

SCHULZ TRIBUTE

The Morning News

pays tribute to Charles Schulz, creator of the cartoon strip Peanuts.

Broken hearts in the dugout

You have hair like Terry Bradshaw and a head shaped like a football helmet. Your kite doesn't fly. The baseball team seldom wins. The Valentine never arrives. For 50 years, you've worn the same shirt. But you never blame others for your problems. You're a good man, Charlie Brown.

"All right, I'll trust you," Charlie Brown says. "I have an underlying faith in human nature. I believe that people who want to change can do so. And I believe that they should be given the chance to prove themselves." At the last second, of course, Lucy pulls the ball away, leaving Charlie flat on his back. "Aaugh!" he says. "Charlie Brown, your faith in human nature is an inspiration to all young people," Lucy says.

"Well, we're all set for the picnic," a "Peanuts" character says. "Here's the ice cream," says a second kid, opening a container of ice cream. "And here's the cake," another kid says, opening a cake box. Off to the side stands Charlie Brown, cupping something in his hands. "What are you holding in your hands, Charlie Brown?" "Soup," he says.

This is how good Schulz's work is. It holds up in mere words. No drawings required. One moment, he'll be quoting Rudyard Kipling. Another, he's making fun of pop psychology. He also had a way of fast-forwarding a conversation, the way a witty novelist or screenwriter might, skipping the obvious response and jumping to something else unexpectedly.

When Charles Schulz was in kindergarten, a teacher spotted a sketch he'd done and told him that someday he'd be an artist. In high school, he took an art-school correspondence course. Cost his dad, a barber, 170 bucks. Schulz's first job was doing the lettering on comics drawn by other people. One day, he drew a cartoon of a young boy sitting on a curb and holding a baseball bat. "Sparky, I think you should draw more of those little kids," another illustrator advised him. "They're pretty good."

Most of all, he found humor in the tiny, vulnerable moments we all experience. His comic strips had more humanity than most of today's movies. And he did it mostly with his words. "Tonight is Halloween," Lucy tells Linus. "How come you're not sitting out in a pumpkin patch waiting for the Great Pumpkin and making a total, complete and absolute fool of yourself?" "You have a nice way of wording things," Linus says. "Thank you," Lucy says. "I work them out on little slips of paper beforehand."

"It's a high fly ball," several "Peanuts" characters yell. "Catch it, Charlie Brown!" "Catch it, and the championship is ours!" "Have you got it, Charlie Brown?" "Don't miss it!" "Get under it, Charlie Brown!" "Isn't this exciting?" "What if he drops it?" "If he drops it, let's all kick him."

It is, in my mind, one of the longest creative bursts in American history. More than 18,000 comic strips, running daily for almost 50 years. Like most Americans, I don't remember a time when there wasn't "Peanuts." I don't remember a time when Charles Schulz wasn't at the top of the page. And now this grand run ends.

Schulz had five children of his own. They eventually grew up. But the "Peanuts" characters never did. They were stuck in the third grade forever. Smart. Cruel. Sensitive. Sweet. They faked their way through book reports. Lied about missing homework. Forgot their lines in school plays. All skills they could use later in life. For third-graders, they acted a lot like adults.

"The bases are loaded again, and there's still nobody out," Schroeder tells Charlie Brown one spring day on the pitcher's mound. "So what do you think?" Charlie Brown finally asks. "We live in difficult times," Schroeder says. So long, slugger.

"Oh, I won't pull the ball away, Charlie Brown," Lucy says. "I give you my bonded word."

CHRIS ERSKINE is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times. © 2000, Los Angeles Times



A different side of the 'Peanuts' gang

Lauren Hawkins The Morning News

The passing of Charles Schulz, creator of the "Peanuts" comic strip, caused many to reflect on the likeable gang and what life's hurdles they helped us over. What wasn't to like about the bunch of kids, a dog and a bird? Especially when we see a part of ourselves in each one of them.

Schulz had a certain dabbling way with line that made up his drawings which came alive in their childlike fashion.

I have a peculiar connection to that line, the way the blobs would develop where his hand paused. How he'd redraw outer lines, rather than use a different pen width. How the same swing-type strokes in grass tufts made up Woodstock's top knot.

I am one of what must be hundreds over the years to have worked for a San Francisco firm designing and adorning products displaying members of the "Peanuts" gang.

Everything from shirts to bed-sheets, baby blankets to soap decals, a telephone (that finally stood!), even gold Cartier jewelry. Puppets, packaging and a lot of socks. Months of socks. Anklets, knee highs, sport socks, baptismal booties, all adorned with the comforting characters.

All designs were created with documented portions of comic strips, noting dates for copyright purposes, showing which frames what segment of characters' features originated. Designers were free to draw backgrounds with studied hand, but characters had to be from Schulz' strips. A leg here, a grin from another frame. We worked from massive binders of strips dating back to the beginning and into the future, as he worked ahead of press schedules in keeping with the business. When completed, several times a



Displayed are concept drawings and product samples adorned by the 'Peanuts' gang. Designs were created by Hawkins for Determined Productions from 1975 to 1977.

week designs were sent via courier, customarily driving a Rolls Royce, to Snoopy Lane for approval.

