

50 Years *Steiff* Teddy



A little Teddybear
journeys into the wide world

THE TEDDY BEAR STORY

Giengen on the Brenz River is a little sleepy town with many old buildings, and just as many, or even far too many inns where the population of this little town of seven thousand can quench its thirst. Yet, not the exuberance of these inns made this little town famous, but the mere fact that a kind little woman, who as a young girl was stricken by polio and for lifetime confined to a wheelchair, created the first stuffed animals in the world, and this happened in the little sleepy town of Giengen.

Margarete Steiff, almost crippled because of her ailment, could only think of the happiness of others.



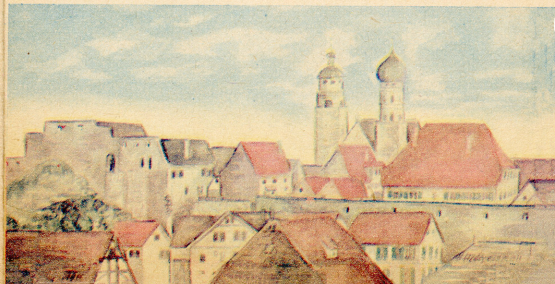
It was her greatest desire to make the children around her happy. One day this desire made her create a little elephant made of felt. This little elephant turned out so well that she made more and more such little miniatures, and after

a little while she



conceived the idea that if she could make the children of her environment in Giengen happy, why not try to spread joy and pleasure to the children of other

towns, other states, other countries, and other continents. Out of this desire to create and spread joy, the first little Steiff factory, though it was no more than a friendly little „sewing circle“ at the beginning, was founded. This little factory remained small and modest for many years to come.



The gifts of Margarete Steiff were not only limited to creating, but also to teaching and conveying to her co-workers her ideas and her zeal to make and create only the best toys for children. This motto is still prevailing today in the huge Steiff factory.

It wasn't long before her brother Fritz joined her and took an active part in the little establishment.

He, too, had ideas of his own and transformed same into the reality of the stuffed animal kingdom. Years passed and new animals were manufactured; domestic ones, tame ones, wild ones, and even the first models of the riding toys were born.

Meanwhile, the nephews of Margarete Steiff grew up,



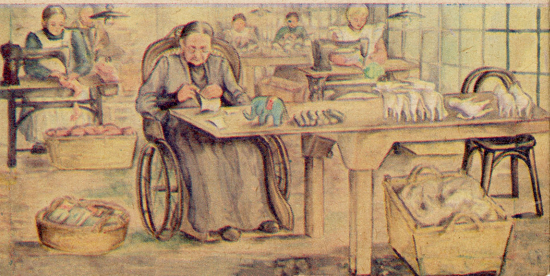
and all of them were later absorbed in her now vastly growing enterprise. One of these boys was especially adapted for the creation of new ideas in the toy animal world. He was –



Richard Steiff.

After completion of his art studies in Stuttgart, he entered the Steiff factory in 1897. Already during his college days, he had spent many hours at the zoo in Stuttgart and would idle away all of the free time he could spare from his studies in front of the bear cages and artificial

caves. The bears were his pets, and that is why in 1902 he conceived the idea to make a toy bear with movable joints and movable head. „Aunt Margarete“, was not particularly enthused when she saw the first model, because it was somewhat larger than the animals thus far manufactured. Instead of the felt that was customarily used in making her toys; her enterprising nephew had used mohair which was very hard to get at that time.





In the early part of 1903 the first sample of this newly created bear was dispatched to the United States, where Paul Steiff, another nephew, was undergoing some vocational training. In his spare time, he was

also supposed to stimulate the interest for this new Steiff bear; and above all, to find a suitable representative in America. Nephew Paul, was very much enthused about this new toy, but was ridiculed everywhere he approached a new prospect with



this stuffed bear from Germany. Not only was he ridiculed, but in some instances insults were heaped upon him, and at one time, he was told bluntly to return home and try to correct the plumpness in form and other nonconformities of this stuffed „misfit“. At least now he knew that the bears were too plump, too heavy, too hard, and above all, too expensive.

Leipzig Fair, 1903 -

The „misfit“, though now streamlined, was taken along to this fair for the Steiff exhibit. The boys did not dare to show it to anyone, less more ridicule be heaped upon them. The curtain of the fair had just „rung down“, and the two Steiff brothers were closing the lids of their sample cases, as the buyer of one of the biggest and leading New York import houses approached them. He told them of his disappointment in not being able to find anything new and worthwhile at the whole Leipzig Fair. He also told them that he was looking

for something soft and cuddly, and asked the two Steiff brothers if it would be humanly possible to create something along these lines. Richard Steiff certainly did not lose any time in digging out the



hidden „misfit“. He showed it to the buyer, and he exclaimed, „Exactly what I've been looking for, put me down for 3,000 pieces, immediate delivery“. Richard was not disturbed in the least, he finished nailing his cases as if he had not heard the buyer from New York. The latter, now a little annoyed, asked if he had not heard him, or didn't he want to accept the order. Richard Steiff said, „I thought you were only kidding me because you didn't even ask the price of the bear“. Truly, the American buyer was enthused about this toy, and it was not long after that time before a reorder was received by the Steiff factory for 3,000 more of these bears.

