**To understand a Marine you must know:**

**We left home as teenagers or in our early twenties for an unknown adventure.**

**We loved our country enough to defend it and protect it with our own lives.**

**We said goodbye to friends and family and everything we knew.**

**We learned the basics and then we scattered in the wind**

**To the far corners of the Earth.**

**We found new friends and a new family.**

**We became brothers and sisters regardless of color, race, or creed.**

**We had plenty of good times, and plenty of bad times.**

**We didn’t get enough sleep.**

**We smoked and drank too much.**

**We picked up both good and bad habits.**

**We worked hard and played harder.**

**We didn’t earn a great wage.**

**We experienced the happiness of mail call**

**And the sadness of missing important events.**

**We didn’t know when, or even if, we were ever going to see home again.**

**We grew up fast, and yet somehow, we never grew up at all.**

**We fought for our freedom, as well as the freedom of others.**

**Some of us saw actual combat, and some of us didn’t.**

**Some of us saw the world, and some of us didn’t.**

**Some of us dealt with physical warfare,**

**Most of us dealt with psychological warfare.**

**We have seen and experienced and dealt with things that we can’t fully describe or explain,**

**As not all of our sacrifices were physical.**

**We participated in time-honored ceremonies and rituals with each other,**

**Strengthening our bonds and camaraderie.**

**We counted on each other to get our job done**

**And sometimes to survive it at all.**

**We have dealt with victory and tragedy.**

**We have celebrated and mourned.**

**We lost a few along the way.**

**When our adventure was over, some of us went back home,**

**Some of us started somewhere new and some of us never came home at all.**

**We have told amazing and hilarious stories of our exploits and adventures.**

**We share an unspoken bond with each other, that most people don’t experience and**

**Few will understand.**

**We speak highly of our own branch of service and poke fun at the other branches.**

**We know, however, that, if needed, we will be there for our brothers and sisters**

**And stand together as one, in a heartbeat.**

**Being a Marine is something that had to be earned, and it can never be taken away.**

**It has no monetary value, but at the same time, it is a priceless gift.**

**People see a Marine and they thank them for their service.**

**When we see each other, we give that little upwards head nod, or a slight smile,**

**Knowing that we have shared and experienced things that most people have not.**

**So, from myself to the rest of the Marines out there, I commend and thank you**

**For all that you have done and sacrificed for your country.**

**Try to remember the good times and make peace with the bad times.**

**Share your stories.**

**But most importantly, stand tall and proud,**

**For you have earned the right to be called a Marine.**