

# Artist Doll & Teddy Bear Newsletter

*Pre-Weekend Event Issue*

**Volume 1, No. 5**

**March 2016**

## **The Event You Only Dreamed of Attending**



*Susan and Terence Quinlan*

In 2005 Susan and Terence (Terry) Quinlan opened the Susan Quinlan Doll & Teddy Bear Museum & Library in Santa Barbara, CA, the largest doll and teddy bear museum in the U.S. The Museum gave them a local stage for promoting teddy bears and dolls, but they wanted to make a national impact, so they considered how they could do the most good. They were both educators, authors, and they were both passionate about supporting artists who design and create unique and one-of-a-kind bears and dolls. Terry also had organized conferences in the business world for nearly 40 years. So they decided to organize an Artist Doll & Teddy Bear Convention that provides a vehicle for educating collectors and artists as well as providing a one-stop shop to admire and purchase creations by the most worldwide leading artists as possible.

## **Background**

Teddy bear and doll shows and conventions have dwindled in number and size for a number of years, but no one seems to know how to change things. The most common explanations always deal with things beyond anyone's control. "It is the bad economy" or "the younger generation just have other interests." Collectors have less money to spend for shows and conventions. After 9/11, airlines restricted the amount of luggage passengers could take and increased security, resulting in artists bringing less to shows and sometimes experiencing damage to their creations. So are the "good old days" at teddy bear and doll events gone forever? Susan and Terry do not think so. They knew that they would have to do things differently to motivate collectors and artists to attend their 3-day Artist Doll & Teddy Bear Convention and the Saturday Show & Sale portion that is open to the public. Based on Susan and Terry's experiences with attending teddy bear and doll shows and conventions as collectors and listening to what artists and other collectors do and do not like about the events, this is the story of the challenges faced by the Quinlans and how they have been developing their own model over the past five years for conducting a collector's event that you only dream about attending.

## **Convenient Location**

The major reasons why collectors attend a specific teddy bear or doll event are local proximity and selection. Collectors will travel quite a distance to attend a convention but only 50-100 miles to attend a show & sale. So the first major challenge was to find the best convention location. Based on their extensive study of U.S. demographics, they determined that the U.S. northeast region is where there is the heaviest concentration of people, especially collectors and more specifically, Philadelphia, PA met the Quinlan's major criteria for the location of their annual event to make it convenient and economical for the most collectors and artists to attend. It was in the center of the country's largest segment of the U.S. population, meaning it would minimize travel expenses for the most artists, collectors and visitors. There was a major airport (Philadelphia International Airport) five minutes from the convention hotel that provided easy access for national and international travelers. The city and surrounding areas offered many historical, cultural, and entertainment attractions for visitors to extend their stay. Terry's criteria for selecting sites for his business conferences is "when you hear the name of the city and you get no visual images of what there is to see or do there, choose a different location." When you mention "Philadelphia" it conjures up numerous positive and unique images of things to do and see – unlike many cities.

## **Economical**

Are conventions getting too expensive for you to attend? It is expensive enough to attend a convention when you have to pay so much for travel and lodging, so the greatest challenge was selecting the hotel site. The Clarion Hotel & Convention Center was the only hotel in the Philadelphia area that met all of the Quinlan's conditions. It had to be close to a major airport (Philadelphia International Airport) for ease of national access. The hotel had to be no more than 5-10 minutes from the airport and the hotel airport shuttle had to be free to eliminate taxi costs for attendees. Hotel parking had to be free, which is especially important for multi-day events. The hotel had to be large enough to have sufficient meeting space, but small enough that their convention is the only group in-house. Room rates had to be very affordable for a large city (less than \$90 and free Internet service). Catered food and beverage prices had to be reasonable because the Quinlans were paying out of pocket for all of the attendees wining and dining (8 buffet meals, 3 open bars, all day refreshments) in order to make registration fees less than any other comparable doll and teddy bear event in the world. Registration fees of \$95 for artists and \$195 for collectors goes entirely to promoting the event and 100% of the optional artist workshop fees goes to the instructors – the Quinlans do not take a percentage like at most events. Everything else is free to the attendees.

