Sergeant Piacek

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SERGEANT PIACEK

In the fall of my senior year, the notice arrived bringing Greetings, and an invitation to the armory in New Haven on a Friday afternoon. My Connecticut physician composed a letter describing my migraine headaches. An old doctor in a brown suit glanced over it, showed it to someone, and declared, “He’s in,” to the room at large. Just a week later, General Hershey proclaimed student deferments.

Naked, cold, we moved among corpsmen with their stethoscopes and chill fingers. When we had finished, Sergeant Piacek called nine men by name, to dress and leave. I wanted desperately not to exchange Harvard for Korea, yet pitied the rejected men. We remaining stood meaty and shameful while Sergeant Piacek called us in gangs of five to congratulate us on making 1-A. With each group, the Sergeant clapped one new soldier stoutly on the shoulder, saying a word or two. “Hall, you’re my lead scout.”