

The Last Load

by Fred J. Alexander (in memory of E.C. Alexander)

I grew up on a farm
But it did me no harm
We just plowed and we planted and hoed.
We hauled bundles of hay
Throughout the long day.
I kept hoping to **haul the last load.**

I learned lots from my mother,
Bonded strong with my brother,
Took pride in our "humble abode."
And I'm still here alive
'Cause I learned how to drive
With my dad as we **hauled one more load.**

As we hauled for the herd
I heard very few words
From my dad as we drove down the road.
He was calm and collected,
And seldom dejected,
Never anxious to **haul the last load.**

I learned by observing
His method of serving
In silence and calm as we rode.
And while feeding the cattle...
No jabber... no prattle!
Just thinking, "**Is this the last load?**"

It was not that I shirked
Or avoided my work.
I had learned not to stay in that mode.
So I stayed quite alert
And I worked till it hurt,
But I wanted to **haul the last load.**

I often was teased
But never displeased
When my quest for relief was bestowed.
And he laughed at my plot
To bypass the feedlot
And proceed to **haul the last load.**

"Right soon" or "We'll see"
Was his answer to me
When I asked if we'd quit and unload.
No straight answer I got
As I pled and I thought
That, just maybe, **this IS the last load.**

"To the house and some rest"
Was my earnest request
Since a sizeable load had been stowed.

But it still wasn't dark
It was not time to park.
There was still time to **haul one more load.**

With the sky turning gray
At the end of the day,
We'd worked all day long, and it showed!
So as darkness approached
My question was broached:
Is it now time to **haul the last load?**

There was likely some charm
To work hard on the farm...
A "blessing" so humbly bestowed.
Quitting work was absurd
As we hauled for the herd.
Not one thought that we'd **haul the last load.**

But the years went on by
Seldom thinking that I
Had a debt to my dad that I owed.
He taught me the rules
Apart from the schools
One thing learned: Not to **haul the last load.**

He was perky and spry
With a glint in his eye
And he taught me by things that he showed.
He taught me to stay
Til the end of the day,
Always waiting to **haul the last load.**

Now he lived a long life
On the farm with his wife
Who was happy to share the workload.
You would not see him frown
Though the years wore him down.
He kept **hauling and hauling that load.**

When we fought off the gloom
In his hospital room,
(He was nearing the end of his road.)
He just eyed me and said
As I stood by his bed
"**It's time... to haul the last load.**"

What a sobering thought,
To be careless and caught
Without tending your "row to be hoed."
So I challenge you, friend,
To be true to the end,
"**Til it's your time to haul the last load.**"