

**The Uncle Sam Sweepstakes**

By Bruce Schwartz

Naturally, you were all listening to the Uncle Sam Sweepstakes. Monday night. Did you find yourself coming home with your birthday calendar blank? You're furious if you say you didn't.

But I'll bet you enjoyed it. So what I'm 25? We'll worry about it later. After all, I've still got two years before it's mine, right? And by then, the war will be over, won't it? Well, won't it? I'll bet. But... Jeez, I've been in school for fifteen years; that's a long time. And I've lost a lot of it. Dammit. Maybe I can take a year off. My birthday comes up, May 30th.

The drawing commences. Hardware, bits and pieces, and the Astor Room, the Uncle Sam Sweepstakes in my apartment, room number two, girls and me.

"Not April 25," January 21 at 3:17. "Oh, God, if I'm in the first hundred I'm screwed." "If I'm in the last hundred I'm letting my deferred lamp and taking a year off and going to Europe." I'd love to do that. Through the tens, twen- ties, the forties, on into the hundreds. My stomach grows uneasy. We say to ourselves, "Come on, make eyes..." If that's my mind playing tricks, listening to two nasal Southern vowels drone away the life drawings, I can take this life. I feel like the stakes in a crap game. Maybe I'll win.

You can't win, you can't break even. You can't get out of the game—the laws of thermo- 
dynamics paraphrased. But why, why should this stupid drawing make any difference to me at all? I will not end the War or make it right if I win number 360 and need not face the draft. 

Number 180. Number 181, 182, 183, 184, 185... Not number 20-twenty-first, oh place.

"Twenty-one." Bingo. What the waiting is over and the die is cast at last. Number 116 and what do we do now? Scream in the malingre and maybe a 50-50 chance of one day opening the mailbox and:

Greetings: Your. The draft. It was four days to day under the 2-S umbrella, you kind of feel it drift to the back of your mind and the idea that one day Uncle Sam might want you next week, just off the rack. Jungle at my back, there was a M-16 in my hand. Shoot down- dow-dow-dow gook in black pajamas. Screams and falls or finds itself crying in front of burning hut "Kill him,"

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