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The Long Run: A Memoir Of Loss And Life In Motion



Synopsis

An unlikely marathoner finds her way through grief and into the untold history of women and running. Thirty-year-old Catriona Menzies-Pike defined herself in many ways: voracious reader, pub crawler, feminist, backpacker, and, since her parents' deaths a decade earlier, orphan. "Runner" was nowhere near the list. Yet when she began training for a half marathon on a whim, she found herself an instant convert. Soon she realized that running, "a pace suited to the precarious labor of memory," was helping her to grieve the loss of her parents in ways that she had been, for ten messy years, running away from. As Catriona excavates her own past, she also grows curious about other women drawn to running. What she finds is a history of repression and denial—running was thought to endanger childbearing, and as late as 1967 the organizer of the Boston Marathon tried to drag a woman off the course, telling her to "get the hell out of my race"—but also of incredible courage and achievement. As she brings to life the stories of pioneering athletes and analyzes the figure of the woman runner in pop culture, literature, and myth, she comes to the heart of why she's running, and why any of us do.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Elegant and erudite. The most resonant parts of [Menzies-Pike's] narrative deal with her own personal loss, and how tightly it becomes interwoven with her experiences as a runner. Gorgeously written and extremely moving. The Atlantic "Satisfies in every way." Oprah.com "Menzies-Pike's engaging book braids together feminist and literary theory, cultural criticism, history, and a moving personal

narrative. Important and fascinating. Publishers Weekly "You don't have to be a runner to appreciate *The Long Run*.... Engrossing." *Bustle* "Honest, funny, and moving." *Kirkus Reviews* "This engaging memoir navigates the complexities, misconceptions, and the oppression of female runners in film, literature, and art throughout history. It will leave an impression on women and runners alike." *Library Journal* "In *The Long Run*, Catriona Menzies-Pike illuminates one of running's great contradictions: incredible restoration found through repeated breakdown. Drawing on her own journey from grieving daughter to confident racer, as well as the experiences of female pioneers who paved the way, *The Long Run* offers a convincing nudge for all of us to get out there and let the open roads work their magic." *Becky Wade*, professional marathoner and author of *Run the World: My 3,500-Mile Journey Through Running Cultures Around the Globe* "Catriona Menzies-Pike's narrative opens up the possibility that we can redefine our world through running. She seamlessly and brilliantly weaves history with her own life in a way that feels both personal and accessible, shedding a unique light on the sport and the women who have pursued it." *Alexi Pappas*, creator of *Tracktown*, essayist, and Olympic athlete "Running is about so much more than exercise: running is about freedom, healing, introspection and community. It is about using your soles to search your soul and this wonderful book captures that feeling so well. Running through these pages with Catriona Menzies-Pike is as rejuvenating as a dash down the trail where your burdens can be, if not left behind, at least carried more easily. This is a book of rebirth, effort, courage, and caring the qualities few runners expect but the lucky ones find." *Tom Foreman*, author of *My Year of Running Dangerously* "The Long Run weaves the rewards of a running life with the sport's rich history. An educational, entertaining and soulful journey through the miles." *Deena Kastor*, American Record holder and Olympic medalist, marathon

Catriona Menzies-Pike is the editor of the Sydney Review of Books. She has worked in digital media for a decade and her journalism and essays on feminism, literary culture, and politics have been widely published. She holds a PhD in English literature and has taught film, literature, journalism and cultural studies units to undergraduates since 2001. In 2008 she ran her first half-marathon, and five marathons and dozens of half marathons later, she's still running.

I was looking forward to this book because I love to read books about running, especially memoirs! And this author is articulate and educated, and has a definite feminist point of view. She included a lot of running history I hadn't heard before, as well as some I did know, and I really enjoyed reading about the different historical perceptions of women as runners. She is from Australia, so I enjoyed hearing a less US-centric point of view!

Enjoyable fast reading book!

