



# SPARTAGUS

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It's said that the Brits always put on a good show, and the funeral for their Queen was both profound and spectacular. All during the mourning for Elizabeth II, who died – as you know – on September 8, Rosy and I were struck by on how much more *real* the event seemed because of our trip last April. We had *been there*, at the façade of “Bucks” – Buckingham Palace – in the big hall at Westminster, on the Royal Mile of Edinburgh. When Keir Simmons

tearfully announced that the Queen had died, the Victoria Monument gleamed behind him. They were cleaning it for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Jubilee while we were there, He mentioned the Canada Gate, and we remembered it. The palace staffer posted the simple notice that Her Majesty had passed on the very gate where I'd posed our goofy little icons, Mib and Neville, “climbing” the fence. It made a surprising difference to us to find familiar the edge shown of the Tower of London and the walkway by Tower Bridge where the Brits fired their cannonade. As her coffin sat on its catafalque in Westminster, surrounded by Beefeaters in full regalia and her children and grandchildren, their heads lowered in sorrow, we remembered meeting our guide to Parliament ... *there*.

Also, when England's new King came forth to greet the crowd the day after his mother's death, it felt personally gratifying, and not just because we'd stood where he stood. I feel as if I've grown up with Charles – we're the same age, and remember “Spin & Marty” on *The Mickey Mouse Club*, based around his tenth-or-so birthday? Ridiculous though it may sound, I felt a kinship with the new King, and frankly, a pride. His resilience, his dignity, his *professionalism* in assuming his role offered a lesson. *Look ahead. Value the past, but live in the present, and look to the future.* The general affection shown Elizabeth centered around her devotion to duty, the sense she gave of national history and identity. Yes, her humor was remarkable – there's a priceless story of her bamboozling American tourists she encountered whilst wandering outside Balmoral Castle\* – but it was her public dignity that embodied England while she reigned. The English-speaking world was reeling the day of her death from the loss of a living symbol of the

British nation. But by his appearance, his openness, his faith in his people, Charles turned world attention to what's to come next. Of course, he followed protocol – such is the duty of monarchy. But he literally opened that tradition to the view of the world. This man of my generation drew the substance of the past into the present and into promise for the nation to come. In Charles III we see love – a word he said over and over in his speeches – and reverence for the past *and* an abiding focus on the future. He will be a good king – if we allow that there is such a thing. And considering the value of monarchy to England, I think we should.

I have to think back two generations to remember when a single individual – JFK – was so universally mourned, and more than 20 years since our country felt united, after 9/11. The Brits have shown us how even a troubled society appears when its people enjoy a common feeling, a common identity. That's what the Queen brought to England, and it is, at the least, enviable, admirable, and a legacy worthy of our respect.

- Courtesy Stephen Silver, You can hear Dick Griffin tell the story.  
<https://twitter.com/i/status/1567894552744271872>

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### My Hugo Collection



is again complete with the arrival of *A Desolation Called Peace* by Arkady Martine, the second half of the duology she began with *A Memory Called Empire*, which also won our little chrome rocket. Martine's acceptance speech got across the serious theme she was striving for in her novels. Such ambition is rare in genre fiction, in fact pushes its limits close to the status of Literature. I ran aground on the dense style of *Memory* the first time I tried it; I'll definitely give it another go.

Style is an issue SF needs to address. It was for its elegant language that I cast my 2021 Hugo vote for *Piranesi*, and it is due to style that I find the '21 winner, *Network Effect*, impossible to penetrate. I have no quarrel with rock'em/sock'em space opera, which Ms. Wells' novel seems to be – but the slang in which *Network Effect* is written is not good storytelling. Clearly something's askew with me – or is it that SF isn't about language?

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### Beast in Show



I like the Westminster Dog Show and switched around among it, football and the U.S. Open Men's Final – a thriller – to catch the 2022 contest. My memories of the true hero of *Lady and the Tramp* were sustained. The only creature whose testimony is accepted as evidence in British courts – aside from humans, hail the bloodhound Trumpet, first of his breed to win the top honor of Best in Show!

But I do admit that the canine competition that appeared on Facebook sometime later appealed to me more. While most of the show dogs posed and pranced in prim perfection, one hound cut loose from his master and just *played*. He leapt and dashed and teased and ran amok. “Hey, what did you just do on the rug?” A happy, crazy, dumb ol' *pooch*. As Lafferty said, who wants a smart dog? *My kind of dog show! RORF!*

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### Who is this girl?

My favorite sequence in *The Terminator* takes place in the Tech Noir nightclub on Pico Blvd. in Los Angeles. The music playing contains the lyrics “You’ve got me burnin’” and one of the extras does that, indeed. Among the yuppie dancers writhing to the rhythms is this → pigtailed blonde, lost in the music, biting her lip, sending me into paroxysms of raw sick lust. Here even Schwarzenegger seems distracted. But *who is she?* So what if the movie was made in 1984 and the girl is likely a grandmother? I need to know. *Don’t tell Rosy.*



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## Rejoinders

*Curt Phillips ran a controversial comment in Spartacus no. 58 about changes in fandom. I invited responses, and here's the first.*

### Joseph Major

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Curt Phillips notes the paradigm shift in Worldcon. The generation now dominating knows the words, as it were, but not the tune.

Consider, for example, the plea issued by a number of Concerned Pros regarding the Jeddicon bid. It appealed to a Worldcon control board. No one involved ever seemed to have heard of the WSFS, Inc., incident. On the other side of the spectrum, Jon del Arroz wanted a position on the Worldcon control board. See above.

But these are symptoms of a greater decline. Like the recent proposal to make Worldcon a true Worldcon, with bids not by con committees but by national cons. For this, the U.S. would establish a national SF con, to be held (the proposer proposed) in Chicago, annually. And he thought that all he had to do was to utter it for it to be considered. Never went to the Business Meeting.

And indeed there is something not-quite-right about the Chengdu con. It won, you recall, through the votes of 2000 members who joined almost at the last moment. Many did not even seem to have mailing addresses, and it was explained that this is commonplace in Chinese fandom.

And they have been floundering ever since. The begging letter asking for experienced conrunners to take over positions to fill places. This was after they had won, note. They had made little or no preparation. This is a prestige Worldcon, but it may fall apart. Never mind the problems of their country; we shouldn't wish the sins of the government on the fans who live under it. But there may not be much of an overseas contingent at Chengdu anyway.

And now, Allah help us, the Jeddicon committee is putting in a bid for Cairo.

*A pyramid scheme, no doubt.*

The old way worked, not perfectly, but it had people who were participants. There has been a shift in perspective. Now the people who go to Worldcon, and even to local cons, are consumers. They expect their fannish experience to be delivered to them, instead of making it themselves. And some people wonder why Dragon\*Con is so popular.

*And an early response to no. 58 itself..*

**Ray Palm**

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Good to hear you're putting up a good fight. I hope the meds and physical therapy are giving you gains over your condition.

*Still early, but the meds are promising.*

Your take on AG Merrick Garland was refreshing, the opposite of what critics have said about him being weak, a wimp. When will the Dark Ages end? Trump being sent to prison? As I've said before, don't be surprised if Biden gives him a pardon like Ford did with Nixon.

*I would be **less** surprised if Biden divorced his wife and **married** the orange-haired lunatic.*

Meanwhile in MAGAland, Second Amendment maximist Marjorie Taylor Green was walking along in public, being verbally challenged by citizens concerned about children killed in school shootings. She kept repeating the same unjustifiable opinion that gun free zones are dangerous, everyone has the right to protect themselves. So we should allow school children to be armed? She kicked one of her walk-along critics. Maybe all that peroxide has seeped into her brain. Or maybe someone put alcohol in her "peach tree" dish when she was being grown and programmed. (Shades of *Brave New World*.)

I know you have a pile of books to read but if you have a chance check out *Off the Edge - Flat Earthers, Conspiracy Culture, and Why People Will Believe Anything* by Kelly Weill. It details how things have become so crazy with MAGA and QAnon.

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## **Election Season**

opens, and the political parties stand revealed, what they stand for evident to all with eyes. The Biden administration's efforts to avoid a rail strike are plenty of evidence as his party's general aims, but the sadistic farce played out with immigrants by Republican governors and the way blue state citizens have met it provides the most powerful evidence there is – a human story.

Texas' governor Greg Abbott and the troglodyte who helms Florida, Ron DeSantis, claimed their state's resources for dealing with illegal immigrants have reached saturation. I don't doubt it; the immigration system desperately needs a sole-to-ceiling revamp. But sensing a chance to "own the libs" and impress MAGAts, the GOP brutes came up with a plan. Without alerting anyone, without a second's effort to resolve the situation through bipartisan negotiation and compromise, they began busing immigrants north to blue – i.e., Democratic – states.

They didn't tell the immigrants where they were bound, or if they did, they lied, assuring refugees from nightmare existences in Central and South America that there were jobs and

housing and schools and free lives waiting at their destinations. And then the people were dumped on Kamala Harris' residence or on Martha's Vineyard, where the smirking Republican trolls were sure they would be greeted with horror, exposing the liberals living there as hypocrites. As for what would happen to the refugees – well, not their problem.

Their plot backfired insofar as Martha's Vineyard was concerned. The citizens, far from panicking, gave their surprise guests welcome and care. Remember what I said about this incident exposing the parties' true natures. Here it was. The "libs" behaved in a generous, decent, Christian if you want fashion. The Republicans behaved like swine.

It is virulent to one's idea of this country to look upon this sickening reality. Powerful men, with powerful states behind them, strike out against their own countrymen, foment regional and political division, use human lives as ammunition – and all to score the capital of cheap humiliation of political foes. The entire episode is a stain on the honor of the people living and voting in the red states involved. If Abbott and/or DeSantis are re-elected, as I expect both to be, then their states will have embraced racism and cynicism and political outlawry as the substance of their character. In short, they'll be an embarrassment and a disgrace – to themselves, to America, to common humanity. Aren't we better than this?

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**This is my friend Larry Montgomery**, a founding member of Southern science fiction fandom, a member of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance off and on since its 1961 inception, creator and winner of the DeepSouthCon's Rebel Award for fannish accomplishment in the South, a veteran, a gentleman, a kind and noble soul, a trufan, he died on September 7, 2022. No less than the world-rattling passage of Her Majesty, his demise bears noting.

Larry was from Anniston, Alabama, and came of age in the savage, splendid Civil Rights era. By no means racist, he was nonetheless defensive about his birthplace, pilloried worldwide by many who had yet to recognize the beam in their own eye. (My fair-minded father, also an Alabamian, endured the same crap.) Larry was a stalwart and creative SFPAn – he spawned the apa's first hoax (a prim teenager who railed against sexy SF) and publishing creative zines. (*Blueprint* covers? Don't gawk – it worked!)

Nevertheless, he was parodied as an unreconstructed Confederate by other members, mostly in good nature. He more-or-less gafiated after he left high school. A stint in the Green Machine followed – he served in Vietnam and on Guam, where he helped face down an assault on his base in which he was forced to use his weapon. Back home, he became a DJ at a Colorado country music station, and in the spring of 1981, received a phone call from a researcher in Southern fan history. "Mr. Montgomery? My name is Guy Lillian."

He replied, "The *third*, no doubt." Always knew those letters to comic books would pan out.

I was calling Larry – from North Carolina, where I lived at the time – to invite him to participate in SFPA’s 100<sup>th</sup> mailing, which the apa planned to make a Big Deal. He not only agreed, he offered to allow me to borrow a huge box of fanzines – the first five years of SFPA, in storage at his parents’ house. Stunned, I thanked him and made arrangements to have the box retrieved by a local and delivered to me at a con. “The Montgomery Papers” reviewing the birth of our regional fandom and its apa, provided a year’s worth of happy articles for my SFPazine,

I invited Larry to the next DeepSouthCon, in Birmingham. He came to that convention. It was his first fanac in 15 years. Said he, “I walked in the door and I was home!”

Indeed he was. He married a fan he met at that con – the incredible, beloved redhead P.L. Caruthers – and moved south again. He rejoined SFPA and became a mainstay of Southern cons. In the ages before fire was discovered – i.e., the early sixties – he chaired a DeepSouthCon and created the Rebel Award to honor Southern fandom’s founder, Al Andrews. It became a tradition, and in the fullness of time Larry and P.L. won the award themselves. (I had the happy duty of announcing the winners that year.) And the friendship we gave to him was returned fiftyfold. When my first marriage collapsed, Larry it was who called me with a wish that all would be well. When P.L. passed on, we mourned with him.

Larry’s apac centered around his love for genealogy – he prepped family trees for many of his mates – and anecdotes from his life. His covers were colorful collages – that’s a French word, meaning “paste.” He frequented Southern cons and was one of the Guests of Honor at the fiftieth DeepSouthCon ten years ago, part of a gathering of Southern fan mentors who helped build our warm and inclusive rebel community. Because of COVID, I didn’t see him in person after that, and in early September, we heard from his niece that, for unknown reasons, he’d left our company for good.



Goodbye then to one of the first ones, one of the fine ones, with thanks for the memory and the example and above all, the comradeship. With such guys behind us, how can we lose?

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The last day of **mourning for Queen Elizabeth** was possibly the most powerful. While heavy on the ancient symbolism – the breaking of the Lord Chamberlain’s ceremonial wand, the departure of the royal piper – the personal effect on her family was telling: a real life had ended, a life of historic importance, but also one leaving grief and pride like the life of any other beloved human being. I’ll let others debate the purpose of monarchy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I’ll just note the humanity of the people Elizabeth left behind, and the double rainbow that arced over Buckingham Palace on the day she died. This really happened. No one could make it up.