## **Largest Selection**

With so many shows dwindling in size, are you finding it harder to find things you want to buy? Because collectors are cutting back on the number of shows that they attend each year, the Quinlans decided to “centralize” as many doll and teddy bear artists as possible in order to provide collectors with “one-stop shopping” at the largest event of its kind, where a collector can shop for dolls and bears made by 128 artists, which is the hotel capacity for artist sales tables. For this to happen, the third major challenge was to create a database of postal and email addresses of artists and collectors in order to organize and promote the event. After extensive research and assistance of a number of generous artists, there are over 10,000 contacts in the Quinlan's database. They are in the process of inviting other east coast show organizers to join them in the reciprocal promotion of each other's shows and events through website links, email, postal mail, and show literature table flyers. They firmly believe this joint effort benefits all show organizers and the growth of interest in doll and teddy bear collecting.

## **Truth in Advertising**

Why do you find so many things for sale at shows that are not dolls or teddy bears? The Quinlan's are big believers in truth in advertising. If an event says that it is a "doll and teddy bear" event, they believe that is what the collectors should expect to find. As a result, the Quinlans may be the only ones conducting a doll or teddy bear event that has restrictive policies on the subject. Their policies are that "only artists, no vendors" may participate (only exceptions are Good Bears of the World and a mohair supplier), and "dolls and/or teddy bears made by the artist must comprise more than 75% of their sales table." Although their museum contains all types of dolls and teddy bears, they have chosen to strongly support the artists who make dolls and bears by hand. However, more and more artists are diversifying by making animals and other creatures. Some, maybe many, artists are upset with the Quinlans for not allowing more than 25% of the items on the sales tables to be things other than dolls or bears. The main reason for the "75% Rule" is that it makes it obvious to collectors at the Show & Sale that it is a doll and teddy bear event, yet it allows the few affected artists 25% of their table to sell other creations such as plush animals. Another reason is that the more animals that are sold, the less money collectors have to buy dolls and bears. This is the same reason for excluding vendors as sellers – the artists were concerned that there would be less purchases made directly from the artists (as well as fewer sales tables available for artists to participate).

## **Convention Complaints**

Do you find convention registration fees too high, especially when they include only one meal and a souvenir doll or bear you could live without? The Quinlan's \$195 convention registration fee for collectors is among the lowest in the doll and bear world, but it buys you the most for your money – access to all of the activities, six full buffet meals, all day refreshments, and an open bar (free drinks) all three evenings – a value of over \$400. There is no souvenir doll, but you receive as souvenirs very limited edition artist doll and teddy bear collectable pins that honor leading artists. Rather than increasing the registration fee to cover the cost of a souvenir doll, the Quinlans prefer that you use that money to buy something at the Show & Sale that you really want and is quite rare – not something the convention organizer picked out for you from a lot of 100 to 1000 pieces that are all the same.

Another reason convention registration fees and optional banquet fees are so high is that convention organizers often select a hotel based on the hotel room rate, which is a visible cost to the collector, and not based on the hotel food/beverage prices, which

are hidden costs to the collector in the registration fee. And more times than not, those hotel rates are not always that affordable to many collectors and artists.

A significant cost to sellers at shows is the sales table fee, which has been a dramatically rising expense to artists and sellers over the years. There is no table fee to artists at the Quinlan convention. Also, artists do not have to pay a percentage of the sale price of gallery pieces to them like they do at most conventions.

Why do you have to pay for so many of the convention activities in addition to the convention registration fee? At the Quinlan 3-day convention, there are no additional fees for attending lectures, demonstrations, and panel discussions. There are optional pre-convention workshops ranging from 2 hours to 7 hours and the registration fees are \$10-\$100, but because in most cases you are entitled to 1 or 2 additional full buffet meals, many of the workshops wind up to be free or nearly free. This is unheard of at other conventions.

Why do you have to wait so long to be served your food at convention banquet dinners? The Quinlans believe everyone's time is valuable. It should not be wasted sitting around because the hotel is cutting their cost by not staffing adequately to provide good service. This is the reason the Quinlans serve buffet meals at all of their breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Also, buffets allow you to try as many and as much of the multiple entrees as you wish, not to mention enjoying as many of the sumptuous desserts as you please.

