

= Jimmy Frise =

The Canadian cartoonist James Llewellyn " Jimmy " Frise (/ fra?z / , 16 October 1891 ? 13 June 1948) is best known for his work on the comic strip Birdseye Center and his illustrations of humorous prose pieces by Greg Clark .

Born in Scugog Island , Ontario , Frise moved to Toronto at 19 and found illustration work on the Toronto Star 's Star Weekly supplement . His left hand was severely injured at the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917 during World War I , but his drawing hand was unhurt , and he continued cartooning at the Star upon his return . In 1919 he began his first weekly comic strip , Life 's Little Comedies , which evolved into the rural @-@ centred humorous Birdseye Center in 1923 . He moved to the Montreal Standard in 1947 , but as the Star kept publication rights to Birdseye Center , Frise continued it as Juniper Junction with strongly similar characters and situations . Doug Wright took over the strip after Frise 's sudden death from a heart attack in 1948 , and it went on to become the longest @-@ running strip in English @-@ Canadian comics history .

= = Life and career = =

James Llewellyn Frise was born 16 October 1891 near Fingerboard in Scugog Island , Ontario , the only son of John Frise (d . 1922) , who was a farmer , and Hannah née Barker (d . 1933) , who had immigrated with her family from England to Port Perry when she was two . He grew up in Seagrave and Myrtle and went to school in Port Perry . There he struggled with spelling ? even with his own middle name ? and developed an obsession with drawing .

Throughout his teens , friends and teachers encouraged Frise to move to Toronto to pursue a drawing career . In 1910 he moved there , though without aiming to develop his art ? rather he sought work and found it as an engraver and printer at the Rolph , Clark , Stone lithography firm ; he spent six months drawing maps for the Canadian Pacific Railway company indicating lots for sale in Saskatchewan .

While seeking another job he read in the Toronto Star an exchange between a farmer and an editor in which the editor extolled the virtues of farmlife only to have the farmer rebut him and challenge him to try out farming . Frise drew a cartoon of the editor struggling to milk a cow and a farmer as an editor ; he submitted it to the Star , where it appeared in the Star Weekly supplement on that 12 November . He visited the Star 's offices the following Monday and the Editor @-@ in @-@ Chief hired him immediately . He began by lettering titles and touching up photos until the Star Weekly 's editor J. Herbert Cranston enlisted him for his drawing skills . Frise illustrated news stories and the children 's feature The Old Mother Nature Club , and did political cartoons . His cartoons also appeared in publications such as the Owen Sound Sun .

Frise took a job at an engraving firm in Montreal in 1916 and in the midst of World War I enlisted in the military that 17 May . He had had two years previous experience with the 48th Highlanders of Canada and served at first served in the 69th Battery of the Canadian Field Artillery . He was deployed overseas that September and by November was serving in the 12th Battery at the front , where he employed his farm experience driving horses to move artillery and ammunition . At the Battle of Vimy Ridge his left hand was severely injured when an enemy shell exploded at an ammunition dump where he was delivering loads of shells . The Star reported its anxiety over the possible loss of " one of Canada ? s most promising cartoonists " , but his drawing hand ? his right ? was uninjured . He was discharged after recuperating in Chelmsford , England , and arrived back in Toronto on 1 December 1917 and returned to work , first at the Star and shortly after at the Star Weekly again .

Canadian Field Artillery 's 43rd Battery approached Frise in 1919 to illustrate a book on the history of their unit . The volume appeared later in the year under the title Battery Action ! , written by Hugh R. Kay , George Magee , and F. A. MacLennan and illustrated with Frise 's light @-@ hearted , humorous cartoons rendered in accurate detail .

As the Star Weekly 's circulation grew , so did its comics section . Cranston encouraged Frise to create a Canada @-@ themed comic strip in the vain of W. E. Hill 's Among Us Mortals , a Chicago

strip which also ran in the Star . Frise protested he could not keep up with a weekly schedule but nonetheless began At the Rink , which débuted 25 January 1919 ; it became Life 's Little Comedies on 15 March . The strip proved popular and evolved by 1923 ; it had taken on the influence of John T. McCutcheon 's depictions of a fictional rural town in the American Midwest called Bird Center . Frise turned focus to humorous and nostalgic depictions of rural life and on 12 December 1925 renamed his strip Birdseye Center , whose setting he described as " any Canadian village " ; its lead characters included bowler @-@ hatted Pigskin Peters , Old Archie and his pet moose Foghorn , and lazy Eli Doolittle and his wife Ruby . The strip grew in popularity and in 1926 was voted favourite comic strip in a readers ' poll ? as a write @-@ in , since the strip did not appear in the list of options

