George and the Judge:
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 dowager 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 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-splotted 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 Janice 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 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 hustler in Texas looks around with unease
For the courts are there to hear our pleas.

Thank you George from us that are here tonight
For giving us a bright light and such 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 and hard.