Where is a cup of coffee or tea when you need one? It is very tiring to attend a convention or show because you are in and out of sessions or on your feet all day. How often have you wished you could have a cup of coffee or tea? Sometimes coffee is available but not tea, which is the preferred beverage of choice of many collectors and artists. If beverages are available, you generally have to pay for them. At the Quinlan Convention and Sale, there is free unlimited coffee, tea and lemonade available all day, every day.

How are you suppose to decide what to buy if you are a shy person and the only way to get information is to get into conversations with the sellers (artists)? The Quinlans provide each convention attendee a "Doll Artist Shopping Guide" and a "Teddy Bear Artist Shopping Guide" that list each artist, show a sample of their creations, describe the unique features of their creations, and explain why artists think collectors buy their pieces. The Shopping Guides also provide the sales table number for each artist so you can quickly get to the sales table of those artists of greatest interest to you before the other shoppers do.



Why do so many events have boring formats? Part of the reason is that you can predict the types of activities offered each year because nothing new is added to the program. They do the same kind of things year after year. The only things that change are the speakers and topics. The Quinlans experiment each convention with new activities to see what is and is not popular with the attendees. Their First Annual Convention in 2011 offered an auction that turned out to be too much like their Gallery of Artist Dolls and Teddy Bears where one-of-a-kind pieces are for sale. Also the auction attracted collectors and vendors who were looking to buy pieces at bargain prices, which drastically cuts into the amount artists receive for all of their hard work and creativity. So, at the request of the artists, the auction was dropped as an activity. Also dropped was the “Under \$100 Sales Table” where new and young collectors could purchase very affordable artist dolls and bears. Unfortunately, adults and long time collectors were doing most of the buying. Other things that did not seem to work were offering free admission and early access to groups of 10 or more adults, as well as, offering early admission to groups of 5 or more adults at no additional charge. However, sending out invitations to over 60 east coast doll clubs and 300 doll club members has been effective in spreading the word and attracting them to the Saturday Show & Sale. In 2013 all collectors attending the Saturday Sale were asked to judge the sales tables to determine the winners of the Doll Artist Display Award for Artistic Excellence (there was a similar award for teddy bear artist tables). There were no overwhelming winners, probably because voting was subjective rather than objective, so this collector judging event was discontinued.

## Evolution of Features and Activities

The core activities at the Quinlan 2011 First Annual Convention were:



