

## The Obituary Page

“Robert J. Wussler, CBS Executive And Aide to Ted Turner, Dies at 73

Peter Keefe, 57, Creator of ‘Voltron’

William L. Murphy, 65, Ex-Prosecutor; Served in Staten Island for Two Decades”

- **New York Times: Obituaries, Monday June 14, 2010**

For obvious reasons, I do not expect to read my obituary in the New York Times - or anywhere else for that matter.

However, I do have a friend who read his obituary published in the Times and he had a very difficult time explaining to his family and friends how he could, at one and the same time, be very much alive and yet have published a lengthy obituary about his death – especially with the Times being the “paper of record” and all. It was a paradox, he finally said: two opposites joined together, but both true.

My friend made a good faith effort to inform the Times of its error but when he reached the obituary editor, she did not seem much interested in his call, dead or alive.

Even though he did not know the deceased, he felt it would be honorable – the right thing to do - to contact the grieving family and acknowledge his concern about the mix-up: I am sorry for your loss, sorry the Times made it worse, and so forth, but it turned out they were not much interested either.

What more could he do? In his own way, he had tried to smooth over this unfortunate mix-up, but no one seemed interested, so he dropped the matter and went on living.

I think it likely when my friend passes away – no time soon, I hope – the Times will reprint his obituary, especially because the work has been done and it’s sitting on a shelf, ready to go.

Wait a minute! Do you think it possible the Times would take the position that because they published the wrong obituary the first time and being the “paper of record” and all, they would admit their error by publishing the “correct” obituary again the second time around? After all, my friend already had his printed. Where is Judith Miller when you need her?

I digress. My living friend's obituary is not the subject matter of this piece – it's about me!

I only read the trashy obituaries in the New York Times – inherited wealth, many marriages, a life marked with bouts of alcoholism and addiction, a corner table reserved at the Algonquin, children out of wedlock, and of course, the inevitable fight among the heirs – fascinating stuff!

Otherwise, I skim the obit headlines – name, occupation and age - AGE?!

This was the obituary message the Times delivered to me on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 – 73, 57 and 65! Holy Smoke! I am 76. What does this mean? Am I next? Past due? Not to worry?

My father was 56 when he passed away. I have no regrets, he said, I have lived a full life, and he meant it. When my hour arrives, can I say that, and would I mean it?