Susan Leigh

*Bearleigh Bears*

 Susan Leigh grew up in Durban, South Africa, then moved inland to a farm in Broederstroom, Johannesburg. After doing a bit of rehabilitation work with wild animals there, she immigrated to Australia to live in Sydney, New South Wales. She explained, “I had just started to learn how to make teddy bears before we immigrated, then once in Australia, I took a design course, and started designing my own bears in 2008, under the name of *Bearleigh Bears*. After moving two years ago to a small farm in Bannister, about 2 ½ hours from Sydney, Australia, and just outside of Goulburn in New South Wales, I was very lucky to be able to acquire a whole room for my craft. Everything is on hand in my craft room, but sometimes the space can become a little messy, and time is needed to sort it out when the pressure of deadlines looms to complete bears! The nice part is that I'm able to leave everything where it is when I am finished working, just close the door, and start again straight away the next day.

I am very lucky to be able to have this wonderful area to create, and I am more than happy to invite friends over to chat and sew. I also teach classes and workshops, as I love sharing the knowledge that I have learned over the years. I sometimes have to pinch myself when I stand up in front of a class of ladies to teach, as I was petrified of speaking in front of the class when I was at school!”
 “I am always trying new designs with my bears. Sometimes they work, and sometimes they don’t! The best surprise is when I am making a certain bear, and it turns out completely different to what I expected, but it is usually a wonderful new bear that I love anyway. My goals are to grow as a bear-maker, and to experiment with new techniques. I get inspiration from fabric, little ornaments and nature. I can find a lovely ornament, and it inspires me to create a little bear to accompany it. My favorite fabric is alpaca. I love creating chubby cheeks, and I am able to do this with alpaca, as it is lush and thick. I also love converting vintage mink fur coats into heirloom teddies.”

 Susan's talent has earned her a Toby Award in 2015 for her bear, Bella, and Bearleigh Bears also has won 1st and 3rd prizes at the Sydney Royal Easter Show,

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