



## Being Dead Is Bad for Business

**Stanley A. Weiss**

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*This memoir offers a clear-eyed, engaging look at one serial entrepreneur's journey.*

Globetrotting entrepreneur Stanley A. Weiss wrestles with what it means to be a success in his expansive, chatty memoir, *Being Dead Is Bad for Business*. The author relates his many adventures and business gambits with clarity and humor.

Born in Depression-era Philadelphia, Weiss spent his childhood in relative comfort until his father, a “good man” but “weak and fearful,” died unexpectedly. He left nothing behind for the family, which consisted of Weiss, his three siblings, and his mother, whom he idolized.

An instance in which young Weiss was needled about his limited vocabulary—a stand-in for his lower social class—fused with the loss in the author’s psyche. Both instilled a desire for strength and manliness, an urge “to show that I had not inherited my father’s softness and that I would not live the rest of my life like a patsy as he did.”

This lifelong drive to achieve success and “to be a man” took the author around the world, from rough-and-tumble Mexican mining towns to sleek Swiss chalets to the elite private clubs of London. The work shines when detailing the spirited conversations and late-night escapades in those settings, with only occasional lapses into oversharing. The book takes on the feel of a picaresque—one that just happens to be populated by the likes of Richard Burton, Henry Kissinger, Allan Ginsberg, and Peter Fonda.

The memoir culminates with Weiss’s founding of Business Executives for National Security, or BENS. The book’s title is his explanation for why executives should be interested in global security concerns such as nuclear proliferation: “Being dead is bad for business.” It’s a pithy title, and one that neatly demonstrates his talent for getting to the point in humorous fashion.

In later chapters, the book gets somewhat bogged down in minutiae, as when it details who sat where at which party, or lists friends’ accomplishments. Chapter lengths are also occasionally uneven; long chapters are interspersed with ones that read like brief essays. But the prose itself is polished, and the author does a good job of translating complex business deals and mining jargon into accessible language.

Adventurers—particularly those as likely to scale corporate ladders as mountains—will love this work for its freewheeling spirit. Fans of the society pages will get an insider’s look at the lives of business and entertainment luminaries of the past five decades.

*Being Dead Is Bad for Business* is an engrossing read. It offers a clear-eyed, engaging look at one serial entrepreneur’s journey from a driven, starry-eyed youth to an international business executive and philanthropist.

ANITRA BUDD (January 11, 2017)

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