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CANADIAN CARTOONIST PLEDGES "PEANUTS" TO SCHULZ CHALLENGE
Mike Cope to Donate Book's Proceeds to Future Home of Newspaper Funnies History

STONE CREEK, Ontario – June 28, 2009 – Two dollars, even in today's economy, sounds like peanuts.

Mike Cope is hoping those peanuts will add up because that's how much the Canadian cartoonist and author of the self-published book, *The Last of the Funnies*, is pledging to Ohio State's Cartoon Library & Museum in response to a fundraising challenge issued by Jean Schulz, widow of *Peanuts* creator Charles M. Schulz.

A \$2 donation, that is, for every copy Cope's timely science fiction, which explores the future of the funnies in a virtually paperless world after a worldwide energy and economic crisis, sells until the Schulz Challenge concludes in March 2014.

That's 85 percent of his creator royalties.

It's a "Peanuts Pledge" that Jenny Robb, Assistant Professor and Associate Curator at the Cartoon Library & Museum, welcomed on behalf of challenge organizers as "a very generous and creative offer."

For Cope, age 32, it's a chance to not only help support the preservation of his humorous profession's history, but also honor the memory of his childhood hero, Charles M. Schulz, whose world-famous cartoons inspired him to dip pens into his own imagination's inkwell. "I like a good challenge," says the work-from-home dad. "I just hope I don't disappoint Mrs. Schulz or the school."

Last March, when Schulz's widow gave The Ohio State University \$1 million towards the renovation and move of the Cartoon Library & Museum, she also issued a challenge to cartoon art lovers everywhere: she will match every dollar donated through March 9, 2014, up to \$2.5 million. When the estimated \$20.6 million project is completed, Ohio State's Sullivant Hall will become home to the world's most comprehensive academic research facility dedicated to documenting printed cartoon art.

"I suppose it's the academic side in me that understands what libraries and museums can offer to future generations," says Cope, who is professionally trained as a high school communications technology teacher.

"Although I've yet to visit OSU *in person*," he stresses, "I truly appreciate the work they do."

While researching for his book, Cope enlisted the help of Professor and Curator, Lucy Shelton Caswell, and her staff at the formerly known Cartoon Research Library. From his home in Canada, he was able to browse their

digital collections, select cartoons, and obtain reprint permissions—all via the Internet.

"Digital reproductions on the web are wonderful," says Professor Caswell on the library's YouTube video, "but seeing the real thing is *really* fun."

But in a world of declining newspaper revenues and shrinking comic pages, libraries and museums may eventually become the only place for cartoon fans to enjoy the "real" thing. In fact, there may be more facts than fiction in *The Last of the Funnies* ...

Set in the year 2076, printed newspapers have ceased production and nearly every form of art and entertainment is a digital simulation. However, the spirit of the funnies lives on through Frost, a crusty old New Yorker who cartoons "the old fashioned way" (i.e., by hand). What his millions of fans worldwide don't know is that the cartoon wizard uses a special ink that draws whatever he imagines.

"I readily enjoyed it," writes Alan Gardner, editor of The Daily Cartoonist, an industry news website. "It justly emphasizes the magic of cartooning and delves into important topics such as comics after newspapers and digital copyrights."

At the heart of the story is a father-son struggle, as Frost seeks to make amends before it's too late.

Cartoonist Justin Thompson, who works for Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates in Santa Rosa, CA, and co-hosts the online podcast Comics Coast to Coast, says *The Last of the Funnies* is, "a great love letter to the art of cartooning and all that it is."

The book pays homage to characters, people, and organizations from comic strip history, including: The Yellow Kid, Rube Goldberg, Joseph Pulitzer, William Randolph Hearst, and the National Cartoonists Society. Ohio State is also mentioned as housing the world's largest collection of original cartoon art.

"Being a self-published work," says Cope, "I feel a bit like Lucy shaking her little tin can in Charlie Brown's face, requesting five cents. With this pledge, I hope that newspaper editors and comic strip fans alike will see my heart is in the right place. It's not a story about the demise of newspapers and the funnies. It's a message of hope ... Their fate is, literally, in all our hands."

For more information, contact Mike Cope at (905) 664-3692 or mikecope@copetoons.com.

Visit the book's official website: <http://lastofthefunnies.com>

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MIKE COPE is a full-time cartoonist and multimedia designer in Stoney Creek, Ontario (Canada), where he lives with his wife, Lynn, and their baby daughter. His cartoons have been published in a variety of books, magazines, newspapers, and websites, including: *Reader's Digest* and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. He's also been a contributing gag writer for the daily technology-themed comic strip *PC and Pixel* by Tak Bui (featured on United Media's Comics.com). He currently illustrates the educational comic *NetTrekkers* for the Canadian Reader, published by LesPlan Educational Services, Inc.

For more about Mike Cope and his work, visit his website: <http://copetoons.com>

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