

ODE TO BETTY JO

A D A
It was the third of June, another sleepy, dusty Delta day,
D E
I was out choppin' cotton and my brother was balin' hay.
A
And at dinner time we stopped and walked back to the house to eat,
E D E
and Mama hollered at the back door, "Y'all remember to wipe your feet!"
A
And then she said, "I got some news this mornin' from Choctaw Ridge.
E D E
Today Billy Joe MacAllister jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge."

E D E
2. And Papa said to Mama as he passed around the blackeyed peas,
D E
"Oh, Billy Joe never had a lick of sense, pass the biscuits, please.
A
There's five more acres in the lower forty I've got to plough."
E D E
and Mama said it was shame about Billy Joe, anyhow.
A
"Seems like nothin' ever comes to no good up on Choctaw Ridge,
E D E
and now Billy Joe MacAllister's jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge."

E D E
3. And Brother said he recollected when he and Tom and Billie Joe
D E
put a frog down my back at the Carroll County picture show.
A
And wasn't I talkin' to him after church last Sunday night?
E D E
"I'll have another piece of apple pie, you know it don't seem right.
A
I saw him at the sawmill yesterday on Choctaw Ridge,
E D E
and now you tell me Billie Joe's jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge."

E D E
4. And Mama said to me, "Child, what's happened to your appetite?
D E
I've been cookin' all morning and you haven't touched a single bite."
A
That nice young preacher, Brother Taylor, dropped by today,
E D E
said he'd be pleased to have dinner on Sunday, oh, by the way,
A
he said he saw a girl that looked a lot like you up on Choctaw Ridge,"
E D E
And she and Billy Joe was throwing somethin' off the Tallahatchie Bridge"

E D E

5. A year has come 'n' gone since we heard the news 'bout Billy Joe,
and Brother married Becky Thompson, they bought a store in Tupelo.

There was a virus going 'round, Papa caught it and he died last Spring,
and now Mama doesn't seem to wanna do much of anything.

And me, I spend a lot of time pickin' flowers up on Choctaw Ridge,
and drop them into the muddy water off the Tallahatchie Br