



SPARTACUS
no. 61

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Well, USA, you showed me.

I expected this *Spartacus* to be a bleak and angry issue, rife with bitterness, stressed to the point of snapping with a perceived need to *understand* and *reconcile* with the contemptible multitudes delivering this country into the hands of fascists. I expected disgust with inflation, the world-wide headache much less severe in America than anywhere else, to force voters' hands to the Republican tickets, rejecting the concerns of progressives with the anti-democratic course election deniers and authoritarians have promoted; for the anger over the *Dobbs* decision torpedoing reproductive choice to be temporary and limited; for the critics of Joe Biden to out-shout those remembering his accomplishments in the last two years – the vital infrastructure bill, the re-strengthening of NATO in support of Ukraine (leading to the humiliation of America's most virulent enemy), action on climate, mass vaxxing to fight COVID-19, record job growth, a terrific Supreme Court appointment, and so on and so forth. I expected Americans to see the man's age and his lifelong stutter as indicators of ineffectiveness and weakness – and shrink back into the shadow of MAGA and its brutes. In short, for the Red Wave predicted by the media and bragged on by the GOP to surge over all.

Didn't happen, did it?

Maybe Americans have too much sense. Maybe the freedom to choose our own paths in life means too much to us. Maybe we actually recognize the criminality of January 6th and the hypocrisy of election denial for what they are, cynical and unAmerican political swindlers, and hearken to those who want to govern this country in a sane and compassionate manner. No maybe about it. The "Red Wave" the hysterical media and the winger politicians so anticipated didn't dampen the soles of the country's Reeboks. The election was a rejection, not of Biden, but of his vile predecessor – almost down the line.

Almost. Let's not ignore the numbers: many were the elections won only by a percentage point or less. The winger perspective retains much of its strength, and the orange sleaze king himself has just declared a new candidacy. Also, I live in Florida, where strongman politics *rules*. The state's Republican governor, Ron DeSantis, has made a reputation as a street fighter unconcerned with sissy matters like COVID masking, immigrant treatment and voting rights, who forces high school kids to doff their protective masks, ship refugees to Northern states to underscore his base's resentment of immigrants, and, to his credit, rebuild the state after a world-class killer hurricane. His reelection was inevitable, and also overwhelming. DeSantis dragged Florida's worthless senator Marco Rubio to victory along with him, and helped the GOP win three House seats, at least. His success on election day was awesome. If I were a GOP political professional, I'd swoon at his potential: a Trump with brains, an agenda, audacity, evil to the core, charismatic enough to capture winger America's imagination, wily and dangerous, a special breed of man.

But he's not the *best* man. For me, at least in politics and at least for now, that title belongs to my cover boy, John Fetterman. For me, the new Pennsylvania senator

embodies not just right political thinking, but righteous personal courage. Facing down the effects of a frightening stroke and the Republican mockery that followed it took confidence and perseverance remarkable even in a 6'8" giant who looks like a retired wrestler. Fetterman confronted the issue of his health straight on, dismissed the spears of his carpetbagging opponent, and convinced the people that his disability was temporary, and his liberal policies were sound. That also takes a special brand of man, but not the *same* brand.

So what does all this prove? That Joe Biden is nowhere near as unpopular and that we the people aren't anywhere as malleable and blank as the Republicans hoped, the media assumed, and *I*, among other bitter cynics, feared? That at least most of us pay attention to facts and actually *look* at candidates and issues? That we recognize that events that seem distant and arcane actually do affect our lives, that January 6th and *Dobbs* and the attack on Mr. Nancy Pelosi and Charlottesville and all that we've seen mean something personal to them and theirs? That Americans still believe in our founding principles? Oh yeah. I am chastened. I am abashed.

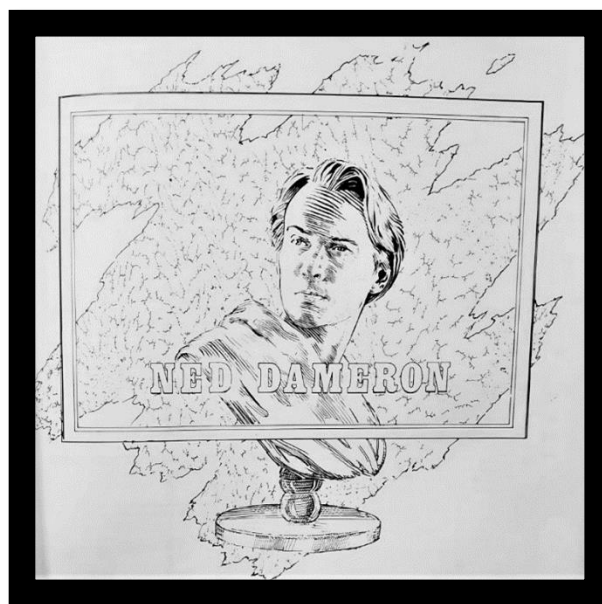
I am delighted.

