

I BURY MY DEAD

THE EAGLE - THE ARROW
and

THE BROOK

I BURY MY DEAD

THE EAGLE - THE ARROW
and

THE BROOK

by
JAMESMICHAELTAYLOR

TEXT

COPYRIGHT 1990 JAMES MICHAEL TAYLOR

All rights reserved

LYRICS

COPYRIGHT 1990 ROYAL T MUSIC

except where otherwise noted

ROYAL T MUSIC 1712 Eagle Drive FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76111 817 834 3879

www.jamesmichaeltaylor.com

THE STORY

It was a sunny day. As we struggled to hook the baler to the tractor, clouds began to form, so we abandoned that project - and hooked the trailer to the tractor and tried to get the hay loaded into the barn. No way! Maybe we got twenty bales before it was all wet. Everything washed. Maybe enough moisture to help the Sudan. I took a bath. Washed my hair. Just sat in the tub for a while reading Songwriter Magazine and Crawdaddy. Listening to the Brandenburg Concertos.

Last night I dreamed that I watched Brook on the beach, running in and out with the tide. I exclaimed at his beauty, knowing that soon the tides would erase his footprints.

Barbara dreamed of a funeral. I wasn't there. Brook was alive but drugged. Some kind of zombie. She thrilled to see him move but then, when she realized the condition he was in, she was repulsed. It was a Church of Christ thing and everyone had come to comfort her mother and dad. They ignored her and took control of the proceedings...

It's like a huge volley of sound echoing between my heart and my mind, becoming more forceful with each cycle. It's like an echo on a tape loop that generates its own volume. It floods my space and I get swept aside as the facts seem to supplant any power of mental discipline.

And then, as suddenly as it swept into me, thru me, it subsides. The power is back. The voice lucid. It is calm and clear. The seeds of the cure that are found in the illness sprout, and bud, and bloom and then go to seed again. The cycle is complete.

On the phone with mother in Portland, Oregon...

"Your dad said, just today, that he feared for Brook."
And I think,
"Why didn't he call?"

Dad called back later and said he would fly into DFW the next afternoon at 3:30.

One reason I wanted to move to Texas was so Barbara's folks could enjoy the kids, as my parents did. It never happened. - Brook, because they knew him from birth, had made some inroads into their affections. And now he was gone.

After I went to sleep that night, Barbara got up and called her parents again. They had asked earlier if she wanted them to come out and she had said, "No." It hadn't occurred to us that they needed us in those hours. Her mother and her dad and her sister were all still up. Her sister had driven from Commerce, where she was in school, that night when they called her and told her that Brook had drowned. They couldn't sleep.

I listened to Barbara cry.
I held her.
I thought, "Maybe Barbara will cry for both of us."
But I asked God to help me cry.

The next morning it was clear.
I was in a trance as I faced the day.
I watered the horse.
I tried to understand our yard without Brook.
His words were the words that told us about our life.
My name was Jume.

Brook didn't say
"Yes"
He said
"Yow!"
I knew that I had to say "Yow!" to this day.
I felt that I must be Brook.
I must embody what he was.
What he did.

If I can name my children, why can't they name me?
Brook had called me "Jume."
"My name is Jume!"
"Yow!"
Whatever I did I said,
"Yow!."
I would repeat to the morning
To the new day
"My name is Jume!"
"Yow!"

"My name is Jume!"
"Yow!"

I squatted out in the field the way Brook did. I staggered around the yard.

"My name is Jume!"

"Yow!"

And, "Oh, oh, God."

And as I turned out toward the road to go check the mail the winds of grief began to sweep thru me. The fields flinched as my heart broadcast its message of loss, of bewilderment. I was a drunken prophet whose gladness had been turned to gall. Crying, "Yow," and "My name is Jume."

I drove into town. Ra Byn rode beside me. There was no mail. I felt like everyone who looked at me could tell that I was wounded. It seemed that they should be able to tell just by glancing at me thru the car window.

At the bank I went straight into Charles's office. I told Charles that my Brook was dead. That my name was Jume. I told him I wanted cards to change my name. My signature. He did what I asked and he did not try to rob me of the feeling that only I could feel what I felt at that moment.

I walked down the street to Charles Auto. I had to tell Jack. And then across the street to tell Jim at the print shop. I went to the lumber yard to tell Sally but she was off for lunch. At the feed store I told Mrs. Cox my baby was dead. She told me that she had lost a son. Her first. He had hanged himself when he was fourteen.

We had joined the club.

Barbara was afraid. As we walked down the road looking in both ditches for Brook, she sobbed. Earlier my fear had expressed itself. I had told the kids that if Brook was dead it was their fault. They reassured me that he had not been near the pool. I had looked in the pool. I saw nothing. I had wired an aluminum pole to the end of my garden rake and raked thru the merky water. I felt nothing.

I was confident that we would find him napping - somewhere. Then we found his T-shirt in the road down by the - mail box. Ra Byn, Wyn or Embyr hadn't put it there. That was - why we were looking down the road. In the ditches. In the cotton field.

