

LAST UNICORN Author Peter S Beagle Mentally OK, Heirs' Lawyer Quits



The lawyer who was hired to prove *The Last Unicorn* author mentally unfit has resigned, declaring the suit brought against him by his children to be without merit. This is the latest ripple in a seemingly ongoing saga involving Beagle, his erstwhile manager Connor Cochran, Beagle's children, his longtime girlfriend Peggy Carlisle, and an increasingly upset and angry fanbase that has been going on for most of the century.

A bit of background is in order: in 2001, Peter S. Beagle was going through a very bad patch: debt, divorce, and a dearth of royalties. Cochran promised to revive interest in Beagle's works and monetize them. To do so, he started a boutique publishing house specifically for Beagle's works. Merchandising deals came in the process of time, though exactly where the money went is somewhat in doubt.

The whole thing came to a head in 2013 when Cochran took Beagle on a tour of cinemas, showing a restored version of Rankin-Bass's 1982 *Last Unicorn* animated film. Mr. Beagle, who later described the tour as a "death march", spent his time doing meet-and-greets, Q&A sessions, and signing merchandise. Lots of merchandise. This reporter was there when the tour came to the Alamo Drafthouse in Kansas City, MO, and remembers multiple tables of merch on display, and a line that snaked around itself both before and long after the movie.



It was during the tour that things really began to get serious. Mr. Beagle said he was more-or-less run non-stop, on a schedule that no one in his 70s should have to contemplate. Cochran, on the other hand, said that he gave Beagle adequate rest. People began to notice a real friction between the two, as well as between Cochran and Carlisle. Disturbing eyewitness accounts cropped up, including [this](#) rather infamous account of a volunteer “roustabout” at one of the tour stops. Allegations of financial irregularities, of merchandise paid for but not received, began to crop up as well.

Things came to a head in November 2015 when Beagle filed a suit against Cochran alleging elder abuse, fraud, defamation, and a variety of other issues. Cochran filed a countersuit, claiming that Beagle’s allegations were invalid due to his supposedly deteriorating mental condition.

Cochran has since gone on to suggest he first spotted Beagle’s alleged condition on tour, noting such things as absent-mindedness, telling the same story three times in a single Q&A session, getting people’s names wrong during signings, and so on. Sharp-eyed readers may note that these things may equally be explained by chronic fatigue brought on by overwork (Also, the account linked above was written by someone who literally works with dementia patients for a living. The author paints Beagle as entirely lucid, if exhausted).

Cochran also alleged that Carlisle was abusing Beagle and had been for some time. He claimed that he had to arrange Beagle’s schedule on the tour to keep her away from him as much as possible. What truth there is to this is not known, but given the general tone of the accusations and how things have shaken out thus far, fans may be forgiven if they cast a jaundiced eye on them.

It is about this time that Beagle’s children got into the act. Siding with Cochran, they filed for conservatorship on the basis that their father was demented. If it had been granted, they essentially would have taken over his personal and financial life on the basis that he was no longer competent to handle them. This, of course, would have rendered Beagle’s suit against Cochran moot.

Which brings us to June. In Alameda Probate Court, the lawyer representing Beagle's daughter Kalisa filed for relief, claiming that the allegations of mental incompetence were "without merit" (citing independent assessments of Mr. Beagle's health and her own correspondence with Kalisa) and recommending dismissal of the conservatorship suit. This has since been granted.

This is a pretty major victory. Beagle's alleged mental incompetence was the linchpin of Cochran's countersuit, and without it the way is very much clear for Beagle's original suit to continue.

Sad to say, this sort of thing — the alleged taking advantage of elderly creatives by their family, caretakers, and/or business managers is nothing new. One thinks of the final days of Salvador Dali, of the allegations around the households of Harper Lee and Richard Simmons. Even the history of Frank Zappa's estate, though at least in that case they had the decency to wait until his death before things got truly ludicrous.

Still, Beagle fans are jubilant. Those who have followed this saga as it has unfolded feel, not without cause, that a corner has been turned. Hopefully this signals a new chapter in Mr. Beagle's life, one where he no longer needs to worry about finances, or usurpation, or allegations as to his mental state, but can just concentrate on doing what he does best.

(Kelly Luck finds one of the advantages of being poor is the lack of people trying to take over your estate. Her other SciFi4Me work can be read [here](#).)

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