Hurricane Nicole invaded my neighborhood from the east a few weeks after Hurricane Ian clawed its way through from the west. Though a mere Category 1 (Ian was a Cat 4 monster), undercut and eroded eastern Florida's beaches, toppling oceanfront houses and condos into the boiling Atlantic., Here, a few miles inland, the only damage was to trees and, at this house, a ripped gutter off the carport. Minor, but damn, Nicole was a nasty little storm.

Losses.

Rick Albertson died. Rick was the genius behind the fabulous laser show that began the Confederation Hugo ceremony – remember the lights playing on the chrome rockets? – and the technical aspects of many a con. He was personable and fun and losing him stinks to heaven. (His ex, Betsy Fokke, was in the day a precious friend.)

Ned Dameron was one of the great artists enriching New Orleans SFnal life for many years; we enlisted him to create the cover to the Nolacon II program/ souvenir book and to design the 1988 Hugo base. The story behind that fiasco made for



a jolly *Challenger* article. He was greatly talented and, like Rick and Martin, terrific company.

Martin Morse Wooster was a fine writer and correspondent whose thoughts echoed across many issues of *File:770* and elsewhere on any number of topics, as well as a published author of social commentary. He fell victim to a hit&run driver on the evening of November 12. His response to Curt Phillips' critique of contemporary fandom ran in these pages, and he attended several Fan-Eds Feasts hosted by myself and Joe Major. A dreadful loss of a talented guy.

Re: the Chengdu Worldcon. Behold, a paragraph reprinted (with permission) from Dave Langford's essential *Ansible*:

Borys Sydiuk of Kyiv expressed his dismay that 'Worldcon-2023's GoH Sergei Lukianenko celebrates the Russian missile attack on Ukraine and hails the murder of Ukrainian civilians. / The Russian young-adult SF author Sergei Lukianenko says in his post that all Ukrainians are fascists and should be murdered. After the mass attack of Russian terrorists on Ukrainian cities and civilian infrastructure on October 10, he made a post hailing the destruction of power plants, heat suppliers, and other civilian infrastructure: "Finally, I wish it would be so in February, deliberately and ruthlessly, fascist scum should go to hell," meaning all Ukrainians.' ([Facebook](#), 12 October) Even Western members of the Chengdu Worldcon committee prefer not to comment on their guest's fulminations.

Readers will recall that an open letter came forth last March from various SF writers protesting the Chengdu Worldcon and all of its problems. It was signed by many professionals, none of whom I recognized except for Jeanette Ng and N.K. Jemisen. Nothing came of their objections, no explanation, no debate; clearly, SFdom was and is content to let the convention go on and its guests to pontificate without comment.

This is unwise. By whatever misfortune, the Worldcon has found itself tied to a dictatorial political system and honoring people whose views are strongly antipathetic to those of most Americans and most SF fans. The controversies and offenses cited are not trivial; they deal with fundamental questions of national sovereignty and individual dignity. Certainly, science fiction should question every point of view, but not align itself against principles at the basis of our society. *SF cannot ignore the real world when so much is at stake.*

Of course, there is nothing to be done. The Chengdu Worldcon will happen, and I'm sure the concom's awareness of these matters will keep controversy in check. But ... what about the morality of westerners seeming to endorse atrocity?

The DeepSouthCon in Huntsville in October '22 – a very pleasant relaxacon, by the way – saw two Western BNFs attend who are closely attached to Chengdu. Those of us concerned with the convention missed a chance to talk out this fearful situation, and "talking it out" clearly needs to be done.

Thou shalt LOC!

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[On Spar #58] Unlike you, I didn't attend the 1974 Worldcon (which was held in D.C.) even though it was within one-day's drive of where I was living. Nicki and I had moved to Chattanooga less than a year earlier (I was fresh out of grad school and had gotten a job with DuPont there) but at that point we had neither the time nor the financial resources to attend *any* science fiction convention, much less a Worldcon. No, our entry into fandom was the year after that when we traveled up to Nashville for the third of Ken Moore's Kubla Khan conventions. And while we were there, met a highly motivated fan named Irvin Koch who was in the process of forming a fan organization in Chattanooga. But that, as they say, is another story.

