

Natalie Coughlin Dares to Show Her Roots Oct. 26

By Laurie Snyder



Natalie Coughlin Photo provided

What does it take to get air guitarists in a room with history buffs and gimpy weekend outfielders? Natalie Coughlin.

The 12-time Olympic medalist will reveal her fascinating family tree at "Their Roots Are Showing!" Oct. 26. Presented by the California Genealogical Society and Library (CGSL), the sure-to-be-a-blast celebration of Family History Month will also feature a silent auction of celebrity memorabilia, along with the intriguing ancestry of Grammy-winning rock drummer, Tim Alexander, and Oakland A's general manager and "Moneyball" subject, Billy Beane, who has donated use of an A's luxury suite as an auction prize.

"Her story is a true American story," says CGSL's Therese Hart-Pignotti of Coughlin, whose family has serious American roots. One of

the nation's two most decorated female Olympians, Coughlin recently returned from a USO tour at the Naval Station Rota in Spain where she conducted a children's swim clinic. Her mother, she says, "grew up on military bases. It's hard on the families. If the kids are in sports, they get different coaches every year." Coughlin, who mentors as time permits, muses, "I know when I was a kid and I went to a clinic where Olympians stopped by, I remembered it. We're all busy, and we have stresses, but it's important to make the effort."

Coughlin also continues to find fame beyond the pool. She recently shadowed a master chef and winemaker for Lifetime television's "Celebrity Bucket List," and has also appeared on the Food Network. "The way that I decompress for the day,"

she explains, "is to cook a great meal." She makes pasta "especially this time of year when it gets to be fall – and you love that cozy comfort. I love kneading and rolling out the dough – the product you get is so delicious and rewarding." Family and friends are often in on the nurturing noshes.

As for the horizon, "My next competition is going to be in Italy – the first and second weekend in November. And then I have short course nationals in Knoxville, Tennessee." She hopes that, in addition to cheering her on, fans will support one of her favorite charities, Right to Play (www.rightto-play.com). "They had a very big presence in the Olympic Village at Athens and especially at Beijing." A supporter since 2004, she did her first field work in Rwanda, foster-

ing anti-malaria efforts by "teaching kids how to prevent and recognize the symptoms" through simple games of tag.

Coughlin also has a message for young Lamorinda fans who find it hard to fit everything into their own busy days. "There is enough time," she says. But, "It's important to have balance. When you're in school, focus on school." When you're with your coach and team, she says, "Focus on practice." And when you're with friends, just concentrate on enjoying the time you have. "It's really just being present in the moment."

"There Roots are Showing!" will begin at 7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 26 at Walnut Creek's Del Valle Theatre. For tickets, visit: www.lesherartscenter.org/event/california-genealogical-societys-their-roots-are-showing/.

"The West Without Water"

By Lou Fancher



Authors B. Lynn Ingram and Frances Malamud-Roam Photo provided

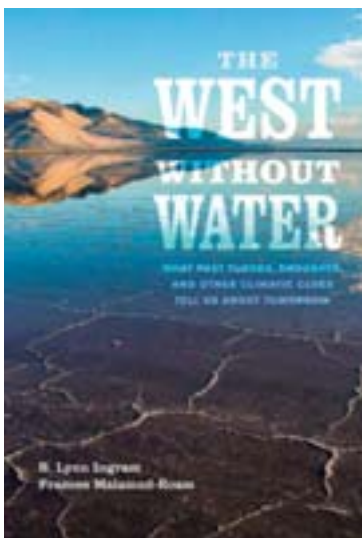


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A new book by two Bay Area authors reads with the surprising velocity of a murder mystery and the intrigue of a rigorous, detective investigation. Why surprising? Because paleoclimatologists B. Lynn Ingram, of Moraga, and Frances Malamud-Roam write in measured, non-dramatic tones, braced with hard data – about water. It isn't homicide (at least, not in the traditional sense), but their storytelling momentum will have readers itching to flip to the final pages. Burning in their minds, the underlying question: How will the perpetrators pay for their crimes?

