

Peace On The Brain
Margi Curtis

Periodically a formidable pile of ransacked mail becomes stranded on my kitchen counter. Not a pretty sight, these ripped envelopes whose contents lie randomly discarded; perused and forgotten catalogues; unopened requests for money. I take a deep breath and begin to read and sort in order to reclaim my workspace.

I sift through the wreckage of junk mailings and Christmas cards. In the pile, amidst holiday messages of 'Peace', appears a nondescript white postcard with very small green type. Save or throw, I have to read it to decide. The name at the top is my oldest son's. The title reads 'Selective Service Division'. Just a few seconds pass before I realize that I am reading the remaining portion of what, in my youth, was termed a 'draft card'. I sit down. My oldest child is now officially registered with the Federal Draft Board.

My next thought is of Eighth grade, when a few of us brazenly wore black arm bands, painted antiwar signs in the school artroom and marched around the track singing "Give Peace a Chance". We had older brothers. Never since those years has the word 'Lottery' had a pleasant connotation to me.

Next to his name are the numbers 4-10-78. That was the day heaven opened up to me, and shone in the endless brown eyes of my child. Here was the culmination of nine months' discomfort and 18 hours of mind-numbing pain. This little being was alive next to me on that extraordinary day of birth.

4-10-78 are now the numbers which prove this man-child is 18, old enough to go to war for his country. Old enough to kill or be killed.

I have cultivated a vision of myself, cloaked in a dark cape, my sons' hands in mine, leading them to Canada in the night. Blast this "civilization", its world wars, police actions, foreign conflicts, mutually assured destruction. This violence to attain peace, despite those Christian words: "He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword."

I have seen their tragic faces, the mothers who stand at the military funeral, next to the casket. Their eyes are drained of life, their expressions are of deadpan resolve as they take the three-cornered flag. The government thanks you for the use of your child. As my Vietnam Vet friend says, "It's a sick world." He watched those 18 and 19 year old guys die, under his command.

For now, I am lucky. There isn't, currently, a major war in progress. In 5 years my next male child will be on the list. I pray, hope and beg for peace -- much more than a word on a Christmas card.

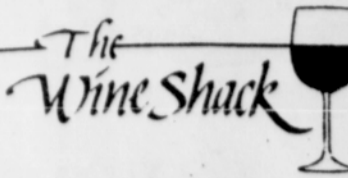


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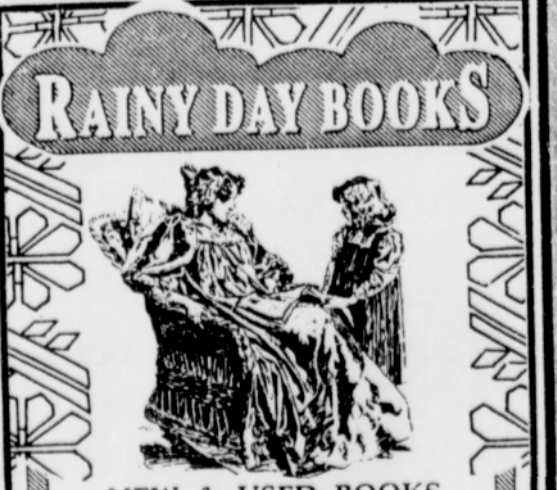
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