For the purposes of this LoC I'll instead obliquely comment on your description of seeing both George Takei and Nichelle Nichols waiting for one of that Worldcon hotel's elevators. I never got to meet Ms. Nichols, but Nicki and I did once have a bit of up-close-and-personal time with Mr. Takei. It happened sometime in the late '70s or perhaps the early '80s when he had come to Chattanooga for some kind of charitable event. The sponsoring organization had apparently been aware of a science fiction club in the city and somehow had found a way to contact Nicki and me – I'm thinking they'd found out we were the editors and publishers of the club's newszine, *Chat*. Be that as it may, it had been arranged for us to meet Mr. Takei at the airport and ride in a limo with him to his downtown hotel. It turned out to be about half an hour in transit and in that time I remember that he was very eloquent and friendly, and didn't show any imposition at all at having to share his ride with two total strangers. As to what we talked about, I no longer remember. It probably was centered on science fiction and the ongoing NASA space program, but that's not really important. What did happen was that he charmed us with his outgoing personality and his above-average knowledge of science fiction and its media fans. The time went by too quickly and I remember wishing the ride had been a lot longer than it was.

I'm regretful that neither Nicki nor I have crossed path with Takei in the decades since then. If we ever do, I want to tell him that I've been a big fan of his.

[On Spar #59] Thanks for that nice remembrance of Larry Montgomery. I didn't know him very well, except from his presence in the Southern Fandom Press Alliance (SFPA) and even then I didn't know him all that well because his interests there seemed almost exclusively centered on the extended genealogy of his family. Only very recently did he start to write his personal history, and what little of it he published prior to his death adds to the knowledge base about Southern Fandom and its early days. I'd hoped we'd have been able to learn more from him at the recent DeepSouthCon but he was gone by then. He'll not be forgotten.

[And on my on-line trip report, [The Iconic Route.](#)]

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I finally read all three of your *Iconic Route* zines. And, because of that, I had to send you a letter. For a while, I couldn't figure out what to say. Finally, I alighted on two topics.

The first topic has to do with was your trip a good thing or a bad thing? I concluded it was both. Given your health, it was a bad thing. In the condition you're in, you shouldn't have walked so much. It was bad enough that you walked until your feet ached and you were tired beyond tired. What may be worse is that, with all your ailments, you may have fucked yourself up royally. A man of your age and not in good condition should never do what you did. For that side of the trip, all I can say is tch, tch.

Indeed, my loathsome bod has yet to fully recover. But it was worth it.

However, you may have done good as far as your life and love go. You were doing it for Rosy. Greater love hath no man. Of course, you didn't go only for Rosie. You've been an explorer to some extent yourself. You've been to many places in America; and you've explored many things in your own life. In particular, you are interested in exploring the things a lot of people are interested in. With all these siren calls, your current straits couldn't put a lid on them.

I went for Rosy, of course – but also for myself.

Most of my exploring has been done in books. I'm not ashamed of it. That's what I did well and that is why I did my job of agency librarian so well. I was given three parties when I left. On the other hand, I am not going to say that I've never traveled. I went to France two summers in the early '60s. I didn't do much sightseeing. I had no passion for seeing the *Mona Lisa*. I was more interested in the French people, the cafes, the trains, the food and the newspapers.

I also spent a short time in England. Similarly, I was interested in things that the English people take for granted. These are my most vivid memories of England. One was being shooed by a black policewoman in London who spoke with a cockney accent. Another vivid memory was running and shouting to a man at an airport. He was talking to a friend at that moment. For interrupting me, he gave me a dressing down. To him, it was bad manners. However, when I explained the situation to him, he apologized; and explained to his friend I might very well have been stranded in England.

Who was better: you or I? I think the world needs all sorts of people.

Now I just want to comment on one crumb of what you wrote. About Jack the Ripper. I read before that Scotland Yard had Aaron Kosminski put in an insane asylum rather than have him tried as Jack the Ripper. Of course, the idea in all the books is to create the scandal you really want to be true. For instance, I can picture a scandalmonger claiming the late Queen Elizabeth was Jack the Ripper and disguised herself as a man during those nights. To the fact she wasn't old enough, he, of course, would say she's older than most people think.

Anyway, it would be wise not to go on a trip like that in your current condition, but who does wise things?

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[On Spartacus 60] As climate change continues, the hurricane season gets worse all the time. You've had to deal with Fiona, Ian and now Nicole this year, and when they've been done with Florida, they often come up the east coast, strengthening all the while, and then, they hit Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, with a swipe at Newfoundland if they are still strong enough. Those provinces are still recovering from this season, and good thing Nicole was in remnants, for it brought heavy rain to those provinces, plus Québec.

The mid-terms ... Ron DeSantis won in a near-landslide. *Ecchhh* ... I have seen DeSatan, and Trump seems to like DeSanctimonious... The shipping of these migrants up to the northern US states is like state-sponsored kidnapping. Good for Martha's Vineyard and NYC for accepting the migrants and looking after them.

With the results of the mid-terms, I believe this also is the salvation of the January 6th committee, even without Liz Cheney in its leadership team. That is a shame, even as a Republican, she deserved better than to be pushed out in her home state. I hope to see more action on the part of that committee soon.

