

Wakefield Daily Item

Editorial Column “Book Marks” by GAIL LOWE

“Power Failure: A Nurse’s Story” by Terri Arthur

The woman who gave readers “Fatal Decision: Edith Cavell WWI Nurse,” a historical novel based on true events, recently launched her second book, this time a work of non-fiction.

“Power Failure” by Terri Arthur is a first-hand, detailed account of her experience as a volunteer Registered Nurse assigned to manage the medical clinic in a high school emergency shelter on Cape Cod set up by the American Red Cross during a “bombogenesis” that struck the East Coast in February 2013. A bombogenesis is categorized as a collision between a blizzard and hurricane. “Nemo,” as meteorologists dubbed the storm, was rated one of the worst five since the beginning of the century.

From the start, Murphy’s Law prevailed. To stay safe, sick and elderly people were evacuated from their homes and sent to the shelter, only to encounter a lack of food, uncomfortable cots to sleep on and a massive power failure. There was the woman with a feeding tube. A man with COPD who depended on an oxygen concentrator to breathe. A 90-year-old woman with cellulitis on her lower legs. And another woman with the eating disorder pica, who went missing, only to be found later in the school’s cafeteria foraging for food.

Arthur, one other nurse and an emergency medical technician were brushed off by a woman Arthur referred to as “Pat McNutter.” Though McNutter had no medical knowledge, she had been placed in charge of the emergency shelter. She claimed that Arthur and the others were overreacting when they voiced their concerns about the power failure and was adamantly opposed to sending any of the sick to a hospital. Because management of the shelter was so wanting, the author felt the need to use fictional names for the people involved, including McNutter’s, or risk backlash from officials on Cape Cod. She admonished McNutter for failing to feed patients and moving them to a hospital.

The story is told in 23 chapters and contains an epilogue, photographs of storm-related headlines published in the Cape Cod Times and accumulated snow up to three feet high. Arthur’s descriptive narration puts the reader in the middle of the action so that the tension and sense of urgency are felt throughout the book.

“Power Failure” is 243 pages and priced at \$19.95. To order a copy, e-mail the author at terri.arthur@gmail.com. For more information, visit www.TerriArthur.com.