



The Right Stuffing: A stalwart and loyal provider of Support and Encouragement, the average teddy 'doesn't mind being taken for a wal

LIFE/STYLE

Looking for Mr. Good Bear

Arctophiles have come out of the closet—and brought furry friends with them.

The well-dressed young woman made her way through the Christmas crowds in the Hundred-Acre Department Store and stopped with a satisfied smile. There were teddy bears stacked on shelves, teddy bears piled on counters, teddy bears hanging from Christmas trees. There were teddies in tutus, in Santa Claus suits, sweaters, suspenders and duffel coats. There were bears small enough to fit into pockets and bears large enough to be home furnishings. The woman hugged one after another until she found one she couldn't put down. "I came looking for a bear for a two-year-old friend of mine," she said to No One in Particular. "But I may have to buy him for myself."

Chapter I. In which we meet a Major Marketing Phenomenon.

It may be the era of electronic whiz-bangs, but some of the best-selling software these days is teddy bears. U.S. sales, about \$40 million a year in the 1970s, swelled to \$125 million last year, and retailers think Christmas '84 will be the biggest bear market ever. More than 40 percent of sales are to adults—for adults. "Bears mean escapism, whimsy and fun—and nobody's too old for that," says Elena Diaz, chief toy buyer for Marshall Field & Co. Why all the interest in something most Americans have been to bed with at one time or other? "It's like spaghetti," says Maureen Kelly of Workman Publishing, which expects to sell 390,000 copies

of its 1985 Teddy Bear Calendar. "It's always been there, but suddenly it's called 'pasta' and everybody's going crazy over it."

The craziness extends to teddy-bear fan clubs, newsletters and B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Bear) conventions. Arctophiles, as stuffed-bear lovers are called, have come out of the closet—and can endlessly debate The Right Stuffing and Looking for Mr. Good Bear. Good Bears of the World, an international group that distributes teddies to hospitalized children, has declared 1985 The International Year of the Teddy Bear. Gary Burghoff (Radar O'Reilly in "M*A*S*H") is promoting sales of Radar's Teddy to benefit the Paralyzed Veterans of America. There are entire stores dedicated solely to beardom. "When I started out, my banker laughed so hard I thought I'd have to resuscitate him, but I paid back a \$15,000 loan in three months," says Joan Venturino of Bears to Go in Berkeley, Calif. The Bear Necessities—which began in 1976 from a pushcart in Boston's Faneuil Hall—now has franchises and a booming mail-order business; it went public last summer and sold 7.5 million shares in two months.

Outfits like The Bear Necessities also fea-

ture a universe of Bearaphernalia—including teddy tote bags, ties, trivets, towels, posters, dishes, diaries, lingerie, aprons, sleeping bags and hot-water bottles. In fact, savvy marketers of everything from luggage to car tuneups have discovered that things sell better with bears. Bears also star in a host of records and books

this Christmas season—including "Pooh's Workout Book," a gentle spoof on exercise books featuring original Ernest H. Shepard drawings. Publisher Dutton has also reissued a Latin edition, "Winnie Ille Pu," in time for Christmas. "Malum! (Bother!) dixit Pu."

Bears themselves are now available in Heffalumpine varieties, as Pooh might say: Bride and Groom Bears, Paddington Bears, Norman Rockwell Bears (patterned

after those he used in illustrations) and one called Spinoza that will deliver personalized messages. There are nurse bears, doctor bears, mink bears (\$120 and up), leather bears (a brisk seller in Greenwich Village sex shops) and bears for every month in the zodiac. Next spring the first environmentalist bear, Greta, complete with a backpack and a book about Yellowstone Park, will hit the stores. Other "licensed plush products"



JACQUES M. CHENET-NEWSWEEK

The first Pooh: 'Bother!'



ED GALLUCCI

for a walk, dressed in ridiculous hats or even being read to. You can blame him for anything, and he won't deny it'

(as they are known in the trade) include Abiner Smoothie—The Last Elegant Bear (in a red satin bathrobe)—and Ophelia, a “Parisian shop girl” (\$125 by Steiff). And then there is Barbara Isenberg’s line of Very Important Bears—including Humphrey Beargart, Kareem Abdul Jabear and Bearmitzvah. (“Look, Mom—he’s Jewish!” shouted one delighted boy in New York’s F.A.O. Schwarz.) But serious arctophiles dismiss these as just Silly New Bears.

