



Stuff your eyes with wonder...live as if you'd drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories.
- Ray Bradbury

There is nothing new under the sun but there are lots of old things we don't know.

- Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty; not knowing what comes next.

- Ursula K. LeGuin

For in the final analysis, our most basic common link, is that we all inhabit this small planet, we all breathe the same air, we all cherish our children's futures, and we are all mortal.

- John F. Kennedy, *Speech at The American University, Washington, D.C., June 10, 1963*

THE VIEW FROM THE PODIUM

by Joe Lex, MD FAAEM

Book List

I doubt you'll get this before Christmas, but the absolute must-have book this year for emergency practitioners is Brian Zink's [Anyone, Anything, Anytime: A History of Emergency Medicine](#), recently published by Mosby Elsevier. Dr. Zink gathered his information over the past several years and has written a volume that, in the future, will be referred to as the definitive text. He traces the beginnings of emergency medicine from a much-maligned, "not needed" specialty to a respected member in the House of Medicine. He interviewed the giants—John Weigenstein ([From Seminary to Aviation to Medicine](#)), George Podgorny ([A Boy from Persia Becomes a Carolina Surgeon](#)), Ron Krome ([From the Tough Streets of Baltimore to Detroit](#)), Richard Levy ([From the "Hollers" of Kentucky to the Halls of Harvard](#)), and dozens more, including many names familiar to AAEM members—Peter Rosen ([The Street Fighter from Brooklyn](#)), David Wagner ([A Quaker Disposition and a Liberal Heart](#)), Lewis Goldfrank ([A Young Activist in the World of Medicine](#)), and many others.

I was again reminded of AAEM's important role in the most recent decade of emergency medicine. In Chapter Eight ([Experiencing and Exploiting Success](#)), Zink pulls no punches discussing the apparent failure of ACEP to address the needs of individual practitioners and its perceived favoring of the corporate practice model. Then on page 257, he introduces us to The Phoenix, James Keane, AAEM's founder (although he once incorrectly called us "The American Academy of Emergency Physicians") and explains the necessity of our upstart organization. If you've forgotten, go download a copy of [The Rape of Emergency Medicine](#) at no charge from http://www.aem.org/rem/The_Rape_of_Emergency_Medicine.pdf.

In Chapter Nine ([Back to the Future](#)), Zink quotes the late John Weigenstein: "I regret that AAEM split off. I wish that hadn't happened, but I understand why it did."

I enjoyed Zink's book tremendously; get your own copy and savor it. But fair warning – it's a tome that should be plastered with a Parental Warning sticker on the cover. The founders of our specialty were, for the most part, a rough-and-tumble bunch that faced much adversity. The language they use to describe their experiences is earthy, but a reflection of their true character. Example: read Peter Rosen's account of how he talked the original ABEM Board of Directors out of "grandfathering" themselves into the specialty as accounted on page 162. You'll howl with delight at his pungent suggestion.

12th Annual Scientific Assembly

I hope you've made your reservations at the San Antonio Rivercenter Marriott for AAEM's 12th Annual Scientific Assembly, scheduled for February 16 – 18, 2006. There are two days of

preconference courses, including an all-day Presentation and PowerPoint workshop on Tuesday, February 14th. Other Preconference sessions include the popular Business of Emergency Medicine Workshop, Advanced Electrocardiography, 2005 LLSA Review Course (bring your wi-fi enabled laptop and do the test on-site), the NAEMSP Medical Direction Overview Course, Trauma Resuscitation for the Community Doc, and Treating Emergency Department Patients with CNS Illness and Injury. Two post-conference courses on Saturday, February 18th, are designed specifically for medical students (Getting into the Residency You Want, with Kenneth Iserson, MD FAAEM, and James Tysinger, PhD) and for emergency medicine residents who take the ABEM inservice exam on February 22nd (Preparing for the Inservice: What to Expect on Your Test).

We're still expecting Vice Admiral Surgeon General Richard Carmona, MD MPH FACS, as our keynote speaker but, as you know, scheduling an upper-level government official is an uncertain proposition. Our back-up keynote speaker is Abraham Verghese, MD FRCP(C) MFA DSc, whose topic is "What the Pen Teaches the Stethoscope." Dr. Verghese is a remarkable speaker and author whose talks, books and essays have inspired thousands of physicians worldwide. (His essay *Resident Redux*, in the June 15, 2004, issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine* particularly moved me and served as inspiration for my opening plenary remarks at MEMC3 in Nice, France.)

As an added bonus, you can hear Mark Victor Hansen, "America's Ambassador of Possibility," also known as "that Chicken Soup for the Soul guy" in a second keynote address on Friday morning. Mr. Hansen has been awarded the Horatio Alger Award, the Ambassador of Free Enterprise Award, and the Visionary Philanthropist for Youth Award, and is a member of the Sales & Marketing Executive International's Hall of Fame.

I'll let you read about the other "usual" presenters (who are anything but usual – Panacek, Mattu, Weiss, DeBlieux, Iserson, McNamara, Wood, Mallon, Rosen, Harrigan, Kline and Karras) in the preconference program. I want to point out three special speakers arranged by Kevin Rodgers, MD FAAEM: Col. Lee Cancio, MD, the Clinical Trials Program manager of the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research at Brooke Army Medical Center will give us the most up-to-date information about emergency burn management; Maj. James Barry, MD, will discuss From the Frontline: What We're Learning About Trauma in Iraq; and LTC Robert T. Gerhardt, MD MPH, will talk on Hemoglobin Substitutes: Are They Ready for Prime Time?

There will also be a panel discussion on Pharmaceutical Company influence on Emergency Medicine, with guest Robert Goodman, MD, founder of *No Free Lunch*.