I imagined that place to be a grassy tumbling road in the countryside, as depicted in Snoopy's early strip memories of his birthplace at the Spring Hill Puppy Farm.

Spring Hill Road is a picturesque drive over Sonoma County's rolling headlands. When, several years later, I moved to the North Bay I discovered Snoopy Lane to be, instead, the alleyway behind the ice-skating rink that was Sparky's bread and butter before his drawings took on a

life of their own. Little wonder how Snoopy made the transition from iced-over birdbath to the arena, then, in turn, made the Ice Capades a popular showcase spectacle, further bolstering Schulz's fortune.

The drawings were a part of Schulz's life from the start. Still a teen, Schulz sent his first-to-be published and paid for drawing to another Santa Rosa son, Robert Ripley. It is now displayed in the Ripley's Believe It or Not! home-stead museum there as a "believe it or not" itself.

Vince Giraldi was gone too soon from the Marin County jazz scene,

(No color use appeared in the original printing.)

Snoopy, Charlie Brown top list of favorites

The Morning News asked "Who was your favorite 'Peanuts' character?" in an online survey last week. Here are the top five responses. Full results can be found at www.nwamorningnews.com

- 37% Snoopy
- 23% Charlie Brown
- 13% Linus
- 12% Woodstock
- 8% Pigpen

but the music he tickled out of the piano keys at Charlie Brown's tavern have become synonymous with our Charlie Brown gang.

Schulz borrowed the clubowner's name for what he perceived to be the comic's namesake. When it came time for syndication, a marketing executive decided the strip's name should be "Peanuts."

Surely Schulz's regret, in part, led him to become the shrewd businessman who exercised great control over the ensuing empire of Happiness Shops which sprung from such fallible kids and a huggable beagle grasping a dog dish in its mouth.

Generous through his characters' foibles, he humored us with his insight. Generous with his fortune, he endowed Sonoma State University along with many charity coffers.

It's been a long time since Schroeder first sat down to play Mozart and Lucy set up her 5-cent psychiatrist's booth. The doctor, however, is definitely still "in." His timeless tales will continue to teach us about ourselves.

LAUREN HAWKINS is Web Site Administrator at The Morning News.



'Peanuts' creator Charles Schulz is shown in Santa Rosa, Calif., in this Nov. 1997 file photo. A memorial service for Schulz was held Monday at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts in Santa Rosa. Schulz died at his home in Santa Rosa Feb. 12.

Memorial service honors cartoonist

Mary Ann Lickteig The Associated Press

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — Tennis great Billie Jean King, cartoonist Cathy Guisewite and other fans of Charles Schulz remembered the "Peanuts" creator Monday as a humble genius who never realized until his dying days how much the world loved him.

The timing of Schulz's death from colon cancer nine days ago, just as his final strip was being published, was no coincidence, said Amy Johnson, one of his five children.

"He was taken from this world to the next at the most sacred of moments for him because he earned it," she told the audience of more than 2,000, which filled an arts center in the town where Schulz lived for more than half of his 77 years.

Schulz's widow, Jeanne, said the world's most widely syndicated cartoonist was a humble artist who never realized how beloved his creations were until after he decided in November that he was too ill to continue the strip.

"He could not know the extent of the impact he had made. I believe that's what these last months have been about," she said. "My comfort comes from knowing that he fully received the love and appreciation that poured out to him."

Schulz, who made more than \$30 million a year from the "Peanuts"

'He was taken from this world to the next at the most sacred of moments for him because he earned it.'

Amy Johnson Daughter of Charles Schulz

strip and the many products, videos and licensing deals it generated, is better known in town for giving than receiving, both publicly and anonymously.

His money founded or fostered a symphony community foundation, library housing development, dogs-for-the-disabled training center and many other projects in the area, as well as the Redwood Empire Ice Arena where Schulz played hockey.

"He was just a good man," said Doug Lightfoot, a retired pharmacist who recalled how Schulz let his wife's troop of Campfire Girls skate for free. "He was always very supportive of the community."

Guisewite, who draws the comic strip "Cathy," said Schulz sought her out from time to time. One day,

he called her when he couldn't think of anything to draw.

"I said 'What are you talking about, you're Charles Schulz!'" she said, recalling how reassuring it felt to know that even the greatest struggle sometimes.

"What he did for me that day he did for millions of people in zillions of ways," Guisewite said. "He gave everyone in the world characters who knew exactly how we felt."

King, who helped Schulz raise money for youth grants by playing at the Snoopy Cup, a senior tennis circuit match at the ice rink, wore a Snoopy lapel pin as she recalled how Schulz sought her out at a match and invited her to Santa Rosa.

What he really wanted to know, she said, was what made her compete.

"He would probe and probe and probe, ask questions all the time. We talked about our own insecurities, which are many. We talked about how anxious we both are," King said. "It was the Lucy in him, asking me. A little psychology here."

After the ceremony the crowd was fed chocolate chip cookies and root beer — standard fare for the "Peanuts" gang. British World War Two-era fighter planes flew over in a missing man formation, the middle plane trailing smoke from its wings.

Schulz was buried in nearby Sebastopol after a private funeral last week.