This wise buyer in the New World was the first one to realize its possibilities as a true plaything. He realized especially the odd thing about this new creation, the form which was so life-like. What impressed the buyer most was that for the first time someone had come out with an idea to make an animal with jointed legs, arms and head, and Steiff was the only factory that had a method of attaching the arms and legs to discs, to make them movable.

The big break for this bear however came by sheer accident. There was to be a wedding, (daughter Alice's) in the White House which was then occupied by

President Theodore Roosevelt, who was not only known for being a good president, but an ardent big game hunter as well. Everything was prepared to the smallest detail. However, the caterer was having sleepless nights because he could not find a suitable table decoration. The wedding drew nearer and nearer, and he went from „pillar to post“ trying to find just the right thing to ornate the wedding table. In his great distress, he went to New York, and there it was; staring at him from a shop window, the little miniature bear from the quaint little town of Giengen on the Brenz; in Germany.

That was it! Here was his missing link. He would use these cute „little fellows“ as table decorations. He really let his imagination give these bears a good working over. He dressed some as huntsmen, and for special effect, put little rifles in their paws, and placed them before miniature tents. Others he dressed as fishermen with little fishing rods in their paws, and some were even fishing out of gold fish bowls. When the wedding guests saw this unique table decoration they were enthused and full of praise for the original conception of this caterer. Finally one of the President's closest friends and hunting companions asked him, „Say Teddy, you are an old bear hunter, could you tell me what the species of these bears are?“ pointing

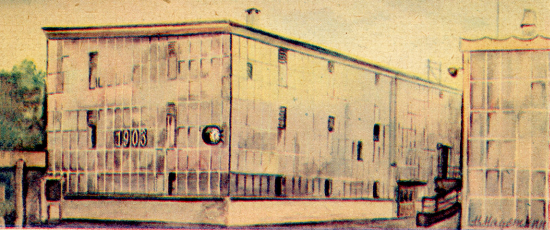


to the table decoration. „This time you really got me,” replied the President of the „Big Stick Fame.” „Well, since you don't know, I'll help you out. It is a new



species called Teddy Bears,” and that is how the Steiff bear got its name. Thus the Press heard about this little anecdote in the White House, and over night the Teddy Bear became famous. Young and old clamored to buy a „Roosevelt-Teddy”.

Orders poured in by the score at the Steiff factory, and soon the little brick building was not adequately equipped to handle the demand. A new factory had to be erected, the walls of which were also something revolutionary as they were made out of glass. Workers had to be recruited from towns, villages, and hamlets, of a distance of 50 miles radius to come to the Steiff factory and sew or stuff bears. Production was in-



creased at such a rapid pace that in 1907 over one million Teddy Bears were manufactured. 1903 to 1908 were definitely the years of the „Bear“. The humming and buzzing of the sewing machines were quite an achievement for the little town, thus only famous for its large abundance of inns.

Just like everything else in life that goes up must come down. 1908 saw the peak in the „Teddy“ production. 1909 came the jolt and the recession, coupled with a tremendous drop in orders and production. So bad was this drop that it almost brought the Steiff factory to a close-down. From this sad streak of misfortune, however the Steiff management learned one thing, and they emerged sadder but wiser from these lean years. They had learned that you cannot or should not put all of your „eggs in one basket“.

In tracing back through the Steiff history, we find that the Teddy Bear was the strongest factor in the development and growth of the Steiff enterprise. Today the Teddy Bear is still the favorite of all the children in the world. Its success was an inspiration to the Steiff workers to make better and newer models each year. Today, the Fiftieth Anniversary, of the Teddy; sees the Steiff line bigger and better than ever. Steiff animals, today as they have always been, are like treasures of form, beauty, and life-likeness.

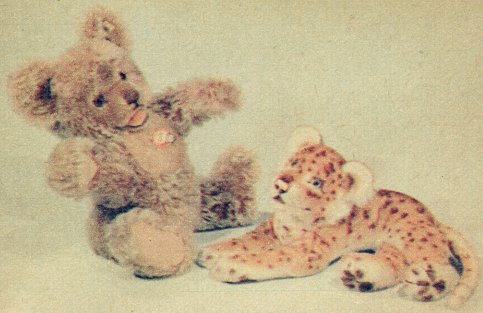
When you observe how the children love, pet, and dote on these animals, and how these little animals share the trouble and joy of our youngsters, and when you consider that these Steiff toys have a durability exceeding, sometimes, two or three generations, then you will realize that the motto of Margarete Steiff,

*„For our children
the best is only good enough“,*

has been fully realized.

Margarete Steiff toys, (Button in the ear brand), are world famous for quality.

Please look for the button in the ear.



This little Story
of the Teddybear is dedicated
to our many friends,
young and old,
by
The Margarete Steiff Toy Corp.
creators of the first
and original Teddy Bear.



BUTTON IN EAR BRAND