

## Kirkus Reviews

Darnton, Kate & Kayce Freed Jennings & Lynn Sherr—Eds.  
PETER JENNINGS: A Reporter's Life

A warm tribute to the Canadian high-school dropout who anchored ABC's *World News Tonight* for 22 years.

Based on interviews, this oral history gathers the voices of more than 60 colleagues, friends, family members and others who fondly recall the handsome and charming Jennings (1938–2005). The Toronto-born son of a noted radio broadcaster in Canada, Jennings quit school, worked in a bank and then joined an Ottawa TV station, where his newscasts caught the eye of the struggling ABC network. In 1965, at age 26, he became anchor of the network's nightly newscast, competing with stalwarts Walter Cronkite at CBS and Huntley and Brinkley at NBC. As recounted here, Jennings's ABC career was an education in both journalism and American culture that turned the pretty-boy neophyte into a first-rate reporter who worked hard to make complex issues understandable to viewers. Sent from his premature anchor post into the field, he learned his craft during 15 years as a foreign correspondent in the Middle East and elsewhere, returning as ABC's nightly anchor in 1983. Darnton (a freelance book editor), Kayce Freed Jennings (a documentary producer and Jennings's wife at the time of his death) and Sherr (an ABC News correspondent) artfully intersperse the journalist's own words with those of others, from Lauren Bacall to Rudy Giuliani to Al Sharpton, to create bright, readable vignettes of Jennings covering the Munich Olympics, presidential campaigns, 9/11 and more. Interviewees recall a sweet, down-to-earth man and a broadcaster of elegance and grace who could be a demanding perfectionist, editing and revising copy moments before going on the air and insisting on the simplest, most direct way to tell a story. Readers who watched Jennings faithfully over the years will enjoy behind-the-scenes views of this charismatic autodidact who became, in Cokie Roberts's words, "the voice of civilization" on television. Jennings not only learned to stop saying "shedule," he fell in love with America and became a citizen shortly before his death.

Evocative glimpses of a sorely missed class act.