Earlier, Brook had said what was his equivalent of, "I'm going to Shannon's. Once, when "Shanny" had been up here playing with the kids, she told Wyn, "If you don't put some pants on your little brother I will have to go home," so we had told Brook, jokingly, that he would have to put some pants on.

Maybe some lonely soul had taken Brook. Would he remember us when he grew up? Would he return. Would we ever see him again? Barbara and I held each other's hands. We stopped and asked Gene House if he had had a visitor. He said, "No," but he got into his pickup and began to check out the roads. He went down to the lake and the roads around the lake. No Brook.

It was getting dark. We walked down to "Shanny's." "No." They checked the trailer. Brook hadn't been there.

It was dark. Barbara and I walked home. We had to call the police. We called Mansfield. They said we were out of their jurisdiction but that they would make a note. Maybe send out - some firemen to help look for him if we didn't find him soon. We

called Cleburne. The Johnson County Sheriff. They said they - would send out a car to get information.

I waited down at FM 917 to help them find their way to our house.

They came.

They started asking questions.

"Name?"

"What was he wearing?"

Two big young officers.

They said they had come to help search for Brook.

"Was there a divorce?"

"Could the child have been taken by a separated parent?"

"No!"

"But one thing you ought to know."

"We have a swimming pool."

"That sounds bad."

"I have already raked thru it with a rake and long pole. I found nothing. But I didn't want to find anything so, maybe I didn't rake very well."

I could hear them call his name thru their loudspeaker.

"Brook!"

"Brook!"

We drove slowly along the dirt road.

I parked the car.

They drove into the yard.

I said, "Put your lights on the pool.

I've got to dive to be sure."

I took my overalls off.

My shoes.

I dived to the bottom, waving my arms.

Nothing.

Nothing.
BROOK!

The TRUTH.

The ANSWER.

How I love the TRUTH.

How do I love the TRUTH?

I was there.
It was real.
It was a body.
Not Brook.
Where he was?
How he was?
I didn't know that.
But I had the answer to the last three hours of fear
in my hands.

I kicked to the surface.

"I found him!"

Barbara rejected the sight that she saw.
Her whole body and mind Said, "No!"
Her legs Said, "NO!"
Her arms Said, "NO!"
She fell, limp, to the ground.
Her heart was being strangled by the sight.

The thot.

I handed the body to one of the policemen and tried to help Barbara. The other cop held her too. We took her to the house. I went back to the squad car to get Brook's body. I said that Barbara needed to see it, touch it, feel it. The truth had held me together. She needed to have the reality break down her rejection.

"We have to secure the scene."

"You can't take the body in the house."

"Barbara, come out here."

"Ra Byn."

"Wyn."

"Embyr, come out here."

"No, they are calm now. Let them be."

"We need to be together now."

We sat in the darkness on the front porch.

I handed the body to Barbara.

Brook was naked.

His body,

every beautiful little muscle,

was fine.

His hair was tangled.

His hands and his feet perfect.

Like a newborn.

Wrinkled.

Quiet.

When I touched his body in the pool,

I flashed on

Wyn's body,

when I first touched it

at her birth.

The two moments were the same.

One the beginning.
One the end.

Brook had lived for us in his eyes.
Brook was gone.
Where?
Why?
How?
When did he slip away?
All, unanswered.
All, too much for the moment.

Barbara sobbed as she felt his toes, his hands, his face, his stomach. The precious body that we had loved. The beautiful Brook that had never left our bed. The body that slept between us. Barbara and I touched in that body. Much of the time it was enough. We would lie awake and watch him sleep. We would pleasure our hearts with his breathing. Things he had said that day. "I jump in." We would be drawn together by our lifted hearts and I would move Brook to my side of the bed for a while.

The Brook.
The Eagle.
The tiny bird.

In the morning he would wake up first.
We were his world.
He would play on us.
Sing to us.
Awaken us.
And we would welcome his smile
 Into our dreaming thoughts
 And return to our sleeping.

Brook was the beginning of our day.
Brook was the end of our day.

Embyr Leah is four.

That is the first thing she will tell you.

"I am four."

That's important to her.

As we held Brook for what we thought would be the last
time Embyr seemed unaffected.

She saw that Brook was dead.

He was gone.

Things die all the time.

Spot, we suppose, is dead.

Yankie died.

The dogs kill the chickens.

We kill the rabbits.

Ra Byn is five.

Almost six.

Ra Byn was confused.

Perplexed.

He seemed to be searching for the right words to say.

Ra Byn savored words.

Especially hard words.

Once when he was three and Embyr crawled over him in
bed he complained,

"Emboo obwivious, I'm twying to fweep."

Wyn was hurting inside.

Wyn was seven.

Almost eight.

She had been a little mother to Brook.

Wyn was more conscious of the implications of life.

More aware of time.

She could sense the loss of something precious.

Embyr woke me up this morning. She crawled into bed beside me and whispered, "Daddy, we should not let babies get near pools or bees."

The night was cool. The moon was bright.

