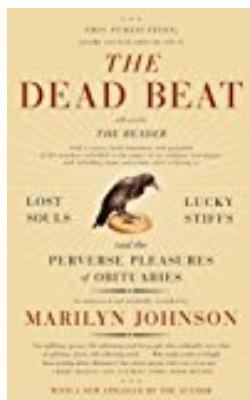


# [PDF] The Dead Beat: Lost Souls, Lucky Stiffs, And The Perverse Pleasures Of Obituaries (P.S.)

Marilyn Johnson - pdf download free book

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#### Books Details:

Title: The Dead Beat: Lost Souls, Lu  
Author: Marilyn Johnson  
Released: 2007-01-30  
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#### Description:

Once upon a time, journalism pros duly instructed their greenhorn grads to seek out community papers and the obit pages as logical entrance points into the world of newspaper reporting. Working

for cash-strapped local papers allowed novices to practice writing everything from hard news to lifestyle features. Obituaries, meanwhile, were a rung on the ladder of major publications, albeit the lowest. The musty, dusty obit pages also traditionally hosted aging reporters put out to pasture. Not any more, argues Marilyn Johnson in her unabashedly knock-kneed love letter to the obit pages, *The Dead Beat*. Today, august publications like *The New York Times*, England's *Daily Telegraph*, *Independent*, and *The Economist*, and Canada's *Globe and Mail* use exalted members of the fourth estate to turn out smart, hip tributes to widespread, almost cultish, acclaim. Why? Because, as Johnson persuasively demonstrates in her book, truth is almost always stranger than fiction and a well-written, deeply researched obit is not only a vital historical record but a damn fine read over coffee and toast. "God is my assignment editor," cracks Richard Pearson of the *Washington Post* and if that isn't more interesting than what's going on in your city council chambers, author Johnson and those working the so-called Dead Beat don't know what is.

As Johnson explains in free-wheeling prose, today's obit writers are virtual folk heroes with global Internet followings and their own conventions. With care and an ear for gentle humor, Johnson guides her readers through the surprisingly structured, labyrinthine obit scene, pausing to meet the writers while pondering both the essence of our being and why, in the right hands, the life of an average Joe can be just as riveting as the shenanigans of a high-flying playboy. And infinitely more resonant. Savvy J-school professors and their students are advised to take heed. --*Kim Hughes* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**From Publishers Weekly Starred Review.** A journalist who's written obituaries of Princess Di and Johnny Cash, Johnson counts herself among the obit obsessed, one who subsists on the "tiny pieces of cultural flotsam to profound illuminations of history" gathered from obits from around the world, which she reads online daily—sometimes for hours. Her quirky, accessible book starts at the Sixth Great Obituary Writers' International Conference, where she meets others like herself. Johnson explores this written form like a scholar, delving into the differences between British and American obits, as well as regional differences within this country; she visits Chuck Strun, the *New York Times*' obituary editor, but also highlights lesser-known papers that offer top-notch obits; she reaffirms life as much as she talks about death. Johnson handles her offbeat topic with an appropriate level of humor, while still respecting the gravity of mortality—traits she admires in the best obit writers, who have "empathy and detachment; sensitivity and bluntness." The book claims that obits "contain the most creative writing in journalism" and that we are currently in the golden age of the obituary. We are also nearing the end of newspapers as we know them, Johnson observes, and so "it seems right that their obits are flourishing." (*Mar. 1*)

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