

## **JUDE HODGES : CHRISTINA LAMB**

Christina Lamb OBE – Foreign Correspondent and author

Born in 1965 Lamb went to school in Cheam and later graduated from Oxford with a BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics.

She interned on the foreign desk of the Financial Times and decided that she wanted, above all else, to be a foreign correspondent. Her first job however was less glamorous, as a trainee reporter for Central Television.

Whilst at the FT due to a last minute cancellation she had the opportunity to interview Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party. This led to her being invited to Bhutto's wedding in Karachi where she was immersed in the preparations. She was just 22 and phoned her first major news story through to the FT.

In 1988 she booked a trip into Afghanistan with 'Resistance Tours Limited', one of seven Peshawar-based mujahideen groups offering the ultimate war-zone trekking trips for journalists, soldiers of fortune and other thrill seekers.

She has fearlessly interviewed smugglers, arms dealers, drug dealers, people smugglers and terrorists as well as the feared Taliban. She has become an advocate for women's rights to control their own destiny.

More recently she has been based in Rio De Janeiro and reported on the systematic murder of the street children by the forces of order who regard these children as 'vermin'. Also in Brazil she investigated the loss of livelihood for the indigenous rubber tappers under the auspices of the corrupt president, Fernando Collor.

Lamb has covered child slavery in Mali, where children are sold by their parents to pay off debts or to raise some much-needed cash. She has had lunch with and interviewed Pinochet when he was under house arrest, a bizarre experience as he played with his grandsons.

She was deported from Pakistan, arrested and imprisoned for several hours, and caught in a Taliban ambush of British Soldiers in Helmand.

In 2007 she was on Benazir Bhutto's open-topped campaign bus when it was hit by a rocket grenade and then by a suicide bomber, killing hundreds, including about 50 young volunteers who had acted as a human shield to protect the bus. Christina spent the evening washing pieces of singed flesh out of her hair.

Since then Christina has reported from most of the world's hotspots. From Afghanistan she moved to Peshawar to cover the mujaheddin fighting the Soviet Union and within two years she had been named Young Journalist of the Year.

Since then she has won 15 major awards including five times being named Foreign Correspondent of the Year and Europe's top war reporting prize, the Prix Bayeux.

Christina remains a working foreign journalist and campaigns for women's issues including the patriarchal system in Syria and the continuing practice of FGM in Africa and other countries.

In between her assignments, she lives with her husband, the author, Paul Coelho and 20 year-old son, whose childhood birthday parties she somehow managed to organise and host.

She has written 9 books, including 'I am Malala' and 'Small Wars Permitting'.