



MOP MOGUL
“When I’m designing a product, I dream about how it’s going to help someone,” says Mangano (at home with her Miracle Mop and, at right, with her kids).



Joy Mangano

Billion-Dollar Mom

FROM HUGGABLE HANGERS TO HOLLYWOOD:
HOW A PLUCKY INVENTOR CREATED A HOME SHOPPING NETWORK EMPIRE
AND INSPIRED A STAR-STUDDED MOVIE ABOUT HER LIFE

By **EMILY STROHM** Photographs by **JAKE CHESSUM**

Joy Mangano sits in a cozy armchair in a corner of her living room in the sprawling Long Island, N.Y., mansion she calls home, sipping a cup of coffee. Everything around the 59-year-old mogul is pin-neat, just the way she likes it. “I used to come in from business trips, and the kids would move one little thing in this entire home just to see how long it would take for me to find what was out of place,” she says, smiling. “It would never take long.” But then, all her life Mangano has had an eye for detail. As a kid, she designed a seven-story tree house in her parents’ backyard complete with “intricate little landings,” she says. In middle school she transformed the family’s toaster into a “superpowered” appliance after carefully taking it apart and reworking it. “Those kinds of things just came very naturally to me,” she recalls. “Everyone said, ‘Oh, Joy is so precocious.’ But I always looked at the world through product.”

That way of looking at the world made Mangano a multimillionaire. In 1992 she launched an empire by hawking her own quirky invention on live television: the now-ubiquitous Miracle Mop, a self-wringing contraption that allows you to clean the floor without getting your hands dirty. The rest is



Jennifer Lawrence stars in *Joy*, a movie inspired by Mangano’s life.

business history. Mangano has sold more than \$3 billion in products throughout the course of her career—and now Jennifer Lawrence is playing a character partly inspired by her in the new movie *Joy*, which opens Dec. 25. “I have always been somewhat fearless, and you have to be to a degree,” she says. But millions and a movie are less important to Mangano than the pure joy of inventing. “It’s so important to me,” she says of her knack for coming up with labor-saving devices. “You want to make a difference for people.”



In 1990 Mangano, who had worked as an airline reservations manager, was newly divorced and raising her three children, Christie, now 33, Robert, 32, and Jackie, 30, when she developed the prototype for her Miracle Mop. “I was always creating something and had little projects,” she says. “There was no such thing as a self-wringing mop way back then.” She sold nearly 20,000 mops in under 20 minutes on QVC, but Mangano admits her first big success wasn’t an easy feat. “I had no support system, and



HER EARLY DAYS

“I would take over the home section of Kmart and demonstrate how to use the mop for shoppers,” says Mangano (in 1989).

it was scary,” she says. She had met her husband, Tony Miranne, as a student at Pace University, but they split after 10 years of marriage in 1989. She and her ex stayed on good terms, and Miranne now works for Mangano as a vice president of her company Ingenious Designs. At the start, “as a single-mom female inventor, there was no path, so really I don’t think people took me seriously for a really long time,” she says. “It was only after the Miracle Mop that people started paying attention.”



Mangano went on to launch several more successful products—and then, after spotting a thick velvet hanger in a high-end couture store, she got the idea for her bestseller to date, Huggable Hangers. “I started dabbling with the idea of that velvety surface, and I realized that was just perfect to hold the clothes,” she says. More than 700 million Huggable Hangers have been sold in the United States. “Joy solves the problems we didn’t even know we had,” says HSN CEO Mindy Grossman. “Her mind never shuts off. Any meeting or discussion creates

Joy’s Bestselling Products

COMFORT & JOY MEMORYCLOUD PILLOW

“We sold almost half a million in a little over six hours,” says Mangano of the temperature-regulating pillow. “It’s insane!”

HUGGABLE HANGERS

The fuzzy, grippy hangers are the bestselling product in the history of electronic retailing. “There’s a science to hangers,” says Mangano.

MIRACLE MOP

The self-wringing cotton mop was Mangano’s first successful invention and launched her career on television.

MY LITTLE STEAMER

Mangano created the portable steamer as an ironing-board alternative.

FOREVER FRAGRANT

The scented sticks are designed to neutralize odors for up to two years.



'I don't have to balance work and home life—it meshes together really beautifully'

a whirlpool of energy and ideas.” Her children all work closely with Mangano: Robert and Christie as vice presidents at Ingenious and Jackie as a style expert for HSN. They remember Mangano as den mother for all their friends. “People would literally call the house and ask for her,” says Christie. “Boy advice, life advice, which college to go to. She just has a magic touch.”

Still, the family was stunned when they found out her life helped inspire the movie *Joy*, which stars Lawrence as a single-mom entrepreneur along with Robert De Niro as her dad and Bradley

NEXT GENERATION
Mangano in her whimsically decorated yard with kids (from left) Jackie, Christie and Robert Miranne. “We are all connected to the family business,” says Jackie.

Cooper as a shopping-network exec. “It’s nothing short of amazing,” says Mangano, who spent hours on the phone with writer-director David O. Russell as he researched the script. “It’s surreal.”

Despite her success, Mangano hasn’t forgotten about the struggles she faced at the start. So she created the Joy Mangano Foundation to help empower other entrepreneurs. “I think, ‘If I had somebody there to wrap their arms around me and say, “Here is a little help”—if I can just do that for one person or for multitudes of people, that’s amazing.” ●