



The prized possession you value above all others... I value old photographs, particularly one of me at home in Wales with my family and Carlos Cachon – the Argentinian pilot who blew me up [Carlos fired the missile at the troop carrier Simon was on during the Falklands War in 1982]. Since we first met in 1991, he's become a very good friend. I have huge respect for him and bear him no malice.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Embarrassing my mum, Pauline, when I was 14 by getting caught in a stolen car. I feel ashamed at the distress I caused her. I got a £30 fine and three months' probation for being a passenger. As a result, I joined the Army to get some direction in my life.

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

I'd see the Boston Red Sox baseball team win the World Series at their home ground, Fenway Park, then Wales win the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand. I'd go to Wembley to watch Manchester United beat Manchester City in the Champions League final, then end the day in Las Vegas watching the Welsh boxer Nathan Cleverly win a world title fight. I'd love my wife Lucy and our children [James, 20, Stuart, 18, and Caitlin, 14] to join me for the whole trip – but I'm not sure they'd want to!

The temptation you wish you could resist... Always wanting the last word!
The book that holds an everlasting resonance... I love Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe novels about the Napoleonic wars. They're so rich in detail.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd go to Iran to see what that lunatic Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is really up to.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... When our politicians re-announce old policies as if we're too stupid to notice there's nothing new.

The film you can watch time and time again... The Lord Of The Rings trilogy. I love the underlying message that if you have enough courage, even the smallest person can make a difference.

The person who has influenced you most... The TV director Malcolm Brinkworth, who made the Simon's War documentary about my recovery after the Falklands. It brought my story to the world and changed my life.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Adolf



One rugby club was prepared to sign me up before I was wounded. I'll never know how good I could have been

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I do *everything* for charity! I'm in business, too, and have a family to support, so there's a limit to what I can do for free.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Obviously, it's the moment my ship was hit. I was lucky to survive while some of my dearest friends died. In many ways, it was the best thing that happened to me – just look at the life I have led since then.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I would plunder every penny from the bankers who got our country into such a mess and see how they cope with poverty.

The song that means most to you... The Home Fire by Louis Armstrong, about a man's joy to be heading home. I love travelling but there's nothing better than being home with my family.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Getting my OBE from the Queen in 1992. It made me and, more importantly, my mother, proud.

The saddest time that shook your world... During the same week in 1994 my grandfather Percy and my father Lofty died. I worshipped both of them.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To have played high-level rugby. One club was prepared to buy me out of the Army to play for them before I was wounded, but I'll never know how good I could have been.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Never let anyone write you off – and never write yourself off.

The order of service at your funeral... I'm not interested in a fanfare. I'll leave some money behind the bar at the Nelson Rugby Club in mid-Glamorgan. If anyone turns up, maybe they can play some Thin Lizzy songs.

The way you want to be remembered... He did his best for everyone.

The Plug... Simon's third children's book, *Nelson At Sea*, is published by Pont Books, priced £8.99. For details of his motivational speaking visit www.simonweston.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: soldier-turned-writer Simon Weston

Hitler's father, Alois. He crushed his son's dreams of being an artist, and look what happened! I'd tell him you should always nurture children's dreams.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Keep your excitement for everything new all through your life.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I collect little pewter soldiers designed by Charles Stadden.

My first one was given to me after I was blown up and I now have 18.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The wallet I was carrying when the missile hit. Inside was a photo of my niece, a gold St Christopher from my mum and some poker dice, plus £200 I'd won at poker!

The unending quest that drives you on... To be successful at everything I do.

The poem that touches your soul... Tommy by Rudyard Kipling. It sums up the frustration and despair a soldier can feel when he's not appreciated.

From top: Louis Armstrong; Simon with his family and Argentinian pilot Carlos Cachon; poker dice; Adolf Hitler's father Alois; The Lord Of The Rings; Sean Bean as Sharpe; an OBE

PS...

*Three biggies at the box office this week. Take your pick from Leo Di Caprio as FBI boss Hoover in *J. Edgar*, Ralph Fiennes and Vanessa Redgrave in a modern take on Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, or Madonna's much talked-about Wallis and Edward film *W.E.**

NEXT WEEK