' ' Birdseye Center ' '

From about 1920 Frise shared an office with the journalist and Vimy ridge veteran Greg Clark (1892 ? 77) . They became friends , and Frise began providing colour illustrations to Clark 's tales in the Star of the pair 's misadventures in Toronto ? Frise tall and gangly , and Clark short and stout . A selection appeared in a volume titled Which We Did in 1936 . Frise talked of their blunderings to the Star : " We 've fried eggs on the city hall steps . We caulked my house and flooded the parlor with cement . I once let Greg persuade me to get a steam shovel to do my spring digging and ruined my garden . Perhaps this book is our most foolish adventure . "

Frise chatted with the frequent visitors to the office . He worked at his own pace and often tore up work @-@ in @-@ progress in dissatisfaction and submitted his strips at the last moment . Frise 's tardiness caused such delays in production and distribution that editorial director Harry C. Hindmarsh once demanded Joseph E. Atkinson have something done about it . Atkinson replied , " Harry , The Star Weekly does not go to press without Mr. Frise . "

Frise was unconcerned with the resale value of his original artwork and pursued little licensing of his work , amongst which included product endorsements , products such as jigsaw puzzles , and a Birdseye Center Cabin Park on Lake Scugog , opened in 1940 . His work provided him well enough that he bought a home in the well @-@ to @-@ do Baby Point neighbourhood .

Frise and Clark had grown concerned with the Star 's treatment of its staff and made an agreement in 1946 to leave at the first opportunity . Clark contacted John McConnell , publisher of the Montreal Standard , a newspaper with a smaller circulation than the Star 's that had earlier offered him a position . McConnell offered the pair salaries similar to what they received at the Star , as well as the opportunity for Frise to have his strip syndicated in the United States , which would supplement his income . When they handed in their resignations that Christmas Eve , Hindmarsh asked them , " Aren 't you going to give us a chance to bid ? " Frise told him , " Mr Hindmarsh , you have nothing to bid with . " The last Birdseye Center episode ran on 1 February 1947 .

The Star maintained publication rights to Birdseye Center , so Frise re @-@ created the feature as Juniper Junction with strongly similar characters and situations . It début 22 February 1947 , and the Standard ran it in colour , as Frise had long wanted . Standard 's circulation grew after the addition of Frise and Clark 's collaborations . Frise provided the illustrations to Jack Hambleton 's cookbook Skillet Skills for Camp and Cottage published in 1947 .

After feeling unwell the night before , Frise died of a heart attack in his home in Toronto on 13 June 1948 , at age 57 . Clark telephoned Cranston on hearing the news , saying , " A great gentleman has passed on . " Frise was buried at Prospect Cemetery in Toronto .

Jimmy Frise

= = Personal life = =

Frise stood 5 feet 9 inches (175 cm) . He enjoyed the outdoors and pursued fishing and hunting . He often returned to the Lake Scugog area and sometimes spoke about his career there . He was a Methodist Christian .

After returning from his service in World War I , Frise began courting Ruth Elizabeth Gate , who had been born in the US and grew up in Toronto . She worked at an advertising agency , and co @-@ published with her father a magazine in braille and a braille bible . She married Frise on 21 February

1918 and the couple had four daughters , Jean , Ruth , Edythe , and Betty ; and a son , John . Frise often featured his spaniel Rusty in his strips .

= = Legacy = =

The Montreal cartoonist Doug Wright (1917 ? 83) took the reins of Juniper Junction , which went on to become English Canada 's longest @-@ running comic strip . In 1965 the Canadian publisher McClelland & Stewart printed a treasury of Birdseye Center with commentary by Greg Clark and an introduction by Gordon Sinclair . Clark continued publishing his tales for a time with illustrations by Duncan Macpherson (1924 ? 93) , but soon moved on to different topics .

Scugog Shores Museum in Port Perry holds some samples of Frise 's original artwork , and the Province of Ontario erected an Ontario Historical Plaque in front of the museum to commemorate Frise 's role in Ontario 's heritage . In 2009 , Frise was inducted into the Canadian Cartoonist Hall of Fame .