

The prized possession you value above all others... My 50-year-old wooden sailing boat, Lady Kate. She sails beautifully and turns heads because she's so pretty.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Not telling my mother precisely why I loved her before she died in 2009. Mama had strong views, but she was immensely tolerant and she embraced triumph and disaster with understanding and kindness.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

It's a warm June day, which starts with tomatoes on toast and coffee in the garden of our house in Devon. Later, I would ride one of [Olympic Gold medalist] Nick Skelton's best horses victoriously around the Olympic course in Rio de Janeiro. Lunch would be fresh fish at Anchorstone Café by the River Dart in Devon. In the afternoon I'd play tennis against John McEnroe at the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and be back to enjoy Così Fan Tutte with my wife Jessica at the Royal Opera House. We'd have dinner at La Coupole in Paris – escargots, cassoulet, crème brûlée and a very good bottle of Saint-Estèphe. I would kiss my children [Daniel, 38, Kitty, 32, Daisy, five, and Gwendoline, three] goodnight and then go to bed with an Ian McEwan novel.

The temptation you wish you could resist... The third, or fourth, glass of wine, or the next bar of chocolate.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Anna Karenina. I read it as a teenager and again in 2007 when on my way to Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy's home, where he wrote his masterpiece.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I would eavesdrop on Tony Blair and George Bush during a private get-together and make their honest conversation about Iraq known to the world.

The pet hate that always gets your back up... People who use mobile phones in the 'quiet' train carriage.

The film you can watch time and time again... The Battle Of Algiers from 1966 about the end of French rule in North Africa. It's cinematic genius.

The person who has influenced you most... My father, Richard. He died when I was 21 and ever since I've wondered what he'd have thought of whatever I do. He had enormous presence and integrity and was always polite.



'I was a professional showjumper when I was younger and was South of England champion in 1965'

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm my brother, David, or that he's me. I don't mind taking credit for all his achievements, but I *am* six years younger!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... My father's death from cancer when he was 52 [on 22 December 1965]. To lose him when I was so young was devastating. I regret not being more curious and asking him about his experiences, especially during the war.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... It would be daft to confess.

The song that means most to you... Cole Porter's Do I Love You? sung by Ella Fitzgerald. It sears the soul.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The day on which the Berlin Wall tumbled. It lifted a huge albatross from the shoulders of the world.

The saddest time that shook your world... Some things are too private and too painful to share.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To say exactly what I think about any subject. Like anyone, I have strong views, but as the chairman of Any Questions? I have to keep them to myself.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Keep on trying and stick at things that really matter. The triers of this world are under-estimated.

The order of service at your funeral... It will be quiet and private. I'm not religious and I suppose I'll be cremated and my ashes can be scattered on the River Dart. I'd like a reading from Shakespeare's Cymbeline in Act Four, Scene Two, 'Fear no more the heat o' th' sun, Nor the furious winter's rages, Thou thy worldly task hast done, Home art gone and ta'en thy wages.' **The way you want to be remembered...** He worked, he cared and he loved.

The Plug... My book *Destiny In The Desert: The Road To El Alamein – The Battle That Turned The Tide* is out now, published by Profile Books. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week: broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pint... Karl Marx. I'd ask him why he thinks it all went so horribly wrong.

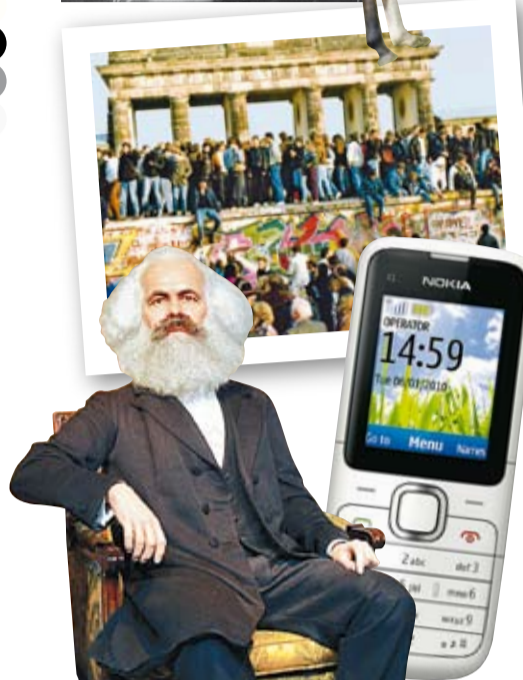
The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Listen and try to be kind.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Showjumping. It was my first love and my main ambition when I was younger. I was a professional for a time and became the South of England champion in 1965.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My father's diary of his time as a BBC war correspondent. I lost it moving house years ago.

The unending quest that drives you on... Curiosity and the urge to educate, inform and entertain. And, naturally, the need to earn a living!

The poem that touches your soul... An Arundel Tomb by Philip Larkin. It provokes a sense of what is irredeemably lost, but inspires optimism.



From top: Jonathan's late father, broadcaster Richard Dimbleby; showjumping; the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989; Karl Marx; a mobile phone; red wine; Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy; Ella Fitzgerald; and some chocolate

PS...

How Not To Lose Things, the new album from Sadie And The Hotheads – fronted by Elizabeth McGovern (aka Lady Cora) – is out on Monday. And the 1978 horror classic Halloween is showing in Apollo and Vue cinemas nationwide on Wednesday



NEXT WEEK

● MasterChef's Gregg Wallace on how he turned his troubled teens into TV stardom ● Sizzling dishes to make your Bonfire Night party go with a bang ● Seasonal squash recipes from Jamie Oliver ● PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide