



From top: Mountains in Utah, a Harley-Davidson, a massive firework, Joe Simpson's *Touching the Void*, Ralph Fiennes in *Coriolanus*, the Crown Jewels, surfing and Muhammad Ali

The prized possession you value above all others... A silver cup used at my wedding to Jenny 11 years ago. I'm not religious, but she's Jewish so a rabbi came to the house and blessed our marriage with the cup, an important symbol.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Not getting a proper school education. I was always bunking off, or doing jobs to earn some dosh.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd spend all morning surfing at Jaco Beach in Costa Rica, then go for a long ride on a Harley-Davidson with Jenny through the mountains of Montana and Utah. I'd have a slap-up lunch of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding at a pub I love near our home, then, because I love Zurich, I'd mooch around there in the afternoon before going to the Bulgari Hotel in Milan for an early evening drink. Jenny and I would end the day with dinner at the Hotel Splendido in Portofino in Italy.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Buying motorbikes. I've got through about 20 in 15 years because I keep crashing, but I love the freedom.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *Touching the Void* by Joe Simpson about his incredible survival after a mountaineering accident. It completely changed the way I write.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... To infiltrate the Taliban leadership in Afghanistan to learn what they're really up to, then give our Army the heads up.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Bad service, especially in expensive restaurants.

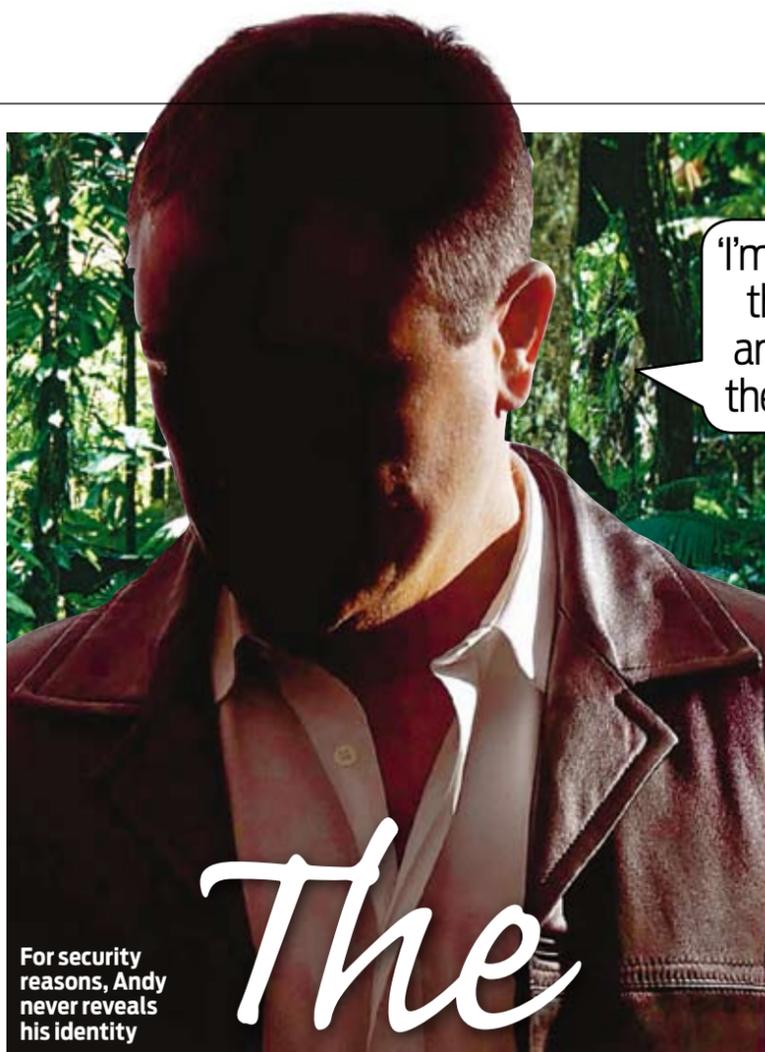
The film you can watch time and time again... *Coriolanus* with Ralph Fiennes, which came out last year. He's brilliant, and the action scenes are fantastic.

The person who has influenced you most... Jenny. I used to fly off the handle frequently, but she just gives me a slap and calms me down.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Muhammad Ali. I met him in Hollywood three years ago and he was amazing, but I'd like to meet him in his prime, in the 60s and 70s.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... No matter what you're doing, give it your absolute best. And never forget to stop and appreciate what you have achieved.

For security reasons, Andy never reveals his identity



'I'm a big fan of opera, I love the over-the-top drama and I get a real kick out of the elaborate productions'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: ex-SAS man and author Andy McNab

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Opera. I love the over-the-top drama. I've been to the best venues, like La Scala in Milan, and get a real kick out of the elaborate productions.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My army medals. I had 14, but they all vanished about 18 months ago when we moved house. I've turned the house over several times looking for them. They're worth a lot of money but they're too famous to sell.

The unending quest that drives you on... I'd like to ride the rip curl of a 30ft wave at Jaco Beach.

The poem that touches your soul... I'm not big on poetry but love Jerusalem by William Blake as a hymn.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm a thick squaddie. A lot of business people think that, but it's to my advantage to be underestimated, so I let them get away with it and make them pay another way.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Being adopted. My real mum left me in a carrier bag on a step at Guy's Hospital in London when I was a baby. My foster parents adopted me when I was five. Mum was a cleaner and Dad a taxi driver, so money was tight, but they gave me love and a stable upbringing.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd pull off the most amazing hi-tech robbery of the Crown Jewels. I'd then hide them, only to be released after my death.

The song that means most to you... *Should I Stay Or Should I Go* by The Clash. It sums up my approach to life. I don't take many things seriously.

The saddest time that shook your world... The moment I was captured by the Iraqis in Syria [during the SAS Bravo Two Zero mission]. I remember the disbelief and deep sadness as it dawned on me it might not end well.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When the Red Cross plane took off from Baghdad [in March 1991 after the end of the first Gulf War] with all the prisoners of war on board. We let out a cheer and two F16s and two Tornados escorted us to Saudi Arabia. That's when we knew we were safe.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To write a serious stage play. I've met people at RADA to see if I can work with them and I'll find out pretty soon if I'm up to it.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Never stitch anyone up. It will always come back and bite you.

The order of service at your funeral... I'm going to leave instructions for my ashes to be put inside a massive firework which will be set off during a full-on party. I'll go out with a bang!

The way you want to be remembered... I'd be happy with, 'A good soldier. Now dead.'

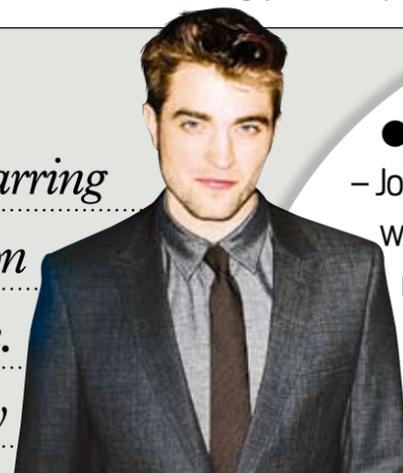
The Plug... *Red Notice*, Andy McNab's brand new thriller, is out now, published by Bantam Press, priced £18.99. Visit www.andymcnab.co.uk ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, ALLSTAR, GETTY

PS...

*The Twilight Saga bows out with *Breaking Dawn Part II* starring Robert Pattinson, in cinemas from Friday. Stephen Fry's back on stage in an all-male *Twelfth Night* at London's Apollo Theatre. And the Rolling Stones' 50-track box set *Grrr!* is out Monday*



NEXT WEEK

- From Doc Martin to Hollywood – Joe Absolom on his new show with Kevin Costner
- Royal cake maker Fiona Cairns's perfect Christmas pudding
- Jamie Oliver's fresh ways with veg
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings