

He Carried Me

Fifty years ago, the coach
stopped me after gym class.
“Would you like to play basketball?”
“I really can’t sir-
have to help dad with chores.”

The next day Mom asks, “Are you in trouble?”
The coach called-
he wants to come to the farm.”
“I would like your son to play basketball.”
“Not sure,” says Dad, “he rides the bus home,
cows need milking.”
“What if I give him a ride home after practice?”
“We could try that,” says Mom.

Practice, practice I did.
He put me on the team,
then he put the team in me.
We won a lot of games, almost all of them,
state champs, then college scholarship, grad school,
career and all the rest.
For decades he sent notes, Christmas cards, answered questions,
called when my wife died,
attended Dad’s funeral, then Mom’s.

Almost unbeknown to me,
he was in my huddle- until a team mate calls:
“Coach died this morning, funeral Tuesday.”
His daughter says: “Coach wants you to be a pall bearer.”
His casket is heavy, cold wind trumpets
over the cornfield, inside my jacket.
I carry him to the pedestal above the grave.
There he will remain.

By Arlin Buyert