

The Journey We Must Not Forget

*(A Tribute to the Cherokee people
and their Trail of Tears)*

Long ago you docked your ships
Upon our peaceful shore.
Our differences, misunderstood,
And so we went to war.

We finally chose to accept and try
To learn each other's way.
We helped each other hunt and plant,
We watched our children play.

Over time we tried your ways,
And even dressed like you.
We wore white wigs like gentlemen,
Built towns and houses too.

We learned to speak your language,
We learned to read and write.
Our separate worlds became as one.
True peace was in our sight.

Promises were broken again,
Just as they'd been before.
Counted now as animals,
Not people, anymore.

You took away our food and homes,
Left us desolate and bare.
You separated families,
With no evidence of care.

Forced to leave 'for a better life',
The great lie so often told.
But you forgot you taught us well,
We knew it was about the gold.

You stripped our dignity and our spirit,
Led like cattle, to walk in rows.
You tied our feet, all bruised and bloody,
You stripped us of our clothes.

Cherokee people, once proud and strong,
We walked for thousands of miles.
We watched and wept on that endless trail,
Leaving our dead to rot in piles.

We walked in the heat, both parched and thirsty,
With rays of sun blazing down.
Mercifully we'd stop at night,
As we slept in the rain on the ground.

When the chill of winter had come upon us,
We still had no shoes on our feet.
We continued to walk in the freezing cold,
With barely enough food to eat.

We walked on land and rode on ferries,
As the white man pushed further west.
Hatred burned deep within our hearts,
Beating drums inside our chest.

As much as we were filled with anger,
Some whites became our friends.
They even fought and died for us,
Praying for the nightmare to end.

So many people grew very sick,
Many thousands of us died.
You know this story as the Trail of Tears,
The place where my people cried.

This tragic part of history,
Shows the best and worst of men.
Today you can follow the trail we walked,
But pray this never happens again.

LJH 11/3/2016 ©

