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Better than Working

Patrick Skene Catling

Liberties Press, €19.99

With much work behind him in fiction, non-fiction and some particularly successful children's books, the septuagenarian Catling regales us with the suggestion that his long life as a journalist was a breeze and a wheeze. Evidently, his journalist father advised correctly that the profession would be "better than working". In sprightly short chapters we are immersed in Catling's early years in England and the United States, in his adventurer's time as WWII navigator with the Royal Canadian Airforce, and, most extensively, in his globe-trotting work for newspapers and magazines either side of the Atlantic. A what-ho mood suffuses all ground covered, with only a slight change at the end to a moving diversion on ageing and belief. Commemorative of booze-lashed entertainments and motley encounters as well as past times spent amid the practicalities of writing, the book is more than charming: it is a love letter to the profession's secret lore, to the life of, the teeming life *in*, journalism.

John Kenny