

FEATURE WRITING

Roger Smith

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TRUMP: The Art of the Deal. By Donald J. Trump with Tony Schwartz. Random House. 246 pages. \$19.95.

Donald Trump takes pride in his ability to deliver on his promises and to get mammoth construction projects completed on time. One can imagine him approaching the writing of this book (in much the same way) with his collaborator Tony Schwartz (as he did) the construction of Trump Tower, the Wollman skating rink and the Trump Castle casino in Atlantic City. The book is not an autobiography but is rather an edifice constructed by piling on layer after layer of materials forming a catalog of the author's accomplishments that are meant to impress the reader with their cumulative weight.

On the "ground floor" of the book, the reader is given a glimpse, much like someone strolling around the atrium of Trump Tower, into the everyday life of an entrepreneur for whom multimillion-dollar business deals are an everyday routine. The chronology of a normal day in Trump's working

life is broken up into 15-minute segments because (that's the longest that most of his business meetings usually last.) Written in a staccato style, the opening chapter has the effect of leaving the reader breathless just trying to keep up with the author as he meets and deals with businessmen and celebrities ranging from Ivan Boesky and Cardinal O'Connor to David Letterman and Judith Krantz.

*show some of this*

But the real foundation of the book is Trump's catalog of the various deals he made, and the implicit message that good old-fashioned entrepreneurship is superior to management by committee when it comes to producing results. Much of Trump's success, he keeps saying in one way or another over and over again, is (due to the fact that) he is in charge of a relatively small ((in terms of the number of) employees) private company and that he doesn't have to worry about what ~~his~~ stockholders think.

The reader learns in a single autobiographical chapter that Trump inherited his drive and his hardheadedness from his father, a successful real estate developer of Swedish ancestry who began buying up and renovating apartment buildings in the outer boroughs of New York City during the Depression. He says he got "a sense of showmanship" from his mother, who was more of a dreamer than his down-to-earth father, a hard taskmaster who taught him to keep an eye on the bottom line.

The Donald Trump who emerges in this pages is, despite

all his wheeling and dealing, a surprisingly bland person. One gets the sense that there are few people that he strongly dislikes other than Mayor Koch, whose administration he labels "both pervasively corrupt and totally incompetent." He does make a few mildly critical comments about businessmen whom he finds to be less than decisive in critical situations, such as hotel owner Conrad Hilton and John Bassett, the owner of a United States Football League franchise, but he usually tempers his criticisms with some exculpatory comments -- Conrad Hilton got "screwed" by his famous father and Trump felt sorry for him when he was forced to sell a casino in Atlantic City to Trump after failing to get a gaming license, for example -- that are designed to show that he's not really all that hard hearted.

*jud*  
In other matters, this book, which is written in a simple, declarative style that at times becomes monotonous, is relentlessly prosaic. In its judgment of people and art for example: "You've got to give it to her [Judith Krantz]: how many authors have written three best-selling books in a row? She also happens to be a very nice woman."; "Some people criticize [Sylvester] Stallone, but you've got to give him credit. . . . Here's a man who is just forty-one years old, and he's already created two all-time-great characters, Rocky and Rambo."

Occasionally, this book reads a pastiche of newspaper clippings and press releases detailing Trump's greatest

successes: buying and restoring the Grand Hyatt hotel on 42nd Street during the 1970s when the real estate market was in a period of decline, the byzantine negotiations to buy the Tiffany store and the site it was located on in order to erect Trump Tower, getting a foothold in Atlantic City when the casino gambling business appeared to be turning out to be less profitable than expected, the short-lived attempt to get the United States Football League off the ground by hiring stars such as Herschel Walker and Doug Flutie, the renovation of Wollman Rink and the ongoing story of Trump's proposed Television City project on the site of the former Penn Central railroad yards on the West Side of Manhattan.

What keeps this book <sup>from</sup> ~~at~~ being a pure exercise in self-congratulation is Trump's ability to poke fun at himself and (while attempting to portray himself in the best light, for example, in his struggle with a tenants group in a building he bought on Central Park South) to admit his faults to a certain extent. "I don't kid myself about why I'm asked to speak at or chair so many events," he says. "It's not because I'm such a nice guy."

Donald Trump is not a particularly introspective person, hardly a quality ~~that~~ would be expected in a businessman. He tells you hardly anything about his family life or his children. The book is unlikely to be useful as a business primer to anyone but the most successful and wealthy. But it delivers what it promises, a behind the scenes look at the

lavish life of a wealthy entrepreneur who relishes in recounting how he pulled off some of his biggest deals.

A - writing is flabby in spots as marked, but this covers all the bases -

Roger:

it's been a pleasure having you in class: you're a smart, careful editor and ~~to~~ have some good insight into writing - good luck in the future -