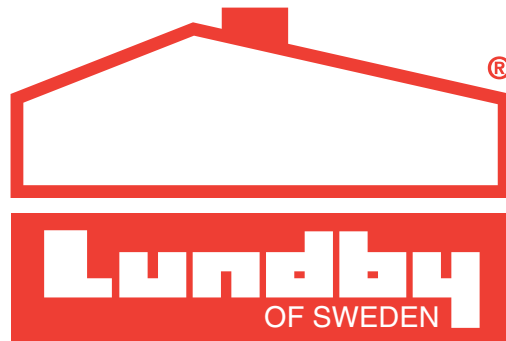


THE



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LETTER

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A Quarterly Newsletter Published for Members of the We Love Lundby Club

Research Reveals a Unique Lundby-Lego Link in 1950s

By Jim Hughes

TO THE LUNDBY COLLECTOR, it is well known that Danish expatriates Axel and Grete Thomsen founded AB Lundby Leksaksfabrik in Lundby, a northern suburb of Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1947. But what happened to Axel after that? The answer lies not only in Lundby history, but also in the history of another well-known Scandinavian toy—Lego.

By the mid 1950s Lego had developed the System of Play, a brick system that is the direct forerunner of today's Lego. Godtfred Kirk Christiansen, son of the founder, Ole, and now managing director of the company, wanted to expand outside of Denmark. In 1952 he met Axel and discussed the possibility of a partnership. By 1955 when Lego began exporting to Sweden, the toy was distributed exclusively by Lundby.

In 1959 Lego set up its own sales company in Sweden which, almost 50 years later, is still based in Lerum. But we are not done with Axel yet! *In 1954 Axel moved to Hohenwestedt, Germany, and opened another dollhouse factory.* When Godtfred investigated the possibility of exporting Lego to Germany, he again looked to Axel. But Godtfred didn't want a distributor like the arrangement in Sweden; he needed someone who would work full-time for Lego.

Axel Sells German Factory and Becomes Lego General Manager

According to Lego sources, after a meeting in Denmark, Axel was so excited by Godtfred's plans for the Lego System of Play that he sold his German dollhouse factory to his son and became the General Manager of Lego's first ever foreign sales company, Lego Spielwaren, GmbH. The company was founded on January 12, 1956, and was housed in an old rail hotel in Hohenwestedt that was owned by Axel.

Germany was a very difficult market and, as toy analyses had predicted, Lego had great difficulty, especially with larger shops and department stores. Spielzeugfachgeschäft Rasch in Hamburg, then the largest toy store in Germany, refused to stock the toy; they wanted no part of the "plastic junk." So Axel provided small toy shops with elaborate window displays



Establishment of Lego's German Department in Hohenwestedt. 1/12/56 (translation from the Danish). Lego's official history simply states that Axel Thomsen owned a dollhouse factory in Hohenwestedt; there was no mention of Lundby. This earliest known image of Axel Thomsen is from January 12, 1956, (note the European reversal of month and date compared to the American style) showing the celebration of the founding of Lego in Germany.

From left to right: person at left is unknown; woman is presumably Grete Thomsen; Mr. Bojesen (Lego counsel, turned toward the camera); Ole Kirk Christiansen; Godtfred Kirk Christiansen; and Axel Thomsen (far right). ©The Lego Group. Special thanks to Jim Hughes for providing the photo.

and quickly filmed a black and white commercial (starring Axel himself) and had it shown in a Hamburg cinema. The result was enough demand that Walter Rasch's toy store had no choice but to stock the toy.

Over time, Germany would become the largest Lego market in Europe. What happened to Axel after this is unknown, but by the early 1960s there was a new general manager of Lego in Germany. The rest of Axel's story is, perhaps, an exercise for a Lundby historian. ♥

Editor's Note: Jim Hughes of Cincinnati, OH, is a collector and historian, not of Lundby, but of Lego, maker of the popular plastic bricks. Jim's research, which took him several years to compile, has revealed that Axel and Grete Thomsen, Lundby's founders, have importance in the introduction of Lego into Sweden, and, surprisingly, into Germany as well. After studying the We Love Lundby Club website, Jim emailed me in early 2008 with some astonishing new information.

Because Lundby historians know so little, if any, information about Axel's activities in the 1950s, these new exciting details are a breath of fresh air, with hope for more in the future. Both Jim and I feel confident that this information on the early Lundby-Lego connection will be of interest to Lundby collectors and historians every where. Any new documentation from our readers is welcomed. Jim's website is www.brickfetish.com and he can be reached at his email address, jhughes@fuse.net.

