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The Cover

There is a great deal to be said for keeping calm in emergencies, but it's also sometimes true that "If you can keep your head when all those about you are losing theirs, you have probably misunderstood the situation completely."

That seems to be the problem on this week's cover, which illustrates a real case described in the SPECIAL COMMUNICATION beginning on page 43. This cartoon neatly illustrates one of the article's main points: The best tools and techniques of emergency medicine, in the hands of the best-trained medical and paramedical staff, are of little use if the rescuers can't get to the patient.

Nancy L. Caroline, MD, author of this article on emergency medical care, said recently that she used to compare big-city emergency medicine to battlefield surgery, with one exception: "We didn't see shrapnel wounds." But the Bicentennial celebration changed that: "We finally saw some shrapnel here in Pittsburgh on the Fourth of July. Some people found an 18th century cannon and tried to fire a salute with it." Apparently artillery pieces do not age well; the gun exploded and Dr Caroline and colleagues were summoned to treat the wounded patriots. "Most of the wounded had been standing behind the gun," she related.

One of the cases described in the current article is an acrophobic's nightmare; Dr Caroline has one for the claustrophobic as well—performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation in a sewer.

The artist who drew this week's cover and the other cartoons that illustrate the article is Peter Caroline, a Boston advertising executive and brother of the author.—PAUL SAMPSON

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