

## ***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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