loaded with glasses of orange Freshie, and three kinds of sandwiches made of egg, peanut butter and jam, and cheese. Judy blew out the candles on her cake and we were all served a piece with chocolate ripple ice cream.

Everyone found at least a nickel or dime wrapped in wax paper in their cake, and Karen found a quarter in hers. It was getting late, and some of the little ones were overexcited and starting to cry and fight. Little plastic baskets full of candy were handed out as we went out the door yelling "Happy Birthday" to Judy one last time.

It's safe to say that a fine time was had by all and that Wooly Willy was a hit.