

Uncle Sam Wants Me. Introduction. Tarot Card Reading

I only had a reading once in my life. And it was dead on. It was 1968 and I was nineteen and a half years old. Like every other able-bodied young man, I was subject to military conscription i.e. the draft, and the distinct possibility that I could be sent to Viet Nam to fight. I eschewed a 2-S student deferment even though I was a full-time college student and eligible for that temporary pass. I did not believe that it was fair that guys who could not qualify or afford to go to college should have to go in place of those that could.

Since I was against that particular war, there was no way that I would enlist. So, it all came down to the likelihood of getting drafted. The lottery had not yet been implemented, so the draft board in my county was taking the oldest eligible males first. At that point they were drafting all of the un-deferred twenty-year-olds. Which meant that I was about six months away from receiving a draft notice.

To those that have never experienced it, it is hard to imagine what it is like to have the most powerful nation in human history coming for you personally. To rip you away from your family, friends, and home, then send you to a place on the other side of the world. To kill or be killed by people that you

have nothing against. Many of my similarly aged male friends had already been killed or horrifically wounded, physically and/or psychologically, in the conflict. The old WWII posters proclaiming “Uncle Sam Wants You” had morphed to something more personal, in my mind: “Uncle Sam Wants Me”.

For a couple of years, I had already been worrying about getting drafted. And it was fast approaching. Some guys talked of going to Canada. Others of disabling themselves in order to be found physically unfit for service. Neither of those appealed to me and I had no idea what to do. I was scared shitless. It was in the front of my consciousness every single day.

My hangout spot was a dank basement apartment, In Iowa City, occupied by three of my buddies, where we smoked a little weed, drank an occasional bottle of wine, and rarely went to class. We would have smoked and drank a lot more but we were just too damn poor. One day a friend of one of the guys showed up. His name was Bruce L. and he had been in Haight/Ashbury in San Francisco in 65 and 66. One of the early hippies. During his time there he had become a purveyor of the mystical arts. One of those arts was the reading of the Tarot.

After a long chat which revealed that he was a very interesting person, Bruce asked if anyone wanted a reading. I quickly volunteered. Bruce informed me that it would work best if I had a main question to center the reading on. So, I immediately posed the question that had been recurring in my mind every single day for the past couple of years; “Will I get drafted?”

Bruce shuffled the deck, getting me involved in the process a couple of times. Then he started the reading. He slowly turned over the cards, taking time to explain what each card represented. Although I had a long-standing skepticism about the mystical arts, his demeanor and intelligence lent credibility to what I was seeing and hearing. I wasn’t totally convinced, but I was definitely keeping an open mind. The reading lasted thirty or forty minutes. When he was finished, he silently took a few more minutes to ponder what the cards had revealed. I found myself getting really excited about hearing what the results would be.

He then slowly and methodically explained the upshot of the reading. I do not remember the rich details that he communicated, but the conclusion was: “The draft came up three times and!”

More about that later.

The reading turned out to be eerily accurate. But I never had the Tarot read for me again. Maybe I wasn't sure if anyone would ever be able to do it like Bruce did. But I often reflected that having that prescient information did not change the course of my life or effect my decision making on the hugest issue of my young life, which I continued to deal with and think about every day for years to come. I finally came to the conclusion that one must live one's life day by day regardless of what glimpse they may have into their future.