

Lillian Moller Gilbreth: A Life Beyond "Cheaper by the Dozen"



Making Time: Lillian Moller Gilbreth -- A Life Beyond "Cheaper by the Dozen" by Jane Lancaster

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

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Lillian Moller Gilbreth, best known as the mother in the heartwarming memoir "Cheaper by the Dozen," was a remarkable pioneer in the field of industrial engineering. Her groundbreaking work in time and motion studies revolutionized efficiency in workplaces and homes, leaving an enduring legacy in the world of productivity and self-improvement.

Beyond the beloved stories of her family life, Lillian's own life was a fascinating journey filled with challenges, achievements, and a tireless dedication to women's empowerment and social progress. Here's a glimpse into the extraordinary life of Lillian Moller Gilbreth, a woman who

transcended her role as a family matriarch to become an influential figure in her field and beyond.

Early Life and Education

Lillian Evelyn Moller was born on May 24, 1878, in Oakland, California. Her father, Danish-born William Moller, was a shipwright, while her mother, Ann Delany Moller, was an Irish-American schoolteacher. Lillian grew up with a keen interest in engineering and mathematics, inspired by her father's work. She attended the University of California, Berkeley, where she studied engineering, psychology, and literature.

In 1902, Lillian married Frank Bunker Gilbreth, a fellow engineering student who would later become her partner in both life and work. Together, they embarked on a journey that would forever change the landscape of industrial engineering.

Breakthroughs in Time and Motion Studies

Lillian and Frank's collaboration led to groundbreaking research in time and motion studies. They developed the "Gilbreth System," a set of techniques to analyze and improve the efficiency of manual work processes. Using motion pictures and stopwatches, they recorded workers' movements, identifying wasted time and unnecessary steps. By implementing their findings, they dramatically increased productivity in various industries, from construction to shipbuilding.

Lillian's work extended beyond factories. She recognized the importance of efficiency in homemaking and family life. She authored several books on household management, introducing time-saving techniques that made a

significant impact on women's lives. Her work became a cornerstone of the home economics movement.

Championing Women in STEM

As a woman in a male-dominated field, Lillian faced challenges and prejudices. However, she remained steadfast in her belief that women were capable of achieving anything they set their minds to. She became a vocal advocate for women's education and opportunities in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

Lillian founded the Society for the Advancement of Women in Engineering (SAWE) and served as its first president. She also supported women's suffrage and worked to increase women's representation in government and academia.

Personal Life and "Cheaper by the Dozen"

While Lillian's professional life was remarkable, her personal life was equally fascinating. She and her husband raised 12 children, providing the inspiration for her daughter Ernestine Gilbreth Carey's beloved memoir "Cheaper by the Dozen." The book, later adapted into two successful films, captured the humorous and heartwarming adventures of a large family living in the early 20th century.

Lillian's role as a mother and homemaker did not overshadow her professional pursuits. She found ways to balance her demanding career with the joys of family life, becoming a role model for working mothers everywhere.

Later Years and Legacy

Lillian Moller Gilbreth's influence extended far beyond her lifetime. She received numerous awards and accolades for her work, including the Hoover Medal from the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in 1941.

In her later years, Lillian continued to write, lecture, and inspire others. She became a sought-after speaker, sharing her insights on efficiency, productivity, and women's empowerment. Her work continues to be studied and applied in workplaces and homes worldwide.

Lillian Moller Gilbreth passed away on January 2, 1972, at the age of 93. Her legacy as a pioneer in industrial engineering, a champion for women, and a loving mother remains an inspiration to generations.

Lillian Moller Gilbreth's life was a testament to the limitless potential of the human spirit. She transcended traditional roles, shattered barriers, and made significant contributions to her field and society. From her groundbreaking work in industrial engineering to her advocacy for women's empowerment, her legacy continues to resonate today.

While her daughter's memoir, "Cheaper by the Dozen," brought her family life into the limelight, Lillian Moller Gilbreth's own life story is an unforgettable tale of innovation, determination, and a lifelong passion for making a difference. Her journey serves as a reminder that even the most ordinary lives can leave an extraordinary impact on the world.

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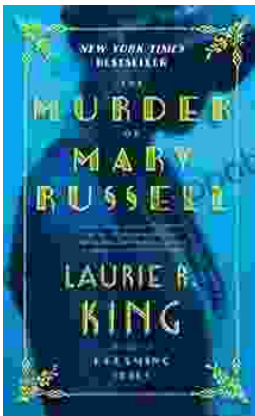
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