

LAMENT FOR THE SOUTH WOOD

I will miss the lofty woods which flank
The main campus at the southern end
They absorb the rumble of traffic
Traveling unchecked around the bend

Deer, turkeys and other wildlife will
Miss the shelter of the South Woods too
They will have to find other paths where
They can ruminate as they pass through

Florida woodlands are wonderful
Since they are mostly green all year round
Some trees are older than Oak Hammock
It will be poignant to see them downed

As I walk the bend of the South Wood
I am cooled by the shade of the trees
I would linger there but there's no bench
It's like the breath of a bracing breeze

On my walks every day I peer
Into the dark depths of the tall woods
Where there are many agile squirrels
Who will have to seek new neighborhoods

I basked in forest therapy while
Digging invasive plants on my knees
Grateful for its elimination
From this impressive stand of tall trees

Some of my favorite trees were those
Immense dead ones lying on the ground
On which I could rest my weary limbs
While enjoying the birds which abound

High up in those tall pines I saw a
Barred owl who called out who cooks for you
And an elusive white-eyed vireo
And many other chirpy birds too

Soon one day we will just imagine
Where the vibrant grove of trees once stood
We'll try to recall the visions and
Senses in the best way we could

As I walk slowly by those trees now
I realize their days are numbered
In a very short time they are
All predetermined to be lumbered

Although we will lose a portion of
Oak Hammocks most renowned habitat
New interesting friends and neighbors
May partially compensate for that

I had to write this poem before
The grand South Woods disappear from view
In order to prepare myself for
A panorama strikingly new

Gene Ziegler. May 2024