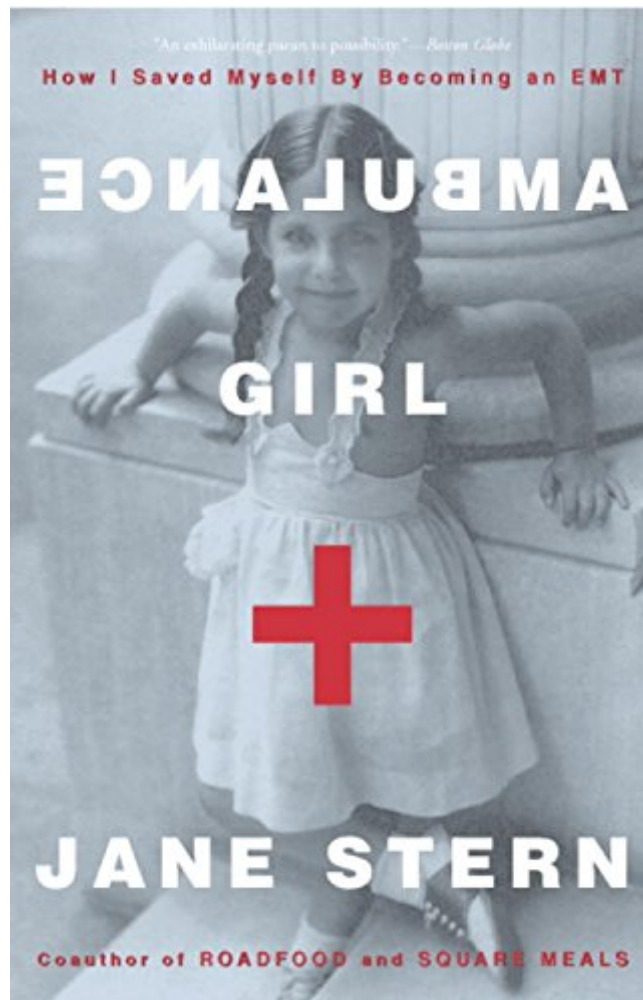




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# Ambulance Girl: How I Saved Myself By Becoming An EMT



## Synopsis

The basis for the movie starring Kathy Bates, *Ambulance Girl* is an inspiring story by a woman who found, somewhat late in life, that "in helping others I learned to help myself." Jane Stern was a walking encyclopedia of panic attacks, depression, and hypochondria. Her marriage of more than thirty years was suffering, and she was virtually immobilized by fear and anxiety. As the daughter of parents who both died before she was thirty, Stern was terrified of illness and death, and despite the fact that her acclaimed career as a food and travel writer required her to spend a great deal of time on airplanes, she suffered from a persistent fear of flying and severe claustrophobia. Yet, this fifty-two-year-old writer decided to become an emergency medical technician. Stern tells her story with great humor and poignancy, creating a wonderful portrait of a middle-aged, Woody Allen "ish woman who was "deeply and neurotically terrified of sick and dead people," but who went out into the world to save other people's lives as a way of saving her own. Her story begins with the boot camp of EMT training: 140 hours at the hands of a dour ex-marine who took delight in presenting a veritable parade of amputations, hideous deformities, and gross disasters.

Jane "overweight and badly out of shape" had to surmount physical challenges like carrying a 250-pound man seated in a chair down a dark flight of stairs. After class she did rounds in the emergency room of a local hospital. Each call Stern describes is a vignette of human nature, often with a life in the balance. From an AIDS hospice to town drunks, yuppie wife beaters to psychopaths, Jane comes to see the true nature and underlying mysteries of a town she had called home for twenty years. Throughout the book we follow her as she gets her sea legs, bonds with the firefighters who become her colleagues, and eventually, comes to be known as *Ambulance Girl*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a great book for anyone who is far too young to sit in a rocking chair all day, but at the age where finally realizing dreams of being a super model probably aren't happening either. Jane Stern found a great way to get her groove back!!! I discovered this book accidentally while searching online to see if other women in their 40s feel invisible when kids leave the nest (especially stay at home moms). Many of us seem to feel lost and "fired from our jobs" as our children become independent. This wasn't exactly the situation with author but I related to her place in life.

