



From top: Earth as seen from space, a whisky and soda, Westminster Abbey, King Charles II, Dartmoor and Paul Robeson

The prized possession you value above all others... A photo of my mother and my brother, Malcolm, when he was five, which my father always had with him during World War II. It touches me because it signals my father's longing for his family.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... My elderly mother fell down the stairs and broke her left leg when she lived with me and I always felt responsible. I went to work early without waking the live-in carer and my mother tried to go downstairs alone.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... It is a dream to see Earth from above so I would orbit the planet. After that, I'd walk on Dartmoor, where I live, then have a quiet night by the fire with a good book and a whisky and soda.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Strawberry pavlova. Even if I'm watching my weight, if I see it on a menu I *must* have it.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... All Quiet On The Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque. It brings home the horrors of World War I from the view of ordinary people.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd muddle up Craig Revel Horwood's scoring cards on Strictly Come Dancing so he awarded 10s to everybody.

The way fame and fortune has changed you, for better and worse... None of the fame thing really matters. I was incredibly driven in my career and the greatest cost was the precious time I missed with my mother.

The film you can watch time and time again... The Pianist. I like the twist that the man who should have been his friend betrays him, while the man dressed as the enemy helps him.

The person who has influenced you most... Sister Mary Evangelista, who was my Latin teacher. She inspired me to love Latin as well as to make the most of life. We are still in touch.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... King Charles II. There is some poor evidence that he married Lucy Walter, but I'd like the definitive answer. It would have had a profound effect on our monarchy.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Keep up your skills. Don't assume you will always be able



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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 Ann Widdecombe

to do something just because you are good at it when you are young.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Charles II's escape after the battle of Worcester. He was on the run for weeks. It fascinates me.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... I had a set of videos of the Paul Of Tarsus TV series, which I had loved in the early Sixties. Sadly, a relative recorded over one of the cassettes – with an episode

of Ultimate Force! I was so furious.

The unending quest that drives you on... Eternal salvation. This Earth is only a preparation for the next world.

The poem that touches your soul... Elegy Written In A Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray. Every politician should read the famous line, 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave,' because it puts ambition into context.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I

proposed to shackle women prisoners in childbirth. I never *ever* did and the proof is in Hansard, but people always assume it's true. It is irritating!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... I'm sorry, but nothing has dramatically swung my life because everything has roughly followed the course I designed.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I am against abortion, so I would incapacitate every abortion clinic.

The song that means most to you... Old Folks At Home by Paul Robeson, about a slave longing to be reunited with his family. It has particular resonance now because my brother died last year, so I'm the last of my family.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... My reception into the Catholic Church in April 1993. I was an active Christian, but this was the resolution of a spiritual quest.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my mother when she was 95. She lived with me for eight years. She was a marvellous, gentle woman and I miss her. I held her hand as she died peacefully at my home.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I am past ambition and nothing haunts me, but I would like to have been Prime Minister. I would have introduced zero tolerance and brought common sense back into a politically correct Britain.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Carpe diem. Seize the day. Get the most out of each day because you don't know if it will be your last.

The order of service at your funeral... I would have a Roman Catholic requiem at Westminster Cathedral. They'd sing He Who Would Valiant Be and I'd like John Major to give the address.

The way you want to be remembered... Just as a loyal, good friend.

The Plug... My theatre show An Audience With Ann Widdecombe is touring this autumn. For tickets visit www.celebrityproductions.info ■

As told to Rob McGibbon