

## Charlie Brown and the Football

*By Marilyn Reeves*

One of my favorite childhood memories is of lying on the floor in my pajamas on a Sunday morning reading the Funny Papers. My early favorites included 'Blondie,' 'Li'l Abner,' 'Pogo,' and 'Brenda Starr.' But in 1950 a new cartoon series took the country by storm. Its creator, Charles M. Schulz, called it 'Peanuts.' And for many – myself included – it soon became our all-time favorite.

The reason for its popularity, I believe, is the 'Peanuts' characters reminded us of people we knew, and their characteristics became an instant frame of social reference. For instance, everyone knows what you mean when you say, "He's like Linus without his security blanket." Or, "He's so dirty he reminds me of Pigpen."

Some of the quirky and unforgettable 'Peanuts' characters included the talented and studious Schroeder, the drama queen Peppermint Patty, and the absurdly adorable little beagle called Snoopy, who loved to pretend he was the valiant Red Baron or the ever-dashing Joe Cool.

But the one most of us can best relate to is poor, big-hearted, ever-fallible Charlie Brown. Man or woman, there's a little bit of Charlie Brown inside all of us. But despite his many defeats, good ol' Charlie Brown just keeps on trying. And trying.

Which brings us to his nemesis, Lucie van Pelt. Have you ever met someone you'd like to be friends with, but despite your best efforts, takes a fiendish delight in setting you up and then letting you down?

I believe we're all familiar with the scenario: Lucy holds the football in position for Charlie to give it a running kick. Charlie screws up his courage and runs – full out – down the field, raises his foot to blast that ball to kingdom come ... but, at the very last instant, Lucy gleefully snatches it away ... leaving poor, trusting Charlie Brown lying flat on his back! Time after time, he falls for the same prank, and time after time he reaps the same result.

Does Charlie Brown ever learn to stop trusting? I hope not. For all the mean-spirited Lucy's in the world, I'm glad there are still a few naïve souls like Charlie Brown, who keeps giving his would-be friend the benefit of the doubt, and keeps on trying. And who knows? Maybe one of these days he'll actually kick that football!