



From top: Norfolk Island, ice cream, Kelly McGillis in the film Witness, Mexico's Day of the Dead, a typewriter, a Bellini, William Shakespeare and a red squirrel

The prized possession you value above all others...

My 1962 Mulliner Park Ward Bentley Continental. I bought her when she was a few months old, but I can't remember how much I paid for her. She's dawn blue, one of 150 made, and still the most beautiful car on the road. But I'm afraid she doesn't get much chance to clear her throat in Jersey, where I've lived since 1973.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Constant travelling leaves friendship in disrepair, and I should probably have made more effort to stay in touch.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'd start with the superb chocolate cake they serve for breakfast on the Orient Express. Once in Venice I'd stroll around, then have a quick Bellini in Harry's Bar followed by baked tagliolini with ham and cheese, before being magicked to the place that changed my life. I first visited Norfolk Island in 1960 and its friendliness prompted me to find my own island home. This speck between Australia and New Zealand is a paradise where nothing bites or stings. Later I'd head for Hong Kong and a pedicure with Mr So at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. I'd leave there walking on air, then cross the road and have dinner at David Tang's China Club. Finally I'd fly to Bali to breathe in the sounds of its musical ensemble, the gamelan, and crash out to the sound of waves.

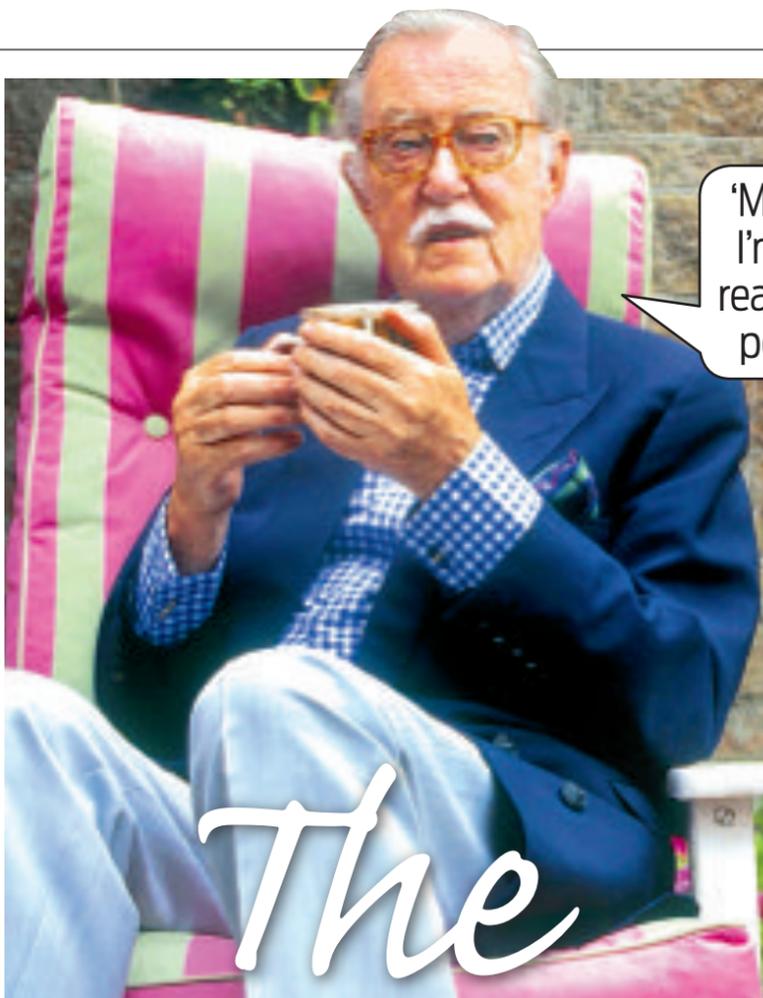
The temptation you wish you could resist... I've never met an ice cream or a piece of chocolate I didn't like.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Under The Volcano by Malcolm Lowry. All the action takes place in Mexico on the Day of the Dead, and it inspired me to film a Whicker's World around that macabre celebration in 1963. I think it won an award!

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I would rewrite the rules at airport security. Queues would be abolished and a nail file would no longer be seen as a lethal weapon.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Rudeness, particularly interviewers who constantly interrupt.

The film you can watch time and time again... Witness, with Harrison Ford and Kelly McGillis. It's like a moving Vermeer interior – visually beautiful, exciting and subtle.



'My curiosity is unending. I'm the only person who really is interested in other people's holiday snaps!'

The

DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: globetrotting TV legend Alan Whicker

The person who has influenced you most... My cousin Reginald. He gave me my first typewriter. By 14 I was knocking out articles and short stories and gathering piles of rejection slips.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Shakespeare. We know so little about him, yet he knew so much about us.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Find something that excites you and follow it with passion.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I have a colony of red squirrels living in my garden, and I can watch them for hours.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My father Charles's pocket watch. He died when I was three and I have no memory of him. I gave it to Olga [Whicker lived with oil heiress Olga Deterding for three years in the late 1960s] and when we parted the watch stayed with her.

The poem that touches your soul... I love anything by John Donne, but Ithaca by CP Cavafy is a wonderful description of life as a voyage of hope, discovery and adventure.

The unending quest that drives you on... Curiosity. I'm the only person who really is interested in other people's holiday snaps!

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... Lazy journalists used to write that I only interviewed the rich. In over 50 years, I can count on one hand the number of my programmes concerned with wealth.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... In the Army Film and Photo Unit during the war I learned how not to waste words or time – and to appreciate the fact that I came through the conflict unscathed.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I wouldn't mind stealing a private jet.

The song that means most to you... I Won't Send Roses from the musical Mack & Mabel, sung by Gordon MacRae. It reminds me how hopeless I am at remembering birthdays.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... My year in Venice after the war. I was enchanted just to be alive.

The saddest time that shook your world... The Cuban Missile Crisis. I really believed the world might end.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I've never got around to cruising the Chilean fjords.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Seize the day.

The order of service at your funeral... It's not something I've given any thought! But it'll be at Trinity Church, near my home. I'll be most comfortable among the camellias and daffodils.

The way you want to be remembered... I hope Whicker's World stimulated people to see the world for themselves.

The Plug... The DVD of Alan's landmark series Journey Of A Lifetime, £9.99, www.amazon.co.uk. Also visit www.alanwhicker.co.uk ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Helena Bonham Carter, husband Tim Burton and Johnny Depp team up again for gothic comedy Dark Shadows – in cinemas now. And The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe opens for the summer under the big top in London's Kensington Gardens



NEXT WEEK

- Kevin Whately takes us behind the scenes on the racy new series of Lewis
- Exotic dishes to celebrate National Vegetarian Week
- Jamie Oliver's pasta like-a-mama used to make
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings