

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's broadcaster *Joan Bakewell's* turn

The prized possession you value above all others... My Victorian house in north London. I bought it in 1963 for £12,000 and it's probably worth £4m now, but I have no intention of leaving. My children [Harriet, 52, and Matthew, 49] grew up here – it's where I've nested.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Never learning to sing. I've belonged to many choirs over the years but have been told to keep quiet during certain songs because I'm out of tune!

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd start with poached egg, croissants, freshly squeezed orange juice and

Tony Curtis and Marilyn Monroe in *Some Like It Hot*



PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY, ALAMY, KOBAL COLLECTION

coffee at the Wolseley in London, where I'd probably bump into old friends. Then I'd swim in crystal-clear waters at a stunning island hotel in the Maldives, and have lots of fresh seafood for lunch, followed by a snooze on the beach. In the afternoon I'd visit Florence and look at Botticelli's painting *La Primavera*, before escaping to the hills overlooking the city for a chocolate ice cream. Later I'd fly to Kyoto in Japan with my children and six grandchildren [aged 14-22] for a huge Japanese meal with lots of local beer and sake. Then I'd watch Eugene Onegin at London's Royal Opera House, with a glass of Bollinger in the interval, before ending the day catching up with the BBC news.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Dark chocolate in all its forms.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. It's an inspirational story that every woman should read.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... The planners and developers destroying London's skyline, especially around St Paul's Cathedral.

The film you can watch time and time again... *Some Like It Hot*. It's such a clever screenplay with a plot within a plot, and it has a really brilliant cast.

The person who has influenced you most... My father Jack. He gave me endless encouragement, and knew the



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Of Honour] by Velázquez from Madrid's Prado museum. It's one of the world's most intriguing paintings.

The song that means most to you... Jerusalem. I love it because I can actually sing it in tune!

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Climbing The Old Man of Coniston fell in the Lake District when I was 14. The view from the top was so awesome it felt like a spiritual moment.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my mother Rose from leukaemia when she was 58 and I was 28. She took a lot of things out on me and we had unresolved issues, but I wept for six months after she died.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To study English literature to degree level.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Take each day as it comes and don't waste it.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd like some poems read and a piece played from Rossini's opera *Stabat Mater*, then for everyone to sing Jerusalem. I'd like my family to go punting in Cambridge and have a lovely picnic by the river, then scatter my ashes on the water.

The way you want to be remembered... As a terrific granny!

The Plug... My novel *She's Leaving Home* is available now (Virago). ■

As told Rob McGibbon



Below: A giraffe.
Bottom right:
Punting in
Cambridge

women of my generation would make a difference. He died of throat cancer about 20 years ago.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day...

I'd go to the savannahs of Africa and wander among the great beasts such as giraffes, lions and wildebeests.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...

Adam Smith [the 18th-century economist and philosopher]. He helped found capitalism – I'd like him to know what ruin it's brought to people.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Do no harm.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I'm interested in the life of

Johnny Cash – his music, drugs and demons. He was a fascinating man.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My grandmother Charlotte's Victorian gold watch. I lost it while hiking on Dartmoor in the 50s and was distraught.

The unending quest that drives you on... To lose half a stone!

The poem that touches your soul... *Ithaca* by Constantine P Cavafy. It reminds me that daily life, not what may be at the end of it, is the reward.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm somehow BBC property. I was only there for two years in the 50s and I've worked for all the major broadcasters ever since as a freelancer.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Gaining a scholarship to Newham College, Cambridge in 1951. I owe it everything.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I would steal *Las Meninas* [The Maids

PS...

Jessica Brown Findlay – Downton's Lady Sybil – hits the big screen in A New York Winter's Tale – in cinemas from Friday. And The Full Monty musical arrives at London's Noel Coward Theatre on Thursday – the same day Beyoncé's UK dates begin in Glasgow



NEXT WEEK

● Part two of our fascinating series on the history of WWI in extraordinary objects ● Tenor Alfie Boe on his guest slot in *Mr Selfridge* ● Try our tangy lemon chicken and lemon meringue pie recipes ● PLUS Britain's most detailed TV listings