

The Reactor

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Hunting: Man's Heritage

It has come as a shock to me to learn that some people object to Field and Stream as much as others object to Playboy and Hustler.

I have found hunting magazines, with their endless pictures of hunters standing around their trophies, rather boring. That was my reaction to the story in the Tribune about the gentleman who recently returned from Africa packing a stuffed kudu in his luggage.

Once you've seen one hunter with a buck deer or an elk or a bear draped over his Jeep, you've seen them all. They're about as thrilling to this reader as somebody else's bowling scores.

My own hunting experience consists of being up to my neck in sea water, feeling around under rocks for abalone. While I have never been charged by an angry abalone, I did come close to drowning one time, and before I bought a wet suit, I did suffer from exposure to our cold coastal waters. But I have never been in danger from a charging wildebeest or an unhappy rhino. Such things are more interesting to the participant than to the one who reads the story in magazine or newspaper, at least if that reader is me.

I don't think the people who wrote letters to the editor were complaining about boredom, however. They were protesting that trophy hunting is objectionable per se, so objectionable in fact they feel the Tribune should not

report such goings-on. It seems strange that there could be something these days that should not be discussed, when radio and TV can review the most unspeakable sexual practices in clinical terms, and movies routinely use the most rotten language possible as a substitute for humor. Our definition of obscenity has certainly changed in the past few years.

As those who read this column regularly are aware, I object to handguns and other weapons which are intended primarily for anti-human use. And I agree with those who would control or eliminate hunting of endangered species. On the other hand, not all species are endangered, and in spite of the feelings of one letter writer, it is not possible to "murder" the wildlife of Africa. "Murder" is something that happens when one human deliberately kills another human being. Period. Why should we be more distressed when a zebra is shot than when it is killed by a lion? If the shooter knows his stuff, the zebra will feel less pain from the bullet than from a lion or a hyena, and will not be any more dead.

Even those of us who are strict vegetarians are descended from long lines of animal killers. Hunting has been part and parcel of the life of men for millions of years, since well before we were really men. Stalking game is part of the heritage of mankind. It is no wonder that some men should enjoy it. Bambi is a cartoon character, and those who operate as if he were anything else are truly living in a fantasy world.

Other than vegetarians, we all live because other creatures are being killed for our use. It is more honest to wring a chicken's neck yourself than to let a surrogate at Foster Farms do it for you. It is no worse to kill a deer to enjoy the venison and the trophy than it is to order a well-done steak at Nick's. Before I worry too much about kudus, first I think I should worry more about what's happening in Cuban jails and Russian gulags.