Chapter II. In which we look back at How It All Started and encounter a Historical Dispute.

Some of the hottest-selling teddies are replicas of early bears, with mohair coats and jointed limbs. Gund Inc. has sold more than 200,000 Bialoskys, named for Peggy and Alan Bialosky, authors of the best-selling “Teddy Bear Catalog,” and patterned after a 1907 model. Steiff’s replica of a 1903 bear, sold in 1980 for \$150, is now a collector’s item fetching up to \$600. Real antique teddies come even dearer. This week Sotheby’s in New York is selling three small lots of bears that should bring more than \$1,500. But the antique market forces a troubling question: who made the first teddy bear?

The name “teddy” indisputably derives from a hunting trip Theodore Roosevelt took in 1902. Eager to have the president bag a trophy, members of his party bayed a 235-pound black bear and tied it to a tree. T. R. refused to shoot under such unsportsmanlike conditions, and Clifford Berryman immortalized his act in an editorial cartoon. (The fact that the bear was eventually killed with a knife generally goes unreported.)

What happened next is open to debate. According to one version, Russian immigrant Morris Michtom was so impressed by the president’s humanity—in contrast to

the czar’s—that his wife stitched up some bears and sat them in the window of Michtom’s Brooklyn candy shop. Michtom wrote to T. R., asking to use his name. Roosevelt reportedly answered that he doubted his name would mean much in the toy trade but Michtom was welcome to use it. He did, and eventually founded the Ideal Toy Corp.

At about the same time, in Giengen-on-Brenz, Germany, polio victim Margarete Steiff was making stuffed animals to rehabilitate herself. Her nephew tried making a bear and Steiff exhibited samples at a Leipzig trade fair in 1903. An American toy buyer ordered 3,000, as this story goes, and some were used as decorations at Alice Roosevelt’s wedding. A guest asked what they were called. The answer: “Teddy’s bears!”

Both stories are probably true. In fact, Gund made stuffed bears as early as 1898. By 1906 teddy bears were a national sensation. In 1907 Steiff sold nearly 1 million—and they competed with domestic models that growled and had light-up eyes. One who never caught the fever, however, was Alice Roosevelt Longworth. Offered an antique bear in 1963 if she would pose for a photo, she replied tartly: “What does a 79-year-old doll want with a 60-year-old teddy bear?”

Chapter III. In which we ponder the adage “What More Needeth Man Than the Love of a Good Bear?”

For all the fervor over “investment” teddies, True Enthusiasts say a bear’s real value is in the holding. Thread-bear remnants from childhood have climbed mountains, intercept-

ed bullets, accompanied RAF pilots into the Battle of Britain and shared foxholes in Vietnam. Cookery expert George Villiers credited Rupert with saving his family when they escaped from Nazi-occupied Norway. Drifting in the North Sea, the bear waved to a British reconnaissance plane, and convinced the crew that the family was British. Mr. Woppit accompanied the late Donald Campbell when he broke the water-speed record in 1959 and was along for one of history’s highest-speed auto crashes at the Bonneville Salt Flats in 1960. Woppit alone survived the speedboat crash that killed Campbell in 1967.

Such stories might have been lost to history if not for the late Peter Bull, the English character actor who played the Russian ambassador in “Dr. Strangelove.” Hearing a friend tell how customs officials beheaded her bear when she was a child, Bull realized that almost everyone has a teddy-bear story to tell. His 1969 “Teddy Bear Book” showed



IRA WYMAN

Attachments: Making ‘scary things manageable’