The man from the county health department came. He asked questions. He told us that the Alvarado Mortuary ambulance would arrive soon. They would take the body to Cleburne for the coroner to autopsy. Barbara wanted to ask if we could get the body back and bury it ourselves. I shushed her. "The people at the Alvarado Mortuary will take care of everything if you want. They are good Christian people and they will do you well. You can leave it all up to them. I have known them for two years and they are good Christian people."

"Here is my card. Call me tomorrow and tell me what you decide to do with the body. You can use any funeral home that you want. The body will be released to any licensed funeral director."

The funeral car came. A white Cadillac. They started to set up a stretcher. I said, "We will bring the body out to the car." I took Brook's body from Barbara and we walked together to the roadway. I put his body on the stretcher. They rolled the stretcher into the car and we all looked at him, perhaps for the last time, thru the curtained windows.

"We will take good care of him."

"Here is our card."

"I am, owner of the Funeral Home. Anything I can do..." and they left.

We were five.
We were tired.

I think we slept together that night.
Like it had been before Brook was born.

Sleep.

Loving

Graceful

Comfort

Mercy

Sleep.

When Wyn was born she slept on my chest. That first night. She slept between Barbara and me until Ra Byn James was born. Then she moved to the other side of Barbara and THE ROBIN slept between us. Then Embyr, with Ra Byn and Wyn someplace between Barbara and me and who knows how we ever got any sleep. For awhile it was all six of us. Then it all changed.

I made a bed at the foot of our bed, and Ra Byn and Wyn and Embyr accepted it as theirs. But we always started the night with an extra body or two in our bed.

I made them bunk beds in the hallway, once, with their own bookcase built in and a light and a ladder and all sorts of fancy things but the new wore off long before the new wore off and we were six again.

My babies tell me things in their sleep.
They cry out and I can hear them.
I can touch them.
They get tangled and I untangle them.

Ra Byn grits his teeth sometimes and I try to wake him up.
I rub his back.
I say to him, "Ra Byn, don't grit your teeth."
I want to be able to reach him.

I want them to reach for me in their sleep.
In their dreams.
In their fears.
I want to be there.
Not in another room.
With the door shut.

They say things in their sleep. If I could, I would answer them but I have never been able to understand more than a word or two. Once I wrote a song about Wyn: "She wrestles with angels the whole night thru. Here by me. There by you." Sometimes I fear they wrestle with devils.

Brook never wrestled with anything.
He slept like a frog between us.

It's three thirty in the morning.
Three weeks and two days have passed.

Barbara and I are awake.
I have been writing.
I could hear her awaken with a start.
Choking.
Heartburn.

I went down stairs to get her a glass of milk.
Barbara is on the verge of delivering another child.
She said this evening, as we were picking okra
that she really wants a little boy.

I thought today, as I baled the Sudan, maybe I would have a copper or brass plate etched..

THE BODY OF A BROKEN EAGLE
IS BURIED IN THE SHADOW OF THIS WINDMILL.

My eyes... I read until my eyes hurt and then I turn the light out and try to go to sleep, but my mind is writing a book. I think, "Maybe I could injure my eyes." But I have relinquished my eyes. Could I dig being blind? Aren't I blind?

Last night Barbara had a dream about Brook. Brook was hanging onto something. About to drop. Calling out for help. Because he is dead, Barbara dismissed the voice. Then she thinks, "That's Brook." She rushes out. Sees him. She rushes to help. We brought him back and he wasn't happy. He doesn't belong here anymore. She wonders if it means one of us needs help.

It will soon be Brook's birthday. Brook was born September 30, 1975. I put the tape recorder down stairs to capture all the sounds in the living room for maybe two hours before his birth and until about a half hour afterwards. I also made movies. I may never want to see those movies again. It was such a strong birth hit I got when I touched his body in the pool. I think it would be a very cold rush.

I got a sharp hit today when I went looking for a rake and I remembered it was still wired to the piece of aluminum pipe that I had used as an extension when I raked the pool for his body.

Barbara said she was glad we gave the goat away. It was too much a reminder of Brook. Late at night, no light in the goat pen, he would help. He would insist on carrying the milk pan.

Brook's life fits snugly between the time we came to live on this hill and the time we must leave. He was conceived here. He was born in this house. He lived his life in this yard and he is buried on this hill. I linked the other children by putting a "Y" in their names.

W-Y-n élan
Ra B-Y-n James
Emb-Y-r Leah

I broke the tie when I named Eagle Arrowbrook.

When I got to Cleburne to register his birth, I was told that I didn't have to do that. The hospital would take care of it. When I told the lady that the child was not born in a hospital she relinquished her position at the counter and another lady took her place. This lady was ready for anything.

She said, "We'll get that baby registered for you now," and she began to ask me questions.

"Date of birth?"

"Address?"

"Name?"

"Eagle Arrowbrook"

"First name?"

"Eagle."

"Middle name?"

"No middle name."

"No middle name?"

"That's right."

"Last name?"

"Arrowbrook."

"What is your first name, Mr. Arrowbrook?"

"My name is not Arrowbrook."

"My name is Taylor."

"James Michael Taylor."

"Isn't this your child?"

"Yes."

"Then the child's last name is Taylor."

