

# My War Is Over, My Purpose Is Not

Capt. James M. Mercure Jr., U.S. Marine Corps

When Afghanistan fell I did not expect a VA Day for us,  
When the last plane left, all I felt was sorrow and  
disgust,  
I was proud of my service until that day,  
“I made a difference” is what I would say,  
But I think of the Marines who won’t walk again,  
Or the weight on the wrists of those who lost friends,  
They went out on a limb to keep terror from  
happening,  
After twenty years the only applause was one hand  
clapping,  
“Was it worth it?” I ask, for so long at war,  
Now that it’s over I can’t say that I’m sure,  
Like Vietnam we must reflect,  
For the next war, what do we expect?  
The first thought should be “what is the goal?”  
Before we spend another soul,  
When I reflect on my service though, there’s nothing  
I’d change,  
I gave it my all when I was downrange,  
Still not forgetting the boredom and pain,  
Missing our families, our friends never the same,

We fought in our youth, now stories just told,  
At the time there was no telling, if we’d ever get old,  
I gave my Marines all that I had,  
The same love they would get from a mom or a dad,  
Anything less would not suffice,  
I had to match their sacrifice,  
By the end, the toll was great,  
But the new Marines, they cannot wait,  
They need to learn how to survive,  
In the last place that I felt alive,  
Not only in the desert sand,  
When death did its best to shake your hand,  
I have to teach them what to do,  
When hell breaks loose and we are the few,  
My uniform will one day get hung,  
Until that time when my song is sung,  
They are my job until my dying day,  
To pay my debt to the ones who lay,  
Their honor is clean and etched in stone,  
And when my brothers and sisters call me home,  
I will know I was there for my Marines,  
Until we look on Heaven’s scenes. ■

Marines take a moment to rest on 21 August 2021 during the evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Victor Mancilla, U.S. Marine Corps)

