

Grass

(By Stan Tixier)

I'll tell you 'bout a family,
 A most important bunch,
 They aren't your friends and neighbors,
 But still I have a hunch
 You know this family pretty well,
 You see 'em every day,
 But if you think they're people,
 Then think another way.

It has a lot of members,
 They're found in every land
 They're needed and they're useful
 For helpin' people, and
 To benefit our wildlife,
 Assist our livestock too,
 A family most remarkable,
 But understood by few.

This family has a Latin name,
 A common name, and so
 It's easily identified
 Most anywhere you go,
 The Latin name's GRAMINEAE,
 The common name is GRASS,
 It's home is the Plant Kingdom,
 It's in a special class.

There's many connotations
 About what Grass could mean,
 Not everyone thinks about
 A plant that's soft and green,
 Some folks in certain cultures
 Think "Grass" is grown to smoke,
 Sometimes it's artificial,
 With "Astroturf" the joke.

A lot of urban dwellers
 Think only of a lawn,
 A park, perhaps a golf course,
 That people might play on,
 It's more than ornamental,
 To beautify a place,
 No, they're the most essential plants
 To all the human race.

This family's a converter
 Of light that's from the sun,
 In other words, of energy,
 Right into food for one
 Important thing from Grass plants,
 And other products too,
 (This family's tallest member
 Turns out to be bamboo.)

The stems and leaves of Grasses
 Grow upward from the base,
 Unlike most any other plants
 You'll find upon the face

Of this old planet, therefore
 The Grass plant is ideal
 For grazing by such animals
 That need that kind of meal.

So Rangeland is important
 To furnish forage for
 Domestic grazing livestock,
 Large ungulates and more,
 It's habitat for wildlife
 Of every kind and sort,
 With Grass the main component,
 I'm happy to report.

Grass roots are fine and fibrous
 And they enrich the soil,
 And keep it firm and stabilized,
 And so it helps to foil
 Erosion's cruel forces,
 By water and by wind,
 Make sure soil productivity
 Will never, ever end.

Now, many kinds of food crops
 Most needed by mankind
 Are part of this Grass Family,
 And several come to mind
 Like wheat and oats and barley,
 And rice and rye and corn,
 There's sorghum and there's sugar cane,
 All from the "Plenty Horn".

What was the Tall Grass Prairie,
 With soils so dark and deep,
 Became the "World's Bread Basket",
 With harvests Man could reap,
 There's Short Grass Plains, Savannas,
 And Desert Grasslands, dry,
 There's Mountain Meadows, lush and green,
 And pleasing to the eye.

There's Wheatgrass and there's Bluegrass,
 And Grama Grass as well,
 Bunch Grasses and Sod Grasses,
 There's more than I can tell,
 It's grazed and baled and combined,
 It's baked and boiled and brewed,
 It's slept on and slept under,
 It's shelter and it's food.

It feeds a world of people,
 It feeds both man and beast,
 And most folks don't appreciate
 Or understand the least
 Just how this great Grass Family
 Keeps all the Earth alive,
 Because without GRAMINEAE
 Mankind could not survive.