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Robert Laxalt

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Robert Laxalt : Travels With My Royal: A Memoir Of The Writing Life (The Basque Series) by Laxalt, Robert (2001) Hardcover before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Travels With My Royal: A Memoir Of The Writing Life (The Basque Series) by Laxalt, Robert (2001) Hardcover:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Memoirs of the writing lifeBy Stephen TaylorMost of Robert Laxalt's books incorporate some kind of personal reminiscence -- whether it's his arrestingly beautiful portraits of life in the Basque Country or his semi-autobiographical trilogy about a Basque-American family in the West -- but "Travels with My Royal" is his only forthright memoir of his childhood and life as a writer. For fifty years an inseparable mechanical friend traveled alongside him -- his portable Royal typewriter. A gift from his mother, he took it all over the world and wrote all of his books and magazine articles on it.Born in Alturas, California, in 1923, (a place that became a ghost town not long after), Laxalt was raised in Carson City, Nevada, the second son in a family of immigrant French Basques. His father, Dominique, was a former livestock baron (a "baron of sorts") who saw his flock of over 60,000 sheep and cattle wiped out by a ranch crash and a freeze in the early 1920s. Consequently, he had to go back into the hills and build up his fortune again, slowly, living the hard life of a sheepherder, separated most of the year from his family. Economic woes marked Laxalt's childhood. He mentions how ashamed he was that his mother, who ran an otherwise respectable Basque boardinghouse, sold whiskey on the sly during Prohibition. At school he was often taunted for being the son of a bootlegger.Yet the family eventually got on its feet again, and after

spending a year in the Belgian Congo during World War II, Laxalt graduated from the University of Nevada and began to forge a successful career in journalism. His first book, "Sweet Promised Land" (1957), recounts his father Dominique's return to his birthplace in the Basque Country, St. Jean Pied-de-Port up in the French Pyrenees, fifty years after he left it, and the emotional recognition that his real home was not there, but in the hills of western Nevada. In print for over forty years, "Sweet Promised Land" was Laxalt's most resounding success, even though he confesses in "Travels with My Royal" that it was torture to write. Laxalt wrote 16 more books (fiction and non-fiction) before his death earlier this year, and was a regular contributor to National Geographic (he discusses his long love-hate relationship with that magazine in this book). He also taught at the University of Nevada, was the director of its press, and helped found the Basque Studies Program there. Anyone interested in the Basques will soon learn that Laxalt has done more than probably any other writer to help us understand their world. If you're not already familiar with Laxalt's books, read a few first. Here he talks about how works like "Sweet Promised Land" and "In a Hundred Graves" came about, and if you haven't read them, some of it will go over your head.

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