Crissy Doll and Her Friends Guide for Collectors by Beth Gunther. Hitting her stride in the early 1970s, Ideal’s Crissy was the only doll I ever asked for. I was frightened by Barbie’s perfect features, and her mere 11½ inches were no match for Crissy’s commanding 18. And that hair! With the touch of her magical belly button and a tug of her tail (pony, that is), Crissy’s hair grew…and grew and grew! Back then, she was the only doll for me.

Which is why Beth Gunther’s Crissy Doll and Her Friends Guide for Collectors came as such a shock. Not only did Crissy have other dolls her own size to play with—including the Cher-esque Tressy and the tanned, tattooed pre-Baywatch babe, Brandy—she had popular 15-inch pals, like Velvet, Cricket and Dina. Where was I? Were our Sears’ Wish Books somehow sucked into the void?

The author has done a marvelous job of cataloging Crissy’s cronies and their known versions, including Swirl-Curl Crissy, who came with a serious-looking five-pronged device that sat atop her head and gave her a perfect part full. Gunther is fastidious in her inclusion of individual variations; for example, the 1969 black Crissy can come with a pink ribbon at her neck, as well as the more often-seen green.

If you’ve got a Crissy that’s a bit cruddy, don’t despair; Gunther includes a chapter on “Restorative Methods,” with instructions that detail the boiling-water hair recurling technique and strategies for battling eye-mold “disease.” There’s a fun chapter of reprinted department-store catalog pages, and a super reference section that includes identifying markings for all Ideal’s grow-hair dolls and current values.

Crissy Doll and Her Friends Guide for Collectors is published by Antique Trader Books, which is a division of Landmark Specialty Publications. It is available for $24.95 plus shipping and handling from Antique Trader Press, (800) 334-7165.

—Pune Dracker continued