

Vietnam War—1963–1975

A Man Less Than His Best



There once was a man, who was at his best.
Proud he was, while at his best.
Friends he had, who were at his side.
Proud they were, while he was at his best.

Crowds they once cheered, for this man at his best.
Awards he received, for being his best.
Proud was this man, who was at his best.
And proud were his friends, proud of this man who was at his best.

Then a war, it did come for this man at his best.
This man did fight, this man, who had been at his best.
Then this man, who had been at his best, became this man, no longer at his best.
He then became, as some would say, a man who was less than his best.

Then a wife, he would come to have.
A wife he would have, while he was less than his best.
A man she would have and only knew, while he was less than his best.
This wife of his would get a man, less than his best.
What this wife of his would get, would be a man, that once was his best,
But she would not see him at his best, she would see, only what was left.

To that wife of his, he is so sorry,
That she only saw what was left, and never knew this man when at his best.
He is so sorry she only knew what was left.
Oh, if only she could have known, this man at his best.
How proud she would have been, of this man at his best!

Then children they would come to have, children they would love,
Children who would only know, this man who was less than his best.
Children would think, this man was best, but his children would never know,
This man at his best, they would just know what was left.
To those children of his, he is so sorry that they only knew what was left,
And they never knew this man when at his best, he is so sorry they only knew what was left.

Oh, if only they could have known, this man at his best.
How proud they would have been, of this man at his best!
To that family of his, both wife and children alike,
He wishes they could have known him when he was at his best.

He is sorry they never saw him at his best, he is sorry that they only saw what was left!
He loves dearly, that family of his, because they loved him for what was left,
And not what was best!

This man, who once was his best,
Would come to know, that the best he could be now,
Was not the best, he had once been, but only the best, of what was left.

What was left, was not a man at his best.
What was left, was a man in his shell,
Not a man, who was once at his best.

Try as he might, and try as he could,
This man, once at his best, would now have to settle for only second best.

Now were gone, for this man, once at his best.
The crowds and the friends, who were once so proud of this man at his best,
But, sad to say, never knew him when he was less than his best,
They never knew what was left.

Now this man would become, the best of what was left,
Not the best he could have been, but, the best of what was left!
This man never dreamed he would not be his best,
This man never dreamed he would only be what was left!

But, the best of what is left,
May actually be better than what once was his best!
Only time will tell which actually turns out best,
What was once his best or what is left!

—Charles A. Peters
Vietnam War Draftee
U.S. Navy 1969–1975