

## Finding Aid to the North American Bear Company Collection, 1989-2004

### Summary Information

**Title:** North American Bear Company collection

**Creator:** North American Bear Company (primary)

**ID:** 111.6966

**Date:** 1989-2004 (inclusive); 1990-2001 (bulk)

**Extent:** 0.2 linear feet

**Language:** The materials in the collection are in English.

**Abstract:** The North American Bear Company collection is a compilation of newsletters, company-produced magazines, and articles. The bulk of the materials in this collection are dated between 1990 and 2001.

**Repository:**

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

One Manhattan Square

Rochester, New York 14607

585.263.2700

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### Administrative Information

**Conditions Governing Use:** This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though the donors have not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, they have given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

**Custodial History:** The North American Bear Company Collection was donated to The Strong in December 2011 as a gift from Barbara Isenberg of The North American Bear Company. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 111.6966.

**Preferred citation for publication:** North American Bear Company collection, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

**Processed by:** Kelli Emler, September 2015

### Controlled Access Terms

#### Personal Names

- Isenberg, Barbara

#### Corporate Names

- North American Bear Company

#### Subjects

- Imagination
- Play
- Stuffed animals (Toys)
- Teddy bears

- Teddy bears--Fiction
- Toys
- VanderBear, Muffy (Character)

**Historical Note**

The North American Bear Company was established in 1978 by Barbara Isenberg and her brother, Paul Levy. During the 1970s, Isenberg became interested in toy design and wanted to create plush toys which appealed to both children and adults.

The North American Bear Company's first major product line of Very Important Bears (or VIBs) included 20" plush bears with names such as Scarlett O'Beara, Queen Elizabear, and William Shakesbear. In 1983, North American Bear released its VanderBear Family series, which soon featured the extremely popular Muffy VanderBear. Muffy eventually had a fan club formed in her honor; she also starred in the company's *Fanfare* magazine. North American Bear offered new annual variations of Muffy along with special outfits and accessories, even manufacturing some non-bear friends for Muffy.

North American Bear continues to produce high-quality plush toys and licensed collectible bears.

**Collection Scope and Content Note**

The North American Bear Company collection is a compilation of magazines, newsletters and articles. Best known for the character Muffy VanderBear, the North American Bear Company developed consumer catalogs, newsletters, and magazines to publicize its products to collectors and plush toy fans alike. The bulk of the materials in this collection are dated between 1990 and 2001.

The North American Bear Company collection has been arranged into three series. The collection is housed in one archival document box.

**Related Materials**

The Strong museum holds more than 200 plush toys and other products from the North American Bear Company.

**System of Arrangement**

Series I: *Fanfare* magazine, 1991-2001

Series II: *North American Bear News* newsletters, 1989-2001

Series III: Bear information, 1995-2004

## Contents List

### Series I: *Fanfare* magazine, 1991-2001

**Scope and Content Note:** This series contains issues of *Muffy VanderBear's Fanfare* magazine. The brightly-illustrated magazine provides fans with articles, activities, and descriptions of upcoming bears. These issues are dated between Winter 1991 and Spring 2001.

#### Box 1

Folder 1 *Muffy VanderBear's Fanfare* magazine, North American Bear Company, Winter 1991- Spring 2001

### Series II: *North American Bear News* newsletters, 1989-2001

**Scope and Content Note:** This series houses the *North American Bear News* newsletters. These newsletters contain information about collectors, fans, bears, and events. These issues range from Summer 1989 through Valentine's/Easter (Spring) 2001.

#### Box 1

Folder 2 *North American Bear News* newsletters, North American Bear Company, Summer 1989- Valentine's/Easter (Spring) 2001

### Series III: Bear information, 1995-2004

**Scope and Content Note:** This series holds published articles about the North American Bear Company; listings of when bears were created and retired from the company; and a catalog. The articles, published in the *Teddy Bear Review*, mainly feature Muffy VanderBear.

#### Box 1

Folder 3 Published articles, bear listings, and catalog, 1995-2004