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# Swimming To Antarctica: Tales Of A Long-Distance Swimmer (Alex Awards (Awards))

*S W I M M I N G  
T O  
A N T A R C T I C A*

*TALES OF A  
LONG-DISTANCE SWIMMER*



## Synopsis

At age fourteen, she swam twenty-six miles from Catalina Island to the California mainland. At ages fifteen and sixteen, she broke the men's and women's world records for swimming the English Channel—a thirty-three-mile crossing in nine hours, thirty-six minutes. At eighteen, she swam the twenty-mile Cook Strait between North and South Islands of New Zealand, was caught on a massive swell, found herself after five hours farther from the finish than when she started, and still completed the swim. She was the first to swim the Strait of Magellan, the most treacherous three-mile stretch of water in the world. The first to swim the Bering Strait—the channel that forms the boundary line between the United States and Russia—from Alaska to Siberia, thereby opening the U.S.-Soviet border for the first time in forty-eight years, swimming in thirty-eight-degree water in four-foot waves without a shark cage, wet suit, or lanolin grease. The first to swim the Cape of Good Hope (a shark emerged from the kelp, its jaws wide open, and was shot as it headed straight for her). In this extraordinary book, the world's most extraordinary distance swimmer writes about her emotional and spiritual need to swim and about the almost mystical act of swimming itself. Lynne Cox trained hard from age nine, working with an Olympic coach, swimming five to twelve miles each day in the Pacific. At age eleven, she swam even when hail made the water “like cold tapioca pudding” and was told she would one day swim the English Channel. Four years later—not yet out of high school—she broke the men's and women's world records for the Channel swim. In 1987, she swam the Bering Strait from America to the Soviet Union—a feat that, according to Gorbachev, helped diminish tensions between Russia and the United States. Lynne Cox's relationship with the water is almost mystical: she describes swimming as flying, and remembers swimming at night through flocks of flying fish the size of mockingbirds, remembers being escorted by a pod of dolphins that came to her off New Zealand. She has a photographic memory of her swims. She tells us how she conceived of, planned, and trained for each, and re-creates for us the experience of swimming (almost) unswimmable bodies of water, including her most recent astonishing one-mile swim to Antarctica in thirty-two-degree water without a wet suit. She tells us how, through training and by taking advantage of her naturally plump physique, she is able to create more heat in the water than she loses. Lynne Cox has swum the Mediterranean, the three-mile Strait of Messina, under the ancient bridges of Kunning Lake, below the old summer palace of the emperor of China in Beijing. Breaking records no longer interests her. She writes about the ways in which these swims instead became vehicles for personal goals, how she sees

herself as the lone swimmer among the waves, pitting her courage against the odds, drawn to dangerous places and treacherous waters that, since ancient times, have challenged sailors in ships. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

I'm a distance swimmer (five miles a day for 22 years...) and this book is sort of like "coming home" to me. I read it every year and constantly come away inspired and re-committed to my daily practice. I've read a lot of swimming memoirs but for some reason this particular book is the one that *really* captures what swimming is all about- not just the physical aspects of it, but the extreme emotional and mental parts of it (especially those long-haul swims...) In addition, the accounts of different locations in which Lynne Cox has traveled is completely fascinating. I've become a little obsessed with different bodies of water and what swimming in them is like, and "Swimming to Antarctica" REALLY offers a great variety of accounts of different areas around the globe and how vastly different water can be in one location compared to the next. This is a must-read for all those who love to swim, or those who want to understand why it is that some of us are so obsessed with

distance swimming. HIGHLY recommended.

If you want to know what swimming is about for those long distance swimmers who take on oceans, seas, and lakes with frigid temperatures (you and I most likely would not last for five seconds without popping out like a champagne cork) this is a great read. What Lynne Cox has in common with others, such as top musicians who achieve prominence, mountain climbers, etc) is a fierce dedication and belief in herself without compromise. It is that focus that achieves greatness, regardless of the field, and one which we lesser mortals can only admire.

I recently read this book to get psyched up for an open water swimming vacation my husband and I had signed up for. Even though Lynne's kind of swimming is something I'd never do (I love swimming, but hate cold), the story of her swims around the world was told in a way that you were right up close to her and feeling very involved with each and every swimming experience. The writing is superb, the swimming scenes exciting and full of vivid (spoiler alert - sometimes too vivid in the case of the Nile swim with the turds and the dead dog - EWW), and she was a very likable character I wanted to follow through with to the end. It was amazing reading about some of these places. Even though I wouldn't be caught dead swimming in shark infested waters or cold seas, I felt inspired to enjoy the sport of swimming to the fullest and strive for my next goal.

Lynne Cox's book detailing her long distance swims is fascinating. It is easy to get wrapped up in her adventures, and hard to put the book down. The writing is effective and engaging, and the stories themselves awe-inspiring. Somewhere around the middle of the book, I began to feel that her obsessiveness was somewhat over the top, and wondered what the point was in her taking on the increasingly difficult and death-defying swims. But near the end, when she is finally able to achieve her lifelong goal of swimming across the Bering Strait, it all comes together. I got the chills reading that chapter, not just because of the 32 degree water. Only downside to the book is the lack of details about her family and background, which would frame her story and put it into context. And, echoing another reviewer...where are the pictures?! Maybe in the next edition.

amazing and. blew my mind. made me choke up. this woman is 1000 times stronger and braver and more wild than I could ever be. I didn't want book to end.

We humans....we love to push the envelope. Almost ANY tale of achieving extreme physical or

mental achievement will attract our attention, but now and then a story that combines astounding prowess with charm and warmth comes along. Such is Lynne Cox's *Swimming to Antarctica*. This book doesn't require a lengthy explanation for why it is a certifiably enjoyable read: extraordinary physical prowess combines with even more extraordinary strength of will in the person of Lynne Cox, and the results are legendary. Cox's writing skills are not extraordinary, but her down home writing voice combines with a choice of life goals to create a tale in which the sum is far greater than the parts. You might expect, in a book written by a world class athlete, to hear some eye-popping stories of achievement, and your expectations will be met. What you might NOT expect is that Lynne Cox's unassuming, almost humble, telling of her story will have a lingering affect on you (and me) the reader. Cox's endurance in the water is matched by her endurance in going after a goal, and her persistence in getting permission to do certain feats (swimming the Bering Strait) is almost as astounding as her actual swims. Her never-say-die attitude both in and out of the water has on multiple occasions led me to lace up my running shoes on cold and gray days, or led me to go a few steps further in pursuing a non-athletic goal than I previously would have. There are many other fabulous tales of athletic achievement out there, from Lance Armstrong's *It's Not About the Bike*, to the more recently popular *Man on Wire* (about the gentleman who illegally strung a wire between the Twin Towers, and walked back and forth along it several times). The pleasant steady character of Lynne Cox's biography outpaces both of these books in terms of changing the way we each view our own personal challenges. If you're a swimmer, this is a must read. If you're not the type that likes to get wet, you'll still find yourself immersed in, charmed by, and changed by Lynne Cox's wonderful story.

Every page of *Swimming to Antarctica* kept my interest. I am not a swimmer, only a "chunky dunker." I was so impressed with it that I posted it on my facebook page. My granddaughter is a junior life guard and I am giving this to her as a present. So well written. So informative about cold water swimming. You will enjoy it - a swimmer or not.

If you swim, love adventure or just want to sit in your favorite chair and read you have to get this book. I couldn't put it down.

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