

**STU AND JOAN PHILLIPS:
HEROES OF THE FALKLANDS WAR**

November/December
1982

The highlight of the September 1982 meeting of the New Orleans Group of the Delta Chapter was the slide show by Joan and Stu Phillips of birding in the Falklands Islands. Their trip to that remote spot occurred just a few months prior to the Argentine invasion and the war.

In an exclusive and revealing article in that respected and August publication, *The Florida Parishes Journal of Phrenology and Cuisinart Maintenance*, the full story of the Phillipses' involvement in the South Atlantic war is now told.

While passing through Argentina on their way to the Falklands, Joan and Stu were recruited by the Sociedad de los Topos, the Argentine equivalent of the C.I.A. It should be pointed out that Joan and Stu were unwitting spies; they thought the Argentine officials were merely fellow birders. Joan and Stu were to provide the Argentines with pictures and details of the geography of the Falklands. In exchange, the Phillipses were given exclusive rights to photograph and study three rare Patagonian birds: the large-breasted booby, the Ptomaine Ptarmigan, and the After-Six Penguin (which always wears a bow tie). Being decent folks, Stu and Joan did not know that the Argentines had a bellicose basis for their curiosity about the Falklands. With naive vigor and glee, Joan and Stu photographed rookeries, coves, rocky crags, bogs, eyries, etc., etc. On their return through Buenos Aires, Argentine officials eagerly accepted their photographs and notes.

Then the war began. Argentine troops poured ashore, their commanders having been briefed with the intelligence data gathered by Joan and Stu. The Argentines dug in, ready for the British assault.

Well, everyone knows what happened. The Argentine forces ashore gave up without much of a fight. The Phillipses' photos and notes led the Argentines to set up their gun nests in

rookeries, where they were repeatedly attacked by irate birds. Argentine troop tents were found by British soldiers to be covered ignominiously with guano. Argentine soldiers trying to put mines on the beaches photographed by Joan and Stu found themselves under attack by seals, sea lions, and hostile penguins. In short, the Argentines' effort to fortify the islands was a disaster.

When Stu and Joan's intelligence-gathering efforts were revealed, the British government decided to decorate them. After all, it was partly through their efforts as amateur "spooks" that the British soldiers encountered so little resistance. They were brought to Buckingham Palace where the Princess of Wales, Lady Diana, awarded them medals and inducted them into the Order of the Garter Snake and the Royal Awkward Auk Society. The next time you see Joan and Stu, ask them to show you these awards, recognition of their heroic efforts in the Falklands War.

– Earl Higgins