

## Susan Quinlan Doll &amp; Teddy Bear Museum &amp; Library

# A Journey . . . Through the Ages

By **ANDRIA WATSON** / CASA

**W**ITH ENTHUSIASM FOR DETAIL and love for childhood nostalgia, Doll and Teddy Bear Museum owner and collector Susan Quinlan honors a timeless connection that people have with dolls, teddy bears, and books.



Susan Quinlan

“The museum provides a place for people to remember their past,” shared Quinlan. “It’s about taking a piece of emotional history, and being able to share memories with younger generations.”

Quinlan started collecting about 25 years ago. After being given a teddy bear

from her sister, a friend that was involved in doll collecting encouraged her to start.

“I was a librarian from 1964 to 1999, so that has not only influenced, but also expanded my interest in collecting dolls found in children’s books,” Quinlan explained. “Now I can’t get enough of them!”

When visitors first enter the museum, located just a couple blocks from State Street at 122 W. Canon Perdido Street, the first thing to greet them is a five-and-a-half-foot stuffed warthog standing on two roller-skates with a lion under his arm. “I’ve designated him as our security guard!” Quinlan laughed. “He keeps the peace.”

As museum-goers pass the “security guard,” there is a lounge room where people can help themselves to complementary tea and coffee, prepared by Quinlan herself, and take in the sights of a mural by Chelsea McGraw, spanning three walls depicting teddy bears at local Santa Barbara hot spots like East Beach, Stearn’s Wharf, and the Mission. Next to the lounge room is a gift shop, where visitors can take a piece of the museum home with them, possibly a Brooke Shields doll from 1982. Who knew?

“Dolls reflect the social structures and



Girl Sewing by mother and daughter team: **Judith and Lucia Friederici**

cultures of their time,” Quinlan shared. “They aren’t just aesthetically pleasing, they also give us insight into our history and our future. They are now becoming true works of art.”

The Quinlan Teddy Bear Museum was founded approximately two and a half years ago with hopes of encouraging a youthful, child-like spirit in all who visit. Quinlan has the permanent exhibit organized in an accurate California time sequence, starting with Native American displays and sculptures that continue with Spanish explorers, Chinese immigrants, Russian and Japanese settlers, the Gold Rush, and so on. Each case has its own era, its own story, and interaction within its immaculately arranged compartment. Quinlan also offers tours to local organizations and groups.

The oldest American doll, owned by Clarissa Fields, a blind girl that lived over 225 years ago, is also on view. The poems that Fields wrote and her sister transcribed are still sewn into the petticoat on the doll’s clothing.

And of course a teddy bear museum wouldn’t be complete without Teddy Roosevelt bears. After all, it was he who coined the name ‘teddy bear’ after refusing



Franklin by **Maria Go** (Japanese Anime Trend Series)

to shoot a bear cub while hunting, naming it after himself.

From *Star Wars* collectibles to European Pinochios, from fairies to *Alien* and *Predator*, Quinlan has all the bear necessities covered.

The Cleveland native moved to Santa Barbara when she was eleven years old, when her parents took teaching positions. She earned a bachelors in history and a masters in library science from USC. She received her graduate certificate from UC Berkeley in library management and later held a variety of positions at San Francisco State.

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The museum is located at 122 W. Canon Perdido St. and is open from 11 to 5pm Fr-Mo. Admission is \$6.50-3.50. For information, call 730-1707, or visit [www.quinlanmuseum.com](http://www.quinlanmuseum.com).