



Red-Headed Woodpecker 2 (Spring Creek)

In times like this when confronting a crisis
Like today when face-to-face with the virus,
It's comforting to dig in depths of the brain
To find relief and dispel the pain.

One such place for me is central Louisiana
A place reminiscent of the biblical manna
A place where the relatives all made home
A place of dark swamps and hard scabble loam.

The laughter comes floating through the pines
From the swimmin' hole and watermelon rinds
Where the water was green and oh so cold
Where nights were spent, and scary tales told.

The family would spend some time in summer
If daddy were missing, it would be a bummer
But mother and Ann and me and the cousins
Would pass several weeks, all pleasure, no fussin'.

The creek bank was cut deep into the clay
And was lined with trees blocking light of day,
A rope swing would be there for all to use
Hang on tight or your grip you would surely lose.

The forest was an amphitheater reflecting sound
And natural sources could be heard from the ground
But none was louder than the red-headed woodpecker,
Whose rat a tat tat was a sanity checker.

We'd look in the trees so tall and green

And red, white and black could often be seen
And later at grandmother's house we'd discuss
The beautiful bird making such a fuss.

Today spring creek lives on in my mind
A reminder of a different point in time,
When life was waking up and going to the creek
And hoping the inner tube didn't leak.

And the red-headed woodpecker is always there
In the images of life lived without hurt or care
It's rat a tat tat a most beautiful sound
To accompany the peace that I have now found.

Red Headed Woodpecker

Walking in the woods northeast of Houston
On a crisp winter day.

The bottomland hardwoods are quiet,
No leaves to intercept the wind
That blows slowly but firmly from the north,
A quiet that is suddenly penetrated by
A soft reek, reek, reek, and then rat a tat tat,
Followed by yet another soft song series.

I search for the source and soon see
That unmistakable, that brilliant,
That remarkable crimson head mounted
Above the white and the black,
And I am transported back in time
To when I was kid,
Walking in the bottoms with my Uncle Bun,
Searching for woodcock,
Learning to read the signs and hear the message
Of the bottomlands,
A message of welcome, of invitation,
Of promise of adventures, of new things,
Things never imagined by a valley rat
From far South Texas
Where the trees were short and thorny,

Things of great value,
Things from the treasure chest
Of what I call the Church of the Earth
Where I now come to worship
North of Houston on a crisp winter day.