Peregrine Falcon

On the Rio Grande
In Santa Elena Canyon
Floating with Don Greene

The bluffs rise high above the river
That flows gently in this area,
Letting our rafts glide through
The late afternoon shadows
That provide blessed relief
From the Texas sun.

Flute music has begun,
Seeming to emanate from canyon walls,
Walls that provide the home
For the Peregrine falcon power gliding
Above through the bare blue sky,
Knifing through the troposphere,
An aerodynamic marvel,
A bird of amazing strength and grace,
A bird that epitomizes the word flight,
A grey bird that brings fear when its near,
But today it comes by to pay respects,
Pulling out of a dive in the waning light,
Offering an aerial salute to Don Greene,
A man who led all who would listen
To learn more of Earth and self,
A waterman who devoted himself to
Helping others learn and love the water.

Today, we who listened,
We who heard the flute
Are richer for it,
And though Don is no longer with us,
He remains a friend for he lives
Within my mind as a mountain of a man,
An archangel of Earth Church,
A man who made the Earth better.
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On the Whooping Crane tour boat
Captained by the legendary Brownie Brown
And his good cat Hardhead.

This boat is chugging across Aransas Bay
Taking the pilgrims out to see the cranes,
It’s an afternoon trip and we’re all packed in
To see the whoopers before the sun wanes.

On the mike Capt. Brownie calls out the birds
Scattering before the approaching boat,
A bufflehead here, a merganser there,
The bow spray is blowing so grab a coat.

On deck Garland and I sit side by side
On this trip for our first anniversary,
An amazing drama begins to play out
Requiring a look that is more than cursory.

Capt. Brown points up and urges us to look
At the brown-grey form that is flying above
It’s a peregrine he calls and all are excited
A sight to behold for me and my love.

The peregrine slows and then begins a stoop
Down toward the ducks that we have spooked,
And they quickly realize that they are the prey
And they indeed fear that their goose is cooked.

The peregrine’s speed goes higher and higher
As closer to the ducks he does come
And the last duck was fleeing away so wildly
That he made a move that may seem dumb.

The duck hit the water with the peregrine close
To sinking his talons into pointed tail feathers,
But the duck dove deep to make his escape
And did not care how but instead whether.

And to this day I remember that sight
Of the peregrine chasing the horrified duck,
And I’ll gladly see that scene replayed
With perseverance and a bit of good luck.