

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

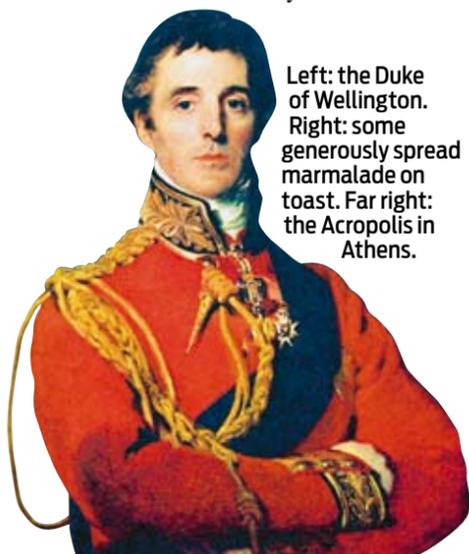
We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: broadcaster and author Peter Snow

The prized possession you value above all others... The 30 or so scrapbooks containing 50 years of our family's history. We'd all be devastated if we lost them.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not being cast as James Bond! The producers asked me to audition in 1968, but then said, 'You're rather tall, aren't you?' I'm 6ft 5in, and they said they'd have to put the girls on soapboxes.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Coating my toast with far too much marmalade or Marmite.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Edward Gibbon's *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*. It captivated me when I read it at 16 and led me to read ancient history at Oxford.



Left: the Duke of Wellington. Right: some generously spread marmalade on toast. Far right: the Acropolis in Athens.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd go into a behind-closed-doors meeting Margaret Thatcher had with China's leaders in 1977 in China. She was cross about something, and I wish I could have witnessed how she harangued them.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Nouvelle cuisine. I want food, not a pretty picture!

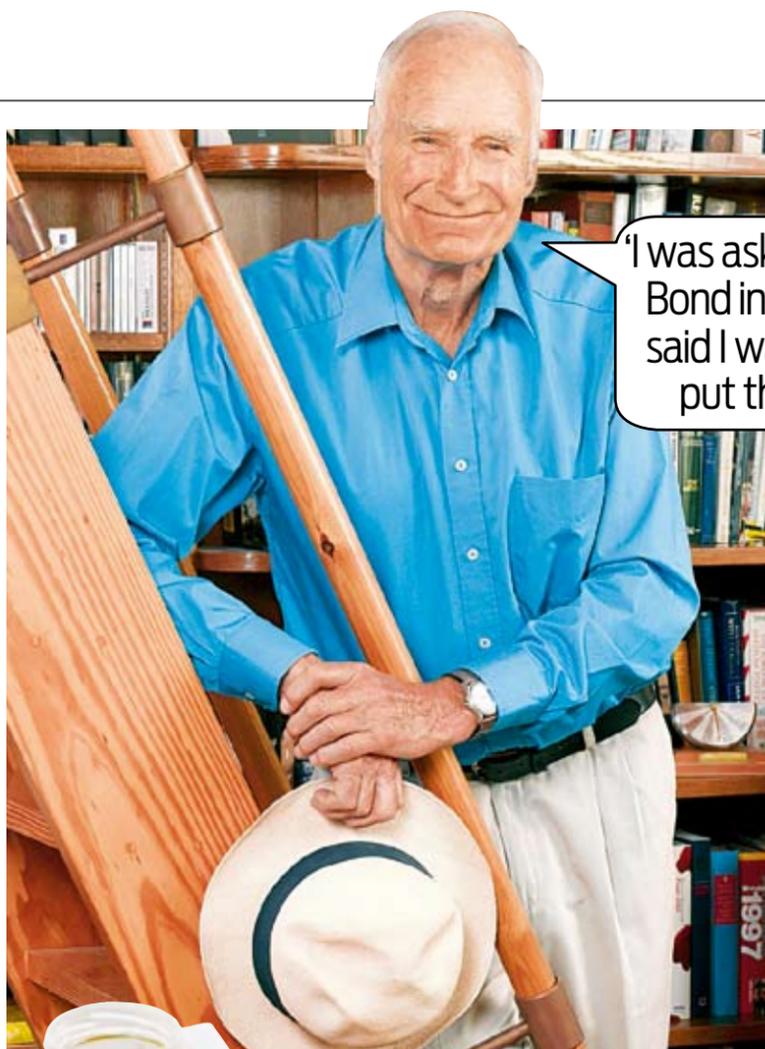
The film you can watch time and time again... *The Wages Of Fear* from 1953 about a lorry loaded with nitroglycerine that could explode at any moment. It's the most tense, realistic film I've seen.