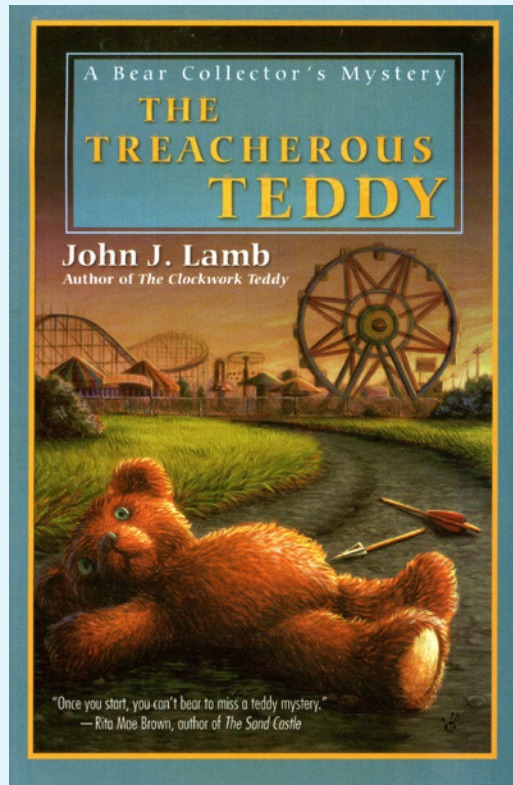
*Helen Bullard and Beverly Port Awards*

- The Helen Bullard Award for Excellence among doll entries and the Beverly Port Award for Excellence among teddy bear entries were established to honor two outstanding leaders in the artist doll and teddy bear worlds and to recognize the work of the participating artists. There are separate awards as voted by the artists and by the collectors at the event. Helen Bullard was the founder and president of NIADA, past president of UFDC, author of numerous books, editor of doll magazines, and championed the idea that original handmade dolls should be considered an art form. Beverly Port was a multimedia teddy bear and doll artist, and international award winning designer, author, consultant and speaker on “The Art of the Teddy Bear.” She coined the term “teddy bear artist” and is known as the “mother of teddy bear artistry.”
- Signed One-of-a-Kind Artist Gallery is where attendees judge and determine the winners of the Helen Bullard and Beverly Port Awards for Excellence. The first recipients of these awards were doll artists Joy Calhoon, Diane Keeler, Beverly Walter and teddy bear artists Sharon Barron, Martha Burch, Michelle Lamb, Capt\*n Ron & Kristy Northman, Karen O’Brien, and Lori Simon



*First in Series of Souvenir Pins*

- Very limited edition collector pins honoring two leading artists each year are given as convention souvenirs to all attendees.



*John Lamb Book at Author Signing*

- Artist Book Signing and Sale where collectors can meet and get autographs from leading artists, authors and illustrators, as well as buy reasonably priced books for their personal collection and as gifts for friends.
- Artist & Collector Market Place is where artists can trade and buy material and supplies used to create their pieces and collectors can buy things other than dolls and bears for their collection, e.g., trinkets, do-dads and silly things. Things can be sold at the Market Place so they do not clutter up the artist sales tables and detract from the dolls and bears that are sold at the Show & Sale.
- Discount Coupon Raffle allows drawing winners the ability to purchase any piece(s) off their favorite artists' sales tables at 10-50% discounts.
- Education Certificate Program awards certificates to doll and teddy bear collectors and artists for each 30 hours of attendance at convention lectures and demonstrations – a unique feature of this event.
- Admission fees to the Saturday Show & Sale were set lower than any other major doll or bear show at \$5 adults, \$4 seniors, and \$3 children over 10 years old (fees have never been raised since the first convention).

The 2012 Second Annual Convention added these new features:

- The convention was extended an extra day to accommodate optional pre-convention workshops conducted by leading artists for both artists and collectors.
- Free Artist Mentoring provides one-on-one sessions where new artists receive advice



from leading and highly experienced artists to gain insight on how to improve their techniques and creations.

- Door prizes for sixty (60) lucky winners are given away during the hourly drawings held at the Saturday Show & Sale that is open to the public. Winners pick their own prize from the assortment of dolls, teddy bears, and other collectables.
- Each participating artist is given five (5) free passes to the Saturday Show & Sale for their customers.

The 2013 Third Annual Convention offered a number of new activities to add to the fun at the event:

- Doll Artist Shopping Guides® and Teddy Bear Artist Shopping Guides®, which were described above, are used to assist collectors with their purchasing decisions.
- Gallery of Workshop Creations displays the dolls and bears made by students at the Thursday optional workshops so everyone can appreciate the imagination, creativity and workmanship of collector and artist students ranging from beginners to professionals.
- Special Galleries were established to motivate artists to think outside the box by using different designs, material and skills than they have grown accustomed to using. The intent is to increase their product lines and to open up new markets for them. For example, the Gallery of Bears-by-Doll-Artists & Dolls-by-Bear-Artists® was the suggestion of doll artist Deborah Pope at the 2012 convention. The idea of doll artists making bears and bear artists trying their hand at making a doll spread like wildfire at the convention, and artists were really excited about the idea of creating a different art form. The Funk & Junk Doll and Teddy Bear® Gallery is a collection of the artists' wild and whimsical bears and dolls made out of funk and junk from around the house or studio. All of these one-of-a-kind gallery entries in these noncompetitive events are for sale.



