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SUPERMODEL TO SUPER MOM AND ENTREPRENEUR

BY ADRIENNE PAPP



As her modeling career came to an end, no one was knocking on Kathy Ireland's door asking her to endorse—anything. Everyone expected the Southern California native to put her efforts into swimsuits. It was the obvious choice for a woman who graced the cover of *Sports Illustrated* three times and made thirteen appearances inside the magazine. But “obvious” never was Ireland's style.

Before she was a supermodel, Ireland was a businesswoman. At age four, she designed and sold painted rocks from her wagon. She charged a nickel. Her sister charged ten cents. She was already under-promising and over-delivering.

She graduated from rock-selling to waiting tables and hoped to major in marine biology or journalism in college. Life took a turn when an Elite Modeling scout discovered her. By age 23, Ireland was modeling and living in Malibu.

On a visit home to Santa Barbara, a young internist, Greg Ireland, caught her eye. Ireland's mother worked at the same hospital and thought they were perfect for each other. “I went to work with my mom and started stalking him,” Ireland says.

When they finally met, Ireland confessed that she had been following him. Dr. Olson had a confession of his own. He'd been aware of what she'd been up to all along—Kathy Ireland and Dr. Greg Olson celebrated their 19th anniversary in August.

The business that is now KIWW—Kathy Ireland Worldwide—started with socks. Asked to model them, her mind began to work. She

conducted focus groups and learned what women wanted in socks—fashion, style, comfort and softness. Ireland partnered with Moretz Sports, a powerhouse in hosiery and socks. Together they developed a product that combined everything women wanted, with a touch of aloe and bamboo fibers for good measure. Ireland threw a backpack

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over her shoulders and traveled the country with her merchandise.

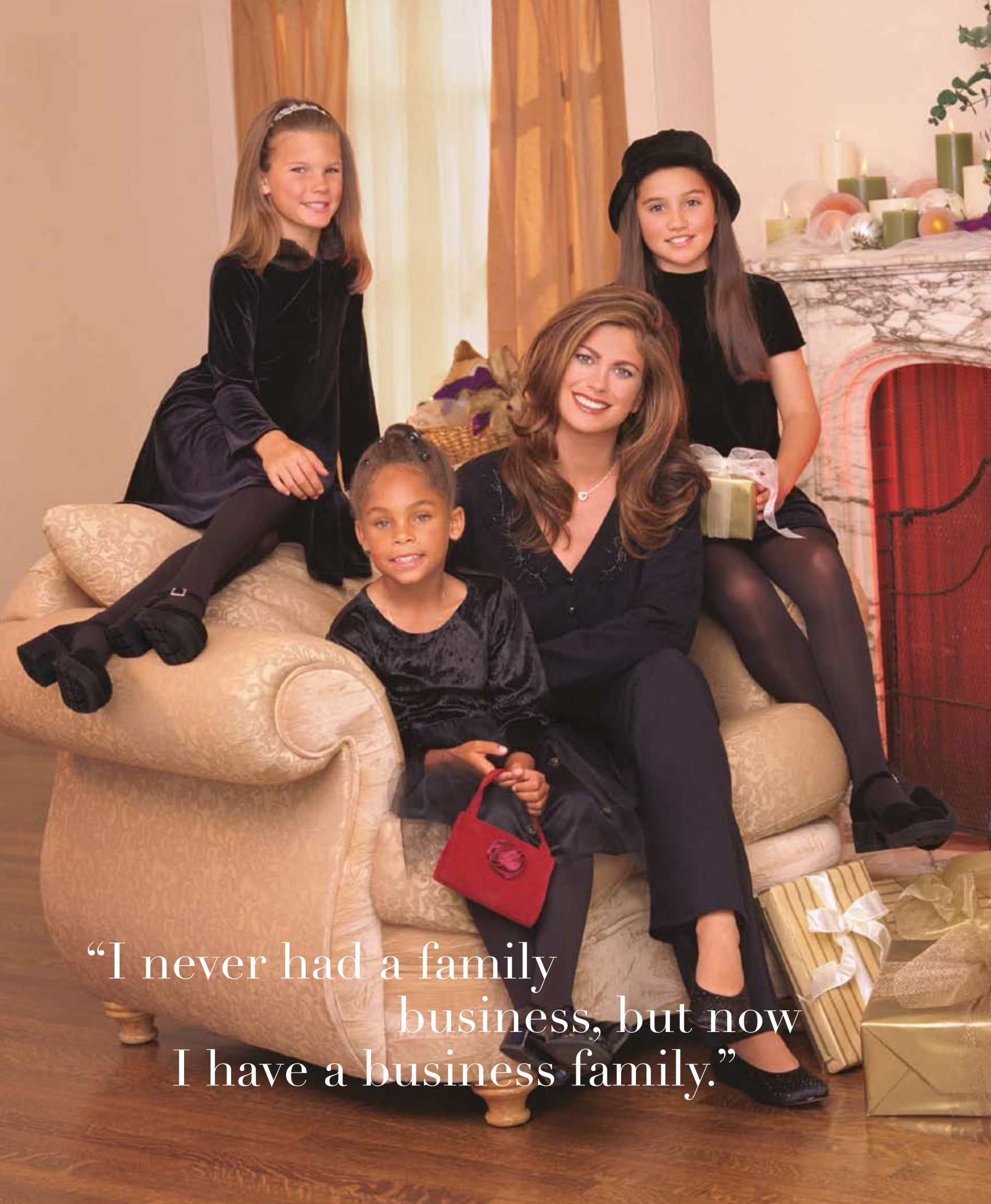
Success didn't happen immediately, but Ireland persisted, just as she had as a little girl, when she took on a paper route. One of her customers wanted a “paper boy,” not a “paper girl.” He insinuated that she would never last. A determined Ireland remained a paper girl for three years. (Once Kathy Ireland Worldwide took off, the busy entrepreneur shared her history with ex-paper boy Warren Buffet, the self-made billionaire and philanthropist.)