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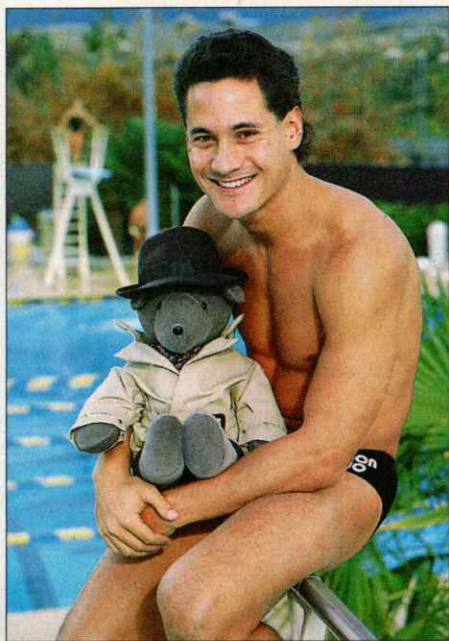
arctophiles everywhere they were not alone. Bull's own "hug" of bears, as he called it, numbered 500 when he died last May—including one (née Delicatessen) who played Aloysius in "Bridgeshead Revisited."

According to Bull, there are few cases of cowardly or treacherous teddy bears—though some have been used in Nefarious Plots. One large bear was found in the Rio airport stuffed full of 512 pairs of nylon knickers and 210 dresses, he reported. At the National League playoffs in San Diego last fall, heartless Padre fans hanged thousands of small bears in effigy and three elderly ladies viciously clubbed a five-foot teddy in front of the Chicago Cubs team bus. Well-loved bears, however, have been the subject of custody battles, and adults have rushed into burning buildings to save them.

What inspires such devotion? The average bear, according to Bull, "doesn't mind being taken for a walk, dressed in ridiculous hats or even being read to. You can blame him for anything, and he won't deny it." Other oft-mentioned qualities include sitting patiently in attics or closets until they are needed again. "That's the nice thing about bears—they'll wait," says Barbara Wolters, editor of the *Teddy Tribune* (circulation: 1,200). "Bears are a comforting fortress against anxiety," says 80-year-old Helen Williams of Rochester, Mich., who came by Randolph Caldecott John on a cross-country train trip in 1907 when she was three. When her mother got off to mail a telegram, she screamed so loudly that a hangover sufferer sitting nearby said he'd buy her a teddy if only she'd stop crying.

Teddy bears are also key providers of Support and Encouragement, and many Persons of Note unabashedly rely on them. Greg Louganis talked to his between gold-medal dives at the Los Angeles Olympics. Novelist Barbara Cartland calls hers "my first masculine love." British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's 22-inch Humphrey has been with her for 50 years. Actress Samantha Eggar's Mr. Bear came to her wedding and went along on her honeymoon. Elliott Gould says his three bears like to act out the morning and evening news shows. Larry Linville ("M*A*S*H's" Frank and "Paper Dolls's" Grayson Carr) even makes teddy bears that are sold through his sister-in-law's chain store, Bear 'N Grin It. Linville's childhood bear, Ignatz, was lost in a move—during his last divorce.

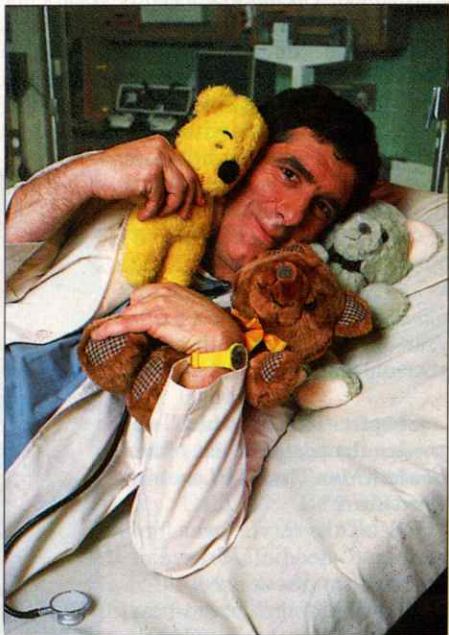
Psychiatrists think that childish attachment to bears is A Good Thing. "A teddy bear is a solacing object—something everybody needs," says psychiatrist Paul Horton of Meriden, Conn., who reports that 90 percent of the sociopaths he has examined never had such objects as children. Why stuffed bears and not, say, rabbits? Perhaps because bears have simply got better press over the years, or perhaps because they convey inner strength. Teddies "make scary things manageable," says Chicago psychia-



Louganis and 'Bogie Bear': No one is too old

trist Marc Slutsky, whose own stuffed koala, Weinstein, hangs in his kitchen.

