

On the Wings of Mercury: The Lorraine Moller Story

At the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Lorraine Moller of New Zealand won the bronze medal in the women's marathon. It was the culmination of an incredible career in long-distance running. She wasn't the best-known female marathoner of the era, but when you look at her statistics, she certainly was solidly in the top five along with Grete Waitz, Joan Benoit, Ingrid Kristiansen, and Rosa Mota.

Consider: she won the first eight marathons she entered. She won three of the seven Avon Women's World Championship Marathons that led to a women's marathon in the Olympic Games. No other woman won more than one. She won the Osaka International Ladies Marathon three times. And in 1996, she was undefeated as a masters runner.

Of course, that's just the flash, the statistical abstraction.

Behind every champion is a life spotted with high points and dismal failures that sculpt the person into a fierce competitor but that also make certain to remind her that, in the end, she is very much a human being like everyone else, blighted with foibles and brilliant with determination.

Lorraine has written an autobiography that is at once inspiring and humbling. It follows a sickly, scrawny, Kiwi kid who discovers she has a certain talent for moving her legs really fast—but she comes from humble beginnings and has a long way to travel to ultimately reach her goals on the international stage. There are a lot of false starts, a lot of setbacks, and a lot of triumphs.

Titled *On the Wings of Mercury: The Lorraine Moller Story*, the book is a fiercely honest look at a life led on a fairly public stage. Lorraine spares no one, especially herself. She is forthright with the wrong turns she took in her life, the questionable decisions, and the blind alleys. But her story is ultimately uplifting because she is determined to come back from everything that goes wrong in her life. When she made a mistake, it was usually a doozy (her marriage to American marathoner Ron Daws is a perfect example), but like the person who throughout life learns how to get things right by first learning lessons from doing them wrong, Lorraine always sticks it out, works hard at correcting her course, and in the end pushes through.

The book is a delight in that Lorraine's personality drenches every page. Her unique take on the world—and on herself—provides an opportunity for readers to

get to know the person behind the accomplishments. This opportunity is provided by two factors: she is brutally honest, and she is a skilled writer. She certainly doesn't need a ghostwriter or a collaborator. This isn't meant as a put-down to her treasure trove of running accomplishments, but she writes even better than she ran. Every page is filled with vivid word pictures and sometimes startling insights.

It would probably be accurate to refer to Lorraine as a "practical New Ager." Throughout her adult life, she has been led by her spiritual side and has consulted many a celestial source, whether a seer or a faith healer. She has put an enormous amount of energy into finding the meaning of life, or at least the meaning of her life. And because of her generous personality, the quest in various chapters of the book comes across as more endearing than kooky. Whether a palmist is authentic or not doesn't matter; if you increase your self-confidence in the process, well then, it worked, right?

We are a little spoiled over the last year in being given two gifts in excellent running books that essentially cement the women's running movement into history. A year ago, Kathrine Switzer unleashed her wonderful *Marathon Woman*; now, with Lorraine Moller's honest and insightful tome, that chapter of the history of running is thoroughly plumbed and delightfully recorded.

The strength of both books comes primarily from the strength of these two outstanding women to tell their stories with honesty and humility, to let the chips fall where they may, and to stand not behind what they have written, but above it. —*Rich Benyo*