

March 19, 1986

Dear Harry,

I have been so busy since I last saw you at the bank that I have not had a moment to sit down to write you and express my thanks. Too often in my thankyou letters to others I have said that words can not express my gratitude, but in this case I could speak volumes.

As you know, for the last nine years Scott and I have worked very hard and sometimes against incredible odds to bring this monumental book to the public. Time and again we were told by experts that a publication of this magnitude was impossible for people of our financial means to produce, and that there were many good reasons why a book of this caliber had never been published in the history of Texas letters. Until recent weeks I had taken great pride in the fact that Scott and I had, indeed, been able to finance this book by ourselves. With a project as complicated as this one which has demanded literally hundreds of decisions, I am still amazed that, with my limited experience in the publishing field, I have made as many correct decisions as I have. By choosing David, William Holman and David's Wind River Press at Austin to do the design and printing of the book, I based my decision on the universal recommendations of many fine book dealers, librarians, authors and other printers throughout the state. It is a fact that in Texas they are considered to be the very best in their field. But even as they were highly recommended, I was nevertheless warned that they were very secretive and independent people and could at times be difficult to work with. I was counceled that, if I were patient with David and his father, William, and if I would put up with their eccentric and exasperating behavior, they would produce a book that would truly be a work of the printer's art.

To produce a great book has always been Scott's and my principle aim. We wanted to create a book that would rival the great ornithological publications of the nineteenth century. We could have settled for a good large commercial printing company to do the color work, and we could have chosen to have the text printed by the standard industrial techniques currently employed by other publishers instead of having the type all set laboriously by hand and each sheet printed separately by custom letterpress — a process which is rarely employed on books of this size anywhere in the world, and

never before in Texas! The problem presented by the Holmans was not whether they would produce a book of exceptional elegance and quality but whether these small, custom-printers could produce the book at all. When I first approached David Holman about our project he did not at that time have a color press and a letterpress big enough to print the book's large, Imperial Folio size pages which would measure 22 by 28 inches. He assured me that, if I chose him to publish the work, he could acquire the necessary presses and have them working within 30 to 45 days after their delivery. My attorney, Denny Ingram of Austin, a man with considerable knowledge of the printing business, expressed skepticism. Scott was also skeptical whether or not such presses could be acquired and put in working order in such a short period of time. I now realize that David himself must have had second thoughts about his ability to do this in so short a time, for after we had gotten our financing through the Camp Bowie National Bank in early January of 1985 and Scott and I were ready to sign the printing contract with David, he backed away from his offer. It took a month to re-write a contract more congenial to him, a contract which removed all deadlines and penalties for failure to meet a publication deadline. I was advised by my attorneys and by Scott that I was taking a considerable gamble and that I would have no control over the Holmans if they decided to take their time with the printing, thus causing us delays in meeting our delivery schedule. By this time I had already given Holman a \$9,000 deposit so that he could acquire a good used color-printing press which had just come on the market. The press had already arrived at his studio, and he was engaged in getting it ready for the job. I therefore felt that the risk was worth taking, and I persuaded Scott and the others to agree to the contract. Artistically speaking, my decision was a sound one, for their work, as you have already seen, has been superb. However, as a tactical business decision, my choice of the Holmans and my reliance on their verbal promise to have the presses ready and working in 30 to 45 days of their arrival at David's studio, has to be the worst single mistake that I have made so far in this entire enterprise. It took from January 10th to July 15th -- nearly seven months -- for me to receive the first four color prints! It was the Holmans' delays in getting their presses into working order which created such a drain on our financial resources. Though no work was being done on the printing, it was still costing me about \$12,500 a month to pay our interest costs, gallery and warehouse upkeep, photographic work, business printing costs, lawyers' expenses,

secretarial services, accountant's fees, Ralph Carr's salary and Scott's and my living expenses. During this time I was not able to paint, because of the daily demands of promoting the book and finishing the text, while Scott was busily engaged doing some of the writing and finishing the last of the bird pictures.

Because of these expenses which continued inspite of delays, our cash reserves which were to be used for the completion of the book were eventually exhausted. A great many of our subscribers had made only down payments for their books with the intent to pay the remaining balance when their books were ready for delivery. Other subscribers had availed themselves of the option of placing their payments in our special escrow account until their books are delivered, and still others, aware of our past delays, have told us to place their names on our list of subscribers, promising to sign purchase contracts and pay when the book is finally published. Quite a few people are in this latter category.

So far we have not lost a single subscriber, and I feel confident that all the work on the book will be completed by the middle of July which is the completion date that William Holman promised to Barkley Ryall. The Holmans must finish our book by then so that they can turn their attention to another major project, a book on historic Texas lithographs which has to be finished by Autumn. Legally, their presses can not be used for any other projects while they are working on our book.

I have been told by those who are knowledgeable about the publishing trade that the delays which we have experienced are not at all unusual even if the project concerns a small book. However, as I see it, most of our subscribers are not people who are knowledgeable about the complexities of the fine art book publishing business, and I simply will not be able to rest easy until I have this magnificent book safely in their hands. To achieve that goal would have been infinitely more complicated and expensive if you, Harry, had not stepped in to break the log jam and inertia which had plagued our project for the last few months. Though Scott and I have always known that we could come to you if we had a problem too big for us to work out by ourselves, it was nevertheless one of the most difficult things that I have ever had to do. It was my pride, of course, which prevented me from coming to you sooner when it was evident that I could not get the book back on schedule by myself.

I have worked so hard to put this project on a sound financial footing and to avoid the many pitfalls that such a publishing enterprize is subject to,

that it was hard for me to admit that I had come upon a problem that I could not overcome by myself. Your timely intervention assures that the book will be completed and delivered with all the quality that Scott and I originally aimed for. That the book will be a financially rewarding success is already guaranteed by the way in which it has been received by the public just in the Fort Worth area. When collectors in Dallas and from around the state see the project and the paintings on display at the Dallas Museum of Natural History at Fair Park where it will be shown from September 19th to November 16th during the Sesquicentennial State Fair, there is the distinct possibility that all the remaining books will sell out. It should also be kept in mind that more than \$2,000,000 worth of prints will be for sale to people who can not afford the entire book. The project is a very economically sound one. The people at the Camp Bowie Bank have known this all along or they would not have lent us the money in the first place, nor would they have continued to help us with the additional financing needed to complete the book.

Of course you, Harry, have played a critical role in the production of what I personally believe will be one of the most important books of its kind produced in America in this century. As you know, we have dedicated the book to two very important people in our lives — to John James Audubon whom we never knew, but whose work has had a profound impact on our careers as artists, and to Shirley Holmes whose help and affection, whose wit and humor and love of animals and other natural things are reflected, we hope, in many of the paintings which are there in our book for the rest of the world to enjoy. And when I say "our" book, I mean to say that it is a creation in which Audubon and you and Gloria and Shirley and a host of other people are literally bound together. In this way and in a very real sense "our" book is dedicated to all of us, and I hope that future generations who will view this book long after we are gone will in some way experience the mutual affection and joy and the love of nature which has been such an important part of our relationship since that first night when two wide-eyed, skinny, burr-headed kids sat down next to you and Gloria to watch your African films at the Children's Museum. I only wish that the public could know the full importance of the part that you have played in the creation of this work. Again I want to thank you for your timely help and to re-affirm that when the books are finally ready for delivery, there will be ten extra volumes waiting for you, each with a remarked page with a watercolor study of

a Texas bird to use in whatever way that you may wish. These books are but a small token of our gratitude and affection.

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PS. I will keep you regularly informed about the Holman's progress.

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