Ukraine continues to fight back and make Putin look stupid and weak. Weak, especially in stories I read online about how Putin's perceived weakness makes him ripe for replacement, or possible assassination. And Alex Jones is reeling over a billion dollars in fines and damages against him, and it looks good on him. He will never realize his crimes in this, and he will probably declare bankruptcy in all this. He must be held liable somehow, I just don't know how.

The Russian oligarchs who own and run that country probably have an idea on how to hold Putin liable.

Previous loc ...working on *Amazing Stories* is one thing, but actually being the editor-in-chief is another. Now that it's been ten days or so since I was appointed, I am seeing the workload ahead, but now know that my workload is small, compared to what new publisher Kermit Woodall has to do. Fortunately, he is an expert on web pages and WordPress (and I am not), so things are getting done while I try to learn the web page and WordPress, and bring myself up to speed. If there is any comfort in this, it is that I will have some time to learn it. I expect that with the Kickstarter campaign, and the Sol System special issue that Kermit and Steve Davidson have been planning, any issue that might have my name on the top of the masthead will probably come about more than a year in the future. (Might be wrong, but that's what I am seeing right now.)

Great congrats! Now, I have this story I wrote in 1961 called "Naked Women in Space" that I'd like to talk to you about ...

The local ... it is striking to see a letter from Martin Morse Wooster here. I read of his death just yesterday, as he was heading home from a convention (non-SF, I believe), and was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver. I hope there is some resolution in this, soon.

Our whole community is broken up by this wretched loss to Martin's family and to fandom. A sickening waste.

In media matters, most of the good stuff is on streaming. F'r instance, the new, German version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* has proven to be a worthy successor to the Lew Ayres masterpiece of the early thirties. World War I is the standard for pointless military misery and massacre, even in a century like the XXth – Archibald MacLeish told my Berkeley student body that it topped even Vietnam in that regard. This new film understands that and uses its magnificent predecessor as a template on which to attack war's insanity, Altering the story, retaining the most powerful segments. It is bestial, beautiful work.

The Good Nurse tells the familiar but frightening true story of a male nurse who – for no reason even he can understand – murdered hundreds of patients under his care. Eddie The terror depicted has no answers, which is a flaw, but the film does what it can, and skillfully. Redmayne

and my beloved Jessica Chastain act the bloody pixels off the screen. It's awesome to watch them at work.

I saw the strong civil rights film *Till* on the *movie* screen, but it would be equally effective on TV. It tells the horrible true story of Emmett Till, a goofy, clueless Chicago teenager who forgot where he was while visiting rural Mississippi in 1955. The 14-year-old knucklehead forgot, or never realized, where he was, and made a wolf whistle at a local white woman. Her husband and some creeps from the same cracker wrapper kidnaped the kid and tortured him to death. The film centers on his mother, played with perfect tension by Danielle Deadwyler, and her efforts to find justice for Emmett and inform the country of the truth of racial hatred. She's a strong, flawed, superb character, and her strength is the film's strength.

Anyone mentioning the New Orleans Saints to the editor of this journal had best do so via Skype or e-mail. It's a dangerous topic in person.

Artemis launch. 1:49 AM (or so), Nov. 16, 2022. Delay after delay, frustration erased – bring flame, thick flame, deep rumble beginning as the ship began its arch towards the east, You could see the boosters fall away, and later, the escape tower (I think), dots cleaving from a dot brighter than Sirius, lingering long into the night, till *Artemis 1* was four hundred miles of more out to sea. Right now, the most powerful in or off the world, carrying an Orion capsule crewed by robots to the moon, waiting serenely in the sky. This house remembers the first rockets that carried men to the moon, 53 and 54 years ago. The sound from the Saturn Vs nearly bounced the Greenhouse into the street.

No such thunder this time, but there will be other launches, and we'll watch them all – be they little Falcon 9s or these behemoths, for the sight of those flames etching into the sky, day, night or best, at twilight or dawn, is never the same, and never palls. I remember watching the whistling dot of Sputnik I crossing the sky above Buffalo, my boyhood home. Echo, the vast aluminum balloon, onto which signals could be bounced – the precursor to communications tying together the world, a lifetime – my lifetime – later. I remember the despair with which I uncharitably greeted the flight of Vostok 1, and the cheer of hearing Alan Shepard's quarter-hour jaunt into space – which began not ten miles from here – in early May, 1961. The agony of the Apollo fire. The ecstasy of Apollo 8. And my 20th birthday, July 20, 1969. I got to thank Buzz Aldrin eventually for that birthday present.

And we're on our way back, beginning tonight. Real people will ride the next Artemis. Think on that. *The next man and the first woman on the moon are in training now. And the first person to set foot on Mars possibly watched this launch tonight.*

A Falcon flies next week. And soon after that, and again after that. Come watch with us from our backyard. You won't forget it. See you next month.

{GHLIII}