

Barbara Eden  
in her study  
at home,  
snuggling with  
her labradoodle  
Djinn Djinn.

Photograph by Marius Luppino

## It was the most famous navel never seen. And it belongs to Barbara Eden.

The word “was” is key because on May 25, 2013, Ms. Eden’s b’button was unveiled to the public for only the second time in history. When she’s not performing on stage or speaking about a cause close to her heart, she lives happily ever after with her husband of 22 years, Jon Eicholtz.

**Tobi Schwartz-Cassell:** First, please accept my condolences on the very recent loss of your first husband, Michael Ansara.

**Barbara Eden:** Thank you. That was really awful. I knew he was ill and I’ve been waiting for word that he had passed. He had Alzheimer’s, so it’s been several years. We almost lost him last year and I thought I’d be prepared for it but it’s a hit.

**TSC:** It was so refreshing to read your memoir, *Jeannie Out of the Bottle*. It doesn’t drag people through the mud, or take you from bed to bed. Was this a conscious decision on your part?

**BE:** Well I didn’t really go from bed to bed! But yes, it was a conscious decision on my part because I didn’t want to tell everything about everyone I know. That’s not nice. That’s not good manners.

**TSC:** Not many people know you appeared

in an episode of *I Love Lucy*.

**BE:** You’d be surprised at how many people know! *I Love Lucy* has a huge following and the fans know every episode. I’d done *The Andy Griffith Show*, too. I played the manicurist, and I only was on once, but you’d be surprised how many fans tell me about little things I did on the show that I don’t even remember! Both shows—*I Love Lucy* and *The Andy Griffith Show*—are two shows that I think are precious to their fans. They are avid. And they remember every single episode.

**TSC:** What was your experience like on *I Love Lucy*?

**BE:** That was the third show I had appeared in on film in Hollywood. I had done two others before *Lucy* and the first one was a terrible experience with an actress who shall

# Barbara Eden

## TV Treasure

This is it! The only remaining bottle, guaranteed to be authentic! It is part of Barbara Eden’s personal collection and she took this picture exclusively for *Girlfriendz Magazine*! (More info on this bottle on page 2—the Table of Contents. It appears at the bottom of the page in “On the Cover.”)



be nameless, but who wouldn’t even speak to me on the set because she was very upset that I didn’t look older than I was. I was very young then. And, after all, *they* cast me in the part! So I was a little gun-shy with the next two shows I did. But they couldn’t have been nicer—both those women—but Lucy in particular. I went in there deciding I was just going to do my lines, do my part and not worry about what else was going on. But I was shocked. I was just shocked at how nice Lucy was and how caring. But she was smart. Because *then* you have a good show, one that runs for years and years and years.

**TSC:** Tell the story of the sparkling dress from the episode “Country Club Dance” (Season 6, *I Love Lucy*).

**BE:** It was dress rehearsal and they wanted me to wear a dress with ruffles and everything on it. I was walking across the stage and Lucy said, “Hey Barbara. C’mere.” And I thought, “Uh, oh. What did I do?!” And I went over to her and she looked at it and she said, “Turn around. Do you like that dress?” And I said, “Yes! It’s fine!” I wasn’t going to say anything wasn’t all right! So I went back in the dressing room and took it off and put my jeans on and came back and gave it to her, not knowing what in the Dickens she was going to do. But she and the wardrobe woman sat there and put those little glittery things on it, one at a time, with a little punch machine to make it look prettier. She wanted it to look prettier! And I couldn’t believe it. It was such a lovely, lovely selfless thing to do. Especially because her husband was just flirting like mad, which he did with every single young girl who was on the show. But she was fine. Just great. She was a good woman.

By Tobi  
Schwartz-Cassell

**TSC:** I have to ask. On *I Dream of Jeannie*, was that your real hair?

**BE:** (She laughs) Oh boy. I had add-ons. The ponytail itself was quite a construction. It had to stick through the hat and come out. It was pinned on my head like a hat. The ponytail was on a buckram base.

**TSC:** Your favorite episode of *I Dream of Jeannie* is the pilot.

**BE:** Yes, it is. Gene Nelson did a wonderful job of directing it and of laying down the rules for what the show would be from year to year. You have to have rules. It’s like a Constitution. And he did a beautiful job of developing it in that one episode.

**TSC:** And your second favorite?

**BE:** Well, I enjoyed doing the wedding and I enjoyed seeing it, but I thought it was a mistake to have us married.

**TSC:** Why?

**BE:** Because they should never have married. She wasn’t human anymore. After she was released from her bottle, she was an entity. He knew it but she didn’t. She wouldn’t accept it. And that’s where you get the jokes and the fun and the reason for being. That fish out of water. She’s like 2800 years old!

**TSC:** You’ve talked a great deal about Larry Hagman and what a very complex person he was. You said he was brilliant, but “... when Larry didn’t like a particular script, his answer was to throw up all over the set.”