Just finished reading this. I had read and loved *Roadfood: The Coast-to-Coast Guide to 900 of the Best Barbecue Joints, Lobster Shacks, Ice Cream Parlors, Highway Diners, and Much, Much More*, now in its 9th edition and *Square Meals*, and was a bit startled to recognize Jane Stern's name appearing as the author of a book on a very different subject. It was a little sad to read about how messed-up her early life had been, and how the apparently hereditary craziness of her side of the family nearly overtook her and nearly destroyed her marriage. But then, plunging herself into learning to deal with medical-emergency stuff which had always grossed her out, not only allowed her to help other people -- it got her mind redirected from depression, and becoming a more pleasant person to be around doubtless helped improve her marriage. As a 50-something out-of-shape gal myself, I could totally empathise with Jane's concerns about being physically able to do some of the more strenuous tasks expected of an EMT. A fascinating read, which went more quickly than I had expected.

I LOVED this book. I'm not much of a reader... other than gossip magazines, if that counts. I may have read one whole book in the last 10 years. But I tore through this book cover to cover and was truly sad when I was done.

I love a good story and good writing. That should be enough to recommend this. Add to the mix an honest telling of a life changing period of a woman's journey from isolated and invisible to courageous and part of her community and I'm very interested-but she had me sold with firemen, fire trucks, and fire houses. I'm the mom who regularly took my boys and girl to the most fun and shiny place in town-our local fire station.Jane Stern reminds me of all the reasons there is mystery and myth around the heroic lives surrounding us everyday. She took me on her healing journey of step by step moving from comfortable dysfunction to a new story and I liked the ride.

I purchased this book as a "bargain book" for a couple bucks. My experience with bargain books has been that about 90 percent of them are poorly written and barely worth what you pay for them. This book was definitely the exception! The author writes with humor about her lifelong battle with anxiety. I felt her pain, but also laughed out loud. As a middle age woman, she becomes determined to do something that is way outside of her comfort zone - become an EMT. She is very transparent about her neuroses, her appointments with her psychiatrist, her inner demons. Everything is hard for her, as she'd really prefer not to leave her house, but she goes after her goal with great determination and succeeds! I found her inspiring and feel the book has great appeal for a wide cross-section of people: middle age women, EMTs (or anyone considering it), anxiety sufferers, or anyone seeking a little inspiration to get out of their comfort zone.I hope the author writes a sequel. I would definitely purchase it, even if I had to pay full price!

I bought this book partly because it takes place in a town near mine in CT, and I wondered what the life of an EMT might be like. It's more than that, however. Becoming an EMT is the author's way of fighting depression and her various fears. It's a quick read and the energy doesn't flag. I did learn one important thing. I'm glad I don't have to be an EMT

I really didn't know much about Jane Stern other than her work with ex-husband Michael Stern about American food & pop culture. I had a vague impression that she might have some phobias, but other than that knew very little.She reveals her considerable list of fears as she progresses through the EMT training she decided to take on as a means to banish some of her demons. For a while, I was thinking, "Jeez, just get over it..." and then as the book progressed, realized she was in fact getting over it. It took loads of courage to take the training - just her descriptions of the classroom part of the course made me cringe, never mind the actual physically doing it, once she passed.I even came away wondering if I could do what she did. Good read.

What an interesting book! Jane writes with honesty & wit. It was especially enjoyable to read because I live in Connecticut & am familiar with Georgetown, Redding, etc. I can honestly say I now have even greater respect for the men & women who volunteer to provide medical services to their neighbors (& for the paid professionals too). This responsibility is definitely not something for the faint of heart to take on. Thank heaven we have so many dedicated people to respond to our emergency calls. You guys & gals rock! :)

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