

My copy

CONFIDENTIAL

20 November 2001

Mr. Kevin Vogle ^{SP}
Valley House Gallery
Dallas, Texas

Dear Kevin:

I had been told to keep it a secret so I didn't mention it to you when we talked in the signing tent at the Book Festival Sunday afternoon, but first lady Laura Bush was scheduled to come to Scott's and my special booksigning party that evening at the Austin Museum of Art. She arrived on time with her mother and a small entourage and a legion of secret service men and bomb sniffing canines. They stayed for the entire book signing, an hour and a half. It was a special honor for Scott and me.

Earlier in the afternoon I had skimmed through your father's new book and had read his stinging commentary on Scott and Scott's summary dismissal from Valley House. I don't know what distressed me more - his public disclosure of a private and confidential matter - or that much of what he wrote was simply not accurate. I know that with any disagreement of the kind that existed between Donald and my brother there are probably three versions. Donald's version, Scott's version, and the truth. So much time has passed. Since I was witness to the events described in Donald's book, maybe there is a fourth version of the story as well.

When I returned from Austin I checked Scott's records from that period. I believed that Donald's assertion that "I paid for the catalogue, invitations, mailing; I framed your pictures without charge; I maintain the operating cost, the help, utilities, insurance ", was not true. Our records show a more complicated relationship. Sometimes Valley House appears to have paid for frames (or the frame price was added to the client's bill) and sometimes Scott paid framing costs. Toward the end of their association Scott appears to have been charged more often. As for the 1968 show catalogue, they shared expenses. I remember that Scott had been told beforehand that Valley House was paying for the catalogue. The surprise billing of Scott for catalogue costs was one of the reasons for his discontent. He was also upset because he did not share in any catalogue revenues. Donald declared (probably correctly) that catalogues rarely paid for themselves but no accounting appears to have been made.

Neither Scott nor I wish to dredge up the unpleasantness of the past. We have many fond memories of Donald and Valley House Gallery. Nobody has ever handled the display of Scott's work with more taste. When I heard that you were taking over the gallery several years ago I was delighted. I knew that the high standards set by Valley House would continue to the benefit of the whole region. And having Cheryl there would make a wonderful addition.

One of the fun things about writing your own memoirs is

that you get to have history your own way. But sometimes it is best to let the dust settle enough to bury past controversies. Scott and I do not hold grudges. It's a waste of time. We are now working on our next book for the University of Texas Press which will profile us and all our art-related interests, our still lifes, landscapes, and portraits, our Birds, our costume paintings, our Aztec project and finally our designs for the Bass Performance Hall. That book would certainly present us with a golden opportunity to present our version of Donald's account, but we have no plans to do that. We will indeed write something about Valley House because of the importance it played in Scott's and my life. There are simply too many good things about the gallery to write about. I do hope that our silence about Donald's comments does not imply that we accept them as true. But, quite frankly, Scott and I don't think that anybody would care anyway.

However one might interpret the facts, the simple truth is that long before Scott departed Valley House Donald had lost interest in Scott's work. The strong personalities of both men just did not mesh well. Scott always thought, and I think rightly so, that Donald never really liked him, that he thought Scott at his young age did not deserve the success that Valley House had created for him, nor was he grateful.

Scott, on the other hand, disliked the term "stable of artists" and all that the word "stable" seemed to imply. Because he had no experience with art dealers prior to coming to Valley House, he made mistakes. He also was disturbed by Donald's occasional condescending attitude toward him and complaints from Fort Worth patrons who came to buy pictures and happened to catch Donald on a bad day. Many refused ever to buy a picture of Scott's from Valley House.

When we discovered his paintings gathering dust in Valley House storage, a lot of dust, it was obvious that they had not been brought out and shown for a very long time. Scott saw the proverbial handwriting on the wall. When I came to Dallas to retrieve Scott's paintings for an exhibition and sale in Fort Worth, Donald appeared not to care in the least. I remember well that as I signed the receipt for the paintings and walked out the door Donald remarked sarcastically that we would all see whether Fort Worth would do as well by Scott as had Dallas and Valley House.

It must have surprised him to find out that Scott's and my show here opened to huge crowds and sold out in thirty minutes - and was the most successful Gentling show ever. If Scott had been "dismissed" as Donald claimed in his narrative, he would have been free to keep the \$10,000 he sent to Valley House, since his contract with the gallery would no longer have been in effect. I wonder how many of Valley House's stable had ever departed with such a gesture?

With his relationship with Valley House obviously moribund, Scott simply ran off the plantation and never looked back. Donald lost perhaps his most remunerative living artist and had to face embarrassing queries about Scott's departure. Neither Scott nor I have ever publically discussed the details of his leaving

your gallery. When asked, Scott merely said that he wanted to be on his own - which was the truth. And that he and Donald could no longer get along. It was never a problem, since few people asked or cared.

That Donald published what he did seems to reveal that he probably had to do a lot more explaining than Scott did and that he retains a substantial ill will after all these years. It is hard not to believe that he would be pleased if his remarks damaged Scott's reputation, since he must know in his heart and from the facts that what he wrote is not true. Be that as it may, Scott feels no ill will toward Donald or to Valley House. Rather just the opposite.

Since you were not present at the events described and have heard only Donald's side of the story, and Cheryl never knew Scott and was not at Valley House at the time, my brother and I have not been much disturbed by the occasional rumors that you both have described Scott and me as "difficult" to work with. I don't think that you meant any malice, and Scott and I would like to believe that we all have moved on.

As I hope you know, the University of Texas Press has just published a trade edition of our OF BIRDS AND TEXAS and two more books with the UT Press are in the works. Scott has just finished his portrait of George Bush as Governor for the Capital Dome in Austin. He has also been commissioned to paint Bush's presidential portrait for the White House and Mrs. Bush's White House portrait as well. Also, the first lady has commissioned two large bird paintings for the family quarters of the White House.

All of this brings me back to the first Lady and your Aunt Clara book. In spite of Donald's remarks which were still ringing in my ears, I spoke to Mrs. Bush again on Sunday night about Aunt Clara and reminded her of our conversation about her paintings and the book which we talked about on our visit to their Crawford ranch last August. She did remember and was delighted when I told her that I had discussed it with you and that a copy was available. If you have two copies, I would love to have one since I loaned my last one away years ago. It is not easy to mail things to the first lady these days, but I have a special access and will get the book to her.

In the meantime, please accept my best wishes for a happy holiday season for the entire Valley House family including Donald. I wish his feelings were different, but I guess it's too late to change. At his stage of life he's probably earned the right to have history his own way, but as John James Audubon so rightly put it, "Les temps decouvrir la verite."

Sincerely,

- 2 Books to Publishing - Peter Gift
3 Books to Mr. Peter Guttery, Matthew, Anne Gift
1 Book to Peggy Church Gift
1 Book to Kevin Vogel Gift
1 Book to Jerry Peters