

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."