



PHOTOS BY RICK SAMUELS / CHARLES M. SCHULZ MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER

# WORKING FOR PEANUTS

Charles M. "Sparky" Schulz, creator of the iconic comic strip, died in 2000, but his legacy lives on in a California museum. **Mike Peters** catches up with the cartoonist's widow, Jean.

## What's been the best part of celebrating the 60th birthday of *Peanuts*?

That people come to the museum with the same kind of enthusiasm as they came with at the beginning. They want to enter into Sparky's world and tell us their own stories about when they fell in love with *Peanuts*.

***Peanuts* is one of five comic strips published in China Daily, and Charlie Brown and Snoopy are quite popular characters in China. A lot of Western humor doesn't translate well when it crosses the Pacific. Why do you think *Peanuts* resonates so well here?**

It amazes me, too. For years, Sparky would say, "I don't know what it is that Japanese find so fascinating about the *Peanuts* characters. We figured out that there is a particular Japanese sensitivity to the art when we saw what they particularly like — for instance, the full-face Snoopy, which Sparky only ever drew once. (Think Hello Kitty.) There is also a graphic quality of black-and-white that's very popular in Japanese art.

But even more than that, it's the human personality of Snoopy. Almost all cultures attach themselves to Snoopy first, without knowing much about the other characters. The drawing of him is pleasant to look at. You can look into Snoopy's eyes and see an expression that speaks to you.

Overall, the characters talk about things that are common to every human. Hurt feelings. Rejection. Friendship. Little things that make them happy or sad — those are the same in every culture.

We're having a lot of success with Snoopy boutiques in dozens of department stores in China — the Chinese-designed garments are just beautiful, very sophisticated.

When I was in Beijing last year we went to two or three of them. There's a Charlie Brown café and a Snoopy bakery in Beijing, too.

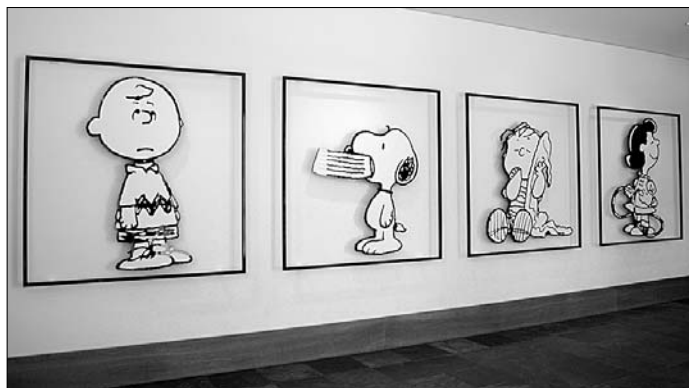
**The museum calendar has an extensive schedule of exhibits for the months ahead. Who thinks of all these ways to revisit the *Peanuts* legacy, and is it difficult?**

We have a big meeting every year and a half to talk about ideas for different exhibitions. Right now we're doing "Games Kids Play". There were so many games in *Peanuts* strips that we divided it into two sections — activities versus thinking games.

In another gallery we are showing how cartoonists use pop art in strips. We have an original Warhol and a Lichtenstein in the museum — this show was three years in the making. There is some recycling: We did "Dogs in Comic Strips" — we might do a popular idea like that again in five or 10 years.

Right now in a small gallery we have his travel drawings — places he visited during his war service, for example.

**I was fascinated to learn that Charles Schulz did some artwork for the Ford Falcon advertising campaign. Did he ever drive one?**



**Top: Jean Schulz hugs a stuffed Snoopy at the Schulz museum. Middle: The *Peanuts* "big four" in the museum lobby. Bottom: Jean and Sparky Schulz with a Canine Companion from a charity for the disabled that the late cartoonist supported.**

He was a Ford man. He drove Fords until he bought a Lotus, which I think happened because his son Monty had some exotic foreign car. Later Sparky bought a Jaguar, but he went back to American cars at the end, when he owned a Lincoln. By the time he was 75 he found it hard to get in and out of small cars.

**Have you considered bringing an exhibition to China?**

I would love to put something together. There's a book that Sparky put together that he always thought would be popular in countries like China — with wordless strips.

**You were in Beijing last spring for the launch of The Snoopy Love Foundation. What does the foundation do?**

The foundation gathers money contributed by our licensees and endowments. The first money went to help schools in earthquake area of Yushu. Besides focusing on children, the foundation aims to help the elderly in rural areas where there are not a lot of social services for them.

**What made the strongest impression on your visit to China?**

Traffic! Sparky and I were first in China in

about what he (or she) is doing. Galleries can't do that kind of thing but we can, we have that kind of space.

We had a thousand tickets out for Jeff Kinney, the creator of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. We had to hold that event on our baseball field, and Jeff was signing books and strips for two hours after his presentation.

