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Good Grief! Charles M. Schulz Museum celebrates 65 years of Peanuts

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The Strip Rotation Gallery at the Charles M. Schulz Museum.

Mary Gilbert

The [Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center](#) in Santa Rosa, Calif., is recognizing a benchmark in the life of [Charles M. Schulz](#)'s world-renowned and beloved comic strip, *Peanuts*, with its "[Celebrating 65 Years of Peanuts](#)" exhibition, now on display until Dec. 13.

On Oct. 2, 1950, *Peanuts* began publication. In

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Mary Gilbert

characters, with their all-too-relatable personalities, have become ingrained in the national (and global) consciousness: angst-ridden yet persevering [Charlie Brown](#), dressed in his signature zigzag shirt and mooning over The Little Red-Haired Girl; crabby, know-it-all Lucy; Beethoven-worshipping and piano-playing Schroeder; Linus and his dependence on a security blanket; [Snoopy](#), the warm puppy companion with the robust fantasy life; and sports-obsessed Peppermint Patty, along with the rest of the precocious and precious gang.

Many of Schulz's images are also instantly recognizable, from Lucy's yellow psychiatry booth, to Snoopy snoozing on the roof of his doghouse, to Lucy yanking the football away from a hard-charging Charlie Brown at the last second, sending him sprawling flat on his back. Terms like "blockhead" and "aaugh" are now part of the everyday lexicon.

"Using a quill pen and ink, Schulz drew his *Peanuts* strip daily for 50 years, creating nearly 18,000 comic strips," said Dinah Houghtaling, collections manager. "The museum has access to or owns a little over 8,000 of the originals, but we have a record of every single strip and what it

is.”

The “Celebrating 65 Years of *Peanuts*” exhibition, held in the museum’s Strip Rotation Gallery, begins with a presentation of enlarged cartoons, one representing each decade. Also included are display cases showing a range of strips for each main character.

Observing the strips across the time periods illustrates how the characters’ physical appearances, attitudes and personal philosophies evolved, even as Schulz himself matured as an artist. His detailed early strips contrasted with the minimalism of later ones. Interestingly, Schulz said he was unaware of these transformations until his comic strips appeared in reprint books long after their debut in newspapers.

Schulz once explained, “You don’t notice when you’re drawing day after day. The characters do change. They get smaller, they get taller and they shrink...Charlie Brown gets a little fatter, he gets a little thinner. Snoopy’s nose gets longer, narrower, fatter or shorter...”

In the early 1950s, for instance Charlie Brown had a huge, round head, lacked his iconic shirt, and was something of a smart aleck. In later strips his body became more proportional. Schulz played with other colors for Charlie Brown’s zigzag shirt before settling on yellow. As a puppy, Snoopy walked on all fours, and later morphed into a biped, almost like a human, who ice skated and danced.

Schulz drew all of his *Peanuts* cartoon strips in black and white. For Sunday strips, he notated

which colors to print them. Visible in some images are underlying pencil marks, as Schulz often sketched first in pencil. A scene of Peppermint Patty shows remnants of whiteout where Schulz corrected her hair. He did his own lettering, which was unusual in the cartoon industry.

With increasing numbers of visitors anticipated this year at the Charles M. Schulz Museum, Houghtaling noted, a goal of “Celebrating 65 Years of *Peanuts*” is “bringing in new generations of *Peanuts* fans who’ll love it like their grandparents do.”

When you go

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