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THE READER'S DIGEST

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February 5, 1969

Dr. Eliot Porter
Route 1, Box 33
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Dr. Porter:

Bob Woodward and I very much enjoyed our meetings with you last week and greatly appreciated your spending so much time with us.

We arrived safely in New York about 1:30 AM Sunday morning with the transparencies and dye transfers under our arms - needless to say, we were not about to consign any of your pictures to TWA's baggage handlers.

Tomorrow we shall be making a preliminary selection for the Ogburn story, and with luck we may have semi-final layouts within four or five weeks. Probably we will do a good deal of experimenting with typography and picture layout and come up with two or three alternatives for each spread. If all proceeds as planned, we shall be able to return most of your photographs within three months.

It now appears quite certain that we shall use your photographs for the Ogburn story in the dummy presentation issue and put the polyphemus story and photos in a succeeding issue. However, should the quarterly fail to get off the ground, we shall almost certainly want to use the polyphemus sequence in one of the nature series books - probably the one on insects.

I found our discussions at lunch particularly stimulating, but I think the highlight of the trip for me was looking through your files Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. Until our visit, I had associated you primarily with those magnificent studies of water reflections, trees, rocks, lichens, leaves and flowers in Wildness and The Place No One Knew. They are powerful images and linger in one's memory. I knew, of course, that

you had photographed birds - I have seen them in your own books and in the National Geographic bird books - but I was astonished to discover how extensively you had photographed them. And I knew that you took occasional photographs of insects, but I had no idea that you had documented the entire life cycle of a species.

Now, after our two working sessions, I am even more enthusiastic about your doing a book for us than I was when we discussed the matter over lunch. Bob Woodward made an offer during the course of our conversations that I should like to repeat: Why not send us 15 or 20 representative bird photographs from your collection, give us your suggestions for format and design (specifying what you don't want to see) and let us produce a dummy? We fully recognize your moral commitment to Dutton and would not want you to feel obligated to us in any way. We would consider such a dummy merely something to talk about, a starting point in our thinking about a bird book.

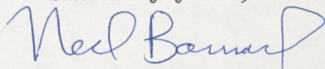
Another idea has also been put forward by Gorton Carruth: What about a general book on nature which might include a generous selection of your scenics, birds, and other animals? Such a book would probably not take one geographic area as its theme but would include the entire range of subjects that you have photographed in many different places over the years. A working title like "Eliot Porter's World of Nature" springs to my mind.

Yet another approach might be to illustrate an anthology of great nature writing with selections by such writers as Burroughs, Muir, Carson, Thoreau, Joseph Wood Krutch, etc. And I am not suggesting that we would want you merely to document the passages selected in strictly literal sense; we know that you wouldn't be interested in this kind of book. I am thinking of the striking juxtapositions of word and image that you achieved in Wildness. Couldn't this approach be applied to longer selections by a number of authors?

Well, you can see that I returned from New Mexico with a great deal of enthusiasm. But perhaps I have talked enough. Let us hear from you about all or any one of these suggestions, or whatever others that may have occurred to you in the meantime.

And, again, many thanks for your hospitality. We enjoyed our visit tremendously and hope that we shall find ourselves working together in the near future.

Sincerely yours,



Edward S. Barnard
Senior Editor

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