

Report to the Commander of the Post

In commemoration of my stepfather's passing

At the Pearly Gates one day
An angel did record
The name of every mortal soul
To be judged before the Lord
But as the angel wrote these names
In the distance he could see
A figure dressed in royal blue
Approaching steadily
The angel saw from the new man's stripes
This was no raw recruit
And when the figure reached the desk
He gave a proud salute
"Paul Hawthorne reporting for duty, Sir,"
And replied the Heavenly host,
"Welcome, Marine. You have an appointment
With the Commander of the Post."
In a light as bright as a thousand suns
The Son of God appeared
And said, "Time to make your report, Marine,"
While the leatherneck hid his fear.

"Sir, you have my paperwork
So there's no use to lie.
I wasn't always in the right
But I gave it my best try.
Though still a kid in troubled times
I answered my nation's call
I proudly donned her uniform
And stood to give my all.
There were times I took your name in vain.
But I never was untrue
To the eagle, the anchor, and the globe
In uniform, green or blue.
Then when I could no longer serve
My nation overseas
I found that there were many things
That still were asked of me.
In peacetime I served my brothers-in-arms
A duty I took with pride.
I wooed a sweet girl and captured her heart
And took her for my bride.
We raised a family and bought a house.

And had many years together.
And, again, I wasn't perfect, Sir,
But I don't think I could've done better.
I've sweated in Asian jungle's heat
And heard "Taps" at the close of day.
I've sat on my porch in the summer sun
And watched my children play.
I've been in love, I broke a few rules.
I honored my father and mother
I tried to protect my sisters and
I tried to look after my brother.
When all's said and done I must admit
I didn't pass every test
But I always did what I thought was right
In the way that I thought was best."

The Commander looked the Marine up and down
And said, "Marine, you've done well.
You've earned a piece of Heaven, son,
'Cause you've served your stint in Hell.
I was at your side in Viet Nam
And by your bed at Walter Reed
I saw you honor your fellow Grines
Regardless of color or creed.
And when you were scared I heard your prayers
And held you close to me.
I saw the tears in your eyes when your children played
Though you thought nobody could see.
No, you weren't perfect. No man ever is.
But you called upon my name
And asked for forgiveness of your wrongs
So you're my child, just the same.
At last your long enlistment is passed
The battle is finally won.
Your billet is ready at this camp
It's time for you to come home.
So welcome, Gunny. Stand at ease.
You gave your first and best.
Your tour is done. Lay down your pack.
You've surely earned a rest."

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