

STUART W. GENTLING

25 February 1983

Dear Pete,

When we last talked a few weeks ago you asked me if there was any way that you might help Scott and me with our project of remodeling the gallery. At that time I didn't think that there was any need as Tom Turner, President of the bank where I had applied for my loan had personally told me that there would be no problem. I had applied for a loan of \$17,000. However, after I had talked to you and all of the processing of my loan application had been ^{completed}, the Bank granted me only \$12,000. Tom Turner called me personally and apologized. He had wanted to grant it all. He really believes in our gallery concept as well as the Bird Book project, but it seems that there is a strict government regulation that limits the amount the Bank can loan on a second lien when a certain amount is still owed on the first mortgage.

This really caught me off guard, because on Turner's personal assurance that I had the loan, I had contracted with the builders to proceed with the building. To get an early start on the project they went ahead and completely gutted the Gallery building in preparation for the remodeling. Of course I have received the \$12,000, and the remodeling has been proceeding beautifully. Thank God, Pete, that I really did my homework in preparing for the project. I searched out bids from three sources, and I checked each bidder out thoroughly in terms of reputation, in terms of previous actual work, and I called in a disinterested party to double check the amount of each bid.

The result has been the hiring of two very fine men. The work has been progressing beautifully. They told me that they could straighten up the huge unsightly warp in one of the exterior walls, and they did it in spite of my doubts. They completely reconstructed the foundations and leveled all the floors to a 1/4" tolerance. All of this I thought was impossible. They have ripped out all of the sheet rock revealing a building much older than we thought. Instead of a 1945 structure, apparently we had a building that was built between 1890 and 1910. The New Gallery was a pretty old gallery after all.

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Well, the structure had very few studs supporting the walls, and those studs were so odd a size, 11/2" X 2". Kim Humel, my carpenter and a very good craftsman told me quite seriously that before he re-studded the building, he hoped that there would be no high winds, because the building had been mainly supported by the sheet rock and the inner walls, some of which we had already knocked out. He and his co-worker labored for two days from 8:00 o'clock in the morning until 1:00 o'clock the next morning to re-stud the old structure. The result is that the building is literally being totally re-built from the inside out. Kim and his assistant, Faron Farmer, are really a Godsend. They are efficient, on time, and every evening when they leave the building it is left completely clean in preparation for the next day's work. Both men are in their late twenties⁴⁹, an age which in carpenters, based on my own past experience, has seldom inspired confidence.

Kim told me quite frankly that he had known that Scott and I and our Gallery were very well respected and that he knew we enjoyed as customers the best clientele. Kim told me quite frankly again that this remodeled gallery building he wants to serve as his calling card to break into the lucrative West Side building business. He is smart and he is ambitious. He told me that his low bid would make him very little profit. He appears to be one of those people who looks at the present job as a step to the future. By the way, he has superb taste and has made many suggestions that have altered my original concept for the better. He told me that when the gallery is finished in mid or late March, Scott and I will simply have a new building, and I now believe him. I just hope everything works out well. I am still somewhat gun shy about dealing with carpenters.

If you can help me, Pete, I have an offer to make to you that should be of some interest - and profit. First, let me tell you some exciting news. Two weeks ago Marilyn Maxwell, who is my attorney, and I went to Austin to confer with Denny Ingram, another of our attorneys and a man named Bennett Spelce, an advertising man interested in our book project.

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Ingram represents our Bird Book interests in Austin where much of the printing will be done, and Spelce is a public relations man who has a keen knowledge of the art business.

I had needed for some time to go to Austin to review several future contracts which are to be used for the purpose of insuring performance by the many people associated with this highly complicated project. But this trip ~~trip~~ had really been on an emergency basis, for both Denny and Bennett called and begged us to be in Austin by noon of the tenth. If we hurried, we just might have the opportunity to meet a man named Jack Maguire. They were somewhat mysterious in their *appeal* and would only tell me that Maguire was Director of the Institute of Texas Cultures. This Institute was in San Antonio, but Maguire would be in Austin to attend an emergency session of the Board of Regents of the University of Texas.

Frankly, I had never of the man or the Institute, but since Denny and Bennett were so sincere and adamant in their urging, Marilyn and I found ourselves in Austin the next day. Marilyn who is quite wealthy, owns a suite at the Sheraton Hotel there in Austin, and both Denny and Bennett were there to greet us when we arrived. They immediately briefed me on Jack Maguire and the Institute. It seems that he is the Director of a huge, elegant and modern educational and display facility in the Hemisfair Park area in San Antonio. The Institute of Texas cultures is an extension of the University of Texas which makes it quite wealthy, with facilities for the display and promotion through touring shows of important Texas Cultural projects. The Institute, in fact, has built and operates numerous museum facilities throughout Texas making its publishing and promotional machinery unrivaled. For their various cultural displays they have a massive curatorial staff and 55,000 square feet of display space. About fifty thousand people a month visit to view the displays at the Institute.

