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Letter from a Canadian Supporter to Geraldine Ferraro

Geraldine Ferraro

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Dear Rep. Ferraro:

Congratulations on achieving the nomination of your party for the Vice-Presidency of the United States. Good Luck!

I would appreciate receiving any campaign items - buttons, photos, posters, bumper stickers, etc.

Are you coming to Washington State? If so, when and where?

Is there a copy or video available of your acceptance speech in San Francisco that I could obtain? If so, let me know how.

Have you worked with Senator Edward Kennedy on anything? If so, what? Is there any printed materials or photos relating to that? Senator Kennedy is someone I admire very much.

What is your position on the "environment"?
I am a member of the International Wildlife Protection Association and we are a pro-wildlife group. We are opposed to hunting, trapping, and any unnecessary destruction of wildlife. Enclosed is our membership form. If you agree with our position on the issues, please join us. The more members we have, the better it will be for wildlife.

All the very best - in November, and beyond.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Enclosures: I.W.P.A. membership form
"Just Ask the Deer"
JOIN US!
Become a Protector of Wildlife

International Wildlife Protection Association
P.O. Box 728
Kamloops, B.C. Canada V2C 5M4

Objectives
The objectives of the International Wildlife Protection Association include:

- To protect and conserve all wildlife and its natural environment.
- To protect wild animals from trapping and from being killed for "sport".
- To support groups and individuals who protect domestic animals.
- To support other organizations having similar objectives.
- To publicize the need for the protection of wildlife, and to the wastefulness of killing wildlife for reasons other than survival.

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The killing of wildlife for sport or recreational purposes is morally offensive and unproductive. Through human development, we have achieved an efficient method of providing ourselves with meat, i.e. the domestication of livestock. In most societies, it has become unnecessary to kill wildlife to obtain food. In our society the killing of wildlife by hunters is done either for pleasure or to obtain those parts of animals (e.g. feathers, fur) which are useful in satisfying men's or women's vanity.

The taking of life for pleasure or vanity is not a positive act and it should not be encouraged. Of all the animals, mankind has achieved awareness and with that awareness, compassion. We should, therefore, become protectors of the environment.

Wildlife should not be regarded simply as a resource for use by mankind. It should be regarded as important in itself, for the very existence of a wild animal, uninterrupted by mankind, makes the world more complete.
JUST ASK...

...THE DEER

by Charles Maher

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AN AD IN THE SPORTS SECTION the other day said, "We, as manufacturers of sporting firearms, the primary purposes of which are recreational, for hunting and target shooting, are opposed to registration of sporting rifles and shotguns at the local, state or national level." The ad was signed by O. F. Mossberg & Sons, North Haven, Conn.

Mr. Mossberg and his sons have taken a position with which I emphatically disagree. But we part company even before we get to the question of firearms registration. Because I happen to think that guns, even registered, should not be used to slaughter animals in the name of something defined, with outrageous insensitivity, as "sport".

One may justify killing animals for food, or in self-defense, or in cases where they are destroying crops or doing some other serious mischief. But I don't see how anybody can justify killing them just for the hell of it. That is not sport. It is a disgusting indulgence in cruelty.

Of course, if you are manufacturing guns with which animals are slaughtered, you do not call them "slaughter guns". You cast about for a suitable euphemism and come up with "sporting firearms".

But it's going to take more than a Madison Avenue adjective to convince me there's anything sporting about hunting. An activity does not qualify as a sport, by my standards, when some of the contestants are involuntary participants. Have we asked the deer whether he wants to get in the game?

A few years ago I had an interview with Carlos Arruza, the famed Mexican bullfighter now deceased. I asked him how he defended his "sport" against charges of cruelty. He seemed to think it impertinent for an American to ask such a question. How, he asked, can Americans object to killing in the bullring when they permit their hunters to inflict even crueler death on game animals?

For example, he said, suppose that a hunter mortally wounds a deer, but that the deer is not at once immobilized and manages to reach shelter. The hunter wants to finish off the deer, but he can't find it. So the animal lies in agony for hours, or maybe days, before dying. No fighting bull, Arruza said, is ever subjected to such prolonged torment.

