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Writer Thinks TV Watching Not Too B

By TOM JORY

NEW YORK (AP) — Jeff Greenfield is like an athlete with a powerful, proven foe. He's not afraid of television, but he certainly respects the tube.

"Watching television is not a bad thing," says Greenfield, a free-lance writer who's made covering TV something of a specialty. "The trouble is when it's used in place of everthing else.

"You don't want to say it's the all-powerful death star," he says, "but if 70 million Americans are looking at television each night, you ought to understand what it is, what its values are."

Greenfield has taken a big jump at examining television, its people, its content and its values, in an attractive, entertaining new book, "Television: The First Fifty Years."

"ESSENTIALLY, I wanted to see if I could isolate, if I could say something about how television has developed beyond categories — drama, sports, sitcoms, news," says Greenfield.

So the large-format volume, though fully illustrated, is more than a "golden years" album. Greenfield's text examines television technology, the causes and effects of TV's power and influence, advertising and why some programs make it and some don't, and the medium's future.

Though affectionate, Greenfield's approach to TV is not reverent. "I looked at it with a sense of humor. I didn't have to prove television is the only thing in our lives to say it is important.

"I took television for what it is. It's a diversion, and sometimes I say, 'I want to be diverted'."

The book is Greenfield's first devoted solely to TV, though he has covered the subject in a number of newspaper and magazine articles.

GREENFIELD WAS a speechwriter for Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and former New York Mayor John Lindsay, and wrote "No Peace, No Place," a look at growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, and "The World's Greatest Team: A Portrait of the Boston Celtics." He co-authored two politically oriented books, "The Advance Man" and "A Populist Manifesto."

And he's contributed articles to a number of publications, including the New York Times Magazine, New York magazine, Harpers and Esquire, and writes regularly for the New York Times Book Review.

"I have turned what are normally considered vices into what I write about," he

says. "I started writing about television because it's something I'm interested in anyway. So why not?"

Greenfield sees limited accessibility as television's principal shortcoming. "There's no off-Broadway in television, no way diverse elements can gain entry to it.

"AND CONTENT, sure, most of it isn't very good, but most of anything is not very good," he says.

"I didn't find any value in 'The Beverly Hillbillies' for example," Greenfield says of the mid-'60s sitcom. "But I would ask, and I do in the book, 'What does it tell us?' Well, it was one way people responded to a tumultuous time."

"Television: The First Fifty Years" is more than a history of television. "I didn't write a book for snobs to

use to tell how bad the medium is," Greenfield says, "nor was it written for cot-

tonheads who want to tell us how much television enriches our minds.

"Simply, I figure out what we see."

*66
Simply, I was trying to figure out why we see what we see 55*

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