"The West Without Water" (University of California Press, 2013) introduces climate as an ancestral protagonist. As such, water is climate's offspring; liquid generations spanning 20 millennia revealing the underlying history of the West's relationship to its most precious resource. In a three-part treatment, Ingram and Malamud-Roam "crack the code" of climate and paleoclimate research, explain the methods and mindsets of pioneering efforts made by mankind to capture and control Earth's water resources, and merge past, present and future with an investigation of the emerging water crisis in light of global warming predictions. Infinitely readable due to the author's clear and compelling storytelling abilities, the book's solid science is mostly easy to digest. Thankfully, final chapters offer thoughtful, real, and realistic solutions to the problems from the authors and a number of experts.

Ingram is a professor in the Earth and Planetary Science Department at the University of California, Berkeley. Cracking into fossil shells from basement core sediment in the San Francisco Bay, she writes in an introductory chapter of how she came to understand marsh ecosystems. Tracing the nomadic lifestyles of indigenous populations prior to gold-seeking, westerner's intrusion, the authors unearthed a wisdom often

heralded by 21st century "green" activists as their own: respect the earth's resources, or perish. Stepping through archeological remains, she and Malamud-Roam, a Caltrans associate environmental planner and biologist and visiting scholar at Cal, chronicle past societies' symbiotic relationship with the natural world as they shifted according to environmental stresses. One example, natives fishing and hunting in wetlands, but not constructing permanent residential developments on what were potential floodplains, provides an instant, learn-from-elders lesson.

The book's Part I aims scrupulous science at why climate matters. What is "normal" for the semi-arid West? After all, Western history holds both devastating floods, like that of 1861-62, and the "Dust Bowl" of 1987-92, a cataclysmic, six-year drought. Climate emerges as a character; mischievous, capricious, prone to climatic (and climactic) bipolar disorder.

Part II digs beneath the surface, untangling the mysteries of 20,000 years of "water family" history. Understanding how climate grandparented change – from gigantic comings and goings, like the advent of ice ages or pueblo collapse, to miniature migrations, like that of diatoms, microscopic phytoplankton preferring fresh over salt water, or vice versa – the authors spin into technicalities the casual reader may find thick.

The immediacy of Part III, addressing today's water crisis, will revive and arouse any student, scholar, or reader interested in mankind's survival. Simple questions – "Why Does Spring Come Earlier?" – receive simply stated, factual answers. "Nine of the ten warmest years in the West have occurred since the year 2000," the authors write. "This warming is the result of changes in the earth's atmosphere: carbon dioxide levels have risen to 390 parts per million..."

And there is no "fishing around" in murky waters for clues to man's impact on wildlife. Instead, the authors examine the plight of fish. Dam building in West Coast rivers diverted water to thirsty agricultural fields and populous cities, but "The Salmon Story" makes plain the devastation caused by "hydraulic capture" altering the temperature and timing of salmon's natural environment. Adding to the gravity of disappearing food sources, Ingram and Malamud-Roam cite data-supported evidence of increasing wildfires, insect infestations, premature snowpack melting, levee-busting floods, and drought. "The recent trend in urban sprawl seems to dance on the edge of disaster," they write.

Admittedly, climate's shifting profile invites opposing perspectives: Is it Chicken Little's "the sky is falling" false panic, or the "recognize-the-truth" of the boy who announces

the Emperor's new clothes are missing? The authors take a "no regrets" approach, suggesting a number of ways to reduce our water footprint, reverse environmental damage, re-

sponsibly remove dams, enable coalitions to collaborate, fund innovative technologies aimed at preserving the West's water, and support legislative change.

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6-6:30PM Costume contest and entertainment in the plaza	
6:30PM Ghostbusters , movie & refreshments for the kids under the stars (in the plaza)	