

16 Aug. 1989

Dear Alice -

Thank you for your wonderful letter of August 9th. Scott and I have just returned from a fact gathering trip to Mexico City and Taxaca with a book on the Aztecs in mind.

Actually we took a small group of Princeton students with us, and we probably told them more about Aztec culture than they will ever want to hear again. They learned quickly and asked wonderful questions.

Yesterday your books arrived, and I was very touched by your inscriptions. Our whole experience with our "discovery" of the Audubon Seachles and the way it was tied in to our own project dedicated to Audubon is almost eerie, and then to have a letter from you arrive out of the blue a few weeks ago and then the letter from Mrs. Ford with her "discovery" — all of this would make a story which might sound as though it had happened in the "twilight zone".

This past Monday I lectured to about 400 artist-members of the Society of Medical Illustrators at their Gale Sponsored Convention in Dallas. I told the whole story about the Audubon Seachles

and the part the painting played in the production of our own book. You could literally hear the proverbial pen drop. Many people come up to me after my talk to not only ask questions but to suggest that I write the story for the record.

Last November I delivered a talk to the members of the North American Print Conference where in 1978 William Reese spoke about the Audubon - Bonaparte relationship as it explained the "Bonaparte" Audubon plates (Lizards) which the Amor Corti Museum here in Fort Worth had just purchased. Coincidentally Reese's talk was delivered here in Fort Worth, not two blocks from where our Balen Street Gallery stands - and was standing at that time. His paper was published in hard cover with the Conference's other papers, and I will try and send a copy of it to you. By the way - when I received Chris Janis Catalogue and called him that December Saturday afternoon and made the Grackle purchase - Bill Reese called them about the painting the first thing on the following Monday. I was just a small step ahead of him. Even though the Print Shop had had the Grackles in their possession for about six months, they apparently

had found no buyers before they published their Catalogue-Calendar. I am also sending you copies of their correspondence and their translation of Bonaparte's letter which you quote in your 1988 Biography.

It does give me a strange feeling to see the Grackles reproduced in your book and to know about the role that painting played in our lives and the part we played in bringing it to the public's notice. As you probably have already read, Scott and I had fairly well researched the painting using reference books in our own library. We were convinced that, barring the unlikely possibility that the little picture was a faked copy which we would discover on receiving the painting in the mail, we did indeed have the original Grackles - the ^{very} Audubon painting that I had written about six months earlier when I composed the Introduction to our OF BIRDS AND TEXAS!!!

I should add that Christopher Jane told me that the painting was owned by a woman (then in her early 90's) who lived in Wilmington Delaware, ^{and} that she needed the money rather urgently and that she came from a prominent

family. He also told me that this woman told him that she remembered the picture framed and on the wall of her Wilmington ~~home~~ family home all her life.

The U.P.S. people are at the door, so I shall say Adieu for the time being. Scott and I hope that you enjoy our book. I would certainly like to hear what you think about it. I am also sending you a 3x5 (unconnected) galley sheet for the text of our book. It will be much easier to read, and you will not have to stand over the book to do so.

I may have told you that we do plan to publish a smaller volume of OF BIRDS AND TEXAS which will contain repros. of some of our color studies, pencil studies, etc. assembled and bound in a different format. This time I would like a major publisher to do it, if I can interest the right kind of people to do the work.

Until I hear from you, Mr. Ford, I shall remain your most obed. humble servant

P.S. you are indeed correct when Great Scott says you say there is no free lunch. I think your 40+ years of labor in behalf of Audubon's memory has been more than payment for our book. SWG