

Radio Active

William O'Shaughnessy

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Radio Active is a glorious hodgepodge of snippets from the O'Shaughnessy files.

Esteemed New York radio personality William O'Shaughnessy's *Radio Active* is his fifth collection of interviews, tributes, endorsements, monologues, and commentary—a sampling of miscellany that captures the spirit of his work.

O'Shaughnessy's radio voice, emanating from Westchester County and reaching listeners in New York City, has been recognizable for over sixty years. A proponent of community radio's mission to serve the public interest, O'Shaughnessy hosts conversations about local and national issues, bringing forth both prominent spokespeople and ordinary citizens.

Using passionate, evocative language, O'Shaughnessy gets into the heads and hearts of his subjects. Excerpts from engaging radio talks between the self-dubbed “No. 1 schmoozer” of Westchester and personalities including Dan Rather, Roger Stone, and New York's Cardinal Dolan are entries, as well as snippets from conversations with a publisher, a Franciscan priest, and an industrialist, among others. In other sections, eulogies and tributes for friends and associates are shared, revealing inimitable speaking talent. Of the columnist and novelist Jimmy Breslin, he says that he “did to a typewriter what Michael Jordan did to a basketball and Sinatra did in a recording studio.”

The text opens with a chapter advocating for First Amendment rights, with excerpts from speeches and essays, as well as commentary by O'Shaughnessy and others in staunch defense of unregulated freedom of speech and the press—even on behalf of Rush Limbaugh (“Let the S.O.B. be heard.”). A 1979 eulogy for Norman Rockefeller is the book's oldest entry, lauding the man who sacrificed much as a public servant, a “rich man's son who could have been quite a glorious bum instead.” Another chapter focuses on longtime friend Mario Cuomo (“of sainted memory”) and treats his life and ideas as that of a great statesman.

The book also reprints Governor Andrew Cuomo's reverent eulogy for his father, introduced as “stunning” and one example of included pieces from other speakers and writers who find their way into the book's mix. In that other voices are prominent in the author's work in radio, these pieces are a nice fit in the book's thematically arranged chapters.

A glorious hodgepodge of snippets from the O'Shaughnessy files, *Radio Active* is a tribute to those who frame and advocate on issues for listeners and readers in New York and beyond. New Yorkers will recognize and appreciate the many local voices, foremost among them the singular voice of Bill O'Shaughnessy, as they sit down to read it.

JOE TAYLOR (October 3, 2019)

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