

STUART W. GENTLING

29 February 1984

Jack Maguire
Executive Director
The Institute of Texan Cultures
801 South Bowie Street, P.O. Box 1226
San Antonio, Texas 78294

Dear Jack,

Thankyou for your letter of January 11th and the information about the Sesquicentennial Commission. I have to say I too am sorry about the way things turned out between us. I am still not sure about what went wrong or, indeed, how it went wrong. I thought that I had sufficiently demonstrated a genuine interest in our having an exhibition at the Institute both during our first meeting in Austin and by personally coming to San Antonio to meet you and to tour the Institute last March. At both meetings I had thought that we had sealed our mutual agreement with a handshake; at least that is what I assumed as did the people who were with me on these occasions.

A few weeks after I returned home from that meeting in San Antonio I took several days to organize my thoughts in order to submit a plan to you about how to handle the logistics for an Institute exhibition and subsequent tour. In a six page letter I outlined every aspect of such a show, dealing with it on an item by item basis, discussing every topic that I could think of from insurance to security to a more inexpensive shipping to fund-raising. In that letter I offered to set aside a substantial number of books for the Institute to sell and from the sales of which the Institute could derive a sizable percentage. I offered this in spite of the fact all of the books would have sold out before you would have had our show unless I reserved them for the Institute. My letter was very detailed and extremely specific. It was by no means a dictatorial letter, and all of my ideas were offered only as suggestions, as possibilities. They were certainly not demands. But when I submitted a copy of the letter to Bennett Spelce, he advised me not to send it. He thought that it was unwise, perhaps even insulting, because

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I had been so specific that I seemed to be doing your planning for you. He advised me to sit back and wait for you to write to me offering your ideas.

I also submitted a copy of the letter to my attorneys, Denny Ingram and Marilyn Maxwell, who also agreed with Bennett that I should wait for you to make the first substantive move. With the wisdom that I all too often gain from hindsight I now realize that it was a mistake to have heeded their advice. It appears that you interpreted my silence as a sign of a lack of enthusiasm or interest, and nothing could have been farther from the truth. The fault is not that of my attorneys or advisors, well meaning as they are; it is entirely mine. I am the only person in charge of this book project, not Scott or John Graves or my attorneys and other advisors. If I have learned anything from my experience in dealing with the Institute, it is the knowledge that, while I will always listen closely to advice, from now on I shall for good or ill make my own decisions and follow my own instincts. More frequent contact with you might have prevented the course which events have taken if in fact we ever really had a chance to exhibit at the Institute.

When our silence was finally broken by Marilyn's letter to you, it was done at my request. It had been her opinion that for the most part all dealings with the Institute should be handled by the attorneys. Accepting this advice was also my mistake. Marilyn only wrote the letter after I told her that I was going to write you if she did not. When we finally received your return letter informing us of your projected scheduling of the history of Aviation in Texas exhibition, I have to be candid by saying that I not only felt disappointed but more than a little abandoned. The feelings of having been discarded for another show are gone now, but the disappointment still lingers on. Since Scott and I are so very busy, we really are forced to look ahead and not to dwell on the disappointments of the past. One thing is for certain; my past experiences in meeting and getting to know you have, indeed, been a great pleasure, and I hope that our friendship can continue in the coming years. I simply refuse to believe that you were not genuinely interested in our bird book project. I just can not help but feel that you really

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do wish us the very best.

I would very much like to keep you informed about the progress of the bird book and any subsequent developments which might be of interest to you. Everything seems to be falling into place. We have to date sold almost one-half of the books, and we haven't even started our advertising or promotional campaign yet. By the way, on the advice of several dealers in fine books, I have lowered the edition size from 750 copies to 500 copies. It seems that an edition size of 500 is about the top limit for the book to have a strong appeal to rare book collectors. It will considerably lessen our logistical problems, and because the price will rise incrementally as fewer and fewer books remain available for sale, we should not lose much in the way of income. I might add here that the box containing the prints and text will not be made of wood (which I have been told by archivists and conservators might eventually harm the paper with its acids) but of acid-free book board covered with linen. I have just received the prototype, and it is extremely handsome and strong - and HUGE! The book - box and all - will weigh more than 40 pounds!

To date I have contacted three museums, all of which wish to do the show. I will be contacting about three or four more in the months ahead and then try to untangle the complexities of coordinating everyone's schedules. As far as the Institute is concerned, 1987 seems so far down the road that it is difficult to see where we will be by that time. Scott and I will always be interested in having an exhibition of some kind at the Institute. It has long been a problem with us that our work is absorbed into private collections so soon after it is completed that the public rarely has a chance to see it. If it were not for the interest of museums and of various publications, the bird book also would follow the same road to relative obscurity, and the general public would never get a chance to know about it. Because all indications point to the fact that our book will sell out shortly after it is published, if not before, Scott and I are purposely reserving a number of books to wholesale (at some loss to us) to a very few select deal-

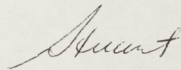
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ers in the United States and Europe so that people outside the State of Texas will have a chance to view and to own the work.

Jack, if you are in any way interested in doing something in 1987, Scott and I would likewise be interested. One way or another our lives should be a little less complicated by then. Our interest in doing something with the Institute has always been genuine, and it remains so. We will, however, wait for you to make us an offer and to suggest a possible schedule. Until then I wish to say again that whether or not Scott and I ever exhibit at the Institute my contact with you has been a fine experience, and I hope that our paths will cross many times in the future. As soon as all of the bird paintings are finished I will send you a complete collection of slides for your files. So let us keep in touch!

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stuart", written in dark ink.

Stuart W. Gentling