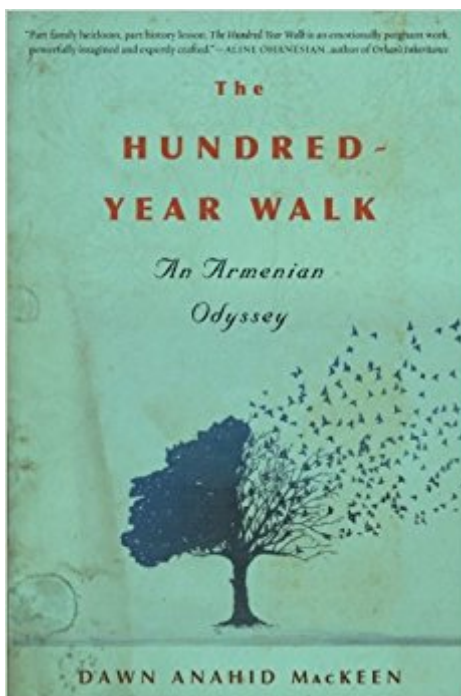


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# The Hundred-Year Walk: An Armenian Odyssey



## Synopsis

A New York Post Must-Read "Part family heirloom, part history lesson, *The Hundred-Year Walk* is an emotionally poignant work, powerfully imagined and expertly crafted." —Aline Ohanesian, author of *Orhan's Inheritance* "This book reminds us that the way we treat strangers can ripple out in ways we will never know . . . MacKeen's excavation of the past reveals both uncomfortable and uplifting lessons about our present." —Ari Shapiro, NPR "Growing up, Dawn MacKeen heard from her mother how her grandfather Stepan miraculously escaped from the Turks during the Armenian genocide of 1915, when more than one million people—half the Armenian population—were killed. In *The Hundred-Year Walk* MacKeen alternates between Stepan's courageous account, drawn from his long-lost journals, and her own story as she attempts to retrace his steps, setting out alone to Turkey and Syria, shadowing her resourceful, resilient grandfather across a landscape still rife with tension. Dawn uses his journals to guide her to the places he was imperiled and imprisoned and the desert he crossed with only half a bottle of water. Their shared story is a testament to family, to home, and to the power of the human spirit to transcend the barriers of religion, ethnicity, and even time itself. I am in awe of what Dawn MacKeen has done here . . . Her sentences sing. Her research shines. Her readers will be rapt—and a lot smarter by the end." —Meghan Daum, author of *The Unspeakable: And Other Subjects of Discussion* "Harrowing." —*Us Weekly*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This previously untold story of survival and personal fortitude is on par with Laura Hillenbrand's

Unbroken." ---Library Jorunal Starred Review --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

An epic tale of one man's courage in the face of genocide and his granddaughter's quest to tell his story. In the heart of the Ottoman Empire as World War I rages, Stepan Miskjian's world becomes undone. He is separated from his family as they are swept up in the government's mass deportation of Armenians into internment camps. Gradually realizing the unthinkable that they are all being driven to their deaths he fights, through starvation and thirst, not to lose hope. Just before killing squads slaughter his caravan during a forced desert march, Stepan manages to escape, making a perilous six-day journey to the Euphrates River carrying nothing more than two cups of water and one gold coin. In his desperate bid for survival, Stepan dons disguises, outmaneuvers gendarmes, and, when he least expects it, encounters the miraculous kindness of strangers. The Hundred-Year Walk alternates between Stepan's saga and another adventure that takes place a century later, after his family discovers his long-lost journals. Reading this rare firsthand account, his granddaughter Dawn MacKeen finds herself first drawn into the colorful bazaars before the war and then into the horrors Stepan later endured. Inspired to retrace his steps, she sets off alone to Turkey and Syria, shadowing her resourceful, resilient grandfather across a landscape still rife with tension. With his journals in hand, she grows ever closer to the man she barely knew as a child. Their shared story is a testament to family, to home, and to the power of the human spirit to transcend the barriers of religion, ethnicity, and even time itself." --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

