

No Mountain Higher

Her son's victory over cancer and cycling comeback are legendary. Now, Linda Armstrong Kelly is telling her own story.

We know that individuals who devote their lives to a single pursuit can achieve extraordinary success. Lance Armstrong proved that theory once again in July by becoming the first cyclist in history to win his sixth *Tour de France*. But what many don't realize is that his mother, Linda Armstrong Kelly, is also living proof of the axiom. Armstrong Kelly, a Dallas native, devoted a major portion of her life to a single passion: raising her son. Now, in a new book due out next

spring titled *No Mountain High Enough; Raising Lance, Raising Me*, she is telling her own story.

According to the publisher's web site, Armstrong Kelly's saga with her son began before he was born. Pregnant at seventeen, she refused to get an abortion and was kicked out of her home and school. Armstrong Kelly didn't give up. Armed with a fierce optimism, she transformed herself from a poor, single mother into a corner-office executive who raised a champion. "I certainly had every reason to fail," says Armstrong Kelly, "But I wasn't going to do that."

Armstrong Kelly says she never once regretted her decision. "I threw everything I had into that baby. I worked full time, but when I got home, he was my full-time commitment. I had no hobbies of my own whatsoever. I didn't work out. I didn't play golf. I worked, and I supported my son. And when I look back on that time, I don't feel like I missed out on a thing."

According to Armstrong Kelly, Lance was active from the beginning. He began running 10K races when he was in fifth grade, with his mother's active encouragement. "I had the fortunate experience of growing up alongside Lance. I was the kind of mom who was out there roller



Armstrong Kelly at her home in Plano.

skating and riding bikes alongside him,” she laughs. “He would find some interest, and I would say, great, let’s do it together.” Lance soon graduated from 10Ks to triathlons, and began competing on a national level.

Armstrong Kelly instilled her passion for excellence in her son, helping him to prepare for his competitions. “We would go over the course before the day of the event. We’d drive the car over the bike course, then I would take him out and practice open water swimming, because he was used to swimming in lanes. It’s really interesting how that homework we did influences what he does today.”

Taking time for golf

While her son was competing in sporting events, Armstrong Kelly was busy climbing the career ladder. She was a global account executive at tele-

communications giant Ericsson when she overheard her colleagues talking about their Tuesday night golf league and decided to join.

“I worked all the time, and while I loved my job, I thought, this was one night a week when I could pick up my purse at 4:30 and go play nine holes. I figured it would be a great way to network.”

She found the business aspect of golf rewarding. “I noticed that men loved to talk about golf, but they would hesitate to bring it up if there were women in the conversation. So I would make it a point to bring it up. Golf opened a lot of doors for me.”

Today, Armstrong Kelly is retired from her job, and uses golf to relax. “If I made it a priority, I’m sure I would get better,” she says. “But at this point in my life, I just enjoy the game. I don’t feel the pressure to compete.”

“More determined than ever”

When she decided to write her story, Armstrong Kelly says she contacted a well-known agent in Dallas, and explained that she wanted to write about her experience raising a champion. The agent told her she didn’t have a story. “I said thank you very much, and I picked up my coat and walked out. And I was more determined than ever.”

She contacted a second agent, who thought the book was a great idea. That agent put Armstrong Kelly in touch with Houston writer Joni Rodgers, author of *Bald in the Land of Big Hair*, her own cancer survival story. They spent a year together writing the book, which will be published in April 2005.

“It’s a story of perseverance,” says Armstrong Kelly. “My motto is: follow your heart. Be true to yourself and follow your heart. The rest will follow.” 



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