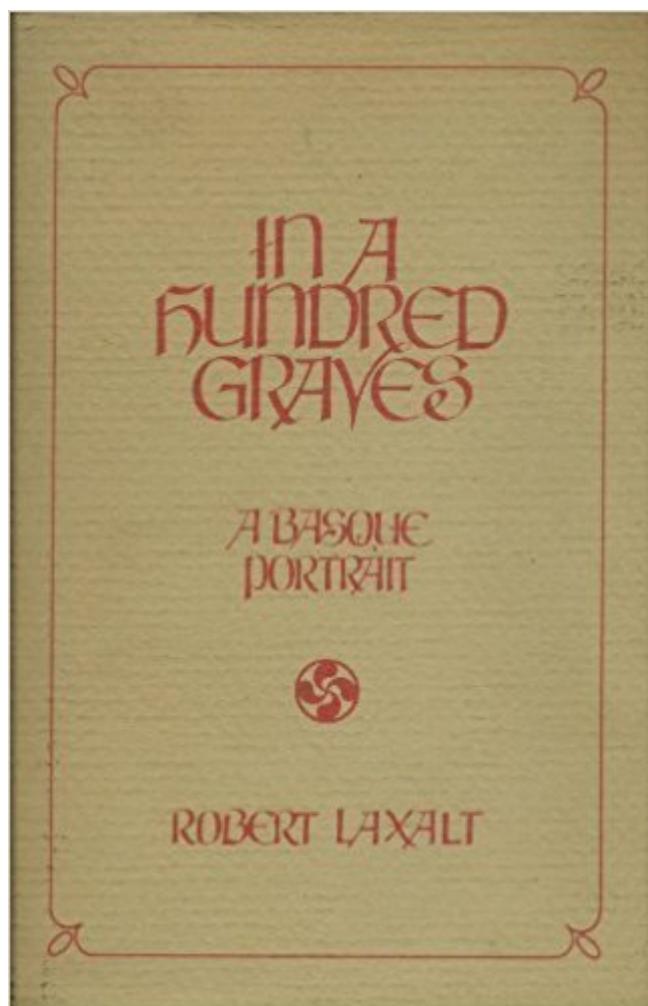


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In A Hundred Graves: A Basque Portrait (Basque (Hardcover))



Synopsis

The Basques of Europe are legendary for the curtain of privacy they have always drawn around their world, shielding it from visitors from the outside. As a result, accounts of the inner workings of Basque village life are almost nonexistent. In this unique book, author Robert Laxalt has managed to penetrate the deep reserve of Basque village folk. Shepherds, troubadours, merchants, and smugglers, caught up in the panorama of daily life, parade before the reader. They are portrayed against a backdrop of green rugged mountains and stone buildings, typical of the Basque provinces in France and Spain. Laxalt, an American born of Basque parents, unveils the Basque character with warmth, wry humor, and above all, honesty. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“A very real, moving, memorable world emerges from the total, and one that, so far as I know, is altogether new to English.” • Walter Van Tilburg Clark, author of *The City of Trembling Leaves* --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Robert Laxalt graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno in 1947. Laxalt joined the staff of the university in 1954, first as director of News and Publications and later as director of the University of Nevada Press, which he founded. He was named a Reynolds Distinguished Visiting Professor and held the position of Distinguished Nevada Author Chair. He is the author of seventeen books, including the critically acclaimed *Sweet Promised Land*. He lived in Washoe Valley until his death in

2001. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

When reading this book, the genre than most readily comes to mind is that of the modern blog. The scenes in this work seem a little disjointed as there is no unifying narrative except that this is life in the Basque country. Most specifically, it was life in the French Basque Country in the 1970's. The episodic vignettes when taken as a whole paint a vivid life. To urban Americans or even to urban Europeans, this life will seem quaint. As someone who first read this book in his teens while living in a rural town in Southern Illinois, I saw this book as something else. It painted a picture of how life should be. The vignettes are not masterful pieces of prose. They are humble images of life. The pieces that seem like they are just gossip and folklore. May seem to be a bit out of place. However it's nothing that wouldn't be heard by a native sitting in a village inn or tavern. If you are looking for a book to read before bed that's not too heavy and will put a smile on your face, pick it up. It's not phony, there's no moralistic values. It does what literature should do, it takes you to another place for a little while. It's also a must read for Basqueophiles like me and it makes a nice addition to more serious works like, "The Circle Of Mountains: A Basque Shepherding Community".

People familiar with Laxalt's work know that he mostly writes about the Basques, which is his own heritage. This book is a moist, sincere, heart-warming ramble around the Basque countryside, based on Laxalt's stay in Basque country in the early seventies. It is not a novel; it is rather a series of vignettes of traditional Basque life, with an eye toward revealing something of the Basque character. Sometimes Laxalt himself is a character in the action, such as at the slaughter of a pig or when some French bikers create a stir in a Basque tavern; more often he is an anonymous observer, such as in the singing contest or the meeting of the three poets. Some of the chapters are less than a page long, and might be described as prose poems. The book is disarmingly short; I think I read it in two hours. But you can't resist how it makes you feel good, and makes you want to spend your next vacation in the Pyrenees. If you're a Basque enthusiast, it's a must read.

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