

Best seller shares secrets of minimizing housework

By JACKIE KLEIN

"Life is too short to stuff a mushroom," and "I would rather lie on a sofa than sweep beneath it" are author Shirley Conran's household doctrines.

Ms. Conran was in Southfield recently to promote her international best seller, "Superwoman," for every woman and man who hates housework.

The book was published in paperback last month after spending nearly a year on the London Times bestseller list of hardcover books.

Ms. Conran doesn't seem like the type of person who would worry about money management and cleaning tips. She lives in Monte Carlo, her circle of friends includes jet setters and millionaires, and she has successfully managed glamor careers in fabric design and journalism.

But after her divorce, Ms. Conran found herself with two children, no money and no household help. She taught herself efficiency and wrote "Superwoman" to share her secrets of housekeeping success.

"Housework inexorably expands into as many hours as you have to fill — plus half an hour — so it never gets done," is Ms. Conran's law.

"I DON'T do windows," she said with emphasis. "If I have buscuit crumbs on my carpet, it's not going to make front page news. I wouldn't tidy up just because a reporter was coming to interview me. Housework is something that nobody notices until you don't do it." Ms. Conran was editor of the British Observer and Daily Mail. She turned author 15 years ago so she could parlay what she was teaching in the newspapers into good money by informing readers how to cut their housework by one-third.

"My book has been rewritten for different countries," she said. "The one problem all superwomen share is guilt. They get it from TV commercials, mothers-in-law and lying friends."

"Superwoman is the first book on housework that men read. They learn how to scramble an egg, scrub the floor and still have an hour to make love. They're excited about their accomplishments, and more and more men are discussing housework."

Ms. Conran has two sons who share the responsibilities. But in the point of view of some men, she maintained, housework is a woman's reason for living, not just a background for living.

Ms. Conran plans to write four books on the problems of wives and mothers and how they can survive life after 30. She uses a research team and, she admitted, she doesn't enjoy writing.

The author writes 5,000 words a day, with time off for meals and cleaning, and her goal is to write one book a year. She said she can't wait to get back into the excitement of newspaper business.

"A SUPERWOMAN can't do everything but she avoids doing too much. I found that out when I was very, very ill and nearly died. I was only up two hours a day. That's when I gave up my newspaper work and decided to write books. I profited from that crisis."

"I figure I'll make \$1 million teaching housework shortcuts. I concentrate on simplifying what many men and women believe are complicated techniques."

Ms. Conran's total survival system for every situation and for every person who hates housework includes: • Cleaning everything from walls and upholstery to ornamental finishes and china including the author's personal

formulas for money-saving homemade products.

- "Confessions of a dry cleaner's daughter" — clothes maintenance.
- Buying the best for the least — from food to clothing to appliances.
- Maintaining your family, your sanity and your car.
- Unclogging a drain and beating ring-around-the-neck bugs.
- Killing odors and bugs.

"Some men perpetuate myths about their mothers," she said. "These guys think of them as little gray-haired old ladies with cheeks as rosy as polished apples working their heads off in the house. I believe many died of exhaustion at the age of 25."

"I'M NOT a bra burner. But I believe in fair play. Women should find time to do what they're good at. Housework isn't like running a factory and it's not a full-time job. When I hired myself as my own cleaning lady, I threw away the iron. Women of America, rise up, wise up and buy drip dries."



Shirley Conran wrote 'Superwoman' to teach people how to sweep housework under the rug.

High school writers, poets to compete

Students with a flair for poetry or prose can enter the annual Lawrence Institute of Technology (LIT) writing contest.

The competition, sponsored by the humanities department in the School of Arts and Science at LIT, is open to high school English students in the metropolitan area.

The contest has three categories: poetry, short stories, and essays, with first, second, and third prizes of \$50,

\$20 and \$10 in each division.

Deadline for entries is Nov. 26, and winners will be notified by Jan. 7. A statement must also be included from a member of the contestant's high school English faculty confirming the originality of the student's work.

For contest details, contact the English department chairman at each high school or Dr. Victor Angelescu, chairman of the humanities department at LIT in Southfield, at 355-0200.

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