Most arctophiles firmly believe that *no one* is too old for a teddy; indeed, terrible traumas can result when relationships are severed. John Darcy Noble, toy curator of the Museum of the City of New York, lost the bear who lived in his pocket when he served as a firefighter during the London Blitz—"worst thing that happened to me in the war," he says. Noble now presides over the museum's collection of 15 bears—including ones sent by a nun who was allowed to keep him when she renounced her worldly goods in 1936, but not permitted to give him to another nun 45 years later. Peggy Bialosky so mourned the loss of "Brownie"—tossed out while she was at college—that she and her husband began adopting old teddies,



Gould and friends: Acting out news shows

and have become the First Couple of Bear-dom. Their catalog features such upkeep tips as vacuuming and paw repair.

Chapter IV. In which we meet some people with a Great Many Bears.

If teddies bring security, some members of the burgeoning bear underground must be *very* comfortable. Collecting bears is the fourth largest collecting hobby—after coins, stamps and dolls. (But, says Ted Menten, author of "The Teddy Bear Lovers Catalog" and owner of 2,000, "I never saw a coin collector take his coins to lunch.") Millionaire Victor Davis was confronted with a problem when he sold his San Francisco mansion last week: what to do with his 5,000 bears. "It's sort of addictive," says Virginia Walker, 59, who built a three-room annex onto her Anna Maria, Fla., home—dubbed Teddy Towers—to house her 600.

Walker's unabashed favorite is nine-inch Eggie, who spends a lot of time talking on the phone to his friend Dumper in Minnesota. A handmade chap with a leather nose, Dumper is one of 600 who belong to the *Teddy Tribune's* Barbara Wolters. Dumper presides over the *Tribune's* annual convention at a Bloomington, Minn., hotel. This year's confab drew 500 bears—and 175 humans—and featured a human "hug meter" that rated bears on their hugability.

Such events are becoming quite commonplace—usually featuring contests for oldest, largest, smallest, most-operated-on and most-looking-like-owner. In Britain, teddy-bear "rallies" are almost as common as rock concerts—and almost as well attended. A few years ago, during England's National Bear Awareness Week, teddies belonging to members of Parliament filled the House of Commons dining room. (Many, it was said, were more lovable than their owners.) The first American teddy-bear rally, at the Philadelphia Zoo in 1982, attracted nearly 25,000. The Hugging Bear Inn and Shoppe in Chester, Vt., is something of a perpetual rally. Bears are tucked into every bed—and some guests arrive with carloads of them.

One of the swankiest bear events is the annual meeting of the Take a Teddy to Tea Society at New York's Algonquin Hotel on A. A. Milne's birthday. Last year, Savoyard-Winnistrand-Pooh, resident bear at London's Savoy Hotel, flew over on the Concorde to attend. Another erudite *ursus* usually in evidence is Moretonhampstead 5p, purchased in England for five pence by New Yorker cartoonist Gahan Wilson and his wife, Nancy Winters. Once neglected, Moreton now lives in the fast lane, traveling on the QE2 and the Orient Express and corresponding regularly with Pierre Cardin (who calls him "Ted-ee.") "He's a *soigne* bear," says Winters. "The more jaded you are, the more amused you are by Moreton."

More and more bears are becoming *soigné* these days, since retailers started marketing items especially for them. Bear-Seasons of Santa Rosa, Calif., sells pilgrim suits, pumpkin suits and bunny ears to put on

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bears. ("I know it sounds crazy, but a little voice inside me said, 'Why don't you make bunny ears for teddy bears?' so I did," says owner Joyce Baechtel.) "I spent more on a custom-made tuxedo for my bear than I spent on a tuxedo for myself," says Rowbear Loman, president of the Northern California Teddy Bear Booster Club. One 42-year-old New York secretary, who shares a one-bedroom flat with 165 bears, takes those she feels need clothing to infant shops. "Some stores get very impatient," she says.