**BE:** Larry was an extremely intelligent, extremely talented, little boy. He was more fun than anyone I have ever known. But he was like the little girl with the little curl right in the middle of her forehead.

**TSC:** How about special effects on *Jeannie*. What was your favorite?

**BE:** I’d say the large pocket in Larry’s jacket. I loved being in that pocket, peeking out. I imagined I was really in there. And of course, through the magic of film, it was superimposed on his jacket so you saw him with a little genie in his pocket, peeking out every once in a while.

I enjoyed the cup full of great big pencils, the huge perfume bottles, the big telephone. I enjoyed feeling small with all those *b-i-i-i-g-g-g* things around me. It was like Alice in Wonderland. Aspirin containers, a



# TAKE THE I DREAM OF JEANNIE QUIZ!

## TRUE or FALSE

1. Barbara Eden was pregnant during the filming of Season 1.
2. “Jeannie’s” bottle was actually a liquor decanter.
3. The show was based on a dream the show’s creator, Sidney Sheldon, had one night.
4. One of the theme songs offered up to—and rejected by—Sidney Sheldon was written by songwriting team Burt Bacharach and Hal David.
5. The theme song that’s stuck in your head was not the original theme song. Instead, it was an instrumental jazz waltz.
6. *I Dream of Jeannie* was always filmed in color.
7. Though the series was set in Florida, California locations were actually used.
8. “Jeannie” and “Major Tony Nelson” were married in the sixth season.
9. “The Wedding” episode was the last show of the series.
10. Wayne Rogers, who played “Trapper John” on CBS’s *M\*A\*S\*H*, eventually became Barbara Eden’s investment broker.



big lipstick—heavy things! But unfortunately, the first day my mother ever came to the set, I was in a safe and they wanted the objects to jiggle, so they pushed it. One of the objects fell over and hit me on the head. (She laughs.) I didn’t pass out, but practically. And my mom said, “I don’t know about that, Barbara, they’re not supposed to do that! Don’t they have a double?” (More laughter).

**TSC:** How did you come up with the “Jeannie” blink?

**BE:** That was Gene Nelson. Gene was the blink. He said, “I want to see your face when the magic happens. I want the camera on your face, but it won’t always be a close-up.” So I said that it would be a much stronger action if I crossed my arm, blinked and nodded my head. And we did that.

**TSC:** In his book, *Twitch Upon a Star*, Herbie J Pilato wrote that Elizabeth Montgomery had nothing against you or Larry Hagman, but was extremely upset with Sidney Sheldon for creating a show that she felt was so similar to *Bewitched*. David White, who played “Larry Tate” on *Bewitched*, was quoted as saying it was much ado about nothing. What’s your take?

**BE:** I always felt the concepts were so different. It was magic, but a lot of shows are about magic. And we happened to be two women but she was a housewife and I was a genie who gloried in her magic. And “Samantha” tried to downplay it. That was her character.

**TSC:** After reading about your personal tragedies, I am in awe of you. You were forced to carry your stillborn son for six weeks before giving birth to him. Then you lost your wonderful son Matthew when he was 35. Just one of those tragedies would shatter any woman, but you were able to withstand both. How *did* you and how *do* you go on?

**BE:** I don’t know. I didn’t handle the loss of the baby very well. But I really think that was also chemical (post-partum depression), but we didn’t know it at the time. I should have had help and I put that in the book because there are so many women who feel so guilty about it but they don’t have help. So I thought I’d clear the decks and let people know what you really have to do. You have to have a doctor. I went down to 110 pounds. I just wasn’t eating. I didn’t *care* about eating. I was just numb. I was performing in Las Vegas and my mother came up to see me perform and just had a fit. I said, “Come on, Mom, relax.” And I heard her say, “She’s dying...she’s dying...doesn’t anyone know she’s dying?” But that’s a mother. But it was bad. It was really bad. And it ruined our marriage (her first, to Michael Ansara).

**TSC:** And then later on, you watched your son Matthew suffer with drug addiction starting from a very early age, and then you lost him to an overdose. Are you now involved in addiction education?

**BE:** I’ve done a lot of work for it, but I don’t know if it’s recognized as an illness, but it certainly is. I speak whenever I can. It’s not easy for me. I don’t like to bring that back, but I feel that’s the best way I can serve. And the only way I can do it is to tell my story.

**TSC:** I know you’ve derived a lot of support



Barbara Eden and Larry Hagman. Photo courtesy of TDE Collection.



Barbara and husband Jon in 2011 at their twentieth anniversary, in the chapel at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco where Jon and Barbara were married in 1991. Photo by Patterson Lundquist.



Barbara, Michael Ansara and son Matthew. Photo courtesy of Barbara Eden.

from your girlfriendz through the years. What’s your take on the girlfriend-to-girlfriend bond?