*Bear created by doll artist  
Deborah Pope*



*Funk & junk bear created by  
bear artist Maggie Newman*



*Funk & junk doll created  
by bear artist Michelle Lamb*

The 2014 Fourth Annual Convention offered these new activities:

- Representatives from five other major artist doll and teddy bear shows and conventions (GBW, HuntValley, NIADA, ODACA, TBAI) made brief presentations about their events at the Thursday banquet so attendees could become aware of these other worthwhile events.
- Four galleries of signed, one-of-a-kind artist dolls and teddy bears were on view and for sale:
  - Ethnic Gallery – African-American, Egyptian, Hispanic, Oriental, Native American Indian and Inuit (Eskimo)
  - Male Gallery – hard to find male teddy bears and dolls
  - Period Piece Gallery – dolls and teddy bears from the medieval ages
  - Quilt Patch Gallery – 12"x12" doll and teddy bear patches to create your own quilts and wallhangings

The 2015 Fifth Annual Convention added to the above lists of events:

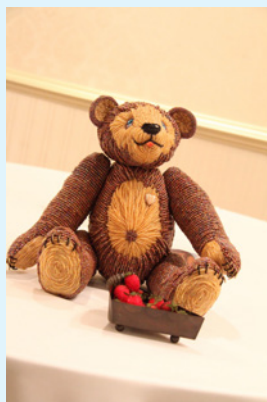


*Doll artist Mark Dennis donation for the first Collector Drawing*

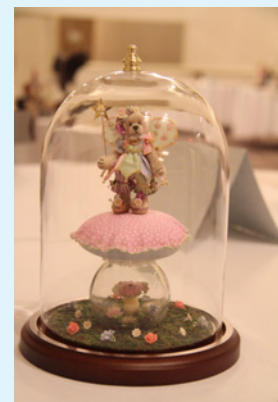
- Doll artist Mark Dennis donated a wonderful creation that lead to our first Collector Drawing. All of the collectors at the convention had their names entered in the drawing, and teddy bear collector Wilma Cohen was the lucky winner.
- Six galleries of signed, one-of-a-kind artist dolls, teddy bears, and handmade creations were on view and for sale:
  - Doll and Bear Pin and Necklace Gallery
  - Doll and Bear Decorated or Made with Beads Gallery
  - Miniature (4" or less) Doll and Bear Gallery
  - Mythological Doll and Bear Gallery
  - Doll and Bear Purse and Tote Bag Gallery
  - Robot and Steampunk Doll and Bear Gallery



*Bear necklace by bear artist  
Elizabeth Taylor*



*Beaded bear by bear artist  
Amy Yascavage*



*Miniature bear by bear artist  
Janet Wilson*



*Robot bear by bear artist  
Amy Yascavage*



*Steampunk doll by doll artist  
Natalie Ruiz*

All of the above listed 2011-2015 activities will continue to be held at the 2016 Sixth Annual Event along with the following additions (most additions in the six year history of the event):

- The event was changed from a Thursday-to-Saturday program to a Friday-to-Sunday program with the expectation that more people can get off work to attend the optional workshops on Friday rather than Thursday and be easier for retailers with shops to attend the Show & Sale open to the public on a Sunday rather than a Saturday.
- The event will be called a “Weekend Event” rather than a “Convention” so it is obvious that the main program is on Saturday and Sunday rather than having to look up the dates on a calendar.
- The Quinlan Event has been referred to as a “boot camp” by many of the past attendees, and they are absolutely correct. Maybe it is because Terry’s Marine Corps background rubs off on the event. Unlike so many other events where you travel a great distance, pay a lot to attend, and wind up sitting in your hotel room with nothing to do, this boot camp aims to give you more than your moneys worth and an opportunity to have fun the entire time. Whether or not you have the energy and stamina to participate in everything is up to you. This boot camp gets you up early every day, opens up a whole new world for you, keeps you moving all day with our go-go-go schedule, educates you about artists and collecting, and feeds you very well three times a day to keep up your energy. “Newbies” are invited to sit down with Susan and Terry Quinlan at the Boot Camp Indoctrination for First-Timers session to understand what makes this event unique and to be briefed on all of the activities you will encounter.
- In addition to the two very limited edition artist doll and teddy bear collectable souvenir pins honoring leading artists that are normally handed out, attendees will receive the convention’s first commemorative pin honoring the recently departed Barbara Burke, a very beloved and gifted teddy bear artist.