"No. The child's name is Arrowbrook."

"You can't name him that."

"Why not?"

"It's against the law."

She excused herself and went into another room where she talked with a man and they opened a big book and read out of it to themselves. She came back.

"You must give the child the surname of the mother at the time of birth."

"Why is that?"

"That is the law."

"Can I see the book?"

"No."

"Why can't I see the book?"

"It is our prerogative."

"What I name my child or whether you let me see the book?"

"I don't have to answer that."

That was the last effort I made to let Brook's birth be known to the powers that be.

There was no birth certificate issued in Brook's name. -
There was never a burial permit. To understand that it is -
necessary to back up a bit and follow the twisted thread that lead
to his burial down by the windmill.

When I talked with Barbara's dad I asked him if he would have his lawyer find out what the Texas state law said about burial. The 12th of August he reported that there wasn't very much. Mostly, the coroner of the county could decide, on the spot, what could be done. His decision was law.

We had been told by the police already that only a licensed funeral director could take possession of the body. That wasn't in the books.

Barbara and I shared the thot that we should bury Brook here on the farm.

That night when they took Brook's body away I had determined this: If the law was going to tell us we could not bury Brook's body in our own way, then the law would have to pay for disposing of it in their way. They had called the Cadillac with two drivers to take it to Cleburne. I would rather have done that. I would not pay for that. When they closed the door on that body we were willing for it to be the last time we saw it. I thot it was the last time.

We were at peace.

When Charles, Barbara's dad told me what his lawyer had said, he had added that he would pay the costs of a funeral, that we were welcomed to bury Brook in his family plot or on his property in Fannin County. Clearly, he preferred the idea of burying him in his family plot. He had already gotten permission from the family members.

I wanted to bury Brook as I would want to be buried.

In a place where things could grow.
Not just grass that was kept like a lawn.

I wanted my body to return to the soil.
Not putrefy in some sealed crypt.

I wanted to feel the cycle was complete.
His body nourishing the prairie grasses.

His dust becoming fertile soil.
Soon.

The sooner the better.
Living earth.

Let the rains wash his bones
and the sun warm the seeds that

reach down to take new life
from the earth he was.

I know that to choose from choices
that are not mine to start with
is not choosing at all.

*I want to dig the hole
I want to feel the strain.
I want to smell the dirt.
I want to put his body in it and
I want to shovel the dirt back in.
I want to do this with my friends.
I want to bury him on this piece of earth.*

Today I worked with Deadeye. It was the first time I have bedded lateral lines since I buried Brook. Deadeye and I met one night in Dallas at a battle of the bands. He plays in a band called Twenty Mule Team. He likes my songs. He digs ditches with his back hoe. He hires me to do the shovel work sometimes.

I worked for his dad one day. His dad digs lateral lines with a back hoe also. Their rigs are the same. Deadeye told me that his father said I worked better than most of his niggers.

One day Deadeye told that he had pulled himself up by his own bootstraps. No help from anybody. I told him that most people end up doing what their fathers do.

Wyn had a dream about a new washing machine. A watermelon got lost in it. She characterized it as a terrible dream.

On August 12th I told the kids that when I had said," If Brook is dead it's your fault," that I had spoken those words out of fear. That I did not believe them.

That afternoon I drove to the airport to pick up my dad. When we got back out here I found Pat Schuster baling the hay I had swathed two days earlier. He knew that if it didn't get baled that day it would burn. He had found something to do when others were saying, "If there is anything we can do..."

Barbara talked with the county coroner and, at first, he said he didn't know if what we wanted to do was legal. He called back that evening and said, "Yes," he would allow us to bury Brook here at the farm, and that because it would be Saturday, we would have to get the burial permit from a funeral home in Cleburne before we could get a release for the body at the county hospital. He said we would need to take a container for the body.

The next morning Sally called. I told her I needed some pine boards to build a little box. She met me at the lumberyard and gave me what I needed.

I found a short poem our dresser. Barbara wrote of the blame her parents placed with us for Brook's death.

..... *the blame for the death of the child with the beautiful name.*

I took the last words and began a song.

Michael Martin called and said he'd like to be around if I wouldn't mind. So he was at the house when it was time to go. Michael is the first songwriter I met when I came to Texas. We decided it would be good if Dad went with us. We decided to take Michael's car. It was new. Not all beat up like the old pickup we were driving. Barbara got cleaned up and I think I shaved and put on some nice clothes. We were not looking for a confrontation. Just get the body and get back to the farm.

When we got to Cleburne we stopped at a drug store for direction to the funeral home. At the funeral home, Michael and I stayed in the car. Barbara and Dad went in. We expected less resistance that way. After about forty five minutes, Michael went in and found that they were getting the run around. That was what I had feared.

The law must be regarded in this matter.
We have to check the laws.
This had never happened before.
Are you going to bury the body in an established plot?
"Yes."

We called it The Taylor Plot..
There were dead leaves. Dead grass.
Dead mice.
Maybe a cow had died on that very spot.

Was it an established plot?
"Yes."

We had established in our hearts that it was a place for
Brook's body to rest.

Is this an old family?
Dad assured them that ours was, indeed, an old family.

I reminded them that the coroner had approved our plan
and that made it legal, so he didn't have to concern himself further.

"It's not your end that I am concerned about.
I must protect myself.
What would happen to my business if everyone started
doing this?"

And then, it was verse four of that same conversation.
Again, I pointed out that the coroner was the lawmaker, that we
had been authorized by him to take the body and bury it and that
was our only reason to be here.

It was a poker game.
Finally.

"Okay. We will send the car over to the hospital to get the
body."

"NO! We were told by the coroner that we just needed to get a burial permit from you and then a release so we could pick up the body. That is what we were told to do by the coroner and that is what we have come to do. We will pick the body up at the hospital ourselves."

One burial permit was deliberately pushed off the desk into the trash can.

There will be no record of this ever happening.

We were told to follow the green station wagon to the hospital. We didn't argue about the permit. We had lost interest in some of the fine points. We followed the green station wagon to the hospital. We took the pine box out of the car and followed. A nurse came out and said, "Telephone." The funeral director followed her back into the hospital. We waited. After about five minutes he returned, unlocked the walk-in freezer, entered, and returned shortly, pushing a cart with Brook's cold little body on it.

There was a "Y" cut in his chest and abdomen that had been stitched up with what looked like kite twine. The coroner had told Barbara that they had found brackish water in his lungs. - Yes, he had drowned.

We wrapped his body in a blanket and placed it in the pine box. Michael and I carried it back to the car.

We wondered what the phone call had been about.

We did not know what was going to happen. We watched to see if we were being followed out of Cleburne.

As we left Cleburne I said,
“I am going to write a book
and I'm going to call it

I BURY MY DEAD.

When we got home Rick Babb was there with, Cinder and Amie and Josh. Brook and Josh were the same age. Buddies. Brook would remind us of his friend, “Josh!” Rick sang some of his songs. The kids liked BABIES ARE A BEAUTIFUL THING.

Scott Richmond, a third cousin of Barbara's, did something that day caused a stir.

When we first moved into the house there were no windows and no doors, no water, no electricity, and no gas. But plenty of bugs. When we got the electricity hooked up we would leave a light on in the kitchen to draw the night fliers away from where we slept. One night I noticed all the tiny creatures around the light and I called Barbara and the children to come and look. - The closer we looked the more impressed we were at the array of - body styles and the intricacy of their patterns. The subtle color differences. It was like a microscopic one ring circus there around the light on the wall above the breakfast nook.

I wrote a song about that experience and we call it CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT.

*Angel wings and butterflies
because the caterpillar dies
that old designer how he tries for you. . .*

`Nights when I am up here writing and these little friends come to watch, I take time out to study their designs. I draw them. They sit real still. Sometimes, right on my paper.

I think my favorites are the tiny locust. What I called Katydid when I was a kid. I like to hold them between my fingers and feel them buzz.

We have paper wasps and we are impressed by their vigilance. I have been stung many times due to a lack of the same on my part. We get stung when we threaten, in their opinion, their

nests. Or step on them. When we are picking vegetables in the garden they don't bother us. Even tho we touch them sometimes.

The creature that has captured our affectionate attention, however, is the barn spider. It seems that in days they grow from tiny mites into huge beautiful yellow and gray and black spiders. The one that we got to know best was one to the right of the back door on the porch. We watched her grow and daily mind her web. We watched her catch her meals and sometimes in the evening when the horseflies would swarm we would swat them down with fly swatters and throw them into her nest.

I pretended sometimes that she was a writing spider like Charlotte in the story and imagined that she knew we were glad that she lived there.

One day a man from the Johnson County Electrical Co-op came to inspect our water heater and as he stepped off the porch he hit her with a pair of pliers and knocked her to the ground. He never knew that she didn't rebuild her web. In fact, within two days all the barn spiders had disappeared again. We began to find them out in the barn. Three summers passed and there were no barn spiders around the house, on the porch or in the pear trees.

This spring they had returned. Another spider built her web at the same spot on the back porch. We called her Charlotte too, and Brook shared in the excitement when we would feed her.

Sometimes when we would throw a big fly into the web it would break on thru and we'd have to try again. Sometimes the fly would buzz its wings so frantically that it would escape.

We did not include horseflies or mosquitoes on our list of the beloved, the Children of the Night.

With all these good vibrations we directed toward the spiders and wasps, it was hard to communicate to Brook that it was best not to pick them up.

At about 5:30 that afternoon, Ra Byn came running out to the front yard to report that Scott had just knocked Charlotte off the back porch. The next day the webs around the house were vacant.

It has been one month today since Brook drowned.

I sat by the pool for a while.

A big green frog jumped in.

I sat on the diving board
thinking he would reappear.

A little green snake peeked out of the drain hole
under the diving board.

I pulled some pea plants out of the garden.

Barbara and I haven't spent much time in the garden since August 11 and then only to pick the okra.

I started the tractor.

We hooked the trailer to it.

Steps to be followed.

Solid steps.

Executed upon instruction from somewhere.

It was sundown.

