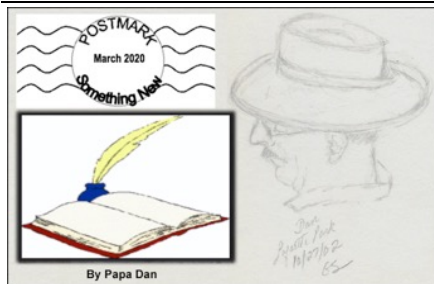


The Vulcan Salute — Its Time Has Come

By Dan Sapone



“Live long and prosper.”
“Logic is the beginning of wisdom,
not the end.”
— Mr. Spock



The Vulcan Salute

During the days when “Star Trek” was a popular TV show, Mr. Spock (Lieutenant Commander and Science Officer of the Starship Enterprise) taught us the Vulcan Salute. In language, it translates to “Live long and prosper.” It was a friendly, respectful greeting that those of us from the 21st century might use in a way similar to our human handshake. So, given today’s reluctance to shake hands for sanitary reasons, it might be used to become a germ-resistant cultural replacement for that time-honored gesture.

Considering the source, Mr. Spock (played by actor Leonard Nimoy) had a dramatic backstory — he had a mixed Human-Vulcan heritage, he taught a number of respectful behaviors to his human colleagues. The character’s father was named Sarek, from the planet Vulcan, and his mother was Amanda Grayson, a human. Due to his mixed-race heritage, the young Spock character had a difficult childhood, bullied on his home planet by full-blooded Vulcan children who made fun of the human emotions he inherited from his human mother. He grew up alongside his half-brother, Sybok, who was eventually cast out for rejecting logic. Although Spock was accepted in the Vulcan

Science Academy, he did not enter the academy because they would never fully accept someone who was only half Vulcan. Instead, he succeeded in entering Starfleet, while spending the next 18 years estranged from his Vulcan relatives.

The evolution of the character was interesting in that the network wasn't pleased with the mixed-race feature of the character and often airbrushed out the pointed ears of the character in promotional photos. After the first season, a rift grew between the show's creator, Gene Roddenberry, and Nimoy because the writing of the character deteriorated into brief expressions of "fascinating" and "logical"; and more complex interactions of the character with other characters, focusing on his unique racial heritage, were rejected by the network. However, the Vulcan Salute in today's environment has a number of useful qualities to offer to us 21st-century humans.

Many aspects of Spock's character endured in popular culture and the boundary between the character and the actor was eventually blurred and then erased. The character was adopted as an informal mascot by NASA and was incorporated into a number of literary successes by authors like Isaac Asimov. An asteroid was named Mr. Spock in 1971 and the character, further promoted by Mr. Nimoy, became an inspiration to a number of scientists and engineers along with a number of more recent honors:

- In 2004, Spock was ranked number 21 in Bravo's list of The 100 Greatest TV Characters. According to William Shatner, the other star of the series, "much of the acting praise and media interest in the show went to Nimoy."
- In 2008, Unified Gamers Online Inc. ([UGO](#)) named Spock one of the 50 greatest TV characters for both the original series and subsequent movie appearances.
- In 2012, Imagine Games Network ([IGN](#)) ranked the character Spock as the second top character of the *Star Trek* universe, with Kirk in the top spot.
- In 2016, Adam Nimoy released his very popular documentary film [For the Love of Spock](#), about his father and his iconic character.
- Spock (Nimoy) has been honored by a multitude of film and television institutions for his dominant role among the characters of the *Star Trek* franchise over fifty years, from the original pilot in 1964 to his final film performance in 2013.
- After the death of Leonard Nimoy in 2015, there has been an increase in the practice of altering the portrait of Canada's seventh prime minister, Wilfrid Laurier, on Canada's five-dollar note to look like Spock.

For today, if we all begin promoting the Vulcan Salute as the clinically safe and respectful greeting to replace the handshake, it may actually have a positive impact on reducing the spread of the coronavirus here in the twenty-first century.

Why don't we give it a try? (Can you do it?)



Finally, at this difficult time in our human history, I am reminded of some words — once used in a movie but originally attributed to John Lennon. He said:

*"Everything will turn out alright in the end.
If it is not alright, it is not yet the end."*