



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

Jane Lancaster

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Readers of *Cheaper by the Dozen* remember Lillian Moller Gilbreth (1878-1972) as the nurturing mom who endures the antics of not only twelve children but also an engineer husband eager to experiment with the principles of efficiency - especially on his own household. What readers today might not know is that Lillian Gilbreth was herself a high-profile engineer, and the only woman to win the coveted Hoover Medal for engineers. She traveled the world, served as an advisor on women's issues to five U.S. presidents, and mingled with the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt and Amelia Earhart. Her husband, Frank Gilbreth, died after twenty years of marriage, leaving her to raise their eleven surviving children, all under the age of nineteen. She continued her career and put each child through college. Retiring at the age of ninety, Lillian Gilbreth was the working mother who "did it all." Jane Lancaster's spirited and richly detailed biography tells Lillian Gilbreth's life story - one that resonates with issues faced today by many working women. Lancaster confronts the complexities of how one of the twentieth century's foremost career women could be pregnant, nursing, or caring for children for more than three decades. Yet we see how Gilbreth's engineering work dovetailed with her family life in the professional and domestic partnership that she forged with her husband and in her long solo career. The innovators behind many laborsaving devices and procedures used in factories, offices, and kitchens, the Gilbreths tackled the problem of efficiency through motion study. To this Lillian added a psychological dimension, with empathy toward the worker. The couple's expertise also yielded the "Gilbreth family system," a model that allowed the mother to be professionally active if she chose, while the parents worked together to raise responsible citizens. Lancaster has woven into her narrative many insights gleaned from interviews with the surviving Gilbreth children and from historical research into such topics as technology, family, work, and feminism. Filled with anecdotes, this definitive biography of Lillian Gilbreth will engage readers intrigued by one of America's most famous families and by one of the nation's most successful women.

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