As usual, this incredible learning/CME experience is free for AAEM members. It's also your chance to hear candidates for the Executive Committee and Board of Directors present their qualifications before you vote. And once again, John Madden, MD FAAEM, will supervise the Open Microphone session, your unique

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opportunity to audition for future Scientific Assemblies by presenting a 25-minute talk on a topic of your choice. *Audio-Digest Emergency Medicine* and *Emergency Medicine Reviews and Perspectives* (EMRAP) will both record for possible use in their commercial CME offerings.

First Inter-American Conference on Emergency Medicine (IACEM)

Take advantage of this incredible opportunity to get solid CME from AAEM and visit one of the most amazing cities of the world – Buenos Aires, Argentina. Education leaders and AAEM members Peter Rosen, Lewis Goldfrank, Judith Tintinalli, Michelle Biros, Antoine Kazzi, Mark Langdorf, Kenneth Iserson, Kumar Alagappan and Jeffrey Kline are among the speakers at the Sheraton Buenos Aires April 18-21, 2006, for this remarkable international gathering, organized by Aaron Hexdall, MD FAAEM. I was fortunate to speak in Argentina during 2005, and eagerly await a revisit to this most remarkable city.

This is a cooperative venture with ACEP, which will send current President Frederick Blum, Immediate Past-President Robert Suter, and many other representatives for both Spanish and English language tracks. Don't even hesitate on this one – you'll take home memories you can't even imagine. Find out more at www.emcongress.org.

Medscape Partnership

Robert Glatter, MD FAAEM, and I recently visited the offices of Medscape in New York City (www.medscape.com) in order to help them establish an emergency medicine presence on their website, which is used by 18,000 physicians who self-identify as emergency physicians, yet have no homepage of their own. Medscape furnishes more than 80 percent of on-line CME in this country and accounts for more than 15 percent of all CME awarded. We've established a subcommittee to best exploit this opportunity, so look for more information in future *From the Podium* columns.

Insurmountable Opportunities

We are confronted with insurmountable opportunities.
- *Walt Kelly (1913-73), American cartoonist, illustrator, created "Pogo"*

This is my last *From the Podium*. AAEM took a chance five years ago when they appointed me, a non-academic, as Chair of the Education Committee. I was a community ER doc at a busy hospital on the edge of Philadelphia and made my desire known that I felt capable of doing the job. Much has changed in five years. AAEM is recognized as having the premier Oral Board Preparation Course in the nation thanks to Mitch Goldman, MD FAAEM, and his incredible group of instructors. We've revitalized the Written Board Review Course thanks to Sam Kini, MD FAAEM, and now Richard Shih, MD FAAEM, and Bernard Lopez, MD FAAEM. The Jam Session has helped hundreds of people pass their Written Board exam thanks to Amal Mattu, MD FAAEM. AAEM is becoming recognized in the International Community as a strong resource for education – MEMC3 was a

huge success (thanks Ghazala) and the Inter-American Congress should draw several dozen Americans to the gorgeous city of Buenos Aires (thanks Aaron Hexdall, MD FAAEM). We've got a Speaker's Bureau thanks to Larry Rancey, MD FAAEM. Our Scientific Assembly material is recorded and distributed to thousands of people worldwide through EMRAP thanks to Mel Herbert, MD FAAEM, and many members have found an outlet for their writing talents at EMedHome thanks to Richard Nunez, MD FAAEM. Our Open Microphone sessions have provided an opportunity unique in medicine thanks to John Madden, MD FAAEM, and have allowed us to discover such treasures as Michelle Lin, MD FAAEM, Rob Dearing, MD FAAEM, Mike Winters, MD FAAEM, and others. None of these projects would have been possible without the administrative help at the Milwaukee home office – Kay Whalen, Helen Kopec, Janet Wilson and Tom Derenne have made this job incredibly easy and I cannot thank them enough. And Ghazala Sharieff, MD FAAEM, who has served as my Co-Chair and right hand for the last few years, deserves special thanks.

Now I'm a "real" academic, teaching residents at a major inner-city hospital / university. Just as I tried to bring that practitioner's perspective to my committee position, I'm attempting to do the same at Temple University. I love being in the academic environment, and I wouldn't have wanted to do it any other way – 14-years as a community ER doc, 7-years as an ER nurse, 4-years as an ER tech, 3 years as a disc jockey, and an Army medic for 3-years with a year in Vietnam.

No, I'm not retiring. Why do people retire? Usually to travel and do things they like. How lucky can I be? I speak out of town once or twice monthly and teach and care for sick people, the things I enjoy the most, on a daily basis. What advantage does retirement offer? Besides, I've still got to help Temple get some regional CME programs and a speaker's bureau.

My position here was predestined. Above the desk in my office is an original 1953 comic strip drawn and signed by Walt Kelly, whose quote opened this section. (Kelly was also responsible for the unforgettable "We have met the enemy, and he is us.") In this cartoon, Churchy LaFemme addresses Pogo and two bugs about Howland Owl's new university: "I is openin' my class on turtles afore owl gits to open the whole u-niversity on accoun' I is ready." I owned this treasure for more than a quarter-century before the inevitable happened and I became faculty at Temple, *aka* Owl University (www.owlsports.com).

I'll continue to serve the Education Committee in any way I can. For instance, I plan to be Scientific Chair for MEMC4, and I'll initially work on the Medscape start-up.

But now it's time for new faces and especially new ideas. The Education Committee is being placed in the capable hands of Kevin Rodgers, MD FAAEM, and Sam Mossallam, MD FAAEM. Look for a new picture and a new byline in the next issue of *Common Sense*. It's been a great run. Thanks for helping me achieve so much.

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