



From top: Treasure Island, Winston Churchill, London in the Blitz, Jacques Tati in Monsieur Hulot's Holiday, a glass of cool lager, Las Vegas, the movies – Des would love to star in one – and Oscar Wilde

The prized possession you value above all others... My collection of books and photographs autographed with kind messages to me by all the stars I've met, from Bob Hope and George Burns to Celine Dion. It's irreplaceable.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... You do a lot of damage if you live in the past, so I believe in living for the future. It's better to view mistakes and missed opportunities as lessons learnt, rather than regrets.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I love Australia, so I'd take a boat trip around Sydney Harbour with my wife Jodie and our son Adam, who's seven. We'd then spend all day in the sun on Bondi beach, with a light snack for lunch and a cool lager. In the evening, Jodie and I would head to Las Vegas to watch a great show. I gave up gambling 20 years ago so I won't even have a bet. We'd have dinner at a fine restaurant in London, then enjoy the magic of the London night from Waterloo Bridge.

The temptation you wish you could resist... I think Oscar Wilde got it right when he said, 'I can resist everything except temptation.' I have to look after myself – I'm 80 next year – so I'm quite disciplined about what I eat and drink, but I don't believe in entirely denying myself the pleasures of life.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... I read Treasure Island when I was ten and it fired my appetite for adventure and reading.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd hire a Boris Bike and cycle up and down Oxford Street at Christmas. That would get a few looks and laughs.

The life of another with whom you would gladly trade places... I'm a sport nut, so I'd love to be a top sports presenter who covers all the major events around the world.

The film you can watch time and time again... I've seen Jacques Tati's 1953 classic Monsieur Hulot's Holiday about ten times, and always find something new to laugh at. It's full of wonderful comic observations.

The person who has influenced you most... My father Harry. He made me realise the power of humour, particularly in difficult times. He died about 20 years ago but is still with me in spirit, and I chat to him occasionally.

The figure from history for whom



Thanks to Morecambe and Wise's jokes about me, everyone is convinced I can't sing – but I can!

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: veteran entertainer Des O'Connor

you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... I would like to talk to Winston Churchill about everything!

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Be loving. Be helpful. Share laughter and respect others' feelings.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I'm far too busy with family and work to have one. What use would I be to my young son if I was collecting stamps or digging the garden?

The treasured item you lost and wish

you could have again... Material things don't matter to me. A friend once questioned that belief, and I proved it by dropping my new, limited-edition gold zodiac medallion down a drain!

The unending quest that drives you on... Remaining enthusiastic about the challenges and opportunities life offers is more than enough to drive me on.

The poem that touches your soul... I've always struggled to engage with what poetry is trying to convey. I'm

more interested in writing my own comic poems than reading what someone else is feeling as they walk through the daffodils.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I can't sing! Morecambe and Wise's jokes convinced people I couldn't. It was all good fun, but people still believe it.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... My home in the East End received a direct hit during the Blitz when I was eight, and my mum Maude, sister Pat and I were buried under the rubble for four hours. We were rescued and my dad raced home from work on his bicycle and cuddled us. My mum said, 'We've lost everything' and he said, 'No we haven't. Everything that matters is here.' That sentiment's stayed with me all my life.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I couldn't be bothered with crime at my time of life; my conscience wouldn't enjoy it.

The song that means most to you... Begin The Beguine by Cole Porter has the most romantic lyrics ever.

The saddest time that shook your world... The loss of my father and mother. I still miss being able to share the highs of my life with them.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I've never made a movie, so, if there are any casting directors out there reading this...

The philosophy that underpins your life... I treat everyone with kindness and respect, and I always feel good if I've brightened someone's day.

The order of service at your funeral... I don't want tears and sadness. Lets just have Dick-A-Dum-Dum [Des's hit from 1969] played non-stop, then smile and only think of the good times.

The way you want to be remembered... If people just remember that I was around, that'll be enough.

The Plug... Des stars in the hit musical Dreamboats And Petticoats at London's Playhouse Theatre. Tel: 0844 871 7631 or visit www.kenwright.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Jude Law heads a starry cast in feelgood family film Hugo – in cinemas now. Michael Frayn's fabulous farce Noises Off lights up London's Old Vic Theatre. And Amy Winehouse's posthumous album Lioness: Hidden Treasures is out Monday



NEXT WEEK

- David Attenborough on his new show following one penguin's search for love
- Christmas dinner with a twist – spicy Moroccan-style turkey, and Jamie Oliver's roast venison
- Monty Don on the magic of Christmas trees
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings