

Ethan's Big Event!

My name is Charly Steiff and I am from Rudesheim in Germany. I am writing this down so that you, Ethan McConnell Bonthron, will know, right from the start, how important you are to all of us.

Grandpa John saw me in a shop when he was on holiday. There were lots of other bears sitting on the shelf but I winked at him and so he chose me to give to a very special baby who was coming soon.



At first I was in his rucksack and then on a boat. Our cabin had big windows and I saw lots of different places floating past until we reached Budapest in Hungary. A bus took us for a visit to Prague in the Czech Republic and then we flew home to Glasgow. So now you know that I am a *travelling bear*, prepared to go anywhere with you. Maybe one day you and I will go on our own adventures to some of these places?

For the last three months I have been staying at their house in Bearsden, waiting for you to come. Grandma Margaret lives there too. She has been looking after me and Grandpa John, making sure that we behave. It's true, sometimes I can be naughty, (just like Grandpa John), and Grandma Margaret has to keep a very close eye on both of us.

At first you were a "mystery baby": no one had a clue that you were inside your Mum's tum until you were twelve weeks old. By that time 'both of you' had already won a Gold Medal, the Scottish Ladies' 200m Indoor Championship on 18 February 2013. Grandpa John was so excited when he first heard about you he wrote you a poem called "Flying Start!"

Since I arrived in Scotland everyone has been talking about you but you were still a bit of a mystery because we had no idea whether you were a boy or a girl, or what your name would be.

Your Mum and Dad have both been working very hard to get your new house ready for us. It has lots of rooms for us to play in and I just hope that I don't get lost! Grandpa John has been telling everyone (and I do mean everyone) about this new house saying, "what they have done is truly amazing!"

(I should warn you, Ethan, Grandpa John is a **very** talkative person, and full of long, long stories.)

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On a Thursday morning, (31-10-13), your Dad phoned to tell us "things are happening" and that you might be born soon. Your Mum and Dad arrived at the hospital (at 12.03) and almost at once: "Ready, Steady---GO!" you raced out to join us (at 13.32). (Later, when you can read numbers, you will see that most of your numbers are "podium places".)

Back in Bearsden Margaret picked me up and said, "Charly, this is the BIG DAY we have all been waiting for. It's time for you to go to the hospital to meet Ethan who'll take you home with him." She found a nice bag for me, not too deep, so that I could peek out over the top and see everything as it happened.

Grandpa John wanted to leave for the Southern General Hospital right away, even though Grandma Margaret said to him, "Calm down John there's plenty time!" But she was excited too and so at last she agreed they should go in case the traffic was bad. Grandpa John was driving slowly and carefully (as usual) but kept getting us into the wrong lane so that when we came out of the Clyde Tunnel we missed the turning for the hospital. Grandma Margaret told him off (again) for being silly but he just kept on humming happily to himself and (as usual) he did not reply.

We found a way into the hospital at last but it was dark and there were no proper signs to follow. Grandpa John told us several times that "parking here is a nightmare" and so (as usual) he went into the first car park he saw and (as usual) found a space that was miles from all the other cars. Grandma Margaret said, "John, are you sure this is near Ward 47? Surely there must be a better car park? Why do you always dive in and take the first place you see?"

We saw a man in a Doctor's uniform and I whispered to Grandpa John to ask him for help. The Doctor told us that we should have come in by a different entrance, the one right next to the Maternity Unit before explaining how we could walk there.

We set off with the rain blowing into our faces and I could see that we had a long walk ahead. But cold, wet, windy weather doesn't bother me because I have a thick fur coat that is waterproof. You can even put me in the washing machine if you like; I am a very good swimmer and it's good fun tumbling around with other toys and clothes.

As we walked along Grandma Margaret said, (several times), "John, why do you never listen to me?", but John was singing to himself (as he often does) practising for his two choirs and swinging the bag with me inside: it was like being at the carnival- I loved it!

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Perhaps we *should* have gone back for the car but Grandpa John would not even consider it and so we walked and walked, splashing through puddles and dodging across dark roads with cars whizzing with their headlights on. Grandpa John said, "Margaret, look on the bright side, if we get knocked down at least we're in a hospital!"

We saw a white building with a sign: "Maternity Unit: Wards 47 and 48". There was a huge car park right next to it with lots of free spaces. Grandma Margaret reminded Grandpa John of his stubbornness but now he was walking faster and faster now, thinking about only one thing - YOU, **Ethan McConnell Bonthron**.

In the lift Grandpa John talked to everyone we met (as usual) and I peeked out and saw lots of people carrying presents and talking on their mobile phones. Outside Ward 47 we had to wait because even though Grandpa John had made all these mistakes, we were still early. Suddenly the door opened and Grandpa John rushed in but again he was lost until I whispered, "John, stop and ask a nurse where Room 8 is!"

And there you were in your cot, all wrapped up in blankets, warm and cosy!

Your Dad was standing beside you beaming a giant smile. Your Mum was sitting up in bed, looking like a film star, smiling shyly. Then the grown-ups were hugging and kissing. I sat on the bottom of the bed inside my bag, peeking out, watching everything.

"Mum, would you like to hold Ethan?" asked your Dad.

Grandma Margaret was so happy! I saw wee tears of joy filling her eyes as she looked into your face. She smiled at you and said, "Hello Ethan, what a good looking boy you are. You are so like your Dad!" And to prove how clever you are you gave her a tiny smile and filled your nappy.

Four other people arrived to see you: Aunty Betty and Uncle Grahame with their son Gary and his wife Rhayader, who will get their own new baby in May, someone else for you to play with!

Then it is was Grandpa John's turn to hold you and he rocked you gently and said, "Welcome, Ethan McConnell Bonthron, you are indeed a most handsome chap, and very wise to pretend to sleep with all this noise going on." It was time for you to go to Aunty Betty for a cuddle and then to Rhayader and then back to Grandma Margaret.

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Then Grandma Linda arrived and brought lots of presents and a very special friend for you called "Grandpa Bill", a big chap in a blue uniform wearing a cap. Like most monkeys he has a long tail and he talks in a loud voice when you squeeze him. From the twinkle in his eyes I feel sure that the three of us will have lots of adventures together as you grow up.

Grandma Linda cuddled you and said "You are gorgeous, just like your Mum when she was born! And you have the same ears, too!"

Then your Mum and Dad told us about you being so determined to dash across the finishing line that you were almost born before you reached the hospital. Being an infant athlete is not easy! Grandpa John wrote another poem for you called, "Sprint Finish".

Suddenly Visiting Time was over. Everyone had to leave so that you could get your nappy changed and settle down for a sleep beside your Mum.

Of course you will be able to see all this for yourself soon, because everyone was taking photographs. Here is one with me in the corner, smiling up at you.