I was quite excited at hearing all of this, but then Bennett Spelce added a kind of a caveat. The Institute, he said, rarely presented art displays. They were very picky about the art they exhibited, but every artist whose work they chose had subsequently become famous. While I was being told all of this there were several telephone calls in Marilyn's bedroom. I might mention that I had been told to bring as many bird paintings as possible, and I had brought about

fifteen. Finally, after the last phone call, Denny came into the room with an odd look on his face. It seemed that Maguire could not get away from his Beard meeting and that he would be leaving for San Antonio as soon as the meeting was over because he was needed there for some emergency. Maguire asked Denny to ask me if I could bring the paintings over to the University and he would take a quick look at them in the hallway during one of their brief recesses. I thought about it for a minute and decided against doing it. I was simply not going to show our pictures in some hallway for a few minutes during some brief recess. Several of the paintings were in frames and difficult to carry, but it was the whole idea that I didn't like. It was my thinking that, if he was genuinely interested in our work, then I could arrange a proper meeting with him in San Antonio at a future time.

Denny returned to Marilyn's room to convey my answer. Both he and Bennett and Marilyn were disappointed but thoroughly understood my reasons. A few minutes later Denny and Marilyn returned to the livingroom very excited. Jack Maguire had decided to leave the meeting and come over to see the pictures. I have no idea what Denny must have told Maguire, but I should add here that both Denny and Bennett are genuinely in love with the paintings and the project, both personally and professionally. They have not charged me one cent for their services, will, of course, eventually when the project gets underway. Each has asked for a book as part of ^{our} ^{his} payment. They never would have done this had they not been so impressed by the pictures and the project.

Pete, you never saw three more nervous people than Marilyn, Denny, and Bennett when the Bell Captain, whom Marilyn had appointed for the purpose, phoned and said that Jack Maguire and his assistant were in the building. I must admit that when they arrived and ^{we} were introduced, I was very impressed. The man did reflect a kind of Factor X. He possessed a quiet and natural aura of importance which rather reminded me of Howard K. Smith. He pulled out his pipe and took his seat on the couch. One by one I began to pull out the paintings which I had previously stacked out of sight. I had placed ^d them in a certain order to maximize their impact. I explained to Jack that John Graves was to write an

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extensive text (12,000 words), that the paintings were to be printed in facsimile size, that there were to be 40 bird paintings and 5 pure landscapes, that every region of Texas was to be depicted, that all of this material was to be presented in a fine hardwood box. He would interrupt me every now and then, always asking pertinent questions and puffing on his pipe. I could see that both he and his assistant were very impressed. I could also see my three companions beaming at my presentation and our guests' reaction. I know the subject so well that I have long had my presentation down pat. I answered all of his questions with ease.

When the presentation was over, Maguire was silent for a moment. He took a long puff on his pipe then said that the Institute's exhibition schedual was booked solid for two years, but with some juggling he could get us a show early in 1984. I answered that it was too soon, that the book would be going to press at that time. I asked about 1985. He took another long puff on his pipe then said that he was a member of the commission to consider projects for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of Texas. The celebration would be in 1986. He said that it would be a huge affair and that many projects had already been submitted to the commission. He went on to say that none so stimulated or excited him like this Bird Book project. He began to really open up. He told me that he thought the paintings were marvelous, that John Graves just happened to be his favorite and, he thought, the best Texas author. He said that the sheer physical size of the book and the fact that it covered every region of Texas made it perfect for the main Sesquicentennial art project. It involved great painting (his words), great writing, great size (he said that he knew of no other Texas publication of this size), and it covered one of the major aspects of Texas Fauna and ecology with many of the birds in the book being exclusively those of Texas.

He then made me an offer. If Scott and I would work with him with the Sesquicentennial in mind, his institute would promote the project. They would organize an exhibition that would open in October of 1985 and remain at the Institute until early 1986 when he and his staff would send the exhibition throughout the state to travel for the whole Sesquicentennial year. He said that he would

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like to publish a book about our book and that he would see to it that the State Seal of Texas was affixed to the title page of every volume, making it the commemorative volume of the Sesquicentennial. The Institute would organize all TV and press coverage and that on the opening night every bigwig in Texas would be there including the Governor and other potentates like John Connally and Lady Bird Johnson. He said that the Institute would handle the sales of the book, if I wished, and would charge no commission, since they were a wealthy State Institution. He said, of course, that with its uniqueness and its quality and with the fact that it would be the main state art project to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Texas Revolution and thus of important historical significance — that all the books would sell immediately. I had already told him that the books were to be issued at the pre-publication price of \$2,500. He also was gracious in mentioning that we really did not need the Institute to sell the Book. He did add, however, that it would probably take more time, cost more to advertise and create a great deal of extra work, if I did it myself.

