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## The Whooping Crane

The large white birds return each year  
To their specific plot of Aransas bay hab,  
Where they train the awkward cinnamon child  
About how to stab the fleeing crab.

The lovely swimmer crabs of blue  
Are the winter source and sustenance  
For the elegant, endangered whooping cranes  
Whose crab consumption seems gluttonous.

It's true that they eat 80 crabs each day  
As they work to survive the Texas winter  
To return again to Canada's woods  
A package delivered back to the sender.

The blue crabs require the sweet freshwater  
The freshening flow of the River Guadalupe,  
A river that is drained by Texas commerce,  
By uncaring politicians that don't give a whoop.

So, I return to Aransas Bay each year  
To again see the orange-streaked kid,  
To watch a drama of our modern age  
Played out as if portrayed in a vid.

Will the inflow be enough this year?  
Or has the drought come that we all fear?  
Are we smart enough for business and the birds?  
Can I help with another onslaught of words?

And I smile as I recall seeing the young one  
Stab and stab and yet again stab

Thrashing to and fro in the Aransas sun  
Running the marsh pond after the crab.

And at night alone with my fanciful dreams  
I dance the dance of the mating cranes  
And I sing the melodious haunting chants  
To whomever or whatever hears such rants

And I pray today that there will always be  
Blue crabs to stab in the estuary  
And I'll be there to look – waiting to see  
When the lovely cranes return to me.



## Whooping Crane 6

### A Tribute to George Archibald

In Judge Janis Jack's courtroom overlooking the bay  
In 2011 in Corpus on a clear winter's day.

Anxiously we arrive at the courtroom so cold  
For the whooping crane trial is about to unfold,  
The bailiff cries "all rise" as the Judge makes her entrance,  
And lights on her bench like a powerful empress.  
What she's thinking of our case we can't even guess  
As she asks the plaintiffs to call their first witness.

I call George Archibald of the Crane Foundation  
A sweet-smiling man representing the crane nation,  
A man unused to legal conflict and harshness  
But today he's of steel and all about business,  
Explaining to all a life's knowledge of cranes,  
About caring and nurturing with hard work and brains,  
About helping Tex find his way to a mate,  
A breakthrough, a first, a reversal of fate.

I debate asking George to show us the dance,  
But common sense demands that I not take a chance,  
Simply stick to the man who has captured the court,  
And talk of the habitat and how it was hurt,  
About cinnamon-splotched youngsters chasing nimble blue crabs,  
About making a grab after several missed stabs,  
About rainfall and runoff and a sweet estuary,  
About the need for caution, that we all should be wary,  
About these cranes being a gift that we need to protect  
Regardless of what crazy Texan we happen to elect.

And at night in my dreams an image appears,  
A vision that is both warming and dear.  
Judge Jack is a whooper and George is the man  
And Tex dances with both flapping hard as he can,  
Renewing my hope, erasing all doubt  
For the dancing Judge has some mighty clout.  
With her pen she has changed our Texas way  
And carved out a path for a better day  
When water for crabs and cranes is assured  
Thanks to Janis and George and those who endured.

So, George and the Judge danced well after all,  
Right out of the courtroom and on down the hall,  
And history will say that George and the Judge  
Took a stand for what's good and just wouldn't budge.  
Though the case was rejected by the court of appeals,  
The impact today remains very real,  
Every water seller in Texas looks around with unease  
For the courts are there to hear our pleas.

Thank you, George, for being our bright light  
For giving us hope and playful delight.  
Come back to Texas whenever you wish  
And continue your work with love and bliss.  
So, I ask you to stand with me and applaud  
A man who has fought long, both here and abroad.  
Amen.



## Whooping Cranes V

At Goose Island State Park during spring migration  
On a beautiful day to be alive.

The Live Oaks are full of webs and worms,  
Food for small warblers that are scarce today.  
The state park guide is speaking near a feeder  
Besieged by buntings that can't stay away.

The blue is brilliant against the brown dirt  
And the green foliage wraps us all like a skirt,  
There were storms yesterday but today is clear,  
When suddenly we stop – what is it we hear?

Just above the treetops the big birds circle  
Five white birds with wings tipped in black  
Offering their haunting whoops of goodbye  
Kettling up to begin their trip back.

I tell the cranes that they are my clients  
And we are now petitioning the U.S. Supreme court,  
I tell them I've tried – that I've done my best  
To build them protection – to build them a fort.

The attorney client bond is very real  
And protecting the weak has great appeal  
For most humans fail to think of the cranes  
It just doesn't pop up within their brains.

And as they rise up into the clouds,  
I feel like they stayed until this last day  
To say goodbye to their hard-trying lawyer,

A connection of souls joined along life's way.

My spirit flies with the kettling whoopers  
Who I thank for letting me represent them,  
I promise to strive for the rest of my days  
To help address their survival problem.

So, goodbye for now you lovely birds  
Come back next year with a cinnamon child  
And my soul reaches out with a last embrace  
Wishing all safe journey to Canada's wild.