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Waiting for Trixie Belden

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By Lori Shontz, Post-Gazette Staff Writer

Just two weeks to go. I can't wait. I have the date marked on my calendar, and as soon as it gets here I'm headed straight to Barnes & Noble to pick up a copy of the book I've been waiting years to buy.

No, not Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. (Although I'll likely be in a bookstore at midnight on June 21, too.) The day I never thought would come is June 24, when Trixie Belden books will return to the shelves.

If you're asking, "Who's Trixie Belden?" unfortunately, you're not alone. The series has been out of print for years, depriving a generation of readers from becoming enchanted with Trixie Belden, a girl detective from the fictional town of Sleepyside, N.Y., her best friend and mystery-solving partner, Honey Wheeler, and the five other teenagers who make up their "semi-secret club," the Bob-Whites of the Glen.

The series has strong female characters, a heartwarming sense of family that manages to not be preachy, and a string of exciting adventures. Why it disappeared is a mystery to me.

Growing up, my nose was always in a book, and my first choice was always a mystery. I read them all -- Encyclopedia Brown, Bobbsey Twins, Dana Girls, Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew.

But my very favorite was Trixie.

Among teenage girl sleuths, Nancy Drew is the best-known, and I did like those

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books so much that as soon as I finished them, I flipped them over and read them again.

But Nancy had gleaming, titan-colored hair that was rarely out of place, a flashy blue convertible that she drove with great skill and an apparently flawless boyfriend, the handsome Ned Nickerson. Plus, she usually wore pumps. As much as I idolized Nancy, I knew she was way out of my league.

Not Trixie. In the first sentence of the first book, *The Secret of the Mansion*, she informs her mother that she's going to die if she doesn't get a horse. As I had many times threatened the same thing, I knew immediately that if Trixie lived down the street from me, we'd be friends.

Unlike Nancy, Trixie wasn't perfect. Like me, she complained when her mother made her do the chores, bickered with her siblings and got jealous when the boy for whom she had "special feelings" noticed other girls.

Trixie wasn't beautiful, she struggled in school and she occasionally jumped to the wrong conclusions during her investigations. But in the end, her friends and family rallied around her, and Trixie always solved the mystery. Sheer bliss. I read the books so much that the covers fell off.

As far as I can tell, the Trixie Belden books are going to be re-issued without extensive updating, which is a relief. About 15 years ago, Nancy Drew mysteries re-appeared in the guise of the Nancy Drew Case Files, which must have been written to appeal to the Sweet Dreams romance crowd. Nancy turned into an airhead. I felt sick.

So far, only the first four of the 39 Trixie Belden books are scheduled to be re-released -- *The Secret of the Mansion* and *The Red Trailer Mystery* in June, *The Gatehouse Mystery* in July and *The Mysterious Visitor* in August.

I'll be re-starting my Trixie collection so when my nieces get old enough, I can introduce them to one of my best friends.

With any kind of luck, these covers will eventually fall apart, too.

This was a mystery the police could really sink their teeth into

After a four-month investigation that included DNA analysis, a former cook at a Burger King off Interstate 80 was charged with aggravated assault for supposedly spitting on a hamburger he prepared for a Pennsylvania state trooper.

City bridging a gap with a second bridge

The city will build a bridge under the Greenfield Avenue Bridge, designed to catch debris when the original bridge undergoes a \$1.5 million rehabilitation.

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