



Editorial

Jack D. Gaskill, Editor

Mt. Graham Revisited

When I set out two months ago to write an editorial about the Mt. Graham red squirrel controversy, I decided to present the subject in a new light: rather than attempting to force my opinions (which, by the way, are correct) down the throats of readers, I would entice them to explore the uncharted waters of their own thinking regarding this emotionally charged topic. In other words, my intention was to provoke thought.

That editorial, which appeared in the July 1990 issue of *Optical Engineering*, brought a swift and hostile response from one reader who clearly did not consider my literary efforts to be thought provoking. He suggested that I take a moment to reread my July column about observatories and squirrels, and to "note the lack of conclusions, the back-handed but evanescent arguments, and the innocent but slanted observations." He also asked me to read again the part about the politicians, and posed the question: "Could they shirk their responsibility as well as you avoided facing the very issue your column was about?" He concluded by stating that "as an environmentalist, your comments about the inevitability of extinction disgust me. I wonder how many reams of acid-free paper were wasted on this piece." Whew! As you might imagine, such a negative response to my well-intentioned essay caught me quite by surprise.

A nearly identical article, which I also authored, appeared as a "Guest Opinion" in a local newspaper at about the same time ("Mount Graham: High Cost of Saving a Subspecies," *Tucson Citizen*, 7/19/90). It produced an equally swift—but this time complimentary—response from someone who had read it the way I intended it to be read. That reader was the Honorable Jim Kolbe, Member of Congress from Arizona's 5th Congressional District, who offered his congratulations "for authoring a fair and accurate piece on the Mount Graham telescope controversy." Congressman Kolbe then added that "it is certainly no surprise to read such a thoughtful article written by you. Regrettably, however, press coverage of well-reasoned and fair opinions has been far too rare." Finally, he suggested that my article "should be required reading for all people who hope to make an informed and fair decision on the Mount Graham astrophysical project." Needless to say, I liked the Congressman's response much better than the one mentioned above, and I was particularly impressed by his willingness to overlook the cheap shot I had taken at politicians in the last sentence of my article.

I also heard from individuals who expressed opinions that lie somewhere between the two already discussed. One such individual claimed he was surprised to learn that 99% of all the species that have ever existed on the earth are now extinct, and suggested (in jest, I think) that we can't afford to lose even one more specie—ever! Yet another recommended (also in jest, I presume) that the government permit development of the observatory on Mt. Graham, but that the squirrels be required to wear hardhats during construction. I guess all of this just demonstrates once again the tremendous disparity not only in the opinions people form about the substance of a controversy, but also in their reactions to the manner in which it is presented.

OPTICAL ENGINEERING EDITORIAL SCHEDULE

October & November 1990

Adaptive Optical Components

Mark A. Ealey
Litton-Itek Optical Systems
10 Maguire Road
Lexington, MA 02173-3199
617/276-2269

December 1990

Performance Evaluation of Signal and Image Processing Systems

Firooz Sadjadi and
Hatem Nasr
Honeywell Systems & Research
Center
3600 Technology Drive
MN 65-2300
Minneapolis, MN 55418
612/782-7543

January 1991

Lidar

John A. Reagan
University of Arizona
Dept. of Electrical and Computer
Engineering
Tucson, AZ 85721
602/621-6203

June 1991

Optical Fiber Reliability

Hakan H. Yuce
Bell Communications
Research
MRE 2L-165
445 South Street
Morristown, NJ 07962-1910
201/829-4945

July 1991

Visual Communications and Image Processing III

Kou-Hu Tzou
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Research
Room 3B-311
331 Newman Springs Road
Red Bank, NJ 07701-7020
201/758-2857

Hsueh-Ming Hang
AT&T Bell Laboratories
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Crawfords Corner Road
Holmdel, NJ 07733-1988
201/949-5296