Arruza's implication was that Americans who are horrified by bullfights, but not by the cruel slaughter of game animals, are horrified hypocrites. I could think of no rebuttal.

Gunmakers may tell you that hunters are merely helping to reduce the game population to a level at which nature will be able to sustain it. There is not enough food for all game animals, they say, so many of them will die if they are not shot.

This is a rationalization I am not prepared to accept. For one thing, there are areas (including that part of the Pacific Northwest in which I lived for many years) where there is ample food for game animals. The hunters kill them anyway.

Moreover, I have not yet been persuaded that it is kinder to slaughter deer than to let them risk starvation. Suppose you and a friend were lost in a wilderness and it seemed certain you were going to starve to death. Would you consider it an act of kindness if your friend shot you between the eyes, to keep you from dying of starvation? Or would you prefer to remain alive on the remote chance that you might come across some food?

We don't know for sure where the deer stands on this question. But I strongly suspect even a starving deer would run from a situation in which it feared its life was in danger. This would seem to indicate the deer would just as soon take its chances with starvation...

Now come the friends of the hunters, armed to the dentures with defenses of the indefensible.

Today we will inspect the arguments of a gentleman who finds nothing essentially wrong with hunting. His name is Ted Perry and he writes: "On purely intellectual grounds (the deer's, not yours), it makes very little difference whether the killing is done for food, for self-defense, sport, depravity or righteousness. Dead is dead.

"Further, despite your conscientious inability to accept scientific evidence in this age of necromancy, all available ecological evidence points to the necessity of periodic 'thinning' of the herds of game animals. This thinning will be done either by the 'sport hunters' on whose motives you speculate so freely or by 'paid hunters,' men paid bounties by the government for the express purpose of thinning the animals and preserving the ecological balance of a region.

"There is an economic factor that you may find beyond your reach. But I believe your difficulty here is you've never managed to survive your total immersion in Disney's fatuous, if delightful, epic, Bambi."

Mr. Perry, as you can see, has a rather nice feel for the language. But I believe it can be shown that his arguments, like those of less articulate apologists for hunting, have both the strength and transparency of cellophone.

First, let us accept, for a moment, his premise that it makes little difference to the deer whether they die at the hands of "sport hunters" or bounty hunters. Does this mean the motives of the people doing the shooting also make no difference?

If we hire bounty hunters to thin the herds, we are having a distasteful but perhaps necessary job done by presumably dispassionate professionals. They are killing animals for employment, not for kicks.

But if we permit "sport hunters" to do the thinning, we are, in effect, encouraging people to indulge a blood lust that would far better be left unex-
pressed. Mr. Perry may suggest hunters are merely trying to do their bit for conservation by killing wildlife. To which I say that if he can honestly tell me he believes the central motive of the average hunter is to achieve an ecological balance, I'll kiss his hand-carved rifle stock.

Nor is the average hunter in need of food. So hunger cannot be his excuse for shooting animals.

What he is in the woods for is the thrill of the kill. He is not fostering a sport but a brutalizing practice that suggests we are still living in an uncivilized civilization.

If it matters little to the deer whether they are shot for laughs by "sportsmen" or purposefully by bounty hunters, it should make a difference to man. For his motives for killing are important. If he kills capriciously, his motives are unsound, if not unhealthy.

But I am electing at this point to withdraw my tentative acceptance of the premise that it makes no difference to the deer at whose hands they die. It could make a considerable difference, for this reason:

If professional bounty hunters do the herd-thinning, we can at least expect that animals will be destroyed with professional dispatch. On the other hand, consider the consequences if we leave part of the job to the amateur whose only credential for possessing a gun is that he could afford to buy it. Turn him loose and chances are excellent some animal will shortly be hobbling around in agony, the result of having been hit in the hindquarters by an incompetent who was aiming for the head.

But the real point here is that even animal life has value—to animals if not to us—and every effort should be made to keep such life from being destroyed without real purpose.

The late Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who practiced what he called Reverence for Life, once wrote:

"Man comes again and again into the position of being able to preserve his own life, and life generally, only at the cost of other life. If he has been touched by the ethic of Reverence for Life, he injures and destroys life only under a necessity which he cannot avoid, and never from thoughtlessness."

You are cordially invited to compare this ethic with that of the man who shoots animals for the hell of it...

Now I'm under doctor's orders to take it easy on the hunters. The orders arrived from Cecil W. Hoff, M.D., of San Bernardino, who was responding to my arguments.

"Look," the doctor wrote, "don't tell me you have never killed anything just for the hell of it, or only in self-defense, or strictly because you were hungry."

All right, I won't. As a matter of fact, in the area in which I lived as a boy, killing animals for the hell of it was not an unpopular diversion. We would go into the woods with .22 rifles and shoot at practically anything to which feathers or more than two legs were attached. Although man was not fair game, even he entered our theater of operation at some risk.

It has since occurred to me that such destruction of living things is not only completely unnecessary but cruel. Dr. Hoff, however, seems to imply that if I ever did kill anything just for the hell of it, all the arguments I have advanced against such killing would be invalidated.

This is like saying that if a reformed drunk began talking about the beneficial effects of abstinence, one might say to him, "Hah! Don't tell me you never had a drink," and assume that all arguments against excessive drinking had thereby been demolished.

Dr. Hoff also contends I trapped myself by using the quotation from Dr. Albert Schweitzer. He asks: "When does a living organism reach such stature and importance that your philosophy becomes operational? Must it be a 150-pound deer, or could we start with the mosquito? How often have you killed an innocent mosquito who was doing you no harm—with murder in your heart, or 'Just for the hell of it'? House flies? Wasps?"

It displays a great lack of imagination that man takes such delight in exterminating things that do him no harm and displays an unwillingness to give other creatures the same right to life that He acknowledges for himself. It's a little frightening that we, sitting safely within our cities, decide that the only way we can enjoy nature is to run out and kill something." — Loren Eiseley
Frankly, I can't remember the last time I killed a mosquito with murder in my heart. Killing mosquitos, I would think, is quite often more of a reflex action than something done with murderous intent. A man slaps a mosquito because the mosquito bit the man. There is no premeditation. As for flies, it may be argued that killing them is, in fact, a legitimate defense against the breeding of serious disease in the home.

The wasp may offer us a better opportunity to illustrate both legitimate and thoughtless destruction. If 500 wasps build a nest in a man's garage, making it virtually impossible for him to get in and out without being stung, the man would seem to have sufficient grounds for getting rid of the wasps. But suppose a man with a gun is walking in the woods and he sees a wasps' nest. Is it excusable for him to fire into the nest just for the pleasure of watching it fly to pieces?

The distinction should be clear enough. It is not suggested that killing ants should be made a capital offense. It is suggested that killing animals, fish or even insects is very difficult to defend if the killing is done only for kicks.

Ted Perry, previously cited, also writes: "If (a hunter) is in the woods for the thrill of the kill, to 'indulge his blood lust,' (your lurid-melodramatic expression), to satisfy his primeval thrust, then what better place than in the woods?"

By oversight or design, Perry missed the point. The question was not WHERE man should satisfy this lust, but WHETHER he should.

In "The Case Against Hunting," the British writer E. W. Martin says: "It could be argued that hunting (done only for pleasure) is a comparatively harmless way of expressing the aggressive instinct. But I prefer to think of better psychological methods."

"I knew of a boy who was unduly destructive. If he had any toys, he would destroy them; if he could tear down or damage any object or property, he would do so. This lad was given an opportunity to build things, to construct, and soon his destructive impulses were turned in the right direction. It is convenient, indeed, for the hunting people to find excuses for their activities, but they will have to look for them elsewhere than in modern psychological evidence."

I would judge, by their letters, that Perry and Dr. Hoff are men of high intelligence. But there are cases in which not even very strong minds can lend much persuasion to a very weak argument . . .

Predictably, the views expressed here on hunting have attracted mail from a number of volatile gun lovers who should be cited for using defective weapons—their minds.

