

Charles Schulz went by the nickname "Sparky," a tribute from his comic-loving father to another popular comic strip character of the day. The young boy's interest in cartooning first took hold about the time Charles was six, and was spurred after his graduation from St. Paul Central High by a correspondence course ad that read "Do you like to draw?" His parents paid the \$170 tuition in installments, although they may have questioned their investment when the class on drawing children netted Charles a grade of just C-plus.

After serving as an army tailgunner in Europe, Charles Schulz returned to Minnesota and earned his first paycheck as a cartoonist by working on a Catholic magazine feature. He also taught art, and sold 15 cartoons to the Saturday Evening Post. He created his first feature for the St. Paul Pioneer Press in 1947. "L'il Folks" was brought in 1950 by United Feature Syndicate, christened with a new name, and Charlie Brown and "Peanuts" debuted on October 2 in seven newspapers. Two days later, Snoopy was introduced to the world.

A phenomenon was born.

More than a few books, college theses, and critical essays have tried to dissect the popularity of "Peanuts." Maybe Charles Schultz himself had the best answer when in a 1994 speech he said, "There is still a market for things that are clean and decent."

I have always thought that the "Peanuts" gang endured because the characters were so strongly developed and so genuine that we saw something we could identify with in each of them.

Snoopy was the dreamer, persistently straddling his doghouse in pursuit of the Red Baron.

Lucy, dispensing nickel douses of pop psychology, took great pride in her crabbiness.

Woodstock was the accident prone one.

Peppermint Patty struggled in the classroom, but never struggled on the baseball field.

Linus made it all right for us to need a security blanket from time to time.

Sally, the loveable younger sister, wanted to believe in Santa Claus and the Great Pumpkin.

Schroeder was the unapologetic artist who loved his music.

Pig Pen* * * well, I think we all know a Pig Pen.

And Charlie Brown, "the little round-headed kid," was Everyman. We relate to him because at some point in our lives, we all pined for a little red-haired girl * * * were menaced by a kite-Eating Tree * * * and faced down a football we were certain would be snatched away at the last moment. Charlie Brown's perpetually upbeat search for happiness was our search, too.

"As a youngster, I didn't realize how many Charlie Browns there were in the world." Charles Schulz said. "I thought I was the only one. Now I realize that

Charlie Brown's goofs are familiar to everybody, children and adults alike." No wonder he considered Charlie Brown his alter ego. "There is a lot of myself in his character, too," he said.

In his art, Charles Schulz could be tender, insightful, sometimes sarcastic, heartbreaking, hilarious, and occasionally sentimental. Always, his work was centered in a deep spirituality. Though it occasionally drove his fans mad, there was a practical reason why his comics were frequently tinged with pathos. In his 1980 book, "Charlie Brown, Snoopy and Me," the artist wrote, "You can't create humor out of happiness. I'm astonished at the number of people who write to me saying, 'Why can't you create happy stories for us? Why does Charlie Brown always have to lose? Why can't you let him kick the football?' Well, there is nothing funny about the person who gets to kick the football."

Mr. President, I am proud to co-sponsor legislation offered by my colleague from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, to award Charles Schulz the Congressional Gold Medal. I am pleased our colleagues in the House have already adopted this resolution. While I wish we had accorded the cartoonist this great honor in his lifetime, I know that Charles Schulz did not need the endorsement of this Congress to be fulfilled in his work, for how can a congressional honor compare with the love shown to him by his millions of faithful fans?

Minnesotans have always considered Charles Schulz one of us, even though he eventually moved to Santa Rosa, California, where he made his home with his wife Jeannie. He was blessed with five children, two stepchildren, and several grandchildren, and our prayers are with them all.

Mr. President, Charles Schulz fretted that his work as a cartoonist would never be considered great art and would certainly not stand the test of time.

With all due respect to the cartoonist I honor today, my two-word response to that is "Good grief!" Charlie Brown will undoubtedly live on long after the rest of us are forgotten. And that, I would argue, is exactly the way things are supposed to be.●

A HEROIC GIFT OF LIFE

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to inform my colleagues of a recent act of great charity by one of my constituents, Ms. Debbie Laakso of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

In an astonishing act of kindness, the single mother of four donated a kidney to her friend and former boss, Verle Jucht. The odd twist is that Debbie and Verle met at John Morrell and Company where Verle was Debbie's supervisor. Though they separated as colleagues in 1993, they surprisingly remained friends for the last six years. When Verle's kidney began to fail last year, Debbie gave him hers. Knowing

her jovial nature, Verle and his wife, Colleen, thought their old friend was kidding when she first offered to donate.

Luckily, Debbie and Verle were a match, and after surgery last November, both are doing well. This story, Mr. President, is a great testament to the truly good and giving nature of people. I rise today to thank Debbie Laakso for her good nature and good humor and to congratulate her and Verle Jucht on their bravery and courage. Debbie serves as a model of goodness and friendship for all Americans, and their story is an account for all of the importance of the "Gift of Life."●

RELEASE OF SONG YONGYI

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the safe return of Song Yongyi to his home and family in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Mr. Song, Librarian at Dickinson College, was recently freed from a Chinese detention center after a detainment of 172 days.

Mr. Song was born on December 15, 1949 in Shanghai where he attended elementary and middle school. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, his education was interrupted and Mr. Song became a dockworker. In 1971 he was detained and labeled a "counter-revolutionary" for organizing a book club with four other young people interested in discussing political ideas. Mr. Song spent five years in detention under harsh conditions, where he was severely beaten, resulting in permanent damage to his health. After the Cultural Revolution, he was completely exonerated of all criminal charges.

In 1977 Mr. Song was part of an elite group of students who entered university as a result of a competitive, nationwide examination. He graduated from Shanghai Normal University in 1981. He taught Chinese literature for Shanghai educational television until 1987, at which time he became a full-time literary critic and widely recognized researcher. Mr. Song moved to the United States in 1989 and enrolled in graduate school at the University of Colorado, where his wife Helen (Xiaohua) and daughter Michelle (Xiaoxiao) joined him in 1990. After obtaining a second masters degree in library information science from Indiana University, the Song family moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where Song Yongyi is employed as Librarian at Dickinson College.

Mr. Song's deep interest in the 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution and growing prominence as an expert in the field led him to make research trips to China in the summers of 1998 and 1999. As part of his research, Mr. Song collected documents concerning the Cultural Revolution, which are widely available in markets and curio shops. It was during this most recent visit to China that state security officials detained Mr. and Mrs. Song in Beijing on August 7. For about one month, Yongyi and