

The Lie

David F. Freschi

Battalion aid station, tent sides rolled
Dreaming of a breeze that never comes
A glance out, a young grunt, shirtless
Reddish hair and an infectious grin
Bucking the MULE up the slope
Load after load, soldiers' sustenance
Eight hours, ten, left in life
Tropic night rushes in as is its wont
The heat stays, no cooling breeze
Breaks the grip, sweaty, clammy
Sleep, as always, a struggle
The occasional hammer of a '60
Evening's normal beat, no threat, no threat
That one, muffled, sounded near
No follow-up, no screams, no problem
Morning bursts as night came
Start the day's tasks- paper, shots, wounds
A death? Inside the line? Who? How?
Toe still twisted in the 14's trigger guard
No need for anything except the paper work
Copy after copy, pink sheet after pink
"PFC reddish hair, infectious grin, sustained
A single gunshot wound to head causing
Traumatic, fatal injury as indicated
On the chart
19 and done, no more infectious grin
"Sir, need to sign these."

“A little unclear doc- his mother.....”

Eyes meet, the lie is cast

“Yes sir, could have been a sniper, must’ve been.”

“I’ll amend the report.”

A choice made, the right one?

Never answered these years gone by.