



*...Bringing History To Life*

**Volume 22**

**Number 036**

**Estée Lauder – Beauty Industry Innovator**

**Lead: The daughter of immigrants, Josephine Esther Mentzer, a.k.a. Estée Lauder set the industry standard for women's beauty products in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts**

**Content: Esther grew up a borough girl in Queens, the ninth and last child of Max and Rose Mentzer. Early on she became fascinated with the creams and fragrances that her mother used and that her relatives**

**sold in their stores. As a teenager she learned merchandizing and customer relations, caught up as she later wrote, “by pretty things and pretty people.” She learned early on from her Uncle John Schotz the benefits of hands-on selling demonstrating how products worked on the faces and hands of her customers.**

**Mentzer understood instinctively that image was one of the most important components of marketing, so she experimented with various names until she settled on Estée in her 30s because she felt her name conveyed the elegance she need to win over her customers. After her marriage to Joseph Lauder she began creating her own products in her home kitchen and developed the selling techniques that would revolutionize the cosmetics industry. In the highly competitive cosmetics business Lauder had an extremely small advertising**

**budget so she began giving samples of her creams to customers and introduced the tactic of ‘gift with purchase,’ which is today an almost universal practice in the industry.**

**During World War II with factories emptied out by departing servicemen, thousands of women entered the work force and many relied on cosmetics to mitigate the effects of shop work. The beauty industry boomed and the Lauders were among the leaders of this trend. Part of her marketing strategy was to exploit her own image which was enhanced by her cultivated friendships with prominent women such as Princess Grace of Monaco, the Duchess of Windsor and Nancy Reagan. Unwilling to rely on a single brand, the Lauder Company began to expand with other lines such as Clinique, Aramis, Prescriptives, and a fashion partnership with the Tommy Hilfiger Corporation.**

**Lauder gradually turned over her businesses to her sons. Estée Lauder went public in 1995 and by the early 21<sup>st</sup> century was worth an estimated \$10 billion. In 2004 she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In her biography she concluded that, “living the American dream has been intense difficult work.” Lauder died in 2004 at the age of 97.**

**Research assistance by Brittany Boys, at the University of Richmond’s School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I’m Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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