

Einstein's Wife: The Real Story of Mileva Einstein-Mari

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Trained alongside Albert Einstein, Mileva Mari, the renowned physicist's first wife, has been credited with being a brilliant mathematician, surpassing Einstein himself; it's also been said that she coauthored his 1905 paper on relativity. Neither of these claims gets much support in Esterson and Cassidy's book.

What *is* made abundantly clear, however, is what it was like to live in the shadow of Albert Einstein. Careful and thorough research that includes everything from the couple's old school records to letters written between the two reveal what Mari *actually did* do and places her within the context of women's struggle to enter the world of science at the turn of the twentieth century.

The 1986 discovery of Mari's letters to Einstein piqued interest in learning more about the Serbian woman, four years Einstein's senior. What they reveal is that despite her own longing for a career in science, Mari gave emotional and intellectual support to Einstein from the time of their student days through his rise to the pinnacle of his profession in 1914. Contrast this with Einstein's apparent lack of support for Mari, who gave birth to their first child alone and unwed, his promise of marriage depending on his finding a full-time job. The fate of the child remains unknown, and the couple's marriage did not last.

Einstein later married a woman not conflicted by desire for a career in science, not hampered by congenital lameness, and not prone to depression over the loss of a child and emotional needs unmet. And while the book does not support the myth of Mari's supposed contribution to Einstein's world-changing work in physics, it does reveal that success is not based in gender but in opportunity, encouragement, and education, and that denying such things to women is a sorry waste of gifts much needed by a troubled world.

KRISTINE MORRIS (March/April 2019)

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