Jeff made books from collection of sketches — sort of like flash cards. Like Sparky, he knew that a drawing is magic — it communicates in an immediate way. When you can draw eyes in a few strokes that are really expressive...

**You devote a huge part of your life to being the "keeper of the flame" for your husband's legacy. What do you like to do when you are just being "Jeannie"?**

I like exercise and being active. I play tennis a couple of times a week, but I'm not a particularly good competitor — I usually collapse! A few years ago, I started doing trapeze at a Club Med. I got up there and was petrified — a total basket case. But I thought, 'I can't believe I can't do this and those people can.' The next week I started practicing at a place not far from my neighborhood.

I'd come home and Sparky would always ask, 'Well, did you get caught?' And of course I didn't — I never got caught. Just when I was going to give up, that very day I got caught! And so I kept going back, again and again. I had an accident awhile back — it took me two years to get over it and the fear. But now I still go once a week — it's good exercise and fun.

**When and how did you take up flying an airplane?**

My mother began flying when she was 50 and flew until just before she died at 76. She was completely fearless... She and I flew in three cross-country air races and several shorter ones, too. She loved "dive bombing" toward the finish line. Anyway, when she came to the house and talked flying my husband (then, Peter Clyde) who had a few lessons under his belt, he decided to take lessons.

I'm not "brave, but I didn't want to be left behind, so I began a few months later.

Shortly after we both got our licenses in 1968, we took a cross-country trip in our little four-seat plane, with our two kids, to the Expo in Montreal, stopping along the way to visit sights and friends. Quite an adventure! By that time my mother was racing in the Powder Puff Derby and I was thrilled when she asked me to be her co-pilot.

**In the cockpit, have you ever imagined yourself as a World War I flying ace facing off with The Red Baron?**

No, I'm not Snoopy — I'm not a barnstormer, I'm really timid. My stepson Craig Schulz has a biplane and does spins with me. But I love flying and pushing myself.

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## worldscene

### Bra chain comes apart at record try

A British attempt to set a new world record for the longest chain of brassieres was called off after volunteers got the lingerie in a twist. Campaigners at "Bra Chain" hoped to hook together over 100 miles of bras in Worcester, a city in the English West Midlands, to raise money for women's charities and beat the current world record of 166,000 linked brassieres, held by Australia. Volunteers, or "hookers," aimed to connect 200,000 bras, but were forced to quit at half that number when the undergarments became tangled in the boxes.



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### Mitch Winehouse goes to Parliament

In the wake of the death of singer Amy Winehouse (above), her father Mitch went to Westminster on Monday to press politicians to do more for young people needing help with drug and alcohol problems. "This isn't about Amy because we were in a fortunate position of being able to fund Amy to go into private rehab — this is about people that can't afford it," he told reporters.

The singer's album *Back to Black* shot back to the top of the British albums chart last Sunday, a week after the troubled singer died at the age of 27. Winehouse, famous for her distinctive soul songs and beehive hairdo, struggled with drinking and drug problems throughout much of her career.

### Bennett, Winehouse duet will aid charity

A duet between jazz great Tony Bennett (below) and the late singer Amy Winehouse is being released as a single to benefit a charity established by her father. Bennett's spokeswoman said on Wednesday. The classic pop standard "Body and Soul" that Winehouse recorded with Bennett in March is one of her last works. She died unexpectedly at age 27 on July 23, after a long battle with addiction.



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### To re-start life, Thais 'practice' death

For those facing a run of bad luck and wanting to start things over, one Thai temple has an unusual solution: "rehearse" death with a mock funeral, including lying down in a coffin. Pram Manee temple in Nakorn Nayok province, 107 km northeast of Bangkok, holds two of the rituals every day: at exactly 9:09 a.m. and 1:09 p.m., since the number nine is believed by Thais to bring good luck.

### Rate your priest on new Website

You can rate your restaurant meal, your make-up, your teacher online and now in Germany your priest. Hirtenbarometer (<http://hirtenbarometer.de>), or the "shepherds' barometer", is the first online platform where priests can be rated for their performance at church services, on projects for youths and the elderly, on their credibility and on how up to date they are.

### US men making legal moonshine

Two entrepreneurs are taking advantage of new micro-distillery laws in South Carolina to make and sell traditional moonshine whiskey legally for the first time in the southern state. The Dark Corner Distillery will open next month in Greenville, where engineer Joe Fenton, 27, and longtime home brewer Richard Wenger will produce and sell small batches of 100-proof moonshine from a custom-made copper still.

### Police tell American: forget bunny suit

Police in Idaho have told a man to stop wearing a bunny suit in public after people complained he has been frightening children. Residents in the northwestern city of 54,000 people also reported William Falkingham, 34, occasionally wears a tutu with the bunny suit, Idaho Falls police said in a statement on Tuesday.