What's New at Lundby

“Lundby is famous for reproducing items, which are the newest in Swedish interior design, for its dollhouses.”

BY PATRICIA HARRINGTON

JUST IN TIME FOR THE CHRISTMAS TRADE, the exciting new set 60.9022, with the Bambi painting and the Box Design chairs for the Lundby Stockholm dollhouse, was released in Autumn 2007. The painting, “Bambi,” was commissioned by Lundby (Micki Leksaker AB) from the artist Lisa Rinnevu. (See the June 2006 issue of *The Lundby Letter* for the article, “Artist’s Inspiration Appeals to All Ages,” about Lisa and her earlier artwork for Lundby.)

The chairs were designed by Ann Morsing and Beban Nord, Box Design architects in Stockholm. (See the September 2005 issue of *The Lundby Letter* for a previous article about the Box Design architects and the Stockholm House and furniture which they designed for Lundby.)

Lisa informed us that Micki/Lundby actually owns the original painting, which is hanging in their headquarters; it is 100 x 80cm in size. Kristina Aronsson, Product Manager for Lundby, wrote in an email that the contract with Lundby allows the company to reproduce “Bambi” in miniature format for the Lundby dollhouses.

Lisa provided the English text scrolling around the edge of the picture:

*Once upon a sweet day your dream will come true
Have faith stay forever pure and simple dear
Trust your heart never lies you are perfect the way you are.
Remember life is for you too.
Stay brave*

Lisa revealed that the money from the commission is saved in a special account for children’s charities. Her dream is to open an art school for children. Lisa states, “It is important for me to give something back since I get so much inspiration and joy from children!”

The swivel chairs for the dollhouse are miniatures of actual life-size chairs designed by the architects Box Design. Lundby is famous for reproducing items, which are the newest in Swedish interior design, for its dollhouses. Box Design’s “Power” chairs can be seen on their website: www.boxdesign.se. Lundby collectors will recognize additional originals of Lundby dollhouse items!

Currently the new Lundby set is available from www.cheekymonkeytoys.com in the U.S., from local toy stores in other countries, and on eBay. ♥

Editor’s Note: In the March 2007 newsletter, we announced that Kristina Aronsson, Micki Toy Company, sent us news about the launching of two new Lundby items at the Nuremberg Toy Show. One of these was the set detailed above by Patricia Harrington. Our thanks to Patricia for adding to our knowledge about this charming collector’s item. We hope to feature the new 2008 Lundby line in the June newsletter.



Artist Lisa Rinnevu is pictured at work in her studio before the arrival of her own little “Bambi.” Her daughter Eva was born in January 2008 in Stockholm, Sweden! Congratulations and best wishes from the We Love Lundby Club! Photo courtesy of Lisa Rinnevu at www.lisarinnevu.com.



The picture, “Bambi” and Box Design swivel chairs for the dollhouse. Photo courtesy of the Micki Toy Company.

Letter from the Editor

Members Step Up

SPECIAL APPRECIATION goes to several members who have responded to the appeal to involve more members in club activities. Maria Cannizzaro, NJ, has volunteered to work on tentative plans for a trip to Sweden in early summer 2009. Elisabeth Lantz, Sweden, has agreed to take on the huge task of answering queries and identifying mystery items, in addition to becoming an Advisory Member. Sue and Peter Kopperman, MD, have been very generous with their ideas and time in helping to plan the 2008 gathering at ScanFest. We can always count on Carolyn Frank, VA, to keep up with Lundby’s history. There is still a vacancy in membership activities. Anyone interested?

Changes are Coming to the Club Website

Although a decision has not yet been made when we will cease mailing newsletters and post them on the website exclusively, we will eventually make that transition due to rising postal costs and mere efficiency. Regardless, we will continue to mail hard copies of the newsletter to club members without Internet access.

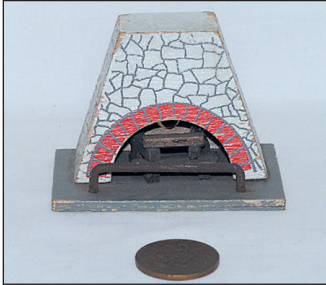
This important consideration also brings us to the question, “How can we assure that members have more benefits than the casual visitor to the We Love Lundby Club website?” One answer is to password-protect a member portion so that a year of newsletters would be available *only* to the members. All those newsletters already posted to the site would remain for interested persons, but members would have the benefit of viewing the current newsletters during the year they are a member. Your comments are welcomed. Watch the website for further information on these upcoming changes.

