

The Socialite Who Killed a Nazi with Her Bare Hands and 143 Other Fascinating People Who Died This Past Year: The Best of the New York Times Obituaries, 2013 (Obits: The New York

Times Annual)

William McDonald



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Returning for its second year but reimagined in a new impulse format, with a new title, new cover, new mission, and new sensibility, here is *The Socialite Who Killed a Nazi with Her Bare Hands*, a pithier, quirkier collection of the 164 best page-turning obituaries from *The New York Times*.

Written by top journalists, each story is a gem of a bio, a full life in miniature. There's the famous: Steve Jobs, including the story of how he was reunited with a sister he never knew, the novelist Mona Simpson. And the almost famous: Ruth Stone, a poet who worked in relative obscurity until she won the National Book Award at the age of 87. The behind-the-scenes, like Arch West, inventor of the Dorito, who pulled America's snacks out of the 1950s doldrums and created a \$5-billion-a-year product, and the out-there, like self-styled anarchist and maverick artist (and real estate mogul and museum director) Bob Cassilly, who died at the controls of his bulldozer while building "Cementland" in St. Louis. And because of the chronological organization of the book, the stories, one next to the other, make for an addictive-as-salted-peanuts book: Mark O. Hatfield, the celebrated antiwar Republican senator from Oregon, next to Nancy Wake of the title, the impoverished New Zealander who grew up to become a high-society hostess and heroine of the French Resistance—the socialite who did, indeed, kill a Nazi with her bare hands.

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William Wright:

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