

# 1930'S THE STEIFF CHOW TOY STORY- Veedol and the Graf Zeppelin



This snapshot from around the early 1930's Germany features what I believe to be an original Steiff chow.

The photo was badly cracked over the girls' face. I was so happy to be able to restore her features and details

Love me....  
Love my  
Chow  
Chow



# THE STEIFF CHOW CHOW STORY

A VINTAGE CHOW PHOTO SETS ME OFF ON A  
NEW JOURNEY TO TRACK DOWN HIS ORIGIN



Every once in a while one of the photos in my collection stops me in my tracks and I can't get my mind off of it until I find out more about the subjects. This beauty is no exception

Immediately of course I recognize this mohair chow toy as circa 1920's-30's mainly because the shoes on the subjects date the image. My years in antique doll costuming helped with that!!

So off on a search I go to find out if it is from the famous German toy company called Steiff. The signature gold button and tag in the ear is what you look for first on all Steiff toys, but many that were being played with had lost their tags over time.

What came next in my research just dragged me in deeper. Who ever said history is boring didn't relate it to chows and dolls!





The Mascot on the  
**Graf Zeppelin**  
 Was a Chow Dog named  
**VEEDOL**

The Graf Zeppelin used  
**VEEDOL OIL**  
 For lubricating its motors  
**VEEDOL OIL**  
 Gives perfect lubrication and re-  
 duces repair bills.

Next time before changing your oil, drive around  
 to Harry's and let him fill your crankcase with  
 Veedol and your motor will be perfectly lubricated.

**Northway Oil Corp.**

Main at Dewey.

Phone 1296

The ad for Veedol Oil is from The  
 Owosso Argus-Press - Nov 10, 1928



**"VEEDOL" The first  
 dog to cross the  
 Atlantic on a  
 nonstop flight. The  
 puppy was carried  
 on board the flight to  
 ward off bad luck.**

**But of course it would  
 be a chow puppy to  
 boldly go where no  
 dog has gone before!**

Above is Veedol the chow with  
 Captain Knut Eckener, son of Captain  
 Ernst Lehmann. Captain Eckener  
 piloted both the Graf Zeppelin and  
 the Hindenburg

**And from this point the story gets even more interesting. Below find the article about why Steiff started making chows**

This article is from [mysteiff.com](http://mysteiff.com) ...a wonderful resource for identifying Steiff animals

***Chow Chows have an interesting history on the Steiff menu of product offerings.*** And, like many other somewhat unconventional items, Chow Chows were introduced into the Steiff line because of international headline news stories. For example, remember that it was the American presidency that influenced Steiff's production of Teddy bears, opossums, and Dolly bears!



***Chow Chows made their debut in the Steiff catalog in 1928... the same year that the German airship "Graf Zeppelin" made its Transatlantic journey.***

Accompanying Captain Ernst Lehmann back to Europe was a little Chow Chow dog named Veedol, who was a gift from American friends. The dog was quite a character on board the airship, and quickly became the mascot of the voyage, despite his puppy antics. Upon arriving home in Germany, the Chow Chow was given

to the airship's helmsman. The story behind this precocious pooch's adventure quickly spread to both sides of the ocean. Seeing the potential behind the breed's popularity, Steiff quickly introduced its own Chow Chow, and named him "Brownie." Both light and dark brown mohair versions of Brownie were subsequently produced sitting, standing, on wheels, as a handbag, and as a pincushion through the early 1930's. The photo on the left, from Christie's, shows a small sitting version of Chow Chow Brownie. Steiff also manufactured a very similar Chow Chow design in all white and called her Chow Chow Blanco. Blanco was produced sitting, standing, and, on wheels during the same time frame.





**According to Steiff company records, the advertising copy for its early Chow Chows read as follows...**

*"He has been showered with affection from all sides, ever since he was adopted as the Zeppelin mascot on the West East flight of the LZ 127. His virtue was certainly the reason he was chosen, and is envied by all the world. As a toy or decorative item, we have portrayed his characteristics as carefully as possible: large, wise eyes; white, pale, or chocolate brown plush coat, and a good 'barking' voice box."*

**A newspaper article to the right states the chow puppy was a gift. I also read that the puppy retired into a happy home with a family.**

#### **Gifts Received**

The Captain, has derived much pleasure from the reception of various gifts to the officers and crew. A zoological institute sent a quantity of bacilli to be carried over the ocean to German Universities. When asked what variety of germs the bottles contained, he answered: "You know, they are just bacilli to me. I do not look at them." A six weeks old chow dog also will make the trip to Friedrichshafen.

The fuel gas, equivalent of the German "blau gas" freezes easily, and this difficulty has caused a delay of many hours. Lieutenant Commander Zeno W. Wicks, who had charge of the preparations, estimated yesterday the refuelling would be completed by early this afternoon.

Here are a few examples of “Brownie” the Chow by Steiff.

