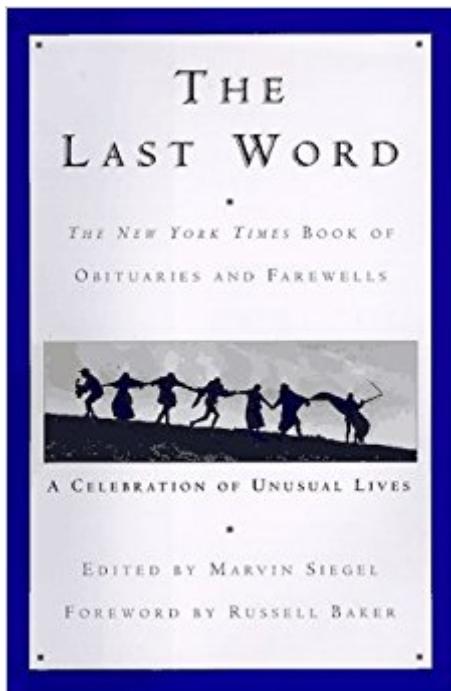


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# The Last Word: The New York Times Book Of Obituaries And Farewells : A Celebration Of Unusual Lives



## Synopsis

With a Foreword by Russell BakerAnecdotal, inspiring, frequently amusing, and elegantly concise, the obituary page of The New York Times has earned a huge following. The Last Word is a fascinating compilation of 100 of the most colorful, entertaining, and touching obits that have appeared in the last few years. The collection deliberately omits celebrities to concentrate on an eclectic mix of lesser-known men and women whose compelling lives have often changed the world they lived in. You may not have heard of Julian Hill, but he changed your life as the inventor of nylon. You'll meet others like him: a quiet man who braved the hostility of racists to integrate the University of Georgia; a woman who turned chopped liver into a million-dollar business; the man who gave the Beat Generation its very name; and a reclusive woman who turned a \$5,000 nest egg into a \$22 million fortune that she left to a school she never attended. The collection also includes commentary by some of the Times's finest writers and contributors such as Jules Feiffer, William E. Geist, James Gleick, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Anna Quindlen, William Styron, and Wendy Wasserstein.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I teach Memoir Writing to local seniors and I routinely use this book as an example of outstanding biography. It's one thing to write a 250 word bio but quite another, and much more demanding, to pen a few-hundred-word last goodbye to someone and do it with panache. The NY Times has three books of obituaries, this is the most recent. The quality of the writing is, in many cases, superior to anything in the rest of the newspaper(all the obits here were published in the Times). I especially

like the reviews of Robert McG Thomas, who died within the past year at age 60. His obituaries deserved a Pulitzer. His obits are worth the price of the book. Everybody deserves a last word. These obits are not just about famous people but about average joes and janes who have been extraordinary human beings. I'd even recommend this book for spiritual reading because the lives here are inspirational. I teach writing and am always on the lookout for examples of prose that will knock my socks off. This is one helluva book.

Rather than an ode to death, this book cherishes lives once lived by all kinds of people. Whether brilliant or simple, rich or poor, actions great or discreet, each of the people written about contributed to society in a meaningful (and often surprising) way. Equally outstanding are the authors of these obituaries, whose writing talents manage to entertain, educate and move the reader deeply without being maudlin. Even more importantly, this book forces us to examine our own lives: what will people say about us when we've faced our Maker? For those of us who come up pitifully short, this book inspires even the common man to contribute to society, and strive for -- and hopefully, attain -- spiritual immortality.

You wouldn't think a book of obituaries would be entertaining, but it is when the obits are well-written and celebrate the lives and characters of the 100+ people found in this collection. The subjects are most often unknown to the majority of us, but the various authors (including well-known NYT obituary author Robert McG. Thomas, Jr.) humanize each subject and inspire you to contemplate your own life. Most essays are a couple of pages long, and there is an introduction by Russell Baker.

I ordered this book, as something I could read at the pool, on a recent trip to Florida. I wasn't expecting much, but it sounded interesting. I have to say it was one of the most enjoyable books of the year for me, and I read a lot. It was so life affirming. I just hope the Times puts out a sequel.

A delightful collection of lives which I read cover to cover in one sitting. Offers a fascinating glimpse of la comedie humaine--often witty, sometimes sad, always remarkable. I was turned onto this book when it was selected for the Book-of-the-Month Club--I cannot recommend it enough to anyone interested in the lives of others. A great gift.

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