

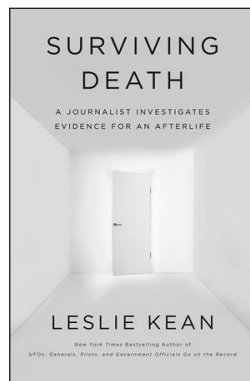
Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for an Afterlife, Leslie Kean, Crown Archetype, New York, 2017, 408 pages.

Journalist Leslie Kean gained bestseller fame for her 2010 book, *UFOs, Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials*. In this comprehensive work, she turns her investigative skills on survival of death, examining the best evidence to date. For more than a century, the question of survival has been intensely researched by scientists, physicians, metaphysicians, and others.

Surviving Death is a hybrid book, part journalism, part personal experience, and part anthology. The book is divided into sections on different aspects of survival: spontaneous past-life recall cases, especially of children; out-of-body, near-death experiences, and actual-death experiences; end-of-life experiences; and mental, trance, and physical mediumship. In addition, there are discussions of nonlocal consciousness, the interlude between lives, interactive apparitions, discarnate personalities who are “drop-in communicators,” and more.

Kean has done thorough, exhaustive research, and provides new material from experts and sources. Her work is augmented by 10 original chapters contributed by experts in the field and experiencers. The researchers are Jim B. Tucker, MD; Pim van Lommel, MD; Kimberly Clark Sharp, MSW; Peter Fenwick, MD; Julie Beischel, PhD; Loyd Auerbach, MS; Alan Gauld, PhD, and Erlendur Haraldsson, PhD. They are joined by medium Stewart Alexander and experiencer Cyndi Hammons.

In her Introduction, Kean establishes the framework for her evaluation of the evidence. There are two general camps of thought: the survivalists, who accept certain assumptions; and the living-agent psi (LAP) adherents. The survivalist perspective holds that at least some dead people have continuing personalities and memories of their lives, and have the desire and psi ability to contact the living. In addition, they have knowledge of what is going on in the living world. The LAP perspective holds that those factors might not be generated by the dead, but by the living, who possibly have unlimited psi access to all information, including the minds of people who have knowledge of specific dead individuals. LAP is the successor term to an earlier hypothesis put forth several decades ago called “super-psi.” It holds that since we do not know the limits, if any, of nonlocal consciousness, then we cannot rule out the possibility that information supposedly provided



by the dead, and memories of past lives, comes from the world of the living: other minds, archived information, and “forgotten” memories.

Journalists are trained to keep themselves and their opinions out of their work, and to subject all information to rigorous analysis. True to journalistic form, Kean is not an advocate for any point of view, which forces her to waffle back and forth. She presents cases that are hard to refute, but feels obliged to follow up immediately with observations such as “of course this doesn’t prove...” It’s as though she wants to please experiencers and believers without alienating the scientists.

The late Ian Stevenson, PhD, one of the leading researchers of past-life recall cases, once commented that the evidence does not scientifically prove reincarnation, but rather provides compelling “evidence in support” of reincarnation. That’s the place we are in when it comes to survival, and Kean straddles this fence.

She breaks away from her journalist role to present her own experiences with afterlife communication, and how she was affected by them. She consulted mediums who gave astoundingly accurate information from her younger brother and ufologist Budd Hopkins, with whom she had a close relationship. She also experienced physical phenomena (such as lights going on and off) from her brother.

“For me, some of the convincing studies and case accounts have not had the same impact as have my personal experiences, even though these experiences are likely to be less convincing to anyone else,” Kean observes.

The survivalist versus LAP debate means that no conclusion about survival of death can be reached, no matter how compelling is the evidence. In her Conclusion, Kean acknowledges that evidence is “highly supportive” of the survival hypothesis, but then states, “The living-agent psi versus survival debate is an unsolvable one since the LAP alternative can never be ruled out beyond a shadow of a doubt.” This has been a significant stumbling block, and experiencers hoping for a seal of approval from science are likely to have a long wait. LAP will remain an obstacle until further advances in consciousness research.

Kean draws no conclusion herself on survival, but leaves the opinions to the experts, and the ultimate conclusion to the readers. In light of her monumental research and experience, I would have preferred Kean to take a stand, one way or the other.

In all, *Surviving Death* is a significant contribution to the literature. Kean does an excellent, thought-provoking job of condensing a complicated subject.

There is no bibliography, but there are extensive chapter end notes. The book is indexed.

— Rosemary Ellen Guiley