

From top: High Society, rugby, The Catcher In The Rye, Alexander the Great, sinking the longest televised putt in history in 1981, a parakeet, Marrakech, a glass of Armagnac and Nat King Cole

The prized possession you value above all others... A piece of paper signed by the Queen conferring a knighthood on me in 2005. It's hanging in a prominent position in my study.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... I've been too lucky in life to have any regrets. Besides, I'm an optimist, and I believe regrets are futile. Things go wrong in every life, but you must move on.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd begin with a breakfast of fresh mango on a boat in the Andaman Sea off Thailand with my wife Helen, followed by a stroll on the beach at the Banyan Tree hotel in the Seychelles. Our three children and five grandchildren would then join us for a fun alfresco lunch at Club 55 in St Tropez. After that we'd all head to Crane Beach in Barbados where I would attempt to body surf, but probably drown. Helen and I would have a candlelit dinner in a garden in Marrakech and I'd end the day with a large Armagnac on the terrace of our holiday home in Gascony, southwest France. As you can see, my perfect day is geared around regular intakes of food and drink!

The temptation you wish you could resist... Doing everything at once. I like to do things quickly, so I tend to do at least two things at the same time.

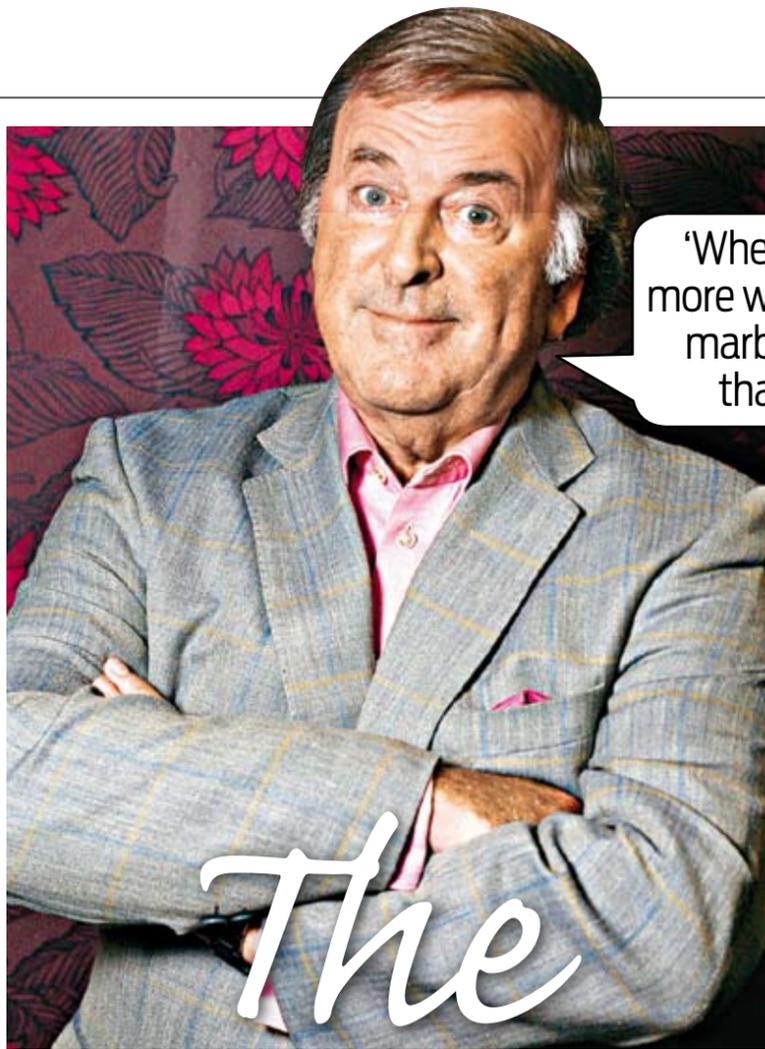
The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Catcher In The Rye by JD Salinger. I read it when I was 17 – it spoke to my generation.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... Being invisible doesn't appeal – I would see things I'd be better off not seeing!

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Hatred in all its forms. It's futile, worthless and ends in tragedy.

The film you can watch time and time again... High Society. There's never been a cast like it – Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly – and the music of Cole Porter. I'm a great fan of musicals and this one never fails to lift me.

The person who has influenced you most... It has to be Helen. We have been married for 47 years and not only has she given me the greatest thing imaginable – my family – she has also made me a better person. She is kind, loyal and gentle, and I have to live up to that, rather than think of myself. She's also a very good cook!



'When you get to 74, you're more worried about losing your marbles and your memory than your possessions'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: broadcaster Sir Terry Wogan

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... I'd like to have a chat with the ancient Greek warrior Alexander the Great and ask him why he didn't just stay home and enjoy himself instead of conquering all those countries.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... That's easy – be kind. Kindness is the most important thing in life, but sadly there is simply not enough of it in the world.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I have a keen interest in birds. I'm no twitcher, but I'm fond of sitting in the garden looking at the parakeets. The beauty of birdsong in the morning is something to behold.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... I don't recall mislaying anything, but when you get to my age, 74, possessions are less important. I'm more concerned about losing my marbles and my memory.

The unending quest that drives you on... I've never been driven, just lucky.

The poem that touches your soul... I'm a great lover of poetry, particularly the First World War poets. Wilfred Owen's Dulce Et Decorum Est is a powerful testament to the futility of war.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I have more brains than I actually have!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... When the BBC offered me a slot on Midday Spin in 1967. Everything grew from there.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'm too law-abiding to commit a crime.

The song that means most to you... Stardust by Nat King Cole brings back romantic memories, but I'm not telling you what they are!

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Sinking the longest televised putt in history on the 18th green at Gleneagles to win a BBC Pro-Celebrity Golf match in 1981. It might be the only thing I'm remembered for.

The saddest time that shook your world... When our daughter Vanessa died from heart complications a few weeks after she was born in 1966. Those were terrible days. You deal with tragedy as best you can. Life has to go on.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To have played rugby for Ireland. Sadly, my left knee was injured when I was younger.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Life happens and we cannot control it. Accept whatever it brings.

The order of service at your funeral... Give me ten years and I might start thinking about it! I do want a party afterwards where people say, 'Well, that's the end of him, let's have a drink.'

The way you want to be remembered... With affection. For people to have liked you is about all you can hope for.

The Plug... Sir Terry Wogan presents Proms In The Park at Hyde Park on 8 September. Visit www.bbc.co.uk/promsinthepark ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Keira Knightley and Jude Law's new version of Anna Karenina opens in cinemas on Friday. Sheridan Smith takes on Hedda Gabler at London's Old Vic theatre. And Ronan Keating's first solo album of new songs in six years, Fires, is out Monday

NEXT WEEK

- A glorious special issue to celebrate the spectacular return of Downton Abbey
- Fascinating insights into your favourite characters
- Exclusive pictures from the set
- All the gossip, romance and intrigue, both upstairs and down
- Don't miss it!