While she was building the business, Ireland was also building a family and struggling to make it work. A philosophy began to take shape, finding solutions for families, especially busy moms. How can I make my day better? How can I make *their* day better? “I know how hard it is to get the kids in the car. Just making it out of the driveway is a victory,” Ireland says.

As her business began to take off, she wanted to thank her many customers. Her website, kathyireland.com, is a vehicle to communicate with women, not to sell merchandise. You can see products and locate stores, but nothing is sold over the Internet.

Kathy Ireland Worldwide passed a billion dollars in annual sales after less than ten years. “I never had a family business, but now I have a business family,” she says. “When you treat people you work with the way you want to be treated, there's no limit to what you can accomplish. While the products bear my name, they're the result of thousands of hours of work performed by many, many people.”





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From apparel to home furnishings to books and videos, every product is designed to make life easier: finding solutions for families, especially busy moms. Ireland's products are accessibly priced at accessible stores such as Bed, Bath, & Beyond, Levitz Furniture, Lamps Plus, Merle Norman Studios, Jo-Ann, and Amazon.com.

She found a mentor in Dame Elizabeth Taylor and quickly partnered with her House of Taylor Jewelry. As hands-on today as she was when she traveled the country with her backpack getting started, Ireland designs manageably priced jewelry. People are often surprised at how involved she is. "Some people want me to shut up and pose," she says. "I don't do that anymore."

Ireland's priority is her family: her husband and children Erik, Lily, and Chloe. And when it comes to the holidays, almost everything else takes a back seat. They get their tree the day after Thanksgiving and celebrate until January 1st. "I like to focus on the holiday and the meaning behind it," she says "The presents from our kids, the ones they make,

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they are the most meaningful. We have the best art gallery in the world: our kids' framed art.”

With no personal assistant or nanny, Ireland arranges her workday around her children's school days. Up around 5 a.m., she works in her home office and then takes the kids to school. She dedicates the in-between hours to KIWW, then dons the chauffeur's cap again and devotes the rest of the day and evening to her husband and kids. If she needs an extra pair of hands or eyes, her family pitches in. Ireland's book, *What Do Mommies Do?*, is a tribute to mothers. "They're everything from doctors to a Kleenex tissue.”

Ireland doesn't profess to be the world's greatest cook, but she gets a little help from her friends Chef Andre and Nicholas Walker. Their advice can be found on www.kathyireland.com.

Another problem solved! **C**

ADRIENNE PAPP is a recognized journalist who has written for many publications including *Savoir*, Beverly Hills 90210, Malibu Beach and Celebrity Society, among many others. She is the President and CEO of Los Angeles/New York-based publicity company Atlantic United, Inc. Adrienne writes about world trends and interviews celebrities.

The Challenges Of Motherhood:

“Kids are on their own schedules, and the most profound moments happen in the car or playing games. They're constantly changing—just when you get them figured out.”

JUGGLING WORK AND FAMILY:

“Women can have it all, but not at once. Everything comes in seasons, and at each season we need to prioritize our lives.”

HER CHILDREN:

“I want them to really figure out what their gifts are—discover and develop them. Respect others.”

PHYSICAL FITNESS—A FAMILY AFFAIR:

“We love outdoor sports...hiking, biking, tennis, and basketball. But my main workout is keeping up with the kids.”

WHAT MODELING MEANT:

“Modeling was a means to the end. It was short-term, a way to pay for college or a business.”

FAME:

“Very rarely does anyone bother me now, only as a result of my business.”

FOUR BUSINESS PROMISES:

“Safety, fashion, quality and value.”

GIVING BACK:

“I understand the need to give publicly. It brings attention and awareness to charities. KIWW can do this as a team effort.”

KIWW CORPORATE INITIATIVES:

“World hunger, health, HIV-AIDS, women and children's issues. Anything that improves the dignity of human life.”