

Film 'Wing Haven' Celebrates Sanctuary's Enduring Love Story

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Clarkson, Edward

The voice of Dick Cavett narrates the love story — a color film just 12 minutes long.

A George Van Allen production, "Wing Haven" is the story of that 3-acre garden, bird and small wild-life sanctuary on Ridgewood Avenue created over the past 48 years by Eddie and Elizabeth Clarkson.

Charlottean Van Allen hopes his film will become a means of inspiring support for the Wing Haven Foundation, which exists to ensure perpetuity of the midcity jewel.

Copies may soon become available for loan to local organizations and wildlife and bird groups across the country. Inquiries may be addressed to Wing Haven, 248 Ridgewood Ave., Charlotte, N.C. 28209.

Wing Haven definitely is a love story in which real life is stronger and more beautiful than Walt Disney fantasies because here birds and animals do interact with the Clarksons as though they're all members of a family.

It has been that way since Eddie Clarkson went to Uvalde, Tex., in 1926 to win his bride and build a Charlotte home to her specifications in the midst of what was then an expanse of red clay with but a single tree.

Immediately her green thumb began to change the landscape and for half a century their gifts to each other on special occasions have been fountains, plants, statuary, bricks for garden walls and whatever else delights countless species of bird life.

The film documents that evolution, complete with photographs and garden shots in which wild creatures readily perch on the Clarksons' heads, shoulders and hands.

It includes the story of a bluebird family, including "Tommy," who never spent a night outside in his life, choosing instead to sleep atop a thesaurus in the library and, by day, to fly about the house plucking

tissues and bright bits of cloth to enhance his aerobic performance. And it was "Tommy," who, childlike, would greet Eddie's arrival home daily by flying down to search all his pockets for the grasshopper or other juicy morsel sure to be found there. It was this same, four-member bluebird family that enjoyed perching on Elizabeth's arms anytime she sat down to play the piano — particularly during fast-paced arpeggios.

Van Allen's excellent cinematography is enhanced by the narration of Dick Cavett, specifically targeted by Van Allen because "his voice and emotional interpretation fit." Cavett surprised him by accepting and without charge. "He was," Van Allen said, "the most gracious, accommodating and sensitive talent I've ever run into."

It's an important work, this little film, which should also be made available to libraries. And to the reservations of the Clarksons, who thought they occupied too much film footage: pish and tosh. Wing Haven is unique for a lot of reasons but it can't ever be duplicated since it is, in the main, a long and continuing love story with an uncommon celebration of and reverence for life.



Kays
Gary

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