

**THE RIVER MAN**

*In memoriam Ron Smith*

To take a passion,  
Or was it that saved him,  
And make a real life  
Is what teenage Ron began  
By his aquariums for  
Carefully populated tropical fish,  
Their mystery of floating  
With water all around,  
Suspended in freedom  
Effortless as breathing,  
And he breathed easily  
Along with them down in his room,  
That place where dreams  
Effervesced to the surface  
Of a kind man,  
Family and close friends  
Got the homespun pleasure  
Of calling Bubba,  
He would unhesitatingly accept by faith  
This message as the still, small voice of God,  
Which sent him to the Gulf of Mexico  
For a master's degree in marine biology  
Along with the ocean's call of *Mother, Mother,*  
The song he sang so soulfully,  
Fingerpicking his guitar  
Sweet and gentle as his spirit.  
Oh, mourners, his spirit remains,  
If you'll close your eyes  
For listening to Ron's tune  
In the air all about you,  
Like a fish in water

You are effortlessly with him,  
And would he have it any other way?  
Don't for a moment think he'll  
Let you go off into a future of silence,  
Calling you instead to find  
Enough room inside the heart  
To follow your dream  
At least a little more than before,  
Because you know he walked his life up  
From that basement bedroom  
Passing through the Gulf waters  
And all the way into the rivers of Texas,  
Getting paid by the state  
To do what he'd do for free,  
Flow in a canoe, paddling here and there  
To realign with the current,  
Not trying to control  
But to move like a song  
Written for all  
With as much as a glimmer  
Of his courage  
To not sell out,  
To be true to yourself,  
Just as he was in some way or another  
All along—one born for the river.