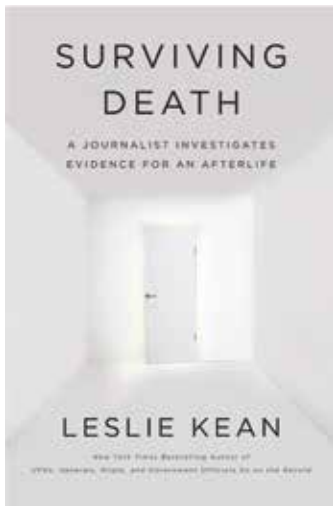




Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for an Afterlife?

by Leslie Kean -- Crown Publishing Group 2017



Leslie Kean has enjoyed a solid career as a respected investigative journalist, often delving into areas that other authors dare not go. Her New York Times bestselling book ***UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Governmental Officials Go On The Record*** probed established evidence, and brought attention to the secrecy and bias towards UFO phenomena. In the tradition of shaking up the status quo, and addressing her own curiosity into some of life's greatest mysteries, her latest project

examines perhaps the biggest question of them all – do we survive physical death?

Leslie conducted her investigation as any responsible journalist would by speaking with the various medical doctors, scientists, philosophers, researchers, medium practitioners and others in an attempt to gather the evidence and try to separate fact from fiction. I would imagine that she had a rude awakening as she found that every argument suggesting survival had a counter-argument, and discerning the truth was not an easy task. The project was further complicated by an unexpected twist in her investigation. Much to her amazement the subject matter took on a new dimension, as she had personal experiences that defied logic and presented a dilemma. She must have been torn as she pondered whether or not, as an impartial investigative journalist, personal experiences should become part of the content. However, in my opinion, she made the right choice by weaving these experiences into the scientific reporting. Many people are interested and intrigued by scholarly evidence, but it is often the personal experiences that people relate to most.

Presenting the best evidence is often more powerful when it comes directly from the authority, so Kean devoted much of the book to chapters written by the researchers themselves.

This worked well, but I must admit that I may be somewhat biased as many of the authorities are on Forever Family Foundation's Board.

The first five chapters are devoted to the subject of reincarnation, and strong cases of past life memories of children are examined. One such case, researched by Jim Tucker, MD, was that of James Leininger, who from the age of two began giving factual evidence of his prior life as a World War II fighter pilot. Obscure facts given by James were later confirmed by research; facts such as the specific airplane he flew, circumstances of his crash, the name of the boat from which his airplane took off, names of fellow pilots, etc. Like other similar cases, the children who remember past lives often exhibit unusual behavior related to their prior personalities. As pointed out by Dr. Tucker, such cases "suggest that the consciousness or 'mind' of a person - which retains memories, knowledge and emotions - survives death and is reborn." These cases, much like the other disciplines of research, strongly suggest that consciousness persists after the brain no longer exists.

The next area of evidence explored comes from the rich research of near death experiences. Compelling cases are highlighted, such as the experience of Maria who was in a hospital having cardiac arrest while a team of physicians and nurses desperately tried to keep her alive. The monitors showed she was clinically dead with no heartbeat or breath, and paddles were in place to shock her heart. Maria was subsequently resuscitated successfully, although she was still unconscious and on a ventilator. Upon her awakening she was animated and had something interesting to tell whoever would listen. She described to Kimberly Clark Sharp, a medical social worker, the fact that she had left her body and was positioned near the ceiling in a corner of the room, watching her resuscitation as it was taking place. Maria accurately described who was in the room, where they were

positioned, the placement of the machinery, and the fact that some printouts from the electrocardiogram had been kicked under the bed by a staffer in the room. She went on to tell how her position then changed to being outside the hospital, above the door of the first floor emergency room, and described the shape of the driveway, the vehicle line-up and the automatic doors. However, the most intriguing fact that Maria related was how she also found herself four stories above the ground floor and saw an object sitting outside on a window ledge. She went on to describe the object in detail, a single tennis shoe, dark blue with a scuffed side next to where the little toe would go, with a white shoelace tucked under the heel. A subsequent search for the evidence discovered the shoe, exactly as described. As Ms. Clark states in the book, "Our consciousness does exist outside of time and space and the confines of our bodies. This knowledge, because of a simple shoe, provides the comfort of a possible continuity not just when near death, but also at our actual death."

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Peter Fenwick, MD, a researcher and neuropsychiatrist, delves into the research involving deathbed visits from dead relatives. His own research involves not only such visions, which reassure the dying, but other end of life experiences witnessed by those surrounding the dying person. His conclusion by examination of the data is that such experiences are much more common than people think, and perhaps occur in up to 60% of those who die while conscious.

After examining the scientific evidence that consciousness can act independently of the brain, Kean wondered if there was evidence suggesting that a spirit entity, a person no longer with a body, could actually communicate with our physical world. This began her personal exploration, and she set up sessions with two highly recommended mediums, Laura Lynne Jackson and Sandra O'Hara. Kean did her homework before the sessions, learned how to be a good sitter and score the evidence, and was careful to hide her identity in arranging the appointments. She describes the evidence provided in these sessions, which was astounding, and represented an extraordinarily high degree of accuracy. Extremely personal information delivered in such a fashion was a bit earth shattering to Kean as she struggled

to assimilate its significance. Yes, she was already well aware of the scientific explanations, but the personal experience of feeling as if her loved ones were sitting beside her were life changing. Science may have opened the door to exploration, but the mediums had now spurred her on to greater heights of discovery. Fortunately, as described in a chapter written by Julie Beischel, PhD of the Windbridge Institute, Leslie discovered that systematic scientific research utilizing blinding protocol reinforces the fact that some people can indeed speak to those no longer in the physical.

Leslie felt that the reader must be taken through a gradual process of taking in the material. To that end she saved her discussions of physical mediumship to near the end of the book. That was probably a wise decision, as her experiences with the physical medium Stewart Alexander were so extraordinary that it defied "rational" thinking. During several sittings, Kean witnessed the medium go into trance, and then subsequent levitations of objects, banging of drums, disembodied voices coming from various parts of the room, ringing of bells, materializations of living hands that could be touched, communication from discarnate entities, and a host of other phenomena that defy materialist explanations. Leslie left the experience wondering how she would go back to living her normal life, and then wondered, "Should the rest of the world know that this is happening?"

Throughout the book Leslie is very careful to present other possible explanations for all the phenomena. Stephen Braude, PhD, a well-respected philosopher and researcher, provided a constant reminder of the "living agent psi" hypothesis, the possibility that the evidence can be explained by psychic functioning of the living as opposed to discarnate communication. This has been a question plaguing survival research for years, as it is very difficult to separate the two. However, in the end, I believe that the author's personal conclusion was that when you take the totality of the scientific evidence, as well as the anecdotal reports and personal experiences, survival of bodily death is the most plausible explanation. As she concludes, it is ultimately up to each one of us to decide how to incorporate these things that transcend the physical world. She reminds us that human capabilities and mysterious forces "have the power to redefine who we are, and to change our perception of life and death."

This is a well-written and balanced book that will open the minds of all who dare to absorb the material. ***Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence For An Afterlife*** should be required reading for anyone that has ever questioned what happens after death. ▲

— Bob Ginsberg