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Rottenberg, Dan. *The Education of a Journalist: My Seventy Years on the Frontiers of Free Speech*. Philadelphia: Redmount Press, 2022, 406 pp., \$18 (Softcover).

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Anyone who's read *Philadelphia Magazine* knows the name Dan Rottenberg. Although originally from New York, he attended college at the University of Pennsylvania (what Philadelphians proudly call "Penn") and settled nearby. He is a popular and lively commentator on city life and the chief editor of numerous publications, including *The Welcomat*, later known as *Philadelphia Weekly*, a weekly opinion newsletter. As a magazine writer, he worked with Herb Lipson, a famous publisher in the city and well-known man-about-town. Currently, he publishes the *Contrarian's Notebook* on Substack.

The Education of a Journalist: My Seventy Years on the Frontiers of Free Speech has great insight into the art of feature writing and can be used in any classroom. The book's 19 chapters cover topics such as the future of democracy, the mayorship of cities, social class, and timely subjects such as sexual assault and Donald Trump's presidency. From this, he deduces many lessons in his seventieth decade, which he generously shares with college students and future journalists.

Rottenberg expounds on Philadelphia life in memoir-style, detailing the escapades that launched his memorable career and takes you inside the magazine world, a plus for anyone studying feature writing. He gives you the details of how he came to journalism as an editor at "Penn's" *The Daily Pennsylvanian* and left for a small-town newspaper in Indiana after graduation. He talks about how working in journalism made his career, not a journalism master's program.

He writes well—a caveat for any journalist—and his love of the profession shines through in every word. His goal is to share his lifetime learnings with journalists and college educators. He sports a readable, lively style, and he tells all about the powerful literati of the city and politicians such as former Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo—whose machinations were daily

dinner conversation in our small rowhouse, so typically Philadelphian. Rottenberg, although not native-born, becomes a real Philadelphian through and through, and he gives great insight into how the "City of Brotherly Love" works (and doesn't). He spares no detail, and no stone gets unturned. It's all written in the back-and-forth banter Rottenberg's known for, and no totem or taboo goes untouched. There's the Philadelphia Orchestra, with its weekly subscriptions, which are the must-have for any aspiring *bourgeois* or professional in the city. Everyone-who-is-anyone dons their best attire and goes Friday afternoons (with lunch first downtown) or Saturday night (with dinner and/or late coffee afterward). Much of this world rings true from personal experience; therefore, anyone from Philly will most likely vouch for the book's voracity.

With the subtitle "My Seventy Years on the Frontiers of Free Speech," Rottenberg delivers by looking at several trials where Philadelphia reporters were sued for libel and spares no detail in spouting the First Amendment. He would say, "Don't be afraid of the lawyers," and report what's out there, which is my takeaway. It's a fun read, light, and not particularly scholarly or abstract, which is acceptable. His lessons come from the real world. His book uses the same tone as his colorful features and literary journalism.

He tells you the demography of the area, who goes into journalism, law, politics, and the facts-of-life about downtown Philadelphia, compared to the outlying neighborhoods and the suburbs. Philadelphia is actually a city of small communities, each with a small-town feel, from Rising Sun to Somerset to the Far Northeast, and he peers deeply into how each one works. He is a terrific in-depth reporter and sociological commentator. He notes that many small weeklies cover the regional happenings, but *The Philadelphia Inquirer* pulls it all together for folks. Philadelphia

has its conventions and parlance, from “Restaurant Week” to “going down the shore,” which means the South Jersey beaches. Happenings there get reported in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the city lives by it as its heartbeat.

There used to be a second paper, *The Evening Bulletin*, but it folded once CNN and the 24-hour news cycle drove it into oblivion. Again, Rottenberg tells it all in the seminal chronicle of a city locked in time, 100 miles from New York, but with its own rhythm and pace.

Students in journalism would enjoy the light side of the book and benefit from the knowledge gleaned.

However, it’s not a textbook for a hard-core reporting class on the news. It’s a lively discussion of the history of journalism in Philadelphia, replete with many anecdotes and local lore. He gives you glimpses of fancy restauranteurs in the city, their influence on politicians, local haunts, and customs. It’s a great read, recommended for anyone in the popular or scholastic audience, and it’s a first-class read from a colorful literary journalist. *The Education of a Journalist: My Seventy Years on the Frontiers of Free Speech* both educates and entertains.