

## Looking for Mr. Smith: The Quest for the Truth Behind The Long Walk, the Greatest Survival Story Ever Told

Linda Willis



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Since 1956, *The Long Walk* has been, for many, the symbol of an immense love of freedom and has become one of the greatest true-life adventure stories of all time. The harrowing story about a group of POWs who escaped a labor camp in Siberia and walked to freedom in India during WWII deeply affected thousands of its readers, and Linda Willis was one of those moved by the story. But she had questions about its authenticity:

- Was it all true?
- What happened after their arrival in India?
- Were there others involved in the story?
- Who was Mr. Smith?

Though she was not a trained researcher, Willis felt compelled to look at some of the most powerful aspects of the story and to try to dig to the core of the truth behind *The Long Walk*. Willis's investigation took her down unforeseen byways with many hours spent unraveling facts, truths, half-truths, rumors, and the like. She waded through archives, wrote and spoke to hundreds of people, and continued to seek out and verify the details of the greatest adventure narrative ever written. The path of Willis's research will be a model for anyone attempting a similar search and who has ever thought about the story behind a book. No one who reads *Looking for Mr. Smith* will ever think of *The Long Walk* in the same way.

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