**BE:** I think it’s rare. I know a lot of women, but I have maybe five who I can count on and they can count on me. I don’t think every woman is your friend, nor is every man. But I do have deep, deep friendships.

**TSC:** Back in May you were the emcee at the Life Ball in Vienna.

**BE:** It was a huge production. Enormous. And it was to benefit AIDS research. It was started by Elton John. President Clinton is a huge supporter and he was there. Fergie was also there representing amfAR (The Foundation for AIDS Research).

I was so proud to be part of something so wonderful and so big and so right. Everyone there was pulling together for a wonderful cause.

**TSC:** And your belly button was finally unveiled!

**BE:** Oh, God. (She laughs)

**TSC:** How did you feel back in the 60s when they wouldn’t let you show your belly button on TV?

**BE:** I didn’t care. I honestly didn’t care. Didn’t give a hoot. A writer for the *Hollywood Reporter*, Mike Connelly, used to come to the set and he’d say, “I don’t believe you have a belly button. Do you have one? Can I take a

little peek?” And we’d always joke back and forth and he put it in his column. Then other stringers picked it up across the country, and before you knew it, it was a cause *celebre*. Not on purpose. It was just a joke between Mike and me.

And then George Schlatter (a friend and executive producer of *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In*) suddenly wanted to premier my navel on *Laugh-In*. Well, *then* NBC discovered I had one! George said he’d never seen so many “suits” sit around a big oak table and talk about someone’s navel!

**TSC:** So was it finally revealed on *Laugh-In*?

**BE:** No! They didn’t let me!

**TSC:** The Life Ball was the first place your belly button went public?

**BE:** No, I did one of the *Jeannie* movies and it showed because it wasn’t the original costume.

**TSC:** You’ve done TV, Broadway, movies, Vegas, you’ve written a book, what else do you want to accomplish?

**BE:** I just want to keep on going. I don’t feel good unless I’m working on something. I don’t care how small, how big. I just like to keep active.

For the entire interview with Barbara Eden go to [www.girlfriendzmag.com/2013/09/barbara-eden/](http://www.girlfriendzmag.com/2013/09/barbara-eden/) **g**

To learn more about Barbara Eden and her upcoming appearances, visit [www.barbaraeden.com](http://www.barbaraeden.com).

## Answers:

1. **TRUE:** After trying for seven years, Barbara Eden and Michael Ansara found out that they were going to be parents (to Matthew). And just moments before *that* phone call came *another* call saying she’d been awarded the role of “Jeannie!” Close-ups and lots of veils were used to cover her growing baby bump.\*
2. **TRUE:** Her original bottle was a special Christmas 1964 Jim Beam decanter that was decorated by the show’s art department. There was more than one bottle during the life of the series. \*\*\*
3. **FALSE:** The show was inspired by *The Brass Bottle*, a 1964 movie in which Barbara Eden starred. Also starring in that movie were Tony Randall and Burl Ives. The movie was inspired by a novel, originally published in 1900.+
4. **FALSE:** The songwriting team that was rejected was Gerry Goffin and Carole King.\*\*
5. **TRUE:** For the entire first season.+
6. **FALSE:** Though Sidney Sheldon wanted to film it in color from the very beginning, NBC deemed it too expensive to do so. Sheldon offered to put out the \$400 from his own pocket, but the powers that be refused.+
7. **TRUE:** NASA’s Dryden Flight Research Center was used for the exterior of “Majors Nelson and Healy’s” offices, a facility on southern California’s Edwards Air Force Base.\* Bill Daily (“Major Roger Healy”) said, “It’s pretty funny. If you look at some of those old *Jeannies*, it’s supposed to be shot in Cocoa Beach but in the background you have mountains—the Hollywood Hills.” \*\*
8. **FALSE:** The show ran from 1965-1970, spanning five, and not six, seasons. They got married in Season 5.+
9. **FALSE:** It was the 11th episode (out of 26) in Season 5. Episode 24 was written to be the series finale because NBC hadn’t yet decided whether to renew it. The episode tied up all the loose ends. Once the show was renewed, the episode was rewritten as a dream sequence. The show ended two episodes later.\*\*\*
10. **TRUE:** They met during the TV movie, *I Dream of Jeannie: 15 Years Later*, on which he played “Major Tony Nelson.” When he left showbiz, he became an investment broker and now manages her money.\*

+ *Jeannie Out of the Bottle* by Barbara Eden with Wendy Leigh

++ *Dreaming of Jeannie: TV’s Prime Time in a Bottle* by Stephen Cox and Howard Frank

+++ Verified by Barbara Eden

\* [www.nasa.gov/missions/research/classic\\_tv\\_prt.htm](http://www.nasa.gov/missions/research/classic_tv_prt.htm)

\*\* [www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/2005-09-15-cocoa-beach\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/2005-09-15-cocoa-beach_x.htm)