

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's former Beirut hostage Terry Waite

The prized possession you value above all others... My iPad Pro. It's a radio and phone, and I use it to write books. I'd be lost without it.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... That I never learnt to play piano. My grandmother Annie was a piano teacher but she lived 20 miles away and we couldn't afford a piano.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Fattening food. I can eat anything put before me – so I do!

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Memory Chalet by Tony Judd, a British social historian who suffered from motor neurone disease. He dictated it as he lay dying.

The priority activity if you were the invisible man for a day... I'd take my suits and ties to the dry cleaner without embarrassment. I have a bad habit of spilling food on them.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Building on the green belt without controlled planning.

The poem that touches your soul... The hymn The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended reminds me of my father Tom, who often sang it to himself.

Right: War And Peace (1972). Above right: a piano. Far right: Styal in Cheshire

The person who has influenced you most... My friend Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He lives by the idea that love is stronger than hate.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Johann Sebastian Bach. I'd like to know why he was compelled to work so hard.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Never be afraid to ask questions, and read widely so you'll develop a critical eye.

The film you can watch time and time again... I love the BBC's 1972 version of War And Peace, with Anthony Hopkins and Morag Hood. It brings Imperial Russia to life.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Cooking. I make a tasty shepherd's pie and an even better fish pie. I find it very relaxing.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Love God and your neighbour as yourself.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The ability to walk long distances. It's not been possible since I was in captivity in Beirut from 1987-1991, when the soles of my feet were beaten. I'm 78, so that's a factor, too.

The unending quest that drives you on... For the homelessness charity Emmaus to have communities all over the world before I die. I'm its president and one of the founders.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... Losing weight. I'm shrinking in height – I used to be 6ft 7in but now I'm 6ft 6in – but expanding. I'm 20st when I should be 18st!

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm a clergyman. I've even received letters addressed to 'Archbishop Terry Waite'! I'm a layman.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd take all the people at the BBC who are responsible for those trailers for new programmes hostage! The commercials inundate the radio.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Captivity changed my life. I know the fear of not knowing whether you'll live to the end of the day. But suffering needn't destroy you, something creative can emerge. It gave me the courage to work for myself and not go back to my old salaried job.

The song that means most to you... Elgar's Enigma Variations. I used to try and recall the music when I was in captivity because it conjures up the spirit and uniqueness of England.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd have breakfast with Pope Francis in The Vatican. He seems a very special man. I'd ask him to set up an Emmaus community in Rome. Then I'd go to Baghdad and throw a big party for all the children who have suffered as a result of war. Later I'd take my wife Frances and the family – our four children aged 40-50 and my three grandchildren aged 11-16 – on a nostalgic trip to the village of Styal in Cheshire where I was

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brought up. Then I'd have a quiet dinner in South Africa with Desmond Tutu, who's not well at the moment. We'd laugh about old times while tucking into a fine roast beef with Yorkshire pudding. The day would end back in my own bed at home in south-east London. Nothing beats home.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When my blindfold was taken off during my release in November 1991. I'd been in the dark – in a basement or blindfolded – for years. For the first time in five years I saw the sky, the grass, the colours, and I felt the wind on my face.

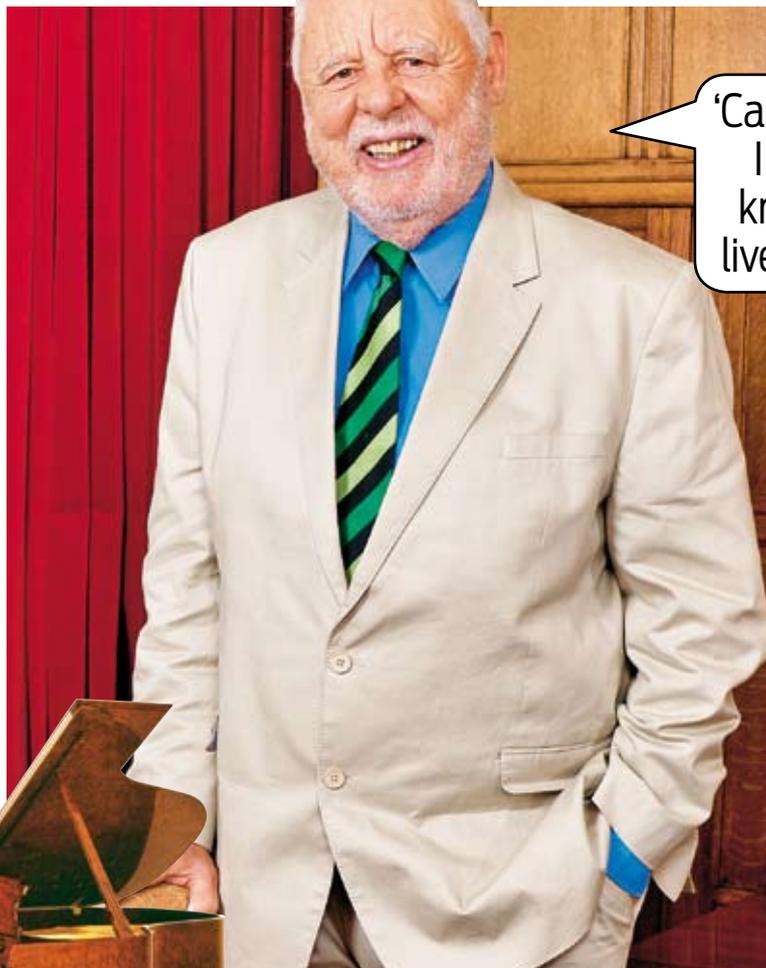
The saddest time that shook your world... My father's death in 1967 from lung cancer. It was on the one weekend I'd not made it up to see him. I was 28 and it's still one of the more difficult experiences in my life.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have an ordinary service at the church near our other home in Suffolk with a reading of my poem The Kingdom, which I think is quite meaningful. The Warrington Male Voice Choir would fill the church and sing Cwm Rhondda to send me out with a bang.

The way you want to be remembered... He did his best to make the world a better place for himself and for others.

The Plug... Out Of The Silence, my collection of poems and reflections, is published by SPCK priced £9.99 and illustrated by Jenny Coles. Please support Emmaus at emmaus.org.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Steve Carell is Gru in Despicable Me 3 – in cinemas Friday.

1967 – Sunshine Tomorrow, a new album with unheard material

from The Beach Boys, is out the same day. And The Wind

In The Willows opens at the London Palladium on Thursday

NEXT WEEK

- As Wimbledon hits 140, Sue Barker's favourite memories
- How to make the most of British strawberries
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings

