

VILLAGE VIEW

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The story made headlines for one day; then it faded away and was replaced by new ones. Ten to one you've forgotten all about it. It was the lead story on all the radio stations the day it broke. But that's all, brother. There's been no follow-up.

Worries about inflation and spiralling gold prices, reports of Russians in Cuba, pros and cons of Salt II, Ted Kennedy's challenge to Jimmy Carter, and the Pope's visit have crowded it out of our memories as well as out of the media. These, and many other less significant news items, have buried, practically erased from our consciousness, the earlier story.

We forget quickly. Furthermore, our capacity for concern is limited because there's more happening than we can handle comfortably. Our interest span is short because we're constantly bombarded with newer, fresher, ever more shocking, ever more intriguing stories, ever more worrisome bulletins.

But this story was salacious enough to catch the attention of even the most jaded of us; the very fact that it was sketchy in detail, but heavy on suggestion, made it memorable. You recall it- the guy in Woods Hole arrested for distributing pornography through the United States Mails.

From the media we learned that children- primarily young males- were sexually exploited to make films for those who will pay exorbitant prices to see and possess them.

Not many years before the same man had been arrested on similar charges in Marstons Mills. He'd beaten that rap and returned to his profitable and pernicious career. Let's hope he doesn't get away with it this time; but we may never hear of it if he does. If he's acquitted again, it probably won't make headlines.

Have you taken a close look at magazine covers displayed in your local news store, pharmacy, drug store, book shop? In many such places there's a rack of books the covers of which, in themselves, are innocuous-looking, but when displayed together (as they are) form a composite picture that can only be described as obscene.

Is that anything to get really excited about? Does it do any harm if some people want to look at "dirty pictures?" Why should you care what someone else finds entertaining?

Do we have any right to censor what's published?

No. I don't think we do. I see no reason to outlaw smut; those who want it have a right to it. It meets a need for them, poor things.

On the other hand, I see even less reason for those of us who don't need or want such material to be forced to view it. Unless you walk around blindfolded, it's hard to escape. Our rights to be free from distasteful displays are being eroded; that's the point.

Perhaps the most damaging aspect of open displays of pornographic material is its availability to and possible effect upon children. When a bookstore features pictures intended to stimulate lasciviousness, I'm offended. Would a child be? Why should he? Books, he's taught, are fine. He's encour-

aged to read, look at pictures, ask questions.

Few adults can honestly deny ever having been fascinated by lewdness, or what they may have interpreted as lewd. In adolescence, certain novels are well-thumbed, certain illustrations attract much attention. Does it do any harm? Probably not.

Adolescents cope with many problems, not the least of which is an ignorance, but a growing awareness of sexuality. Certain pictures and certain passages help clarify confusion many adolescents experience. The National Geographic magazines, for example, often contain pictures of people of other cultures with standards different from ours about nakedness. That doesn't make the National Geographic pornographic.

According to our laws, pornography is defined to be printed material which appeals "exclusively to prurient interests and is entirely without redeeming value." And what are prurient interests? The definition reads, "lascivious longings, lewd." The law proscribes distribution of pornography through the U.S. mails.

Raw porn should not be readily available to children. Let them get their kicks from the National Geographic. What they find there will satisfy their puerile interests (as opposed to prurient ones), and certainly is not without redeeming value.

Nor should anyone encounter obscene material while on an errand in a shop. Is that prudish? Just consider:

Leading porn peddlers are well-known to law enforcement agencies; some, even while incarcerated in federal penitentiaries, are believed to retain control of their pornography businesses through subordinates.

According to police reports, the hard porn industry is closely aligned with organized crime; mobsters are known to reap huge profit from extortion, pirating films, skimming cash, and pay-off agreements under which independent porn merchants pay financial tribute to operate.

It's big business; it's dirty business; and most of it is tax-free business. It's carried on at international levels. Raids on peep-show operations have revealed yields up to \$6,000 a day, in quarters! Full-length 35-mm. movies may cost up to \$150,000 to produce and \$500,000 to purchase.

The sex industry isn't something to be ignored when it involves that kind of money. Still, it's aimed primarily at adults; if adults want to spend money that way, it's their choice.

What about children? Not until child porn began appearing on this nation's bookshelves and peep-show screens did the public, and Congress, become outraged. Now, most kiddie-porn-pushers flourish underground, like the man the police nabbed in Woods Hole.

Apathy toward porn stems from a widespread attitude that it's a victimless crime; but the FBI points out, in addition to being a major source of financing for criminals, pornography may have a direct relationship to sex crimes. The vice squad in a large western city reports that 72 percent of people arrested for rape and child-related sexual offenses have some type of pornographic material in their possession.

Can anything be done? In a recent attempt to prohibit the public display of obscene materials in Massachusetts, a bill sponsored by Senator John Aylmer passed the state Senate, but was killed in the house. If you believe the quality of life could be improved by restricting the type of literature publicly displayed and available to children, you may wish to encourage your town meeting representative to support a by-law prohibiting open display of pornography in the Town of Barnstable. The question will come before Town Meeting next month.

CAIDOP, the Committee Against Indiscriminate Display of Pornography, will hold a rally at 7:30 p.m., October 19, 1979, at Barnstable High School Auditorium. Neil Gallagher, author of "How To Stop The Porno Plague", will speak.

If you have children, if you know children, if you love children, you may wish to lend your support to this dedicated group. They're attempting to help make the world a fit place for children to grow, learn and mature.

Give a moment's thought to the kids who were in those films made over in Woods Hole. What sort of adults are they likely to become?