

Generations

Christmas, love and Charlie Brown

Recently, my daughter, Vicki, and her friend Jenny came to visit from Maryland, and we decided to take my granddaughter Claire, also known to Grandma and Grandpa DeMarco as "Pookie," to the movies on a Sunday afternoon.

The new "Peanuts" movie was playing, and I figured this would be an awesome way for three generations to bond in cartoon heaven.

We decided to leave early to avoid the crowd since whenever I took my children when they were small to a Peanuts movie, it was tough to get a seat.

We arrived 40 minutes early and, after loading Pookie up with a cherry slush and a bag of popcorn, we crept into the semi-dark theater. We were the first to arrive and grabbed front-row seats.

We were then faced with about 30 minutes of the same annoying advertisements that I usually flip off when at home in front of the TV, only now they were in surround sound. We were still alone in the theater.

Previews of movies to come came next, one producing some giggles from Pookie, but most just a bit of fidgeting in her seat and a restroom break.

The theater had about eight people by the time the movie started, which surprised me since after all, this was

Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, and all the other



Peg DeMarco

wonderful characters created from the marvelous mind of Charles Schultz. Where was everyone else on a

perfectly beautiful Sunday afternoon?

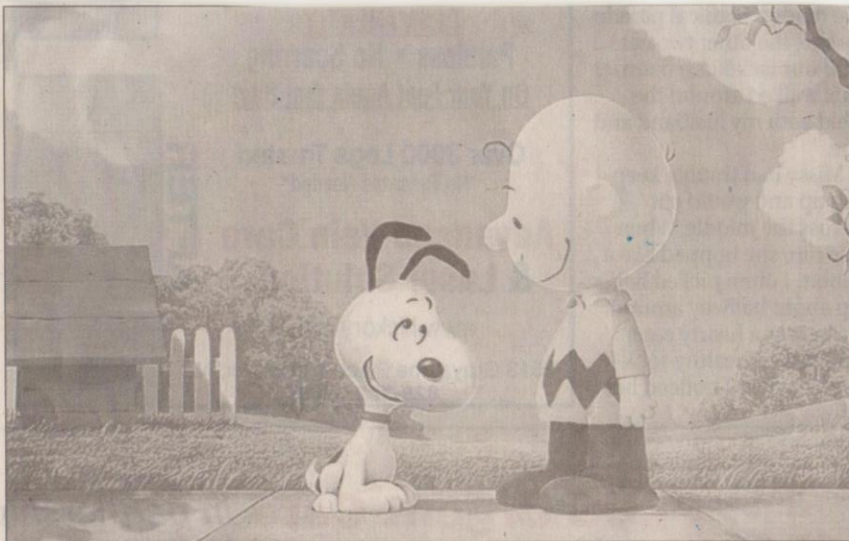
Ah, yes, I had forgotten about pro and college football, derby racing, bobsledding finals, poker tournaments, alligator wrestling and every other sporting event known to man or woman on a lazy afternoon.

Lifetime also promised a tear jerker marathon of love-gone-wrong movies, so, for some, an hour and a half of life's lessons would have to wait.

That's why baby boomers loved "Peanuts." Sure, our parents had already drilled all of life's lessons into our heads since we were toddlers, but hearing it from the mouths of those memorable characters stuck to us like cotton candy to the roof of one's mouth.

Persistence was one life lesson that first comes to mind about Peanuts.

Charlie Brown kept trying to kick that darn football and most of the time he failed, but he didn't give up. And, sure, he lacked confidence, but he always managed



Snoopy and Charlie Brown in "The Peanuts Movie."

to pull the group together in a time of crisis and get things done.

In the movie we were watching, he tried hard to get the girl, but success kept eluding him until the end, when he finally realized that he had her heart just by being himself.

"Peanuts" also showed us the true meaning of holidays, especially during Christmas. It didn't matter if your Christmas tree wasn't as ornate as the one in Rockefeller Center.

It was yours and you loved it because the true meaning of the holiday was love.

Our Christmas tree chronology went through many phases during years past. I remember those

years when my parents would bring home a real tree and the dog always drank from the trunk's water rather than his water bowl. There was also the time when Mom hooked up cooing birds to the tree that went off every half-hour.

Since the tree was near the console TV, Dad decided one evening that he'd rather listen to a re-run of "Perry Mason" without the birds and unhooked the gizmo. Mom left it off until he went to work.

When I became a mom, we saved decorating the tree as family time, but as the kids grew up, I found myself doing it on my own with a glass of wine.

One year, I decided it was time for the latest

fake white tree decorated only with blue bulbs, ribbons and lights. I was proud of my creation, but the kids got together, went on strike and made me promise to get rid of it once the holiday was over. It was put in the trash bin by New Year's Day sometime during the 1980s.

So, yes, lessons and traditions change and, with them, so do generations. One thing remains constant, though — love — and that never goes out of style.

Contact Peg DeMarco at pegde-marco@earthlink.net.

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