

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's the turn of author Frederick Forsyth

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My RAF flying helmet from my National Service when I was 17-19. It reminds me of camaraderie, scares and too many pints of bitter!

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Not going for the £500,000 question when I was on celebrity Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? with Gloria Hunniford in 2005. The question was 'What is the shortest book in the Old Testament?' and I was 80 per cent sure it was Obadiah, but Gloria talked me out of going for it. I was right!

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** I gave up smoking in 2001, I don't drink much and I watch what I eat. There's not much left to tempt me!

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Seven Pillars Of Wisdom, TE Lawrence's account of his time as a soldier during the Arab Revolt of 1916-18. He was a fascinating character.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd like to swim with Great White sharks in Gansbaai, South Africa.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** The poor treatment by our Government of our ex-servicemen and women.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** High Noon. Just hearing that Western's throbbing music grips me.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My father, Frederick. He wasn't rich or famous, nor was he a scholar, but he was a decent, kindly, tolerant, brave Kentish shopkeeper.

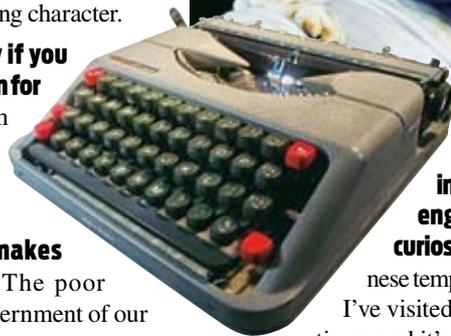
**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** The Duke of Wellington. I'd ask him about his campaigns and what he thought of Napoleon.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Do not lie, cheat or steal, do not turn your back on those who need your help and never, ever put self before country.

Left: Gary Cooper in High Noon. Above: an Empire Aristocrat typewriter. Right: a Japanese temple garden



'A woman once told me I was her favourite author, then gave me a book to sign – by Jeffrey Archer! So I signed it as Jeffrey'



**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Japanese temple gardens.

I've visited Japan five times and it's magical to sit on a stone slab in a Zen garden.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** The little Empire Aristocrat typewriter I used to write The Day Of The Jackal in 1970. It got lost during a move.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To see my son Shane, 37, happily married so I can have some more grandchildren. My other boy Stuart, 39, and his wife Hannah have two kids, Freddie, two, and Sofia, 15 months.

**The poem that touches your soul...** Fallen Soldier, a poem I wrote last year to commemorate all the fallen soldiers from every country and every war. It's now been adapted into a song by the soprano Melissa Alder. I hope it will raise lots of money for charity.

**The song that means most to you...** Jerusalem. The words are amazing, as is the music, and it fills me with love for my country.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** A woman once stopped me and said I was her favourite author. She fished out a book from her bag for me to sign. It was by Jeffrey Archer! I signed it as Jeffrey.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Writing The Day Of The Jackal when I was a freelance journalist and in need of money. It changed everything for me and, to date, it's sold ten million copies.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd give two black eyes to the lawyer who was the driving force behind ruining Sergeant Alexander Blackman. [Sgt Blackman was jailed in 2013 for a minimum of ten years, reduced to eight, for the shooting of an unarmed Taliban fighter in 2011.]

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I'd begin with a fry-up and a cup of tea at Sal Salis, a tented hotel near Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia. I'd then go snorkelling over

the reef and see the whale sharks feeding. Lunch would be at my local pub in Buckinghamshire, The Jolly Cricketers, with my wife Sandy and the family. I'd have a glass of red and the ploughman's sandwich. I'd then relax at home and read in my chair, before having a nap. At sunset I'd fly over Kent in a twin-cockpit Spitfire. Sandy and I would go to Le Caprice in London for dinner – I'd have filet mignon with frites and a glass of good claret.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** Seeing my baby boy Stuart for the first time in 1977.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** Watching my father's coffin disappear in the crematorium. He died at 84 in 1991 and he was the man who made me, so it was sad to see him go.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** The whale sharks are the only thing on my bucket list – but I can't get the insurance to do it!

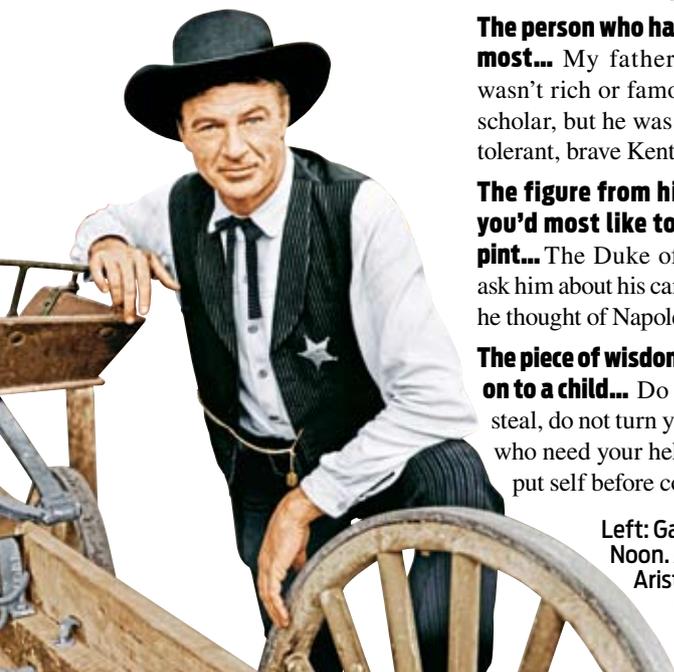
**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Live with honour and – if you have to – die with courage.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I just want to be buried under a tree after a quiet, secular service.

**The way you want to be remembered...** A man who loved his country when it was unfashionable to be patriotic.

**The Plug...** The song Fallen Soldier by Melissa Alder is available on CD and to download. Help make it a hit and raise money for our Armed Forces. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Benedict Cumberbatch is Marvel's Doctor Strange – in cinemas on Tuesday. Katherine Parkinson and Ralf Little bring Dead Funny to the Vaudeville Theatre from Thursday. And former X Factor star Rebecca Ferguson begins a UK tour tomorrow



NEXT WEEK

- Antonio Carluccio on his new book of Italian vegetable dishes – plus five pages of recipes
- As the clocks go back, ferns come into their own says Monty Don
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings