



Ode on a Florida LEEF

By Bob Smith

Come gather 'round new friends and old

And listen to my rhyme;

LEEF's history I shall impart

A travel back in time.

On March thirteen of eighty-one

At a place called Mill Dam Lake,

From far and near they came to meet

Throughout the Sunshine State.

The sky was gray -- the weather cold;

The cabins had no heat.

Came seventy-six souls whose common goal

No rain cloud could defeat.

By morning's light that follows night
On that Friday it was clear --
That those who came and signed their names
Had a message for all to hear.

The Environment, that sacred trust,
To teach of it we'll need
A unity of mind and heart --
An environmental league.

Some were strangers when they met
And others friends of old,
Yet by the end of that first night
All were friends I'm told.

Throughout the day as workshops go,
We studied Nature's way.
And in the night by campfire's light
Sang songs and tunes did play.

Aboard a wagon filled with hay
We did set forth to go
To see a gator's fire red eyes,

Then watched the embers glow.

Then sat we down at tables
On Saturday's starry night
To discuss and then to vote on
This league to make it right.

Then after all the talking,
When all had had their say,
Hands were raised for the count --
That vote then made the day.
"What must we do," it was then asked,
"To keep this spark alive?"

We've made a start my friends, take heart --
This movement will survive.

The numbing cold of Sunday's morn
Was lessened by the fact
That the fire was warm,
the coffee hot
And all spirits still intact.

We must begin, it was agreed,
To nurture this newborn thing --
To lay the groundwork down with words
And solidify this happening.

“What of a name,” it was then asked,
“To identify this League?”
Environmental Educators
in Florida it should read.

The acronym would be the LEEF --
A Turkey Oak the sign
To symbolize our union with
Nature’s own design.

So volunteers were called for
Throughout the rank and file;
And everyone who raised their hand
Did so with a smile.

Then for weeks and months thereafter
They did communicate
By phone call, card and letter --

LEEF's ideals to formulate.

Now sat they down on paper

Bylaws for a constitution --

Goals, objectives and a purpose

For LEEF's dawning evolution.

To teach with skill and knowledge

Of our ecology,

Became the main objective

Of our philosophy.

To govern LEEF's activities,

Five regional directors --

To set forth policies and such

And serve as circumspectors.

Next, a president to head the team,

And a president-elect,

One keeper of the books and funds;

Now the offices were set.

A newsletter was then needed --

Some way to communicate
Environmental news to all
LEEF's means to facilitate.

And the LEEFLET we did ask
Who shall we put in charge --
The man from Tallahassee's Hills,
Our own Director-at-Large.

Committees were appointed,
And sub-committees, too.
For none were left around to shout
"I have no job to do!"

On into Spring and Summer, too,
With Autumn on the rise --
The job was done by everyone,
And the ink had barely dried.

At this founding of the Florida LEEF,
We could not begin to see
How rapidly our LEEF would grow
Into a "life style" philosophy.

My story is now ended,

As stories often do --

But as long as there's a LEEF, my friend,

LEEFERS' stories are never through.