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Bring 'Em All

Eugene Richards
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Bring 'Em All was commissioned by the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) in celebration of its 50th anniversary. With such prestigious origins, this collection of photographs and interviews could have been a compendium of the pioneers of emergency medicine. Instead it “pays homage to the heroic men and women of America’s emergency care system, who work to preserve the health of their communities every second of every hour of every day.” Although some of the founders of our specialty are discussed within, the pages contain a cross section of the everyday heroes of emergency medicine: not just physicians but also nurses, physician assistants, residents, paramedics, and flight nurses.

Brian Zink provides a brief history of the evolution of the specialty in the foreword. He ends with his answer to what possesses anyone to do what we do, an answer that carries just as much passion and insight as those provided by the residency applicants sitting across from me on interview days.

The book’s title comes from Jen Farris, the charge nurse on duty at Aurora Medical Center the night of the Aurora, CO, theater shooting. Although the emergency department (ED) was under renovation and only 2 physicians were on duty, her answer to the dispatcher about how many patients they could handle was “bring ’em all.” The book opens with quotes from and photos of Paige Archey and Gilbert Pineda, two of the emergency physicians who helped care for the patients that night, but it is not all

high-intensity gore and glory. Rather, the book is intended to reflect something that every emergency provider is familiar with, something that happens on every shift: brief but intense and often surprisingly deep interactions, only the subject is now the provider, not the patient. “The stories in this book reflect the cadence of those interactions: short, concise, powerful.”

The images and interviews were captured by photographer Eugene Richards (also known for *The Knife and Gun Club: Scenes From an Emergency Room*, published in 1989). Richards traveled across the country for 2 years, working not just in EDs but also on the streets, in the wilderness, everywhere we are called on to provide care. Looking through the pages, I imagined how soldiers must have felt looking at images in *Life* magazine: this is an outsider, an artist, who understands what I do and has found a way to make it beautiful and present it to the world. Every picture is familiar. Even though I recognize only a few of the faces, I recognize the settings, the situations, the look of compassion on the face of a provider at the bedside. A hallway conversation. A smiling child. Breaking bad news to a family member over the telephone. I have been there. Any one of us could be in these images.

Although most of us have never experienced something as intense as the Aurora shootings, the words of Dr. Archey are something that all of us can identify with: “[W]e managed somehow. We just put our heads down and kept moving.” That could be said about most shifts. *Bring 'Em All* truly provides a “glimpse into the heart and soul of the specialty and what it means to serve on medicine’s front line.” As Drs. Kivela and Jouriles write in the introduction, I too feel privileged to serve alongside the accomplished clinicians featured in these pages. A book like this brings out the heart of what we do.

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