Smiles, Sue Morse, Editor.



Lundby Connections

UK MEMBER Marion Osborne's mystery fireplace has been identified by a visitor to the website, Syll Van Veen. She recently found the exact same fireplace on www.marketplaats.nl in a lot consisting of early 1960s East German furniture.



Remember **Paige Baird's** project to raise money for cancer research? So far the UK member has sold four diving boards and plans to sell the remainder on eBay. Her nicest story is from **Anna-Maria Sviatko**, Australia, who posted a picture of the diving board on her swimming pool in a blog about collecting, <http://theshoppingsherpa.blogspot.com/2008/01/yeah-were-going-to-be-so-neat-dancing.html>.

Please help identify these rare mystery items. **Reina Olthoff**, Holland, sends this photo of an upholstered chair and a painted chest for identification. She says the former owner told her it's early Lundby. Could it be Lerro? Photo by Reina Olthoff.



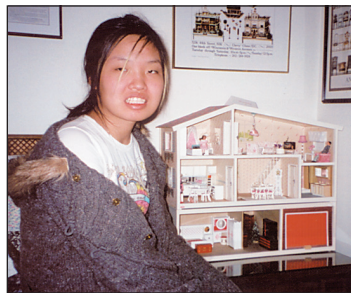
Dexter Chow of Cheeky Monkey Toys wrote a promotion of the WLLC on the company website. It reads, "Did you know there is a We Love Lundby Club? They are an international network of Lundby collectors, and a great resource for those passionate about Lundby (we are completely unaffiliated – this is an independent club)." Thanks to Dexter for bringing us several new members!

It's fun to decorate our dollhouses for the various holidays. **Lori Van Houten**, FL, shares a photo of her Lundby kitchen with Easter decorations. Please contact Lori if

you have an extra Lundby globe. Hers was broken by movers when she relocated from New Jersey to Florida. Photo by Lori Van Houten.



Seeing themselves in print in last issue's Members in Focus was an exciting experience for the Browne family from Australia. **Catherine Browne** also sends her thanks for winning the competition, and her kids, who are new Junior Members, guess they are all now famous!



Sang E. Kim, VA, loves the Salame and Signor Lundby dollhouse, one of which she received for a Christmas present from her foster parent, Kathy Hinton. Sang, 20 years old, is originally from South Korea. Photo by Sue Morse.

It was thrilling to receive an email from **Sheila King** in Perth, West Australia, to thank us for providing so much useful and easy-to-use information on the website.

Meet Club Members at ScanFest in August

PLANS ARE IN THE DEVELOPING STAGES to hold the fourth annual We Love Lundby Club convention on **Saturday, August 30, 2008**, the day before ScanFest in Vasa Park, Budd Lake, NJ. Then the group will take in ScanFest on Sunday, August 31.

Please email us at toysmiles@aol.com if you are interested in attending. Watch for more information in the June newsletter and on the website. ♥



The Children's Corner

THE CLUB'S JUNIOR MEMBERS have a birthday angel in **Carolyn Frank**, VA. Carolyn sends an annual birthday surprise to all the children listed below. We salute Carolyn for her generosity and kindness to our Junior Lundby Lovers!

To illustrate what these gifts mean to the children, we present a note from **Maddie Boutry-Klingbeil**, **Lisa Boutry's** daughter, who recently celebrated her fifth birthday: "I Love You, Carolyn and Sue! I love it when you bring me money and I always like to spend it."

On Lundby, we presume!

Madlen Boutry-Klingbeil
January 21, 2003

Joelle Williams April 24, 1998	Megan Browne August 13, 1990
James Browne May 1, 2004	Brodie Butchart September 24, 2000
Gemma Browne June 16, 1993	Natalie Schlager November 10, 1995
Katie Richmond June 27, 2000	Caitlin Butchart December 20, 1994



NOW THAT THE BIG PARTY for the 60th anniversary in 2007 is over, the slogan, "It's Never Too Late to Have a Swedish Childhood," will be used in 2008 and beyond.

Submitted by **Jenni Nolan**, Dublin, Ireland, this slogan will carry us forward to the 70th anniversary in 2017! Photo of Lundby family and friends by **Jennifer McKendry** and design by **Don Christian**.

