

## Waits Tom

### "Big Joe And Phantom 309"

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well you see I happened to be back on the east coast  
a few years back tryin' to make me a buck  
like everybody else, well you know  
times get hard and well I got down on my luck  
and I got tired of just roamin' and bummin'  
around, so I started thumbin' my way  
back to my old hometown  
you know I made quite a few miles  
in the first couple of days, and I  
figured I'd be home in a week if my  
luck held out this way  
but you know it was the third night  
I got stranded, it was out at a cold lonely  
crossroads, and as the rain came  
pouring down, I was hungry, tired  
freezin', caught myself a chill, but  
it was just about that time that  
the lights of an old semi topped the hill  
you should of seen me smile when I  
heard them air brakes come on, and  
I climbed up in that cab where I  
knew it'd be warm at the wheel  
well at the wheel sat a big man  
I'd have to say he must of weighed 210  
the way he stuck out a big hand and  
said with a grin "Big Joe's the name  
and this here rig's called Phantom 309"  
well I asked him why he called his  
rig such a name, but he just turned to me  
and said "Why son don't you know this here  
rig'll be puttin' 'em all to shame, why  
there ain't a driver on this  
or any other line for that matter  
that's seen nothin' but the taillights of Big Joe  
and Phantom 309"  
So we rode and talked the better part of the night  
and I told my stories and Joe told his and  
I smoked up all his Viceroys as we rolled along  
he pushed her ahead with 10 forward gears  
man that dashboard was lit like the old  
Madam La Rue pinball, a serious semi truck

until almost mysteriously, well it was the  
lights of a truck stop that rolled into sight  
Joe turned to me and said "I'm sorry son  
but I'm afraid this is just as far as you go  
You see I kinda gotta be makin' a turn  
just up the road a piece," but I'll be  
damned if he didn't throw me a dime as he  
threw her in low and said "Go on in there  
son, and get yourself a hot cup of coffee  
on Big Joe"

and when Joe and his rig pulled off into  
the night, man in nothing flat they was  
clean outa sight

so I walked into the old stop and  
ordered me up a cup of mud sayin'  
"Big Joe's settin' this dude up" but  
it got so deathly quiet in that  
place, you could of heard a pin drop  
as the waiter's face turned kinda  
pale, I said "What's the matter did  
I say somethin' wrong?" I kinda  
said with a half way grin. He said  
"No son, you see It'll happen every  
now and then. You see every driver in  
here knows Big Joe, but let me  
tell you what happened just 10 years  
ago, yea it was 10 years ago  
out there at that cold lonely crossroads  
where you flagged Joe down, and  
there was a whole bus load of kids  
and they were just comin' from school  
and they were right in the middle when  
Joe topped the hill, and could  
have been slaughtered except  
Joe turned his wheels, and  
he jackknifed, and went  
into a skid, and folks around here  
say he gave his life to save that bunch  
of kids, and out there at that cold  
lonely crossroads, well they say it  
was the end of the line for  
Big Joe and Phantom 309, but it's  
funny you know, cause every now and then  
yea every now and then, when the  
moon's holdin' water, they say old Joe  
will stop and give you a ride, and  
just like you, some hitchhiker will be  
comin' by"

"So here son," he said to me, "get  
yourself another cup of coffee, it's on the  
house, you see I want you to hang on

to that dime, yea you hang on to that  
dime as a kind of souvenir, a  
souvenir of Big Joe and Phantom 309"

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