My daughter has run the Boston Marathon four times and has run up the tallest mountain in New England, Mt Washington. I am so proud of her and her expertise, but all this time I have wondered why. Many of her friends over the last twenty years were made in a running club, so I understood the bond of the runner. In this book, Catriona Menzies-Pike relates her story of running. Born to a father who loved running, and a mother who did not, Catriona had no wish to run. They lived in Sydney, and it was a grand place to grow up. It was not until her parents died in a tragic plane accident when she was 20, that she began to think about running. Dealing with her grief and those of her sisters, she finished her college work. She went to Paris on a scholarship, and came back home. She decided to join a gym, which led to running five miles on a treadmill, and worked her way up to running outside. Catriona tells us of dealing with her grief by running, and then beginning to realize that she felt better. As she explains in her book, running is not gender neutral. Running has a long history for women, thus the term 'running like a woman'. She delves into the history of running, nutrition, clothing and advice. There had been no book for her about women in running, and she decided to write her own book for the rest of us. This is a fascinating look at running and women, and told with such a superb manner that I fell right into the book. A couple of hours later, and I realized the wisdom that had come. A book for every woman runner. Recommended. prisrob

04-04-17

"The Long Run - A Memoir of Loss and Life in Motion" (2017 publication; 256 pages) is a non-fiction book from Australian author Catriona Menzies-Pike. In the book's Introduction, the author comments that "When I was twenty years old, in 1998, my father, who loved running, and my mother, who didn't, died in a plane crash", wow. She also notes that "I had come to running relatively late. I didn't even bother to put on my sneakers until I was thirty." In subsequent chapters, we get to know the author's a bit more about the author's background, including a couple of pages on how she dealt with the terrible loss of her parents. Nor does the author spend much beyond a couple of pages

talking about the 10 year gap between her parents' passing and her start in running. A shame. Instead we get quickly back to what the author really wants to talk about, namely how she became a late bloomer for the "long run", and what it means to be a female runner (with sidebars into what women in countries like Pakistan endure in order to try and run). I thought that at some point the focus of the book would turn a bit more inward, but it really doesn't. It's all about the running. I eventually (about two-thirds into the book) gave up and quit. Earlier on in the book, the author notes that "It would take a different book to itemize the sadness and stress of those first years after Mum and Dad died". That is the book for me! In fact, that is the book that I had expected from what I had read about it before taking a chance on it, but instead this is a rather detached account of what the "long run" means for this particular author, and for women in general. If you are an avid runner, by all means check out this book. For the rest of us, I suggest we await that other book the author may one day bring about dealing with the shocking passing of her parents.

The Long Run is most compelling when it focuses on the details of the author's personal training and running regime, and her own life story. Catriona Menzies-Pike juxtaposes interesting snippets of history of women running (or women being excluded from competitions) which are in themselves fascinating, but for me distract from the compelling details of her personal quest. Readers wondering what it might be like to set a training challenge and then actually "go for it" will likely enjoy this book. It is definitely a memoir and not a "how-to train" book. Vivid descriptions of the author's enthusiasms and terrors of race day, and her particular logistics of mental prep for a big run are very inspiring! I love passages describing how the runner's experience narrows to the moment: portrayal of the marathoner's journey, both interior (recovery from grief and entering a zone of metaphysical moments) and exterior (shade trees, geckos, wallabies, steep trails, other runners). That said, I think the history and political/feminist details about running beg for a book of their own. This author has the determination to pull it off. This review is based on an ARC from NetGalley.

Runners are so common a sight in much of the world now that it seems odd to realize that it's a relatively recent thing for average people to go running for fun or for their health. Until the 1970s, it would have been quite odd to see anyone running down the street -- even athletes in training restricted their running to school tracks for the most part. And when it came to long distance running, women were not to be found practicing or competing at all until the later part of the 20th century. Catriona Menzies-Pike combines a history of women in long distance running, especially

marathons, with her own experiences starting to run at age twenty, as a way of coping with the shock of losing her parents in a plane crash. She also talks about the role of women runners in popular culture, such as paintings, movies, and TV. This is a thoughtful and sometimes provocative look at women running and it's worth a look even if you have no plans to run anywhere.

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