

SHIRLEY CONRAN, OBE

Shirley Conran (born 1932) went to St. Paul's Girls School, London - which taught her how to maximise time - followed by a finishing school in Switzerland, which taught her how to waste time. She trained as a sculptor at Southern College of Art, Portsmouth (now part of Southampton University), and as a painter at Chelsea Polytechnic (now part of University of the Arts, London). Until she was thirty, she worked as a textile designer, the executive director of Conran Fabrics Ltd.; this firm specialised in working with architects on projects such as hospitals, cruise ships and aircraft. For eight years, Shirley was on the Selection Committee of the Design Council and for six years was an advisor to the British Jewellery Industry. Shirley started to write, when she became Design Consultant to the Daily Mail, and subsequently the Home Editor.

Shirley Conran was the first women's editor of The Observer colour magazine and women's editor of The Daily Mail, for which she launched **Femail**. A pioneering campaigner for equality, she handled the publicity for the Women in Media campaign for legislation against sex discrimination (1971-2).

After a serious illness, Shirley Conran started to write books, nearly all of which have been international bestsellers. They include **Superwoman** (1975); **Down with Superwoman** (1991, the revised and updated edition of **Superwoman**) and other self help books for women. Her first novel, **Lace**, was filmed (No. 1 mini-series movie, USA 1984). Her other novels are **Lace 2** (the sequel to **Lace**), **Savages**, **Crimson**, **Tiger Eyes** and **The Revenge**.

She was formerly married to design tycoon, Sir Terence Conran and they have two sons, Sebastian Conran and Jasper Conran, both of whom are designers.

- 1998 Founder and Chair of **Mothers in Management**, which aimed to improve working conditions and flexible practices for parents.
- 1998-2000 Director of **Woman of the Year Lunch and Assembly Ltd**
- 1999 Elected a Fellow of the RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, manufacture and commerce).
- 2000 Judge of Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year Competition 2000
- 2000-2002 Government Advisor at Ministerial level for Department of Education and Employment (DfEE)
- 2001 Founder President of **The Work-Life Balance Trust**, formed for educational and research purposes.
Published **The Graduates Guide to The Work-Life Balance Sector** (with Professor Carey Cooper of Robertson Cooper)
The Work-Life Balance Trust organised WORK-LIFE BALANCE WEEK 2001 at The Savoy Hotel, London.
- 2002 Wrote **The Guide to the Work-Life Balance Sector** (published for The Work-Life Balance Trust)
The Work-Life Balance Trust organised **WORK-LIFE BALANCE WEEK 2002** at Claridges Hotel, London plus events in Edinburgh, Manchester and Bristol. Over 1 million workers were able to participate in their own workplace.
The Work-Life Balance Trust organised **WORK-LIFE BALANCE WEEK 2003** at Claridges Hotel, London plus events in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Over 3 million workers were able to participate in their own workplace.
- 2003 By September 2003 The Work-Life Balance Trust's original goal - a country-wide educational and promotional task - had been completed. The Trust had raised over half a million pounds to promote the concept of Work-Life Balance in Britain.
- Shirley Conran has suffered from ME since 1970. In October 2003 Shirley became involved in the work of the Association for ME. She is also a Patron of The Young ME Sufferer's Trust.
- 2004 Shirley Conran was awarded the O.B.E. for services to Equality.
Shirley started to develop a new concept for teaching maths.
She founded MATHS ACTION an independent, not for profit organisation with no political affiliations, which aims to improve maths performance in Britain. (work ongoing).
- 2005 Chaired '**Women at Work**' Conference, London
- 2009 At the House of Lords, the charity Working Families honoured 30 **pioneers of work/life balance who changed the British workplace**. Shirley was honoured for her "tenacious campaigning".