

Dunphy, Don. *Don Dunphy at Ringside*. New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1988. Pp. xiv, 289. Index, photographs. \$18.95.

Primarily a book for boxing fans, especially those who never heard Dunphy's radio or TV ringside commentaries between 1941 and 1981, this account of one man's life as a sportscaster has a broader appeal. Dunphy's job was no sinecure. Like Howard Cosell, as he portrays himself in *Cosell*, Dunphy hustled, used his considerable intelligence and imagination, had some good luck, and understood that a network sportscaster's job has to be learned and earned. Unlike Cosell, Dunphy emerges as someone more interested in his profession than in himself, ruefully willing to admit mistakes, and thoroughly good-humored. Dunphy's perspective on events Cosell discusses, such as Muhammad Ali's fights, is understandably different, also.

Dunphy does not intend his book to be more than nostalgic. He wants to help "Young men and women who weren't even born when I was regularly at the ringside microphones . . . to see the sports scene as I saw it" (p. xiii). In this, he succeeds remarkably well. He describes a ticker wire broadcast in which the commentator had to translate the game coming to him in Morse code via Western Union. He has interesting things to say about the differences between working on radio and on TV, while his reminiscences underscore the skill and versatility a good commentator needs. In broadcasting "in the neighborhood of two thousand fights" (p. 206), after having worked as a general sportscaster for seven years, Dunphy paid his dues. He obviously enjoyed himself mightily while doing so; "maybe in some small way, with this history as I have known it, I have repaid boxing and all sports for what they have done for me" (p. 27.5).

Anecdotal, descriptive, lacking substantive discussion or any indication of sources save incidental reference to films, tapes, and notebooks, *Don Dunphy at Ringside* is no book for sport historians or those who have a serious interest in communication studies, although it could supply some useful information for work on sportscasting. But Dunphy is writing not for enquirers but believers; boxing buffs of all backgrounds will relish his precise descriptions and honest recollections, delivered with a chatty sense of style.

As it stands, the book reads well, and is skillfully constructed. Besides recreating his own work, Dunphy vividly describes the contributions of "great sports voices of long ago" (p. 108), and chooses "great fights" (p. 79f) and "great rounds" (p. 206f). The book also gives occasional glimpses of a world we have lost. As a child, Dunphy was once chased by a New York cop whom irate

householders summoned because they were tired of boys using their brownstones for stoopball. Would that New York police in 1990 were so innocently engaged.

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