Who could tell?

The clouds in the west veiled the setting sun. I threw four bales of hay up onto the trailer. Four bales of fresh johnson grass hay and the pine box containing the thawing remains of my second son.

My mind flashed forward.

Stabs.

“No!

Now!

I must stay here.

I must stay now.

I can handle Now.

I can not handle Then.

Up There.

I can not miss these last minutes.

I can not miss this last hay ride with that precious body.

Now!”

I am driving the tractor. The "wactah". Times when Brook was wound too tight to go to sleep, even when he was tired, I knew how to put my Boogie to sleep. "Let's go for a ride on the wactah."

Three days before, when we went to town to check the mail, he played a trick on us. Always, when we'd pass a certain property down the road, Brook would point matter-of-factly to a small Farmall garden tractor and say, "Wactah." This day he - simply pointed and Barbara and I said, "Wactah."

He had trained us. We laughed. The last memory I have of Brook is helping him down from the tractor seat so he could have a picnic with the other children.

That last week I had been swathing some Johnson grass out on FM 917. My swather will go about two miles per hour and one evening at dusk Barbara drove down and brought the kids. And a bottle of cool water. Brook rode back with me. It takes one foot and both hands to drive the swather. Brook stood between my legs, facing forward. In a few minutes I noticed he was bobbing and I pulled him into my lap. Limp little Boogie. Put to sleep once again by the good vibrations of the wactah.

As I put the tractor into second gear and gave it about one third throttle, all of this flooded my mind.

Brook's limp body.
In the box.
With the hay.
It all meant something.
"Yes, God.
I hear you.
I trust you.
Open me to the cleansing rain.
I am grateful to have been the student of such
a guileless teacher.
Hold me.
Hold my heart."

Driving my old Farmall tractor.
In Johnson County, Texas.
In the year of our Lord, 1977.
Why?

I drove slowly.
Those who had come walked behind.
Rick and Michael and Barbara's families.
Some neighbors.
Dad and Barbara.
Wyn. Ra Byn. Embyr.
My mind took pictures.

I saw,
silhouetted along the ridge,
a tractor and driver,
a trailer
and the figures of maybe thirty people,
slowly
following,
heads bowed.

I tried to hold my head up.
I breathed deep.
I opened my mind.
I took pictures of myself from behind.

I must not seem hopeless.
I must not be hopeless.
I must remember every pound of this.

I took pictures of a trace of a smile in the air.
A dragonfly.
A breeze.
A faint cloud.
The image of a thot.

Could it be that Brook is with us now?
Could Brook be the angel sent to hold our hearts together?
Will he be our guide thru this?
How can we know?
Do we play games with ourselves?
Do we pretend for our own comfort?
Can we know?
Can it be known?
Do we fool ourselves?

Then there was no reason to go on.

But there is reason.
There is a guide.
I have not made this up.
I did not decide on the tractor.
I did not decide on the trailer.
I did not decide on the windmill.

I was given what to do
and tho I did not believe it possible
it all came to be.

Who was this guide?
Who was this screenplay writer?
Who was this dozer of walls?

Was Brook to live in me?
Oh, come into me Brook.

I will die to let you live in me.
I will squat like you.
I will speak like you.
I will let you be me.

Will you live in all of us?
That is what we can do.
We can let Brook live in our family.
We will all be cleansed by the Brook.

I pulled the trailer up next to the hole that Wynn Massey
had dug with his back hoe while we were in Cleburne getting
Brook's body. The hole was deep. Oak roots had been severed.

I took the lid off the pine box.

I took his body out of the box and held it on my shoulder.
I read from a piece of yellow cardboard...

Naked, came he to this world
Naked, he remained
Naked, he returns to dust
We are naked in our pain
Because his life, his smile
Has now returned to God
His body, mine and Barbara's
We now return to sod.

I climbed down into the hole. Brook's body fell forward
and the stitches that held his chest together stretched and blood
seeped along the "Y" that had been carved by the coroner.

I caught him.

I held him to my breast and then I laid him down.

Naked.

Face up.

His arms to his sides.

His eyes half open.

Gone.

Brook was not in those eyes.

This was an abandoned body.

It must be buried.

It would become dirt again.

The oak tree would draw life from it.

It was that way.

There could be no questioning that.

I pulled some dirt into the hole. I began to bed it along his legs and body. As I bedded the soft tan body it hit me. I had been here before. I had been trained to do this. And I said, as tho it would be clear to anyone what I meant, "It is right that we bed the bodies of our dead babies with as much care as we bed our sewer pipes."

I pulled the dirt over his body.

Around his head.

I touched him.

His hair.

His face.

His lips.

And I pulled the dirt over his face.

I BURY MY DEAD.

THE SONGS

All songs by JAMES MICHAEL TAYLOR except where noted

SIX O'CLOCK SHADOWS

At six o'clock the shadow of the windmill throws its shade upon the grave
 The cattle chew their cud and lowly lo above the one we didn't save
 The broken body buried there beneath the sod we carried there that day
 And though we hold each other so behold the tiny brother quiet that way

.. . that way

At six fifteen the oak tree boughs her head across the grave
 The windmill cries, the Texas skies have moved her once again to lowly
 say
 Her roots the flowing waters reach and murmur, "I will treasure
 yesterday."
 And standing here I gladly share the falling rain that flows like tears away

.. . away

The hand of time has felt her way across the land. So ends another day
 Darkness turns the shadows into night and all who weep now turn to pray
 Oh, let the tender of my heart continue now to take the hurt away
 For you in me and I in you sometimes I don't know what to do I say

.. . I say

Naked came he to us. Naked now he goes for naked was his way
 Naked stand we at his mercy. Naked, knowing everything we say
 And so his store returns to God, his body now we learn is sod this way
 The lesson hardly learned yet hardly earned are the joys we share today

.. . today

THE CHILD WITH THE BEAUTIFUL NAME

What remains of an eagle that's fallen
The roots of an oak tree now claim
To draw sap for the shade for the cattle
O'er the grave of THE CHILD WITH THE BEAUTIFUL NAME

The law, it's revealed is unheeded
Embalmer's call plays in the game
The potentates are impotent in the face
Of THE CHILD WITH THE BEAUTIFUL NAME

Grief brokers stand in the lobby
They assert no legitimate claim
O'er the soul and the mind and the body
Of THE CHILD WITH THE BEAUTIFUL NAME

The sky and the prairie remind us
There are spirits we never can tame
And the windmill stands vigil at twilight
O'er THE CHILD WITH THE BEAUTIFUL NAME

The books with the numbers in Texas
Have failed that one eagle to claim
No permit was issued to bury
THE CHILD WITH THE BEAUTIFUL NAME

© 1977 Royal T Music

THE SEASONS OF THE HEART

The SEASONS OF THE HEART they come and go
 And like the winter wheat that weathers snow
 You and I will learn to fly
 Never let the music fade and die. . .

And if the seasons stop turning
 We'd all wish for Winter
 Remembering the snow like I do

The SECRETS OF THE HEART they come and go
 And like the autumn leaves that yield to snow
 You and I will learn to cry
 Never let the memories fade and die. . .

And if the seasons stop turning
 We'd all wish for Autumn
 Remembering the leaves like they do

The SEASONS OF THE HEART they come and go
 Like all the friends we've ever known
 You and I will say "Good-bye,"
 And hope it's not forever, you and I. . .

And if the seasons stop turning
 We'd all wish for Spring time
 And we'd wish for summer too...

THE PRETTIEST GIRL IN TOWN

She wears a snake skin belt that says SALLY
 And she's working at the lumberyard
 I know you're thinking, "With a job like that,
 The lady must be hard."
 She cuts that glass. Threads that pipe
 She really knows her way around
 And somehow, underneath it all she's THE PRETTIEST GIRL IN
 TOWN

*... I ask her questions just to hear her talk(I love the way she talk)
 Ask her for directions, just to see her walk(I love the way she
 walk)
 I'd ask her out for fried chicken/catfish/bar-b-q/whatever
 But the words just come too hard. The prettiest girl in Mansfield,
 Texas and she's working at the lumber yard

She carries a tradition so her shoulders must be strong
 But that don't make her manly so don't you get me wrong
 She cuts that glass. Threads that pipe
 They say she packs a gun and somehow, underneath it all
 She's her daddy's only son

I always walk in casual. Act like I don't even care
 But I don't go in on Tuesday 'cause Sally won't be there
 To cut my glass. Thread my pipe. Show this boy around
 And somehow, underneath it all,
 Be THE PRETTIEST GIRL IN TOWN
 ...

© 1977 Royal T Music

TEXAS SKIES

There was a time in Texas when the bars were full of cheer
Folks would sing their favorite songs and drink that long neck beer
They'd sing about red-necked mothers and laugh and dance and
yell
Texans had what no one had and they weren't afraid to tell

Now the TEXAS SKIES are in my eyes
Her clouds they fill my heart
And you know it came as no surprise
Since we fell apart. . .

There was a time in Texas when you could feel the crowd
And nobody seemed to notice that the music was too loud
We'd sing that country and western and rock and roll of course
And you could be a cowboy without a pickup or a horse

Now the TEXAS SKIES are in my eyes
Her clouds they fill my heart
And you know it came as no surprise
Since we fell apart. . .

There was a time in Texas when the sky would speak out loud
And every tiny bar had a band and every band had a crowd
A three piece band called Calico still knew who they were
And a storm called Texas Water had just begun to stir

And the TEXAS SKIES are in my eyes
Her clouds they fill my heart
And you know it came as no surprise
Since we fell apart. . .

© 1980 Royal T Music

I FELL IN LOVE WITH TEXAS

I was not born in Texas. I just came here for a while
 You give a state like this an inch, it turns into a mile
 I came to stay a day or two. It turned into a life
 Now I've got three hungry kids and one Texas Wife

* . . . I FELL IN LOVE WITH TEXAS. What else could I do
 I FELL IN LOVE WITH TEXAS when I fell in love with you

I really hate to sing so late. The night birds sing so sweet
 The crickets and the bull frogs, they all got that Texas beat
 There's a lot of moisture in the air, but I can stand the heat
 Of this big flat land, my guitar in my hand, I'm counting my feet
 * . . . *

You've seen your bug collections. I bet I've seen more
 Flying 'round my porch light at night. Circling on the floor
 I've learned to live with the chigger mites down around my shoes
 And the feeling of a fresh mosquito bite is a feel I never lose
 * . . . *

Every night the moon's so bright it couldn't be too far
 There was a time it took a week to drive across Texas in a car
 When you have seen what I have seen, there's no place else to go
 From the Oklahoma border to the Gulf of Mexico
 * . . . *

I was not born in Texas, but I love her just the same
 It seems there's so much music written in her name
 Just check a map, read a history book and you will see
 Why that old lone star's dug down so far inside of you and me

© 1975 ROYAL T MUSIC

BENEATH THE AUGUST MOON

BENEATH THE AUGUST MOON

My summer love is shed
Once again I'm left to ponder
What we said

Was it with word or smile
My heart was taken
I should know but can't get beyond
I'm forsaken

Father of mountains
You've washed me thru the years
Consider your child now
And wash away her tears

White River rapids
Pound out
All but the present
Help me stop asking
Where his welcoming smile went

AMEN

words by Rose Kempton and James Michael Taylor
© 1983 ROYAL T MUSIC

WELCOME TO THE CLUB

You say you're lonely. I see that you are
 Why do you think I'm standing here at the bar
 Tell me, where have you been
 Life's no play pen. Call it a bar. Call it a pub.
 WELCOME TO THE CLUB

You lost your mother. I lost a child
 Everybody else's pain must be mild
 I say, "That's naïve."
 I can't believe it
 You can call it the pits. I call it the rub.
 WELCOME TO THE CLUB

Pain has a way of making people forget
 You know what I mean, so think about it
 I say, "Think about it and don't you forget
 I'll take a taxi. You take the sub, but
 MEET ME AT THE CLUB

People in trouble, they like people in love
 They the only ones they thinking of
 That sounds like trouble but it don't sound like love
 I got the brush off. You got the snub.
 WELCOME TO THE CLUB

I lost a brother. You lost a wife.
 We're still alive, so it's on with the life
 Tomorrow may come. Take a hol't of someone else
 You call it push. I call it shove.
 WELCOME TO THE CLUB

Time has a way of helping people forget
 You know that it's true, so think about it
 I say, "Think about it, and don't you forget."
 Hand me the ticket. You keep the stub.
 WELCOME TO THE CLUB

TEXAS IS AS FAR AS I CAN SEE

Some folks say that Texas is boots and belts and hats
And Lone Star Chili's just carbohydrates, proteins and fats
I'll try to curb a snicker but I'm apt to disagree
TEXAS IS AS FAR AS I CAN SEE

Where the winds would blow on the buffalo when the prairie grass
was high
It was here and not that long ago. It almost makes me cry.
The pictures, like a movie, live in my memory and
TEXAS IS AS FAR AS I CAN SEE

Follow the plow that leads to now thru loam and chalk and clay
The arrowheads and the feather beds are strewn along the way
Take all the books I ever read and call it history because
TEXAS IS AS FAR AS I CAN SEE

They tell of far off places, where boots are back in style
Cowboy bars and shirts with stars are known to raise a smile
But I will never know for sure if it's reality because
TEXAS IS AS FAR AS I CAN SEE

© 1980 Royal T Music

SWEET RAIN

It's been a long dry spell
I haven't done that well
And when you reach a certain level
You just get by

I could draw you a map of hell
Oh, the stories I could tell
I watched a daughter of the devil
Break down and cry. She cried for...

Rain, rain, rain, SWEET RAIN
Rain, rain, rain, SWEET RAIN
Rain to wash the salt away
Rain to melt a cloudy day... SWEET RAIN

The sun can ruin the land
Turn your gardens into sand
Lap all the water from the river
Till it runs dry

Oh, the ocean's seen it all
It's lived to watch the forest crawl
Following the clouds across the mountains
Now tell me why. For...

Rain, rain, rain, SWEET RAIN
Rain, rain, rain, SWEET RAIN
Rain to wash the salt away
Rain to melt a cloudy day... SWEET RAIN

© 1983 ROYAL T MUSIC

I'M AN EAGLE

I'M AN EAGLE

I'm an arrow

I'm a swallow

I'm a sparrow

And I feel the wind blow across my feathers in the morning
Flying high above the fields. Swoop down without a warning

I'M AN EAGLE

I'm an arrow

I'm a swallow

I'm a sparrow

And I find a thermal and I ride it high
Incredible is normal when you're in the sky

I build my nest high up on a ridge crest
I stand the test, doing what I do best
I build my nest high up on a ridge crest
I fly East and I fly West

And I tuck my legs up against my body. I don't need 'em
Creatures looking for direction, I can lead 'em

I'M AN EAGLE

I'm an arrow

I'm a swallow

I'm a sparrow

© 1977 ROYAL T MUSIC

I BURY MY DEAD