The person who has influenced you most... George MacMillan, my Greek and Latin teacher at school, who's in his late 80s now – an inspiring man who helped get me into Oxford.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The Duke of Wellington, an extraordinary character. I'd love him to explain what was behind his knack for winning – he never lost a battle.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Be good-mannered and always listen to people.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Model railways. I have a 60-metre 00-Gauge layout in my loft – I've had it 30 years. I find it mesmerising watching the trains go round.



'I was asked to audition for James Bond in 1968, but the producers said I was so tall they'd have to put the girls on soapboxes'

from two previous relationships] and eight grandchildren. After lunch at a local restaurant, I'd go to my home in south-west London to do a few hours' writing – I'm currently writing about the Battle of Waterloo. Then I'd head to Beirut for a delicious mezze dinner with some very rich Lebanese wine.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Watching my son Dan win the 2000 Boat Race with Oxford.

The saddest time that shook your world... Losing my mother, Peggy, to liver cancer at the age of just 60. She was such a wonderful, sparky woman.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I always wanted to be an architect and I'd love to have designed a magnificent building.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Be ready for anything, do your homework and be lucky.

The order of service at your funeral... My wife refuses to tell me! In truth, it's not something I've considered because I'm too busy living life to the full to think about death.

The way you want to be remembered... As an enthusiast, particularly on General Election night!

The Plug... Peter will be talking about his new book, *When Britain Burned The White House*, at the Ageas Salisbury International Arts Festival on 26 May. Visit www.salisburyfestival.co.uk. ■
As told to Rob McGibbon



The event that altered the course of your life and character... Turning down a job as a management trainee at Mobil Oil in 1962 after I came down from Oxford. I taught for three months, then joined ITN as a sub-editor. That made me realise I wanted to be a journalist and I've never looked back.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd flatten the Lion's Mound monument the Dutch built on the Waterloo battlefield to commemorate the Prince of Orange. It's a hideous blot on the landscape.

The song that means most to you... Remember The Alamo. I love the song's lyrics, melody and vision it conjures up of that great battle.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd have breakfast in Athens with my wife Ann and take a good long walk to the Acropolis, then we'd visit some dear friends in Nicosia in Cyprus. We'd go to Kyrenia beach on the island, to be joined by the family, including my six children [three with Ann and three

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... Patrick, a boyhood teddy bear. I took him to boarding school at seven, but the other boys laughed so much I posted him home. I lost him years later in a house move.

The unending quest that drives you on... I'm a sailor, and own a 43ft boat, so discovering exciting new anchorages is a constant delight that never ends.

The poem that touches your soul... Tennyson's *Ulysses*, which describes what a man should think about the wide world. I'm 76 and it's forever inspiring.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm the father of Channel 4 News presenter Jon Snow! We're cousins, and he's only nine years younger than me!



PHOTOGRAPHS: DAN GOLDSMITH/ALAMY

PS...

Yes, it's Jennifer Lawrence, back with the gang in the new X-Men movie Days Of Future Past – from Thursday. Miss Saigon returns to London's West End after 25 years, at the Prince Edward Theatre. And the new Coldplay album Ghost Stories is out on Monday

NEXT WEEK

- It's the BGT live semi-finals! Meet our pick of the acts ● Treasures from the Royal Archives
- Iain Glen takes us on the set of his crime series Jack Taylor
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings

