

7 January 1987

Mr. Bob Phillips
WFAA TV Channel 8
Communications Center
Dallas, Texas 75202

Dear Sir:

My twin brother Scott and I recently completed the publication of a monumental new book entitled OF BIRDS AND TEXAS. It is the largest book of its kind ever published in Texas, measuring 23" X 30" X 3" and weighing more than 46 pounds. It contains 50 offset color plates with commentary by Scott and me, and it can also boast of a 13,000 word new work of literature by Texas author John Graves. Graves's book GOODBYE TO A RIVER is on every book critic's list of the best 10 Texas books ever written. His essay is entitled "Recollections of a Texas Bird Glimpser". The entire text is printed by letterpress, using handset type — a prodigious and very costly task and never attempted on this scale before in Texas.

Ron Tyler, Director of the Texas Historical Association, has called it "one of the premier Texas books", and Dr. Edmund Pillsbury, director of the Kimbell Art Museum has written that it is "a triumph of beautiful design, fine printing and original scholarship. There is nothing in Paul Mellon's incomparable collection of 18th and 19th century illustrated books from Britain of greater appeal or sheer beauty. I know this from five years of rubbing shoulders with many of the world's snootiest bibliophiles and rare book dealers." All the original bird paintings have been purchased by the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History — a rare honor for two local artists. An exhibition of the pictures just closed a 4 month run at the Dallas Museum of Natural History. The show was originally scheduled for only two months but was held over by popular demand. In March the collection will travel to the Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio where it will be on display from March 3rd to April 5th. Then it will return to Fort Worth where it will be on display at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History for six months beginning the third week in April.

Scott and I are not wildlife painters, and OF BIRDS AND TEXAS is not meant to be a wildlife book. However, we wanted to create a book to be ded-

icated to John James Audubon who has been an artistic hero for us since we were boys. By a very strange and curious coincidence we discovered and purchased a small watercolor painting which turned out to be a long-lost Audubon original. It has been authenticated by the New York historical Society (the leading authority on Audubon) as the great bird artist's very first published bird painting and the only Audubon bird painting published in the artist's lifetime that remains in private hands. The ^{story} sotry of its discovery and purchase and the subsequent roll it played in he production of our own book would make a book in itself.

Another interesting facet about our book is that my brother and I actually worked together on most of the individual paintings of birds. I drew most of them, and Scott painted about 70% of the pictures. There are a number of aspects about our book that, I think, would be of interest to your viewers. Since no description of our book really takes the place of actually seeing the book itself, I am sending you a sample portfolio containing some of the color plates and text. It is important to keep in mind that the portfolio is a sample, and not the book itself which is a boxed set of two portfolios of different thicknesses.

Several articles have been written about OF BIRDS AND TEXAS, and more are coming. I am sending you two articles which may be of help to you. I really do believe that the book and the story behind its creation would fascinate your viewers, and I am very interested in having as many people as possible know about it. We have already sold more than half the edition of 525 copies, mostly in Texas, and I am currently targeting the remaining books for sale outside of the state.

If you are interested, please give me a call. I would be pleased to give you a private veiwing of the original paintings and explain in further detail how this book came to be. My home telephone number here in Fort Worth is 1-817 738 4427. You can usually get me at this number in the mornings between 8:00 and noon, and there is somebody here to take calls after 2:00. I hope this portfolio piques your curiosity, and if I can be of any help whatsoever, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely yours,

Stuart Gentling
Stuart Gentling

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