



Classmates,

This month's memoir writer, Stuart Niemtow, is the third former resident of the first floor of Speakman Hall during our freshman year to contribute to this series; Chris Royston and I were the other two Speakman denizens. Stu also is the first '72 author to be married to a classmate, Joellen "Elly" Mazor, although they did not meet until 1980.

Before entering Penn, Niemtow, who was born and raised in Freehold, New Jersey, attended the Kent School in Kent, Connecticut. While at Penn, he majored in political science and was a member of the SAM fraternity. Following graduation, Stu attended the George Washington University Law School from which he graduated in 1975. For the first half of his legal career, Niemtow was a white collar crime prosecutor in Philadelphia; since leaving the prosecutor's office, he has been in private practice where he specializes in low-volume personal injury cases, malpractice, and products liability.

Stu and Elly live in Bala Cynwyd (PA), but spend as much time as they can in a four season cabin which they own on the mid-coast of Maine. They have two sons: Andrew, a Tufts graduate who is 27 and Josh, 21, who is a junior at Emory. When not working, Stu jogs and works out with a personal trainer twice a week. He is also a wine aficionado and previously taught courses on Burgundies and other French wines. Cooking is another one of his hobbies as he has both a smoker and a commercial pizza oven in his garage. Niemtow describes himself as a voracious reader of non-fiction wherein he concentrates on the history of the Holocaust.

Stu's submission, "How Penn Basketball (Literally) Might Have Saved My Life," had a special meaning to me as I received #32 in the initial draft lottery. Since I did not read the *New York Times* as regularly as our writer did, I ended up enlisting into the US Army Reserve and kept Harrisburg safe from the Red invasion from 1972 through 1975.

Please see below for the 24th memoir in our series.

There still remain 21 memoirs to meet the goal of "45 for 45." In upcoming months, there will be memories submitted by Mark Blum, Jane Brady, Marlene Price, Mike Cook, John Daly, and Nancy Gerth. These publications will reduce the "magic number" to 16.

If you would like to share your own story with the rest of the class or have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at Friar72@gmail.com or by telephone at 973-951-6203. Click on the [Class of 1972 Website](#) to read all the memoirs.

Best,

Jeff Rothbard, President
Class of 1972



Picture of Stu and his "lifesaver", Alan "Coins" Cotler.

HOW PENN BASKETBALL(LITERALLY) MIGHT HAVE SAVED MY LIFE

By Stuart Niemtzow, C'72

Pause in Draft Would Let Thousands Escape Service

***Indicated 3-Month Delay in Call-Ups
Would Free Many Who Lost Student
Deferments or May Give Them Up***

In the winter of 2014, I bumped into my friend and fraternity brother, Alan Cotler, and his wife at a Marcia Ball concert in Philadelphia; we chatted and laughed for quite some time.. Upon reflection, the next day I realized that Alan and his Penn basketball teammates might, literally, have saved my life as the Class of '72 was approaching graduation.

During our era, all male undergraduate college students received the 2S classification and were deferred from the draft. Presumably to counter the inequities which, as set forth below, Credence Clearwater described in "Fortunate Son", a draft lottery was conducted in the fall of 1969 while we were at Penn.

*It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no senator's son, son.
It ain't me, it ain't me; I ain't no fortunate one, no,
Yeah!*

*Some folks inherit star spangled eyes,
Ooh, they send you down to war, Lord,
And when you ask them, "How much should we give?"
Ooh, they only answer More! more! more! yoh,*

Random lottery numbers were assigned according to your birth date, so there were 365(maybe 366) of them. My birthday and two others in Σ AM, my fraternity, born on May 3, received No. 30—almost a guarantee to get drafted once our student deferments expired.

So, during fall 1971, after failing to come up with any physical excuses to duck the draft, this "unfortunate son" explored the options for National Guard units in my hometown of Freehold, NJ (where a young Bruce Springsteen, who my father had delivered, was then pondering his life as a poet). The options were pretty scary and burdensome, but all of them beat a possible trip to Saigon.

By the fall of 1971, our senior year, the glorious Penn basketball run of the Bilsky-Wohl era had ended, as T.S. Eliot foresaw, not with a “ban, but as a “whimper” with a 90-47 NCAA tournament loss the previous spring to Villanova and Howard Porter (which was later nullified as Porter had signed an ABA professional contract while still at Villanova.) Nevertheless, many of us loyal fans continued to cheer on the Quakers, especially since the Calhoun-Morse led team with Cotler moving into the starting line-up continued to be competitive in both the Ivy League and the Big Five.

During winter break our senior year I took a round the clock drive to Miami in my mother’s Ford Country Squire Station Wagon with three other guys. Although I had never been to Florida, I had gone to Europe that summer.

I have always been a newspaper addict, and the *New York Times* is and always has been my “hometown” newspaper, (even after I moved to Philadelphia in 1975. I always sought it out wherever I was, including that lucky morning in December 1971 as I sat outside waiting to get into Wolfie’s deli on Collins Avenue in Miami Beach. The main reason I bought the paper was to check out the Penn basketball box score from the Kodak Classic holiday tournament in Rochester. I think Penn beat St. Bonaventure, but am not sure and am happy to leave that to the haze of nostalgia. (Editor’s note: Penn won, 70-69). More importantly, as I was reading the front page, I yelled “holy shit” to my friend, who was then finishing law school. I asked him to read the article to see if I understood what it could mean to me.. After he finished the article, we both agreed that it was describing a legitimate strategy to get out of the draft: Melvin Laird, the Secretary of Defense, had goofed and let slip that the Nixon administration, then facing pre-Watergate break-in prospects for re-election, was not planning to draft anyone for the first three months of 1972.

Were this to happen, the below article from the *Times*’ archives, explained, people who dropped their deferments in 1971 (there were two days left of that year) would be “home free” in 1972 and forever. (The details are in the article, though they are etched in my psyche, too.) Suddenly, “30” didn’t seem like my unlucky number. I called home and told my parents to read their copy of the *Times*, check with whomever they wanted, and get back to me with any reasons why I shouldn’t drop my draft deferment immediately. y.. I was at the motel pool when I was paged and told “go for it.” Later that day, I drafted the letter and sent it by certified mail, return receipt requested from a Miami Beach post office to my local draft board I was saved. (I also went to the Orange Bowl game the next day which was between Nebraska and Oklahoma for the national title, in another lucky twist thanks to a frat brother.)

Though I had no way to realize it then, I would have been safe at any rate: to my knowledge no one was ever drafted after 1971 to serve in Vietnam or anywhere else. “Vietnamization” has been effected in 1971, and by early 1972, all U.S. combat troops were forever pulled out of Vietnam. But, to this lucky 21-year old, Penn basketball (and an addiction to the New York Times) had – as far as I could tell-- literally “saved my life.” The round the clock drive north was a lot happier, that’s for sure.

Pause in Draft Would Let Thousands Escape Service

*Indicated 3-Month Delay in Call-Ups
Would Free Many Who Lost Student
Deferments or May Give Them Up*

By **DAVID E. ROSENBAUM**
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 29—
Tens of thousands of men with
low draft lottery numbers will
be able to escape military serv-
ice if no one is drafted in the
first three months of next year,
as Defense Secretary Melvin R.
Laird hinted earlier this week.

According to officials at Se-
lective Service headquarters
here, more than 70,000 physi-
cally qualified men with lottery
numbers below 125, the cut-off
number for this year, graduated
from college in June and lost
their student deferments but
have not yet been drafted.

Under Selective Service reg-
ulations, these men will be
placed in what is called the Ex-
tended Priority Group, Sub-
group B, meaning that they are
eligible for induction between
Jan. 1 and March 31, 1972, but
not after then.

If there are no draft calls in
January, February and March,
these men will be free from
liability to the draft forever,
unless there is a national mo-
bilization of the magnitude of
that in World War II.

Furthermore, men in college
who are 20 years or older and
who now hold student defer-
ments and very low lottery
numbers can drop their defer-
ments before midnight Friday,
Dec. 31, and be assured that
they will not be drafted if
there are no calls in the first
three months of 1972.

Many thousands of men are
in this category, bringing to-
well over 100,000 men the total
that will be able to avoid the
draft if there are no calls in
January, February and March.

If there should be draft calls
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The New York Times

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A PAUSE IN DRAFT WOULD FREE MANY

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In the first three months of next year, they would be filled entirely by the men in the Extended Priority Group, including those who drop their deferments, starting with those with the lowest lottery numbers and working up.

Defense Department experts said that if there were calls in February or March they would be extremely low. They noted that the Army had to cut its troop strength by well over 100,000 men between now and June 30 to meet the force level set by Congress.

Draft lawyers and counselors around the country were attempting today to locate their

clients, most of whom were on Christmas vacation from college, to tell them to write their draft boards with instructions to cancel their deferments, with the letter postmarked before midnight, Friday.

William Smith, a Los Angeles lawyer, who is recognized as an expert in Selective Service law and probably has more clients than any other lawyer specializing in draft law, said in an interview today that a man with a deferment should meet the following criteria before dropping his deferment:

☐ He must have been born in 1951 or before.

☐ He must have a lottery number below 50.

☐ He must be absolutely certain that he was not classified 1-A on Dec. 31, 1970.

Must Cancel on Request

Mr. Smith said that he had many clients who met all these criteria, and he is advising all of them to have their deferments canceled. Under Selective Service rules, a draft board must cancel a man's deferment if he requests in writing that it be done.

Mr. Laird said at a news conference Monday that there would be no draft calls in January and "quite possibly" none in February and March. Defense Department sources said today that they were almost certain that no one would be drafted before April.

Selective Service officials agreed today that if there were

no calls before April the men in the Extended Priority Group, Subgroup B, would no longer be eligible for the draft. They also acknowledged that men who dropped deferments before midnight Dec. 31 would be placed in that category.

One draft official said he was "a little disturbed" that Mr. Laird had made his announcement before the first of the year. If he had waited until next year to make the announcement, this official noted, then men with deferments would not have known to drop them and get an unintended break.

Finds Odds 'Pretty Good'

Men born in 1952 and afterward were not eligible for the draft last year, and thus are not affected by Mr. Laird's announcement.

Mr. Smith said he was advising only men with lottery numbers below 50 to cancel their deferments because he did not believe that the ceiling above which men will not be drafted would exceed 50 in 1972.

"There's always the chance Mr. Laird will change his mind," Mr. Smith said, "and I think if your number is above 50 the odds are better if you hold onto the deferment. The odds are pretty good both ways."

Of several lawyers and draft counselors interviewed today, only one said he was not advising his clients who met Mr. Smith's criteria to cancel their

deferments. This was Joe Tuchinsky of the Midwest Committee for Draft Counseling in Chicago, one of the most respected counselors in the country.

Mr. Tuchinsky said that he felt the ceiling number in 1972 would be so low that he would not want to advise young men to drop their deferments and then have the Defense Department decide to draft men before April.

If no one is drafted in January, February and March, it will mean that virtually no graduating member of the college class of 1971 will have been conscripted. Since June 30, only 10,000 men have been inducted, and few of these were among the 400,000 men who graduated last June.

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