

Peter Young: Animal Rights Hero or Misguided Yippie?

Shannon Carter

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I recently found out that a high school boyfriend of mine, **Peter Young**, is now a minor celebrity in some circles (none of which I run in). It seems he got himself in some trouble almost 8 years ago when he broke into **mink farms** in Iowa, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, liberating over 7000 mink from “slavery,” He was indicted in 1998 on four counts of extortion and two counts of animal enterprise terrorism (terrorism?), which carried a maximum sentence of 82 years. He then disappeared and was a federal fugitive for 7 1/2 years until March of this year when he was caught shoplifting CDs from a **Starbucks** (yes, this is where I started laughing as well). The extortion charges were dropped and he made a deal with prosecutors that will allow him to serve the relatively low sentence of two years. Now he has a website devoted to him, **www.supportpeter.com**, and apparently receives fan mail from fellow **animal rights activists**.

Peter was always a **Abbie Hoffman**-loving **yippie**, but had never shown even a hint of interest in animal rights activism. If I had just heard he got arrested stealing CDs from a Starbucks, I would have shrugged and thought he was still trying to rail in his own little way against the commercialization and corporatization of society. But the animal rights confused me: What was he thinking?

The minks that he released were sent out into the wild where they undoubtedly suffered from starvation and predators wholly unfamiliar to them. They probably wreaked havoc on the local habitat. For an animal rights activist, it seems he had little concern for the minks he released or how the animals that reside in the surrounding ecosystem were impacted. I assume he didn’t have a plan or facility for the proper care of the minks once he unshackled them from their incarceration, which seems the next logical step if one is truly concerned with the animal’s well-being. What was the goal here, if the interest of the animals was treated with such disregard? Even if some of the minks he released were able to survive, many animal lives were still sacrificed. For what? The Greater Good? Doesn’t forfeiting the lives of some animals to accomplish The Greater Good blur the moral lines when you are taking such an absolute stance?

My guess is that this is an act of insubordination that had much less to do with animal rights than it did with a desire to perform mischief and symbolic protest. Or perhaps I’m too cynical to believe so strongly in a single cause?

The Library of Unconventional Lives

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Association verified by Peter: peteryoung.me/peter-young-media-mentions

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