But there have also been some letters from thoughtful hunters, such as Allan D. Kyle of Hawthorne, who writes:

"Most (hunters) will be hard put to say exactly why they hunt. But they will talk with a real love for the time they spend hunting. You will hear stories about the difficult times the hunters have had to overcome the obstacles nature puts before them. Mosquitos, mountains, snow, slippery rocks, long hikes, rain, tired muscles, and non-existent game have all plagued the hunters. In the same breath they will tell you of silent forests, placid lakes, rushing streams, unsurpassed sunsets and sunrises, a warm campfire, companionship and a good dog barking nearby.

"Conversations may turn to the hunt itself, but it will be centered on two phases. The first is stalking the game . . . The second phase is the kill itself. But what is told is the distance and difficulty of the shot, and not a long description of how the animal died . . .

"Man's desire for competition and lust to match wits with a worthy adversary has produced today's true hunter, a person for whom the actual kill is anticlimactic."

It is difficult to believe many men would be willing to expend the energy and patience needed to overcome mosquitos, mountains, snow, rain and slippery rocks just to reach an anticlimax.

But if the kill is anticlimactic, as Mr. Kyle suggests, then shouldn't it be relatively easy to forego? Webster defines anticlimax as "an event or occurrence (as the last of a series) that is strikingly or ludicrously less important, significant or dignified than what has preceded it."

I would certainly agree that the kill is likely to be less dignified than anything that has preceded it. And since Mr. Kyle acknowledges that the kill also is less important than the stalking phase of the hunt and the companionship, why not just shoot the animal with a camera and let it go at that? Why kill the animal when it is of no importance to do so?

Mr. Kyle also writes: "Unless you are a vegetarian . . . you are as guilty of killing animal life by buying a steak as I am by shooting a deer. U.S. law finds a person arranging a murder or paying for one as guilty as the person pulling the trigger. The slaughterhouse may be more merciful than a rifle in a hunter's hands, but that rifle is more merciful than starvation or a wolf! Whether or not the life is snuffed out by starvation, mountain lion, hunter or slaughterhouse, the life is still gone."

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I have read this argument so many times lately that I have begun to believe the ability to recite it must be a prerequisite for membership in the National Rifle Assn. and kindred groups.

In any event, the argument is irrelevant to the case I have tried to make against certain forms of hunting. The point is that one may defend killing animals for food (as the wolf does), and one may defend killing them in self-defense, but killing them just for the hell of it is indefensible.

So if Mr. Kyle wanted to eat that deer he stalked through snow and rain, over mountains and slippery rocks, through swarms of mosquitos, I've got no argument with him. A man who likes deer meat has as much right to slaughter deer as a man who likes hamburger has to buy a portion of a slaughtered cow.

But how many men kill deer because of a real need for food, or a genuine affection for venison? Mr. Kyle says his experience indicates there are few hunters "who like to simply kill something". But I happen to know there were more than a few in the days when I used to go into the woods with a gun, and I have no reason to believe the number has diminished.

"If you want to keep hunting, find the deer you want to hunt and hunt them. If you can't find them, don't hunt. If you can't come to terms with yourself, you aren't a good hunter."

Only a few days ago a hunter told a friend of mine that he will shoot a certain species of game animal and leave it where it drops because he does not care for its meat. And a reader named J. E. Mixer writes from Joshua Tree: "I live in the desert and the 'sportsmen' come out here and shoot everything in sight . . . And, bless their little hearts, when nothing else shows up they shoot all the road signs."

Mr. Mixer has reason to put quotation marks around the word 'sportsmen.' For even if a hunter's motive for killing is not to get food, there is no justification for his describing himself as a sportsman. Where is the element of sport when one party to a contest is armed with a $300 rifle and the
other is defenseless, and possibly even unaware that a content is in progress?

Mr. Kyle says: "The money spent by the hunter for licenses supports fish and game departments . . . and this department does much more than put deer in the forest for the hunter. The money from licenses has been used in the past to protect more species of animals than are hunted. The hunter usually has a much greater respect for animals and therefore a greater love for them."

If he shoots them for pleasure he has certainly struck upon a unique method of expressing love.

International Wildlife Protection Association

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