Some collectors are quite particular. Bear-in-Mind, a Concord, Mass., mail-order operation, has spent months cultivating the tastes of an elderly widow who lives in Boston's Ritz-Carlton Hotel and buys about 60 a year—sometimes sending for them in a cab. Bull himself was somewhat prejudiced against *nouveau* bears. "I've seen... Teddies, who should be ashamed of themselves, made of some wildly hygienic washable material and smiling with smugness like plastic tablecloths," he wrote in 1969. Bull was also disturbed by the burgeoning antique market: "Many a tired old bear has found himself changing ownership several times in a few months. This is unsettling."

Bull's demise pointed up a serious problem: what to do with one's bears when one dies. His 300 British-based bears have been donated to the London Toy and Model Museum. His own favorite, four-inch Theodore, however, was bequeathed to collaborator Enid Irving. Aloysius, meanwhile, is expected to be auctioned. "It will be the sale of the century," Irving says.

Two middle-aged sisters in Malvern, England, have the answer for those less well provided for: a rest home for Elderly and Unwanted Bears. The Queen Mum's teddy, Lady Elizabeth, shares the rambling Victorian house with about 500 others—including former Prime Minister Edward Heath's Chinese panda. Coproprietress Benita Brown scours rummage sales for needy teddies and is distressed at the high prices they fetch. "And so many of the old ones are just being shipped off to America," she says. "I do think that's rather dreadful."

Arctophiles on this side of the ocean also lament the bear market's increasing priciness. "It's a bear-dealer-eat-bear-dealer world," says Ann Rees, who recently closed her bustling teddy-bear hospital in Palo Alto, Calif. Winnie-the-Pooh probably pronounced the final word on the subject in a 1968 Punch article on the sale of an original Shepard drawing for £1,200. Christopher Robin explains about Art being like that, and What the Market Will Bear. But Pooh will have none of it. Instead, he sings a little hum to himself:

*Isn't it funny how a bear makes money
But none of it sticks to the bear?*

MELINDA BECK with NANCY COOPER in New York, RITA DALLAS in London, PAMELA ABRAMSON in San Francisco, JOHN McCORMICK in Chicago and apologies to A. A. MILNE

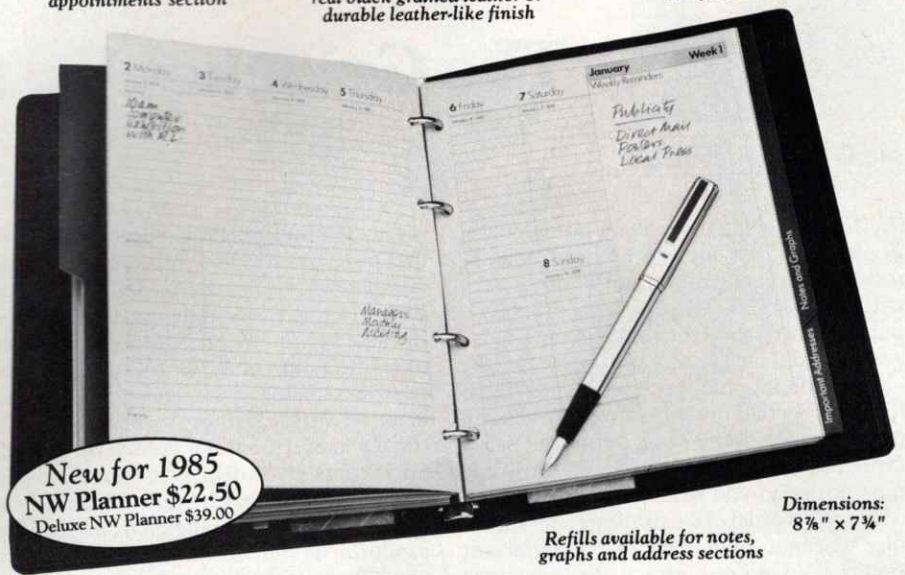
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