Members in Focus

THIRTEENTH IN A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS

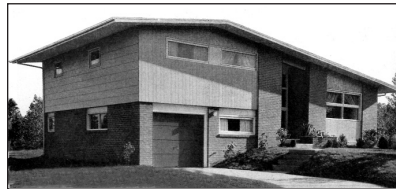
By Sue Morse

WHAT ARE THE GROWING CONDITIONS needed to create an individual who can write a history of 100 years of dollhouses? Here are some life experiences of a Canadian member of the We Love Lundby Club, **Jennifer McKendry, Ph.D.**, that led her to make a phenomenal contribution to the hobby of dollhouse collecting.

- First, it helps to have parents who collected and dealt in antiques and gave her antique miniatures as gifts when she was a young girl.
- Secondly, it takes the foresight to buy a box full of very early high-style furniture in the mid-1960s when she was a first-year university student in Toronto, then going on to purchase a dollhouse dated 1906 and likely made in Quebec, and then buying a small Bliss-type with its original furniture.
- Thirdly, it takes feeling regret for having sold both of these houses because items from the 20th century were not as treasured at that time as they are now.
- Finally, it requires reassessing her bias against recent dollhouses and miniatures and deciding to try acquiring at least one dollhouse per decade from 1890 to 1990. This objective became feasible once she started to use eBay in 2005 and, as well, began to make contacts with the private sellers through email. When one does the math, that's acquiring at least 10 dollhouses in 2 years!

All of the above experiences, plus the realization that solid information on the web about collecting is very hard to come by, inspired Jennifer to create her own website, www.mckendry.net. Combining her experience as a photographer, author, designer, and architectural historian, Jennifer treats the subject of collecting dollhouses as seriously as when she tackles assignments as a researcher in Kingston, Ontario.

How did Lundby arrive on the scene in Jennifer's history? It was as recently as 2005 at a silent auction in a thrift shop in Kingston. She did not know what the dollhouse was but found the modern style and the accompanying furniture intriguing.



When Jennifer isn't rearranging her Lundby Stockholm house, she keeps writing. Her latest addition to her website is about dollhouse dolls, www.mckendry.net/dolls_dollhouse/dolls_dollhouse_1.htm.

Through her writings as an architectural historian, Jennifer has amassed many photographs of real houses with asymmetrical roofs. This 1956 photograph shows a house in Philadelphia. You can learn more about the connection between the Lundby dollhouse and real houses by reading Jennifer's article on her website, "The Lundby Gothenburg Dollhouse: Its Evolution and Survival from 'Modern' to 'Traditional.'"

This interview was previously published in the Holiday 2007 issue of the Dollhouse Toys 'n Us newsletter. Many thanks to Geraldine Scott, editor, for permission to reprint.

She made note of the Lundby brand name and checked it on the web. Luckily, she raised her winning bid to \$40! It was a mid-1970s Gothenburg with a garage extension and a lot of furnishings, all in nice condition.

That was the good news! The even better news, as all of us who collect Lundby can attest, meant that this first purchase launched Jennifer into the quest for more! One of her most recent acquisitions is a 1960 Franz Carl Weber catalog that shows one of the earliest known photographs of a Lundby Gothenburg dollhouse. Jennifer constantly searches for printed materials that assist in dating and identifying, and she would welcome help finding any dated photographs of Lundby items from the 1950s. ♥

WLLC welcomes more new members

FIVE NEW MEMBERS HAVE JOINED the WLLC. Welcome to **Patricia Corbin**, Johnston, IA; **Jennifer Jorgensen**, Tiburon, CA; **Marie Gibson**, Durmont, NJ; **Sigrid Frederick**, Kansas City, MO; and **Julie Plovnick**, Winooski, VT.

The 2008 Membership Directory and an updated membership card are enclosed in all renewed members' envelopes. If you have not yet renewed, a 2008 renewal membership form and a return envelope are included with this mailing. To keep your membership current for 2008, please renew no later than June 1. If members or readers have any questions, please send an email to toysmiles@aol.com. ♥



The Lundby Letter is published quarterly for members of the **We Love Lundby Club**. If you have any inquiries about an article, or if you are interested in submitting a story or project of your own, please do not hesitate to write or email us.

THE LUNDBY LETTER

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Coming Up in the June 2008 Issue

- 🏠 Miniature Clubs in Sweden
- 🏠 Petra Dolls
- 🏠 Photo Tips
- 🏠 Member Interviews
- 🏠 Plans for 2008 Gathering