

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's TV presenter Carol Vorderman



'Because I'm good at maths people think I'm dull. But I'm a party animal and I love the carnage of a big night'

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Not living my childhood dream to be a pilot. The RAF rejected me as a teenager because they didn't accept women in that role then, but I got my pilot's licence two years ago. Flying is amazing and makes me feel complete.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Drinking the *third* bottle of champagne! Two bottles between two is great, but the third gives you a hangover.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** I'm not really into novels, but I love poetry. I enjoy Shakespeare's sonnets and the works of Carol Ann Duffy and Roger McGough.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Just focus on doing what you want to do to the best of your ability.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To keep on moving forward. The scariest word to me is 'forever'!

Right: Julie Andrews in *The Sound Of Music*. Above right: Bungee, Carol's teddy bear. Far right: a giant clam on the Great Barrier Reef



**The prized possession you value above all others...** My teddy bear Bungee. My parents split up when I was three weeks old and my mum Jean brought up my siblings and me alone. Bungee was my first ever present, for my fourth birthday. Mum got him on sale from Woolworths because he only had one ear and he still has pride of place on my bed.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day...** I'd sit in the cockpit of a Harrier jump jet as it flew over the deserts of America. That plane's vertical take-offs and landings are awesome.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** *The Sound Of Music* makes me cry every time.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** I love to walk round a city and learn its history.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** My mum being messy. She's 88 now and we've always lived together, but we're like chalk and cheese when it comes to tidiness.



**The person who has influenced you most...** Donald Green, who was my director of studies at Cambridge. He offered me a place to study engineering when I was 16 and was an amazing teacher – he's in his 80s now and we're still in touch.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Mildred Bruce, the first woman to fly solo around the world in 1930. I have my own plane now and named it Mildred.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** My sight started to go when I was 46. I'm 55 now and it'd be nice to have 20-20 vision again.

**The poem that touches your soul...** An untitled poem about the freedom of flying by the Australian poet Erin Hanson. It gets to the heart of my approach to life – that you must feel free to go for it, whatever you're doing.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That because I'm good at maths I'm dull. I'm a party animal and love the carnage of a big night. I have friends who get complaints from their neighbours when I'm staying!

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** When my mum faked a letter from me in 1982 and sent it to the producer of a new programme called *Countdown* she'd read about in *The Yorkshire Post*. I was working for a cold storage company, but I got the job and it changed everything.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd steal the contents of Bollinger's cellars in France and throw a huge champagne party.

**The song that means most to you...** Dolly Parton's *Coat Of Many Colours*, about a poor girl whose mother makes her a coat out of rags. It's so touching.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I'd start with bacon and scrambled eggs by the beach at San Diego in California. After that, I'd have coffee with my friend Gok Wan in Sydney Harbour. I'd meet my kids – Katie, 24, and Cameron, 19 – to go snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef to see the giant clams, then have a barbecue. I'd spend the afternoon in Hong Kong soaking up the buzz, before going to Washington DC for

cocktails and burgers with my astronaut friends. We'd watch a rocket launch at Kennedy Space Center in Florida. I've seen four and they're so exciting.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** Doing my first qualified solo flight, from Gloucester to Cambridge, two years ago. It was beyond my dreams that I could do that.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** When my *Countdown* co-host Richard Whiteley died suddenly after a heart operation in 2005 I was struck down with grief. He was very special. We used to have long lunches together – once we began at 11am and were thrown out of the restaurant at 3am!

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To fly solo around the world. I plan to take off in July and fly 28,000 miles. But I'll probably have a new ambition soon after that.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Never waste a day. If I have a bad one, I write something good out of it.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I want Queen's *Don't Stop Me Now* to be played, and a big party afterwards. I want my ashes dropped from a plane over my home in Bristol – so my neighbours have to clean their windows!

**The way you want to be remembered...** I don't care because I'll be gone.

**The Plug...** For Living Streets National Walking Month Carol is backing Westfield Health's Walking Lunch campaign to get workers walking in lunch breaks. Sign up at [westfieldhealth.com](http://westfieldhealth.com). ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



## PS...

*Angry Birds*, the film based on the wildly popular game, is in cinemas from Friday. *War Horse* author Michael Morpurgo's *Running Wild* begins at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre the same day. And *Busted*'s UK tour starts at Wembley Arena on Wednesday



## NEXT WEEK

- The Countryfile team tell all about their week-long spring special
- Delicious seasonal dishes from TV's Sarah Raven
- Got a pond? Monty Don picks the best plants for it
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings