

On the Runway

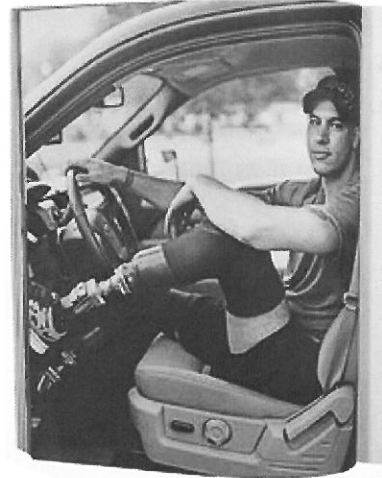
ALL THINGS FASHION



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A Homecoming for Bruce Weber

By [CATHY HORYN](#)



Patricia Wall/The New York Times A photograph from Bruce Weber's new book.

For the last 11 years, at Christmas, the photographer Bruce Weber brings out a new edition of his "All-American" series, softbound books of photos and essays from his Little Bear Press that reflect his curiosity about other people's lives. Mr. Weber has a passion for the kinds of stories that often don't appear in the mainstream media, and he tells them in full. You can find his books at bruceweber.com.

I was particularly struck by his latest, "Just Life," and an eight-part story about military bravery and homecomings. The rest of the book includes essays about the Peace Corps founding director R. Sargent Shriver, an interview with the filmmakers D.A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus, and various movie idols whose mugs and then some papered Mr. Weber's adolescent walls. And you can appreciate the connections between Hollywood he-men and soldiers. But Mr. Weber has touched on something quite relevant.

He got permission, with the help of the actor Gary Sinise and Genna Griffith, the director of the Achilles Freedom Team of Wounded Veterans, to visit soldiers recovering at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland. Two of the soldiers, Matias Ferreira and Justin Gaertner, both Marines, are partial amputees as a result of land-mine explosions in Afghanistan. They are good-looking guys who have become even more involved in competitive sports since their rehab began. Mr. Weber photographed Corporal Gaertner and Lance Corporal Ferreira during physical therapy, with and without their mechanical limbs, and in dress uniform.

There's obviously a Weber quality of beguilement in the pictures, but there is also plainness and honesty. He accepts what the two soldiers have to say about their injuries, with the same sense of grace. "You do what you have to do," Corporal Gaertner said. "Everybody plays a role in this country. I don't want you to feel sorry for me, because this injury is part of my job."

"At first I was really nervous," Mr. Weber said by phone on Thursday, recalling his first visit to Walter Reed this fall. "How should I treat these guys? Should I be overly sensitive to their injuries? In the end, it was like me going to a university and taking pictures of students. They have that spirit. I admire them so much." He added: "Not every story there turns out so well. I think there's a lot of sadness about what their life is going to be like."