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No decline in the species

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bears, Steiff sold nearly a million toy-bear immigrants.

By then, practically every large American city boasted two or more teddy bear factories. There was a teddy bear whose eyes lighted up, one who whistled, one who played music, one who tumbled and one who laughed, revealing a set of teeth (like the president's), the better to "bare them at his critics."

In this same bearish year, young women regularly were seen driving through Central Park in Columbia electric victorias and other fancy vehicles, their teddies the only passenger. But teddy bears were not just for the rich. By 1908, the Sears and Roebuck catalog advertised a family of three bears for 25 cents. (Parents provided the Goldilocks.) The growing teddy bear population so alarmed a Michigan minister that he warned that replacing dolls with toy bears would destroy the maternal instinct in little girls.

Teddy was not to blame. If blame were to be laid, good old American know-how was the culprit. "Hardly a day passed but that a new teddy article is brought before the public . . ." Playthings trumpeted. The tiny "Humpty-Dumpty" teddy came apart, revealing a miniature compact. Teddy bears were on automobiles, buttons and china, as well as on linens, stationery, jewelry, postcards, sheet music and even hot water bottles.

In this year's gift catalogs, teddies are turning up once again — including a teddy bear sleeping bag and a furry teddy bear hot-water bottle. For that extra special someone, there's a natural ranch-mink teddy. Stores selling only teddy

bears and related bearware springing up all over America; antique teddies sell for hundreds of dollars.

Clearly, America is experiencing teddy bear awareness. Last year, the year-old Zoological Society of Philadelphia, America's first chartered "America's First Great Teddy Bear Day." For two days 25,000 people, an undetermined number of bears in parades, entered contented bear-care clinics and swapped bears.

Arctophilists, as collectors of bear models are known, abound. Mr. Murphy, board chairman of the Public Bank of Plano, Texas, started at age 5, back in 1935, with three four-inch "Teddies. First they were soldiers and later they became box players with numbers and reach; day they are retired bank executives," Murphy says. He owns 1,257 bears "only" 230 of them are teddies.

The Good Bears of the world, 7,000 members, is a non-profit organization dedicated to donating bears to children and older people in hospitals, institutions or wherever they are sent. Through their dens in many states, Good Bears have given away 15,000 teddies and other bears since the group founded in 1973. So far, 11 states have proclaimed Theodore Roosevelt's birthday, Oct. 27, as Good Bear Day. The group is urging the United Nations to declare 1985 "The Year of the Teddy Bear."

Why all the fuss over a stuffed creature? New York City's Big Apple Bear Den put it this way: "We have enduring affection for the teddy bear finding it to be a universal symbol of love, comfort and joy."

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