



From top: Surfing, a bottle of Pol Roger, Kathy wearing her corgi suit, George Clooney in *The Facts Of Life*, a red kangaroo, *The Island Hideaway* in the Maldives, *Vanity Fair* by Thackeray and Mae West

The prized possession you value above all others... My honorary doctorate from Southampton Solent University, which I received in 2010. No one is more surprised to have a degree than me! I left school at 16 and the only test I ever passed was my Driving Test!

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Not dating George Clooney. I worked with him on a sitcom in America called *The Facts Of Life* in the late 80s. He asked me out and I said, 'No. I'm a writer. I don't go out with actors.' I sob when I recall that moment.

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

I'd wake up at *The Island Hideaway* in the Maldives with my husband Geoffrey [lawyer Geoffrey Robertson] and our son Jules, 22, and daughter Georgina, 20. I'd spend the morning scuba diving over a coral reef then have lunch with Ruby Wax, Sandi Toksvig and other girlfriends at Kaspar's Seafood Bar and Grill restaurant at the Savoy Hotel in London. We'd have white wine, Dover sole, and plenty of gossip. In the afternoon, I'd write a Nobel Prize-winning novel then I'd meet up with my three sisters and our families at Kioloa beach south of Sydney. We'd surf then have a lobster BBQ on the beach at dusk with red kangaroos hopping around. I'd see *The Book Of Mormon* on Broadway in the evening with my family, then slip into bed at a hotel overlooking the Grand Canal in Venice with a big, strapping... hardback!

The temptation you wish you could resist... Pol Roger Champagne.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *Vanity Fair* by William Makepeace Thackeray. The social satire is so sharp it could shave your legs.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd hang out in the male locker rooms at Wimbledon.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Misogyny.

The film you can watch time and time again... *The Women* from 1939 starring Joan Crawford, Norma Shearer and Rosalind Russell. It's about the lives of bored rich women in Manhattan and it has the wittiest one-liners.

The person who has influenced you most... My mother Val. She was a school principal, who raised four daughters with no help. She's 81 now but it wasn't until I had my own kids that I appreciated how inspirational she is.



'I worked with George Clooney on a sitcom in the 80s. He asked me out and I said no. I sob when I recall it.'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's novelist Kathy Lette's turn

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Mae West. She was an actress, playwright, sex siren and libertarian who went to jail in defence of freedom of expression. And all this in an era when women were meant to just be decorative.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... To Georgina, I'd say, stand on your own two stilettos. To Jules, I'd say the way to a woman's heart is through her stomach, so learn to cook!

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Opera. I love the combination of drama and ravishing music.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My dad Mervyn, who died last year aged 83. He was a hero to us girls. He could hotwire the car if we lost the keys and rescue us from spiders – and bad boyfriends.

The unending quest that drives you on... To keep writing novels that are empowering to women and entertaining.

The poem that touches your soul... Spike Milligan's *A Silly Poem*. When I was 16 I ran away and hitchhiked round Australia following his tour.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm a 'man-hater'. I'm allergic to misogynists, but I absolutely adore men.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Being told when Jules was three that he was autistic.

There are endless obstacles – like school bullying and social Siberia. But my boy has made me a better person.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal George Clooney's heart, of course!

The song that means most to you... Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life, as sung by Eric Idle in *Life Of Brian*. Optimism is *not* an eye disease.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The day I wore a corgi-themed suit to a reception at Buckingham Palace in 2012 and made the Queen laugh out loud.

The saddest time that shook your world... Jules's diagnosis was shattering, but I no longer think there's such a thing as 'normal', just 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary'. My son is extraordinary.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To surf the rip curl of a huge roller wave in Hawaii.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Life's too short to be subtle.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd like a Christian service at St Pancras Old Church and to be buried next to the memorial to my heroine Mary Wollstonecraft, the 18th-century women's rights campaigner. My headstone would read, 'Finally – a good plot!'

The way you want to be remembered... As a funny feminist who proved women are each other's human Wonder Bras – uplifting, supportive and making each other look bigger and better.

The Plug... *The Boy Who Fell To Earth* is published by Black Swan, £7.99. Follow me on Twitter at @kathylette and visit www.kathylette.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

*Catch Hayley Atwell on stage in *The Pride* at Trafalgar Studios, London from Thursday. See spooky movie *The Conjuring*, which has been terrifying audiences in the US. And hear the self-titled album by Adele's favourite band *The Civil Wars*, from Monday*



NEXT WEEK

- Bake Off exclusive! Scrummy recipes from the book of the new series
- Monty Don on brilliant bedding plants
- Countryfile star Ellie Harrison's mission to save endangered animals
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings