Joining an increasingly popular list of advanced level textbooks focused on specific areas of paramedic practice is the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) Airway Management—Paramedic text, written by well-known EMS educator Gregg Margolis.

The text provides a comprehensive, nicely written approach to both the basic and advanced aspects of managing the broad spectrum of airway abnormalities encountered in the unpredictable field environment. The flow of the text is simple to follow and takes the reader down a logical path, similar to that encountered in field practice. The illustrations are clear, and the photographs are a good mix of “real patients” and simulated situations designed to illustrate skills. (Why is it as EMS providers, we make it a point to pick out what’s “real”?)

The author uses several interesting tools to effectively bridge the gap between an academic presentation of the science and a practical, real-world approach to patient care. The first is a series of case studies that build upon themselves with each successive presentation, allowing the reader to think through the changing dynamics of an evolving patient presentation. This approach not only reinforces the content discussed, but also challenges the reader to work through the elusive process of developing solid clinical decision-making skills.

The case presentation scenarios contain just the right mix of “life in the streets” descriptions and focused findings. The cases also reinforce good medical practice unrelated to airway management, but essential to street medicine (“… as you pull the jump bag, oxygen kit and AED out of the rig …”).

Finally, the text uses several break-out boxes that focus on important points related to documentation and safety.

Margolis’ Airway Management—Paramedic is a solid, well-written, soup-to-nuts textbook that covers the science of airway management in a fashion that also focuses on the art of developing a comprehensive, practical approach in the unpredictable world of out-of-hospital medicine.

—Edward M. Racht, MD, Medical Director, Austin/Travis County EMS Dept.

Population: 485
By Michael Perry: Perennial Press (HarperCollins), 2003

America is very much a rural land. On your next flight, look out the window and you’ll see miles and miles of sparsely inhabited country. What you see is rural America, and those who live in these nether regions are proud to call these areas home. In his book, Population: 485—Meeting Your Neighbors One Siren at a Time, Michael Perry captures the essence of rural America.

In the book, Perry describes returning to the land of his roots after a time away from home. His roots are in the little farming community of New Auburn, Wis.—population: 485. When he returns, he finds things are different—and the same. Eager to regain the acceptance of his neighbors, Perry joins the local volunteer fire department and becomes an EMT.

Perry takes us on a rollercoaster ride of emotions that any person who has been in EMS for some time has experienced. He describes, in humorous detail, the irony that is rural EMS. He writes of life and death, drunks and car wrecks, the old and the young—but most of all he writes about his neighbors. On a superficial level, Population: 485 is about being a rural EMT and volunteer firefighter. However, it’s more about the concept of community and the spirit of those who share this land. In this era, when it seems that so many people first ask, “What’s in it for me?” Perry provides a refreshing look that captures the heart and essence of community service, loyalty and simply being a good neighbor.

He gives us a glimpse of rural life—perhaps a glimpse at a rapidly fading part of our nation’s history. In rural America, people are thankful for what they have, and they don’t expect a lot. They are a...
strong-willed lot who don’t blame
the EMTs when somebody dies.
They know that they take certain
risks in living away from population
centers and wouldn’t have it any
other way.

Perry describes, in perfect phrases,
the feelings we have all experienced.
He depicts in detail a call in which a
young, attractive female state trooper
was killed in an auto-pedestrian acci-
dent on an interstate highway. Perry
keeps seeing the image of her hand
sticking out from a blanket. Each of us
recalls similar images: Mine is a pair of
dirty bunker boots in a corner of the
trauma room. The boots belonged to
a firefighter whom I had unsuccessful-
ly tried to resuscitate following a struc-
tural collapse during a commercial
building fire. Perry, in his own way,
says it’s all right to hurt, all right to feel
and, most importantly, all right to care.

Population: 485 is a short read, and
you’ll find Perry’s writing style remini-
sicent of Garrison Keillor with some
Mark Twain thrown in for good meas-
ure. Younger folks might mistake him
for Tom Bodett of Motel 6 fame.
Regardless, it’s a good read and
should be required reading for all
EMS personnel.

Perry is an interesting fellow. I had
the chance to meet him recently in
New Hampshire, and he is indeed
enigmatic. Although from a farming
community in the Midwest, he earned
a nursing degree and then went to
work as a ranch hand in Wyoming. He
likes the theater, poetry and dance—
but can kill and clean a deer with the
best of them. His writing places you
right at home with the locals in rural
Wisconsin—only to have him sudden-
ly turn a Rocco phrase that takes you
elsewhere. He was the first firefighter
in New Auburn to ever miss a fire
department meeting because of a
poetry reading. He is not your average
rural firefighter—and that is what

Nobel Laureate Saul Bellow once
wrote, “Writers seldom wish other
writers well.” This is not the case for
Michael Perry. I wish him well, and I
hope he writes many more books.
More people in this world (and in
EMS) need to understand how it is
to live in small towns like New
Auburn, Wis., Bartlett, N.H., or even
Midlothian, Texas.

—Bryan Bledsoe, DO,
FACEP, EMT-P