I have been reading that mohair producers were pretty inconsistent during wartime so the toys were not always identical or uniform in coat. There is quite the variation in online examples







06688103

### Zwergspitz - Miniature Pomeranian

langhaariger Mohairpluesch, weiss, stehend, ohne Raeder - *long-hair mohair plush, white, standing, no wheels*

SERIE	ART.-NO	PERIOD	PR.	INFO
69	1315.0	1935-1943	6	15 cm
69	1318.02	1935-1943	6	18 cm
69	1323.02	1935-1943	6-7	23 cm



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### Zwergspitz - Miniature Pomeranian

langhaariger Mohairpluesch, weiss, sitzend - *long-hair mohair plush, white, sitting*

SERIE	ART.-NO	PERIOD	PR.	INFO
69	3320.2	1935-1943	6-7	20 cm



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### Chow Chow Brownie

Zeppelin Mascot, langhaariger Mohairpluesch, hellbraun, stehend, ohne Raeder, weich, Seidenschleife - *Zeppelin mascot, long-hair mohair plush, light brown, standing, no wheels, soft, silk ribbon*

SERIE	ART.-NO	PERIOD	PR.	INFO
66	1317.0	1928-1932	6-7	17 cm
66	1322.02	1928-1932	6-7	22 cm
66	1328.02	1928-1932	7	28 cm
66	1335.02	1928-1932	7	35 cm



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### Chow Chow Brownie

Zeppelin Mascot, langhaariger Mohairpluesch, hellbraun, stehend, 17 und 22 cm Exzenterräder, ab 28 cm Raeder, Bell-Druckstimme - *Zeppelin mascot, long-hair mohair plush, light brown, standing, 17 and 22 cm eccentric wheels, from 28 cm wheels, squeaker (barks)*



ABOVE IS THE RARE WHEELED PULLTOY VERSION OF "BROWNIE" IN A  
STEIFF CATALOG CIRCA 1928-1932



## **SO BON VOYAGE VEEDOL! I AM SO PLEASED TO HAVE MET YOU THROUGH MY RESEARCH!!**

We will never know for sure if that stuffed chow in the photo was truly a Steiff, but two things you can be sure of. That chow stuffy was loved by his girl, AND you can be certain the passengers on the Graf Zeppelin were thoroughly entertained by the chow puppy antics of Veedol. Talk about socializing!!.

A true ambassador for our breed and a piece of chow history that we can now be sure will never be lost.



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BELOW IS ANOTHER WONDERFUL PHOTO ADDED TO THE ARCHIVE , SEPT,  
2017



Circa 1928  
Detroit FreePress

Month old  
chow puppy  
"Veedol"  
pictured with  
August Grafzinger  
before the puppy's  
maiden voyage  
on the German  
Graf Zeppelin

The puppy mascot  
made many such  
voyages on  
this dirigible  
before retiring  
with a family

—Underwood & Underwood.  
FIRST MASCOT of the Graf Zeppelin—a month old chow puppy—  
which was taken aboard the giant airship just before it left the hangar  
at Lakehurst. August Grafzinger, assistant chief engineer, is shown  
with "Vee."

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UPDATE: 4 YEARS AFTER WRITING THIS ORIGINAL ARTICLE I WAS  
FORTUNATE TO HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE THIS  
TREASURE BELOW

Veedol looks to be maybe 5-8 months old at this point and  
still being advertised as the Graf Zeppelin mascot. What a  
life this young chow had as well as such a legacy to the  
Steiff company menagerie!



chowtales.com



Bild Nr.123: Der Bordhund



Bild Nr. 59: Seiten-Laufgang in der »Bodensee«



Der »Nordstern« wurde aber gar auf Grund des Ver- der Luftschiff-Station (französisches Marine- er) verwandt. Wie das zuletzt gebaute als Re- unter stellt schen, r ge- nutet, s jen- etrie- en noch zwei Mo- scheinend die sta- nicht ausreichte. Ruder-Legen wöh- auseinander, ent- zte mit 40 Ameri- ab. Dieses Miß- Grund, daß die Gaszellen des einer ungewöhn- tels Netzen befe- der Schiffsrüden et, anderseits aber Zellen im Schiffs- ge war, daß schon kes Pendeln und m der Zellen fest- nicht die Ursache m versucht, durch zuschwächen. Da- einer Fahrt nach In- re, daß es am 5. Ok- in Frankreich stran- edrichshafen hatte t jede Bautätigkeit de es begrüßt, daß parations-Luftschiff onen Goldmark an Schiff erhielt die 1924 fertig- gestellt. Der »ZR III« hatte 200 m Länge, 27,6 m Durchmesser und 70000 cbm Inhalt, war also etwas größer als die »L 71«-Klasse. (»ZR III« bedeutet nicht Zeppelin Reparation, sondern Rigid = Starr; daher auch die en- Be- zeichnungen »R 100« usw.) Das einen Aktions-Radius von 9000 Nutzlast und erzielte mit fünf- toren von je 400 PS 126 W- schwindigkeit. Bild Nr. 62 ze- welche außerordentlich kr- ist, weil sich in ihrer Spitze Mast-Fesselgeschirr bef- Nr. 115 und 116.) Wie- wenig beanspruchte



Bild Nr. 61: Verkehrs-Luftschiff »Nordstern« 1920



Bild Nr. 62: LZ 126 (ZR III) Bug



CIRCA 1929 - 'Veedol' the Graf Zeppelin Chow mascot. Photo taken from a rare real photo book collector book called the Zeppelin Weltfahrten

FROM THE MERCHANT I PURCHASED THE PHOTO FROM: "This is an original real glossy photo (not a printed lithograph photo) taken from Zeppelin-Weltfahrten which was a rare album sold in Germany in the early 1930's. Germans would collect the individual real photos and mount them in their albums with history. The album this photo came in was falling apart with a tattered cover and loose pages."