

From SUPERMODEL to ENTREPRENEUR

The Intriguing Life of Kathy Ireland

By Suzanne Takowsky

Globe-trotting supermodel turned business mogul Kathy Ireland burst onto the modeling scene at the age of 17. The five-foot-ten beauty was born in Glendale, California and raised in Santa Barbara. As one of Sports Illustrated's most fabulous cover girls (she graced the SI cover three times), we all drooled over her beautiful face and famous curves.

And then without us even realizing it, and seemingly overnight, Ireland went from swim suit model to big time—big business entrepreneur. Actually, multi-millionaire entrepreneur (some say her net worth is around \$350 million). Today, she heads a world-wide empire that franchises everything from exercise videos to sports wear and swimsuit calendars, to maternity clothes, shoes, accessories and a furniture line. Ireland's branding of herself was an instant success and a virtual gold mine. Pure genius.

Ireland has been married to Greg Olsen, an emergency room physician, for 15 years. She still calls Santa Barbara home, and is the mother of two children Erik and Lilly. What? Kathy Ireland driving carpool! It's hard to believe, but true. She has even taught Sunday school.

Incredibly after Ireland had her second child she found herself 40 pounds over-weight. Determined to get back to her pre-pregnancy shape, she set out on a quest to learn all she could about food, nutrition an exercise. "Priorities change once you have kids," she points out. "But women need to stay in shape and make exercise and health an important part of their lives."

Ireland says she sticks to her exercise routine by scheduling an appointment with herself three times a week for a 45 minute aerobic and weight training workout. "Otherwise, with my hectic life, it will never happen. I believe in getting plenty of exercise and eating balanced meals and snacks," she says. "My philosophy is to make a conscious decision to choose nutritious foods without denying myself. I don't believe in dieting; it wreaks havoc on your system. It's healthier to enjoy food, but eat smaller portions."

Setting an example through hard work and determination, Ireland proves to us that we CAN have it all.— if we want it badly enough.

ST: Wife, mother, executive, supermodel... Do you ever feel overwhelmed? Do you have any time for yourself?

KI: I have a terrific support system and what you see is a collaborative effort on the part of everyone around me. The career is built to serve the family—not the family to serve the career. I work hard and my schedule is tight. When it is time for my family, I take that very seriously too and my business part-

ners, the people I work with, understand this. As long as I have balance I don't get overwhelmed or stressed. When things get out of sync and work starts taking over my life I stop and get things back on track.

I also do a lot of work from my home. My team is wonderful, but ultimately I am responsible for what goes to market. I listen to my customers and I find out what they want and I take the job of providing them with products very seriously.

ST: What advice can you offer women who are juggling both career and family and feeling guilty they aren't doing justice to either?

KI: This is a common complaint of women. It helps to have family who can step in and take over when you get frazzled. My mom helps me with my kids and also I take my kids to work with me. I could not do it without my mom. If it wasn't for her, I would be doing something else for a living.

If you don't have family around who can help, make sure the people you hire and the schools you choose are the best. Knowing that your children are having a good time, are safe and are being taken care of...that will relieve a lot of your guilt.

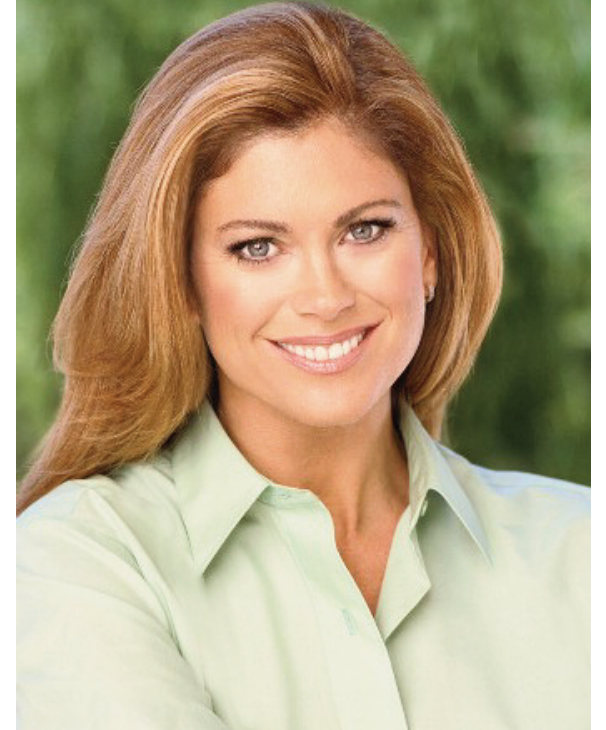
ST: You've been in the public eye most of your life. What has the fast lane taught you?

KI: It's important to be grounded. Money and fame don't necessarily make you happy. Fame and fortune can end at any time. You want a life you can fall back on, so it's important to recognize what the truly important things in your life are.

My priorities are my faith and my family. Once a person becomes famous, that fame can take on a life of its own. It's important to build a strong sense of yourself—to be comfortable with who you are as a person.

ST: From supermodel to superbusiness woman. What inspires you to keep changing; keep reinventing yourself?

KI: I've worked since I was a child. My parents instilled a great work ethic in me at a very young age. If I wanted something, I had to work and find a way to earn the money to buy it. When I was young I would wash neighbors cars. I also had a paper route and I was a waitress. I worked very hard and learned how to support myself and use my imagination to make money. I learned the value of a dollar and also learned the importance of saving money. The transition from model to designer was easy for me. I have never been into buying expensive clothes. Therefore, It was very important for me to be able to design clothes that are affordable for everyone.



ST: Success doesn't come easy. There are failures and disappointments along the way. How do you handle them?

KI: My faith in God helps me. If God is with me, it doesn't matter what anyone says. When negative situations come into your life, know where to go, who to turn to for help with the rough times we all go through. Have faith that what is meant to be will work out in a way that is right for you, even though you may not see it at the moment. You can only control so much. You have to learn to roll with the punches. I don't give up easily. If someone says no, I become more determined. Once I was asked to leave an aerobics class because the teacher said I wasn't coordinated enough. Of course I was embarrassed that day, but it also made me determined to succeed. So I went out and studied and took classes. Eventually, I became a certified fitness instructor and ended up teaching an aerobics class.

ST: What message do you want to give to your children about the role of a working mom?

KI: I want them to understand the importance of supporting the people they love—and that it takes hard work to achieve goals. My parents taught me that to survive and overcome obstacles, I must be grounded in faith. Faith in God will get us all through the difficult times we face throughout our lives. ●