Well, Pete, what do you think about that? Though I could not believe my ears, and though the others around me appeared stunned at the offer unexpected as it was, I still remained calm. I told him that I was interested but that I had to discuss everything with Scott. I asked him if I could meet with him sometime in early March in San Antonio to discuss it. He said he would be delighted to meet with me on the 5th or the 6th and give me a grand tour of the facilities of the Institute.

Pete, I think that this project may well make both Scott and me very rich and well known, especially in Texas. An additional feature of Maguire's interest is that he wants to include in the exhibition a great many of our other paintings. And so, if we do become well known, it will not be only as bird painters. Of course you know what this will do to our painting prices, and because Scott and I have sacrificed so much in income to be able to own all of the original bird paintings (from which we have been able to derive no immediate income) we will have a collection that should be extremely valuable.

I hope that you have enjoyed this rather lengthy story. It is still hard for me to believe that it is all true. I have taken the time to tell you about this, because it will help to explain the background behind the offer that Scott

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and I are about to make.

Pete, we need some immediate money. In our recent mutual enthusiasm over your near purchase of the Catesby books for investment purposes, I think that both of us overlooked a much, much better investment, one that would benefit the both of us. I have already pre-subscribed about \$300,000.00 worth of the bird books, but I dare not collect on any of these pre-subscriptions until early in 1984. However I could do so among members of my own family as long those involved are properly secured against the possibility that the book would not be printed, remote as that might be at this stage. This could be done by pledging the already completed bird paintings, or in the event of our sudden death, a life insurance policy would suffice.

Scott and I are willing to offer you, Pete as many as 10 author's copies of the Bird Book. An Author's copy is far more valuable than the numbered ones. There are going to be only twenty-five author's copies. Twelve volumes are already spoken for, not as sold books but as gifts to people intimately associated with the project without whose help the Bird Book would never be done. Scott and I are among that number, each retaining one for ourselves. These books will be labeled Author's Copy; it will be signed, and significantly each will contain an original bird study in watercolor bearing the number of the book and also containing the words, Author's Copy.

The remaining author's copies will offered for sale at a price of \$5,000 at publication. I can assure you that they will all sell immediately. Because Scott and I need money now in order to allow us to complete the gallery for the birds and our other works, and also to give us the time to finish the the remaining bird paintings as soon as possible, we would sell you as many as 10 Author's Copies for \$2,000 apiece. We are willing to take a loss on these books, if such a loss would help us to finish the gallery and the birds. Besides our accountant has said that our problem will be the making of too much money, all at once. Any time after the publication of the Book you should wish to divest yourself of them, I will act as your agent since I will know the best customers, and I will charge you no commission. We will even store and insure them for you. You would be wise to hold them for as long as possible, for I

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now believe that the price of these Author's Copies will go quite high. You should keep in mind that each book contains 45 prints with each print to be valued at not less than \$100, our current going price. Just the price of the prints alone is bound to rise, since there will only be 250 individual prints for sale for each painting in the book. Also remember that any original bird painting will be of considerable value after the Institute show and the state-wide exhibition.

I hope that you will consider our offer, Pete. It's a good one. This book is going to be famous, and there is no doubt in my mind that we have a tiger by the tail. You would also be the major holder of Author's Copies. You might even consider buying some of the numbered books. I will give you the same \$2,000 offer as on the Author's Copies. However, you would not be allowed to purchase more than 10 volumes, all of which would be consecutively numbered. You should also remember that the \$2,500 price of these numbered books is ridiculously low and will rise very quickly. The price will rise incrementally for each 100 copies, and Scott and I plan to hold back 50 to 100 copies for ourselves for speculation.

Well, let me know what you think, Pete. I am confident — everybody is confident — of the project. Frankly, I think that it would be a shame if those who are closest to Scott and me should be the last to take advantage of this project and to profit by it. If you could see your way to help us now, it will insure that the work will be finished more quickly and the publication not delayed.

*Love -
Stuart*

PS Give our love to the family et al

PS I have included plans of the gallery both before construction and the way it should look after the remodeling is finished.