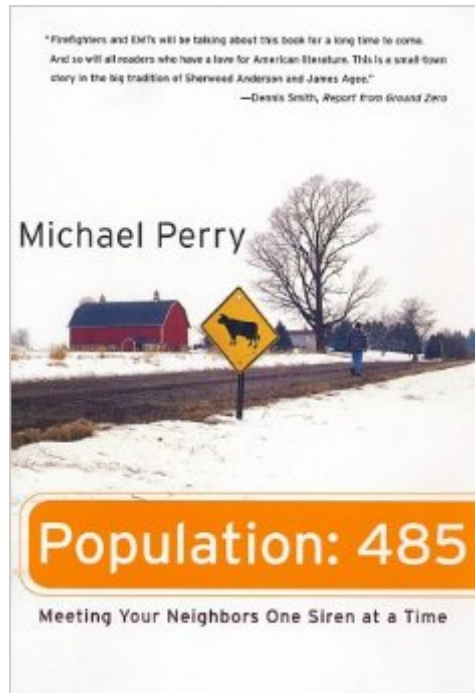


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# Population: 485: Meeting Your Neighbors One Siren At A Time



## Synopsis

Welcome to New Auburn, Wisconsin (population: 485), where the local vigilante is a farmer's wife armed with a pistol and a Bible, the most senior member of the volunteer fire department is a cross-eyed butcher with one kidney and two ex-wives (both of whom work at the only gas station in town), and the back roads are haunted by the ghosts of children and farmers. Michael Perry loves this place. He grew up here, and now -- after a decade away -- he has returned. Unable to polka or repair his own pickup, his farm-boy hands gone soft after years of writing, Mike figures the best way to regain his credibility is to join the volunteer fire department. Against a backdrop of fires and tangled wrecks, bar fights and smelt feeds, he tells a frequently comic tale leavened with moments of heartbreaking delicacy and searing tragedy. Tracing his calls on a map in the little firehouse, he sees "a dense, benevolent web, spun one frantic zigzag at a time" from which the story of a tiny town emerges, building to a final chapter that is at once devastating and transcendent.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Author Michael Perry is a poet, registered nurse, EMT (emergency medical technician) and volunteer firefighter in northern Wisconsin. Perry grew up on the family farm and rarely went to town for anything but school activities. Now, 20 years later, he's been away and moved back. He lives in a weather-worn-house on Main Street in this town of 485 where good-paying jobs are 30- or 40-miles away. Perry's memoirs, *Population: 485, Meeting Your Neighbors One Siren at a Time*, is a breathtaking account of life in small-town America where weirdoes and oddballs, the upscale and the downtrodden, the fast lane and the slow pace all merge as the fabric of community life. After

years away he returns and writes about being a townie and foreigner at the same time. The result is funny and moving, an account of things that are truly important in life with insights that can only be provided by one who faces moments of life and death daily. Rarely but occasionally childbirth occurs in the arms of the rescue squad. One of Perry's ambulances carries the insignia of a stork, departmental recognition of its delivery on-board. More frequently and without regard to religious preference, income status, political belief or necessarily age, rescue squads see life at its other end, and Perry takes you on a ride that shifts between laugh-out-loud storytelling and delicate description of heart-stopping tragedy. Population: 485 could be about this town or any other small town. Once through this book will not be enough. I find myself turning again and again to the description of the farmer's wife armed with a pistol and a Bible or that of the senior member of the fire department, a cross-eyed butcher with one kidney and two ex-wives (both work at the only gas station in town).

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