

Love for a lifetime

From cradle to the present day, Berlin collector's love of Steiff spans the decades.

Dr. Fellberg as a child in 1951 and today.



Some people start collecting Steiff as children, and others as adults. But our special guest in this issue has been deeply passionate about the brand and its wonderful “Button in Ear” Teddy bears and animal friends since she was just a baby in her cradle! Here is the story of Dr. Ursula Fellberg, a lifelong collector who loves to share her Steiff passions with other enthusiasts through the Internet, live lectures, and books.

Dr. Fellberg was born in Berlin and received her first Steiff Teddy bear in 1951, when she was just five months old. She named her beloved bear “Sonnyboy.” Little did her parents know that this gift would trigger a lifetime of love and passion for Steiff, and would be the first Teddy bear in a collection that would grow exponentially over the years. Early on, she also received a Steiff cat and a pug dog named Mopsy. Today, almost six decades later, she has these three animals, but they clearly show all the love and wear that time takes on precious friends like these. But it is no surprise that Sonnyboy remains her very favourite Steiff Teddy bear, even today as he shows signs of being loved and cuddled a lot.

Steiff was a big part of Dr. Fellberg’s childhood. Many happy occasions were marked with a gift of Steiff. This was especially true around Easter, when the Steiff bunnies arrived with plenty of chocolate. Dr. Fellberg’s collection quickly resembled the Berlin Zoo! Some of her childhood favourites included Steiff giraffes, elephants, lions, tigers, birds, Snobby the Poodle, a family of Zotty bears, and many other farm, forest, and jungle friends. Each animal had a story, and a name, and became like a member of the family. Her many Steiff Dachshunds, for example, keep alive the memory of her departed Struppi; one Teddy bear was even named after her brother, Wolfgang who died as a baby before Dr. Fellberg was born.

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As she grew, so did her passion, and today her interest in Steiff and Teddy bears has become a central focus of her life, both personally and professionally. She has many larger display items, such as the Millennium Band, Carousel, Noah’s Ark, and the Perpetual Calendar, that fill her adult home with the love and quality of Steiff. However, one special piece continues to elude her to this day: a life-sized or Studio Teddy bear for her collection.

Once the recipient of Steiff items as gifts, she now travels the world to discover new Steiff treasures both close and far from home. For example, Steiff’s musical Radetzky Teddy is a souvenir of Vienna. A few years ago, she discovered



Dr. Felberg's
"beary books".

the Ralph Lauren Polo dressed bears in the United States. And Steiff's Buddha bear brings back fond memories of Sri Lanka and Singapore, where Buddhism is practiced widely.

But Dr. Felberg is also a big fan of Steiff's German Special editions, as well. Favourites include King Ludwig II, the Schäfflertanz, and the charming Oktoberfest Bears, which are sold through Oberpollinger, a major regional department store. And her hometown of Berlin - whose flag features a standing black bear - has inspired other Steiff favourites as well, including The Captain of Köpenick, the Iron Gustav, the KaDeWe doorman, the Shoppingbär, and many others.

Dr. Felberg, who is retired from Siemens, created an online Teddy bear museum called Bruno's Teddy Bear Museum. This website, which is a unique online meeting place for fellow plush lovers from all over the world to gather, learn, and explore everything related to Teddy bears and other animal friends, can be found at www.baerenmuseum.com. Of course, Bruno's Teddy Bear Museum has a great display of newer and vintage Steiff treasures, as well as much information about the Steiff Club and its history, highlights, and exclusive editions. Dr. Felberg herself has been an active member of the Steiff club for over two decades!

In addition to running her online museum and growing her plush collection, Dr. Felberg is also an active speaker and book author. She gives exciting, interesting lectures about life in Berlin, starting from 1900. During these talks, she takes listeners on a journey, leaping from Prussia to Bavaria and from the centennial to millennial. Of course, these lectures always involve a few Teddy bears who play the roles of famous - and sometimes infamous - characters in the tales. She has also authored four books that feature delightful Steiff bears and animals as the key actors. She

writes about history, her beloved city of Berlin, as well as Christmas. Her most recent book marks the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. In all of her activities, she strives to be the "voice" of Teddy bears and to bring their perspective, knowledge, and understanding to the busy world of humans today.

In order to insure that her enormous love for Steiff and Teddy bears continues for generations to come, Dr. Felberg has established a charitable foundation in her will. Called "Sammlung Felberg" ("Felberg Collection"), it has been directed to create a Teddy bear and toy museum upon her passing. This museum could then be run/hosted by the foundation itself, by an already existing museum or by an animal welfare organization.

Dr. Felberg likes to tell the story about how her family was connected by Steiff despite socio-political divides and physical barriers. Her family was torn apart by the construction of the Berlin Wall after World War II. Less than a year ago, she finally reunited with her cousin Renate for the first time after 44 years of separation. After they had their first visit, Renate sent her a photo of her little Steiff Dachshund Beppo, a present that she received from Dr. Felberg's parents in the mid-1950's. Apparently Beppo had been her friend for life and had accompanied her on every trip and adventure since childhood. As it happens, Dr. Felberg herself has been faithfully accompanied by a Steiff Beppo of her own through much of her life! Clearly Steiff has the power to connect hearts, minds, and people over the years, despite walls and other unnatural divisions.

Readers can find more information about Dr. Felberg and her books and lectures at www.baerenzeit.com. ■