

This Day in History... November 26, 1922

Birth of Charles Schulz

Famed cartoonist Charles Schulz was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota on November 26, 1922. He created the beloved *Peanuts* characters, personally creating 17,897 comic strips and overseeing 37 television specials.

From an early age, Charles Schulz had an affection for both comic strips and drawing. Every Sunday he and his father sat down together to read the funnies. The younger Schulz's favorites included *Skippy*, *Mickey Mouse*, and *Popeye*. Schulz frequently drew the family dog, Spike,



Snoopy frequently imagined himself as a WWI flying ace ready to take on the Red Baron.

who had a habit of eating odd objects such as pins and tacks. In 1937, he sent a drawing of Spike to *Ripley's Believe It or Not!*, and Robert Ripley published it in his syndicated panel.

Schulz was intelligent and talented. He skipped two half-grades in school, but became shy as he was the youngest in his class. He grew even more timid after his drawings were rejected by his high school yearbook. Around this time, Schulz began taking a correspondence cartoon course with the Art Instructions School.

In 1943, Schulz was drafted into the Army, serving as a staff sergeant in the 20th Armored Division. He served as a squad leader on a .50 caliber machine gun team, seeing service at the very end of the war. Schulz returned home a proud veteran and continued to follow his passion for art. He worked for the magazine *Timeless Topix* and graded student work for Art Instruction, Inc.

In June 1947, Schulz published his first weekly cartoon, *Li'l Folks*. The one-panel comic appeared in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* every week until January 1950. The characters looked similar to his later Peanuts gang and he used the name Charlie Brown for several children. Some of Schulz's comics also appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* during this time.

When *Li'l Folks* was dropped from the *Pioneer Press* in January 1950, Schulz started looking for another way to publish his comics. He also began work on *Peanuts* – a new four-panel comic. United Feature Syndicate liked this new strip and the first *Peanuts* Comic appeared in seven newspapers on October 2, 1950. It was then added to the Sunday comics in January 1952. The *Peanuts*' rise in popularity didn't happen overnight, but over the years it grew to become one of the most popular comic strips in the world.

In 1965, Schulz took his characters to a new medium with his first animated TV special, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, which won an Emmy. This was the first of 37 television specials Schulz would oversee during his lifetime. His characters also appeared in feature films, mini series, and television shows.

Even in his later years, Schulz refused to accept the help of an inker or letterer, claiming "it would be equivalent to a golfer hiring a man to make his putts for



Stamps issued for the 50th anniversary of A Charlie Brown Christmas in 2015.

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This Day in History... November 26, 1922 continued



2022 stamps issued for Schulz's 100th birthday

him.” In the nearly 50 years the strip was printed, Schulz took just one vacation – for his 75th birthday. At its height, shortly before his retirement, the *Peanuts* appeared in 2,600 newspapers in 75 countries and 21 languages. As his health began to decline, Schulz announced his retirement on December 14, 1999. He died in his sleep on February 12, 2000, with the final *Peanuts* strip publishing the following day. As he’d predicted, his comic strip outlived him.

Schulz received a number of honors, including a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, a Congressional Gold Medal, and space vehicles named after his characters. As fellow cartoonist Bill Watterson (creator of *Calvin and Hobbes*) put it, “*Peanuts* pretty much defines the modern comic strip... Schulz blazed the wide trail that most every cartoonist since has tried to follow.”

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