

# Soaring Above Barriers: The Extraordinary Life and Legacy of Iris Louise McPhetridge Thaden



In the annals of aviation history, the name Iris Louise McPhetridge Thaden shines brightly, marking the unwavering determination and pioneering spirit

of a woman who dared to conquer the skies. Her remarkable life story, captured in the captivating book "The Flying Life: Iris Louise McPhetridge Thaden and the Launching of Thaden," is a testament to her love for aviation, passion for adventure, and relentless pursuit of equality in a male-dominated field.

## Early Aspirations and Flight Training

Born in 1885 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Iris Louise McPhetridge developed a fascination for flying at a young age. Inspired by the daring exploits of early aviators, she dreamed of soaring through the clouds and exploring the uncharted frontiers above.



## THE FLYING LIFE Iris Louise McPhetridge Thaden and the Launching of THADEN SCHOOL: Presented to the '81 Club Monday 21 November 2024 by Mrs. Alan R. Marsh ... Nonfiction Books About Women and Men)

by JOAN MARSH

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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File size : 2570 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
X-Ray : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 46 pages  
Lending : Enabled



However, in the early 20th century, society's expectations for women were narrow and limiting. Undeterred, Iris refused to be bound by these outdated norms. In 1926, at the age of 41, she enrolled in flying lessons at the Curtiss Flying Service in Chicago, becoming one of the few women in the country to pursue aviation as a career.

## **Aviation Achievements and Record-Setting Flights**

Iris's natural talent for flying quickly became apparent. She excelled in her training and obtained her pilot's license in 1927. Eager to push her limits, she embarked on a series of record-breaking flights that made headlines across the nation.

In August 1927, Iris set a new altitude record for women, soaring to an astonishing 19,782 feet. This remarkable achievement proved that women were just as capable as men in the cockpit. She followed this triumph with a series of transcontinental flights, demonstrating her endurance and navigation skills.

## **The Birth of Thaden Aircraft Company**

Beyond her own accomplishments, Iris was instrumental in fostering the growth of aviation and promoting the role of women in the industry. In 1929, she co-founded Thaden Aircraft Company in Pennsylvania with her husband, William Thaden. Thaden Aircraft specialized in manufacturing high-performance airplanes and became known for its rugged and reliable designs.

Under Iris's leadership, Thaden Aircraft produced a series of successful aircraft, including the WACO-9 biplane and the Thaden T-3. These planes were used for various purposes, from civilian flight training to military

missions during World War II. Iris's entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to innovation helped to establish Thaden Aircraft as a respected name in aviation.

## **Advocacy for Women in Aviation**

Throughout her career, Iris was a vocal advocate for women in aviation. She established the Ninety-Nines, an international organization dedicated to promoting women's participation in aviation. As the organization's first president, Iris encouraged and supported aspiring female pilots and fought for their equal recognition in the industry.

Iris's advocacy work extended beyond the cockpit. She lobbied for changes in aviation policies and regulations that discriminated against women. Her efforts helped to pave the way for future generations of female aviators to achieve their dreams.

## **Legacy and Inspiration**

Iris Louise McPhetridge Thaden passed away in 1972, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire generations of aviators. She was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 1989 and received numerous awards and accolades for her contributions to aviation and her tireless advocacy for women.

"The Flying Life: Iris Louise McPhetridge Thaden and the Launching of Thaden" offers a captivating and detailed account of Iris's extraordinary life and achievements. Through archival photographs, historical documents, and firsthand accounts, the book provides a vivid glimpse into the struggles, triumphs, and pioneering spirit of one of aviation's most remarkable figures.

For anyone interested in aviation history, the role of women in the field, or the pursuit of dreams against all odds, "The Flying Life" is an essential read. Iris's story is a timeless inspiration for anyone who believes in breaking down barriers and reaching for the stars.

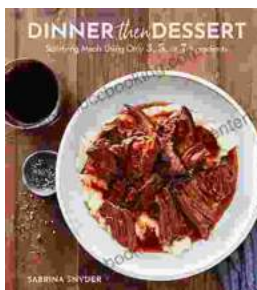


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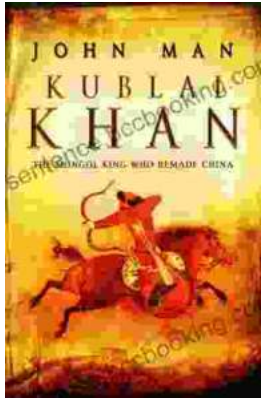
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