The Hundred-Year Walk: An Armenian Odyssey (Spoiler alert) The number of times reporter and writer Dawn Anahid MacKeen's maternal grandfather Stepan Miskjian escaped death during World War I at the hands of the Ottoman Turks is mind boggling. This is a graphic, disturbing, but ultimately redemptive account of one very resourceful man's survival during the first genocide of the 20th century "when the ruling pashas set out to exterminate Turkey's large ethnic Armenian population. MacKeen alternates Stepan's story with her own experiences in 2007 retracing his steps. His diaries in hand, she traveled from his hometown of Adabazar outside Constantinople, all the way to the killing fields of Deir El Zor in present-day Syria, where the surviving Armenians were mercilessly slaughtered. Ironically, this region is now in the hands of the so-called Islamic State. The author manages to turn an unbearable subject into a page-turner. With each chapter you wonder how the 5-foot 4-inch Stepan will slip away from his captors "armed, saber-wielding gendarmes on horseback" and evade being swept back into the massive deportation of Turkey's Armenian population. MacKeen's clean,

spare reporting style is dispassionate but descriptive. We are transported to that place and time. We see what Stepan saw and survive the horrors alongside him. He is resourceful, intelligent, generous and scrupulously honest throughout his ordeal, while many around him are not. We root for the diminutive hero throughout. My only regret is that MacKeen does not offer the reader even more about her own experiences and travels retracing her grandfather's steps. Ultimately, Stepan survives the killings thanks to a Bedouin sheik who shelters and employs him, and other Armenians, for the remainder of the war. In one chapter, MacKeen recounts how "with Assad's secret police tracking her every move" she finds the sheik's descendants and is able to thank them. They warmly welcome her and hold a feast in her honor. Sadly, the region today is being visited by fresh horror that is threatening the lives and livelihoods of her grandfather's saviors. Stepan, himself, is compelled to bear witness to all that he saw, even after emigrating to the United States, a land he loved and where he found security and financial success. He remained haunted by memories. Surely his journals helped exorcise them, yet he speaks repeatedly of his experiences to his wife and daughters, including Dawn's mother Anahid. But, without the stories and without the diaries, MacKeen's mother would never have pleaded with her reporter daughter to tell Baba's story. I'm glad that she did.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book! Having a friend of mine who is Armenian, I have talked to him about the Armenian genocide and had a little bit of background information. The information I took away from this book, and the experience of Stepan Miskjian, was profound. Stepan Miskjian was a young Armenian man, living in Turkish Armenia in 1913 when his whole world turned upside down. His story, which he wrote down in journals, was kept hidden and lost in his own family for nearly 100, until they were discovered by his daughter and his granddaughter. After translating his words, his granddaughter - Dawn Anahid McKeen - embarks on a journey to retrace her grandfather's steps, to tell his story of the Armenian genocide and of his survival. The book is written between 2 worlds, essentially - Stepan's and his granddaughter's, Dawn. Through their words, the plight of the Turkish Armenians come to life vividly. This book does not read as "non-fiction" at all. This reads as an adventure story - until one realizes the death count is all too real. This book makes me wish I could have met Stepan Miskjian, but, in a way, I think I already have, and I feel honored to have been allowed to have shared in his life!

Beautifully written by the granddaughter of an Armenian holocaust survivor, who draws her story from the five notebooks her grandfather left behind as well as her own research and indefatigable efforts

to retrace her grandfather's death march across the Syrian desert. The writing is so vivid that you feel the torment and agony of Stepan's journey even as you marvel at his humanity and wonder at his desperate will to live. The cruelty of the Turkish government is interspersed with such beautiful acts of compassion from ordinary citizens including a Turkish soldier and Bedouin shiek "who intervened at exactly the right moment to save Stepan's life" that ultimately you are left with hope.

I am a Brazilian architect, turned into the travel business long ago, who has just finished reading the touching book "The Hundred Year Walk". I first learned about the Armenian Genocide when I was living in Lausanne, Switzerland, reading a pocket book "Le Genocide Armenien" about the horrible facts, and since then I was impressed how people little knew about the tragic events of the Armenian people in Ottoman Turkey during First World War. Watching "Ararat" fifteen years later marked me deeply as it was one of the saddest film I had ever seen. As I left the cinema took me some time of grief to reconcile I was back to the beginning of the 21st century in Southern Brazil. As I am getting prepared for my first trip to Armenia I found this book and followed the author Family odyssey through the pages of this hundred year walk that had put the writer and her survived grand parent on the same trail "one on searching of surviving and the other of recounting its saga. Congratulations to the author as it achieved it on a remarkable way. A personal history always gives a glimpse of a tragedy that affected millions. I Through the journal and daily "life" along the deportation and camps we can feel the suffering, challenges and cherish the struggle of the survivors. Thanks for bringing life to Stepan Miskjian's writing and sharing with us. Best regards Beto Conte.

This is not a book for the faint of heart. The death and destruction wrought upon the Armenians during World War I is heart rendering. There is no motive on this earth that would have justified this genocide. As I read, I was alternately cheering for Stepan and Dawn on their separate journeys. For Stepan to have survived is as close to a miracle as one will get. I was not so much interested in style as I was the story. I liked the way the author juxtaposed the two because it gave you a sense of the past and the present political/cultural environments. I was enlightened by this novel having heard little concerning the Armenian's plight. This was a story that needed to be told.

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