We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: globetrotting TV legend Al 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 pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Rudeness, particularly interviewees who constantly interrupt. The order of service at your funeral... I won an award!

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 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.

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 tail file would no longer be seen as a lethal weapon. The unlikely event that altered the course of your life... The Cuban Missile Crisis. I think it won an award! The unlikely event that altered the course of the world might end... 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 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. The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... I'd fly to Bali to breathe in the sounds of the gamelan, and crash out to the sound of waves. The way you want to be remembered... I'm the only person who really is interested in other people's holiday snaps!

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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'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 Detrending for three years in the late 1960s] and when we parted the watch stayed with her.

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