The day I hung up the phone on the actor Tommy Lee Jones

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Tommy Lee Jones, the actor, is rarely interviewed, and it's easy to understand why. He has the personality of a microchip and a surprising lack of insight into his shortcomings. The Harvard grad was in a vile mood last night, having arrived at the Charles Hotel to appear tonight at the university's Carpenter Center for a benefit screening of ''Heaven and Earth,'' Oliver Stone's tale of a Vietnamese woman's struggle to survive hardship in her own country and in her adopted land, America. Tickets are $50. Proceeds benefit the Harvard Film Archive and Print Acquisition Fund. The interview was a reminder that not much can be accomplished in the absence of grace, but here are the highlights:

Did the role in "Heaven and Earth" alter your politics or your attitude about the war?

"No."

Long pause.

Well, was it an experience without any feeling at all?

He laughs uproariously.

No, I'm amazed you could go through something like that and come out of it without any feeling whatsoever.

"Did I say that?"

Yes. I asked if it had changed you?

"No, that's not what you said."

Then let me ask you, what impact did it have on you?

"That's a large question. . . . it's very difficult for anyone to go around the globe and be unchanged. It would be equally difficult to describe those changes over the telephone to someone you never met in a matter of minutes. Having said that, I found it to be . . . enlightening."

One might say that the receiver on the telephone exists for the convenience of ending an interview of that character, and so, the conversation was concluded, and I hung up the telephone.

(He called my editor to complain, and she came by my desk to tell me, and we both had a good laugh at what an ass he is.)