*Preview of "Titanic" by bear artist Barbara Burke to appear on the first commemorative pin*

- Some special sessions of interest to doll and teddy bear collectors will be offered for the first time:
  - Investment Experiences and Strategies: from Blackjack to Collectables to the Stock Market
  - Experiences with Disposing of Doll and Bear Collections
  - Doll Collectors: Why, What and How You Collect
  - Teddy Bear Collectors: A Vanishing Breed?
  - The Ancestry and Evolution of Cloth Dolls
  - Teddy Bears: From Sketches to a Finished Product
- The workshops usually involve making things, which most spouses often have little interest in, so workshops were added to appeal to the spouses. An "Acey-deucey Board Game Tournament for Beginners" is offered Friday morning with a quick explanation of the simple rules of the game. This game popular among the First World War military will issue awards to the winners. The instructor Robert Niederer is the spouse of participating doll artist Marla Niederer." A Friday afternoon workshop on the "Introduction to Home Brewing & Tasting" includes sampling various beers provided by the instructor and owner of Bright-Head Brewery, Daniel Kelly, who is the spouse of participating doll artists Theresa Kelly.
- Professional photographer Lloyd Wilson will be available for a reasonable fee to take pictures of dolls and bears brought to or bought at the Weekend Event by collectors and artists. Lloyd is the spouse of participating doll artist Diane Keeler.
- The Collector Drawing prizes increased from one in 2015 to four in 2016 thanks to the generosity of four leading doll and bear artists: Mark Dennis, Diane Keeler,

JoAnne O'Hanlon, and Sue VanNattan all past recipients of the Helen Bullard or Beverly Port Awards for Excellence. These generous artists came up with the idea of expanding the drawing to reward more collectors for their support of this Weekend Event with signed one-of-a-kind creations. All attending collectors will be entered in this free drawing (one entry per household).



*"Amelia Bearhart" by bear artist  
Joanne O'Hanlon*



*"Peggy Sue and Her Poodle" by bear artist  
Sue VanNattan*



*"The Audreys" from Little Shop of Horrors movie by  
doll artist Mark Dennis*



*"Queen of Hearts" by doll artist  
Diane Keeler*

- The six Special Galleries, where collectors can view and buy signed, one-of-a-kind, never before seen dolls and teddy bears, will consist of the following:
  - Star War Characters Gallery
  - Comic Book Characters Gallery
  - Heroes and Role Models for Children Gallery
  - Hand Painted Dolls and Bears Gallery
  - Bride and Groom Gallery
  - Military Figures GalleryWith these themes, the event is expected to attract a greater variety of collectors than strictly doll and bear collectors.
- While the artists are setting up their sales tables for the Show & Sale, there will be an Artist Social – an artist-only gathering that allows artists to socialize with their colleagues in the six sales rooms and areas before collectors are admitted. It is the only time they have to see what their peers have created this year and to discuss shop. They will have access to an open bar (free drinks).
- Bear-aerobic 15-minute breaks conducted by teddy bear artists Agnes Intelicato and Audrey Howell will be held several times during the Weekend Event to work off all that eating and drinking. A little bit of exercise mixed with fun will provide a low impact, no degree of difficulty exercise routine. You can bring your favorite doll or teddy bear to join in with you. At the end of the breaks, you will receive a complimentary gift.

## Conclusion

After experimenting with the process and content of their annual Artist Doll & Teddy Bear Event each year from 2011-2015, the Quinlans feel that they have a pretty good model in place – something that brings back and improves on those doll and teddy bear events from the good old days. It is their hope that other doll and teddy bear event organizers can learn from their mistakes and successes so the entire world of artists, collectors and retailers will benefit.

*For further information about the April 29-May 1, 2016 Artist Doll & Teddy Bear Weekend Event in Philadelphia, contact the Quinlans at [terry@quinlanmuseum.com](mailto:terry@quinlanmuseum.com) or (805) 687-8901.*

*Note: A very short teddy bear version of this article will appear in the April 2016 issue of the Teddy Bear Times magazine. To subscribe to this excellent publication that just recently became available in the U.S., go to [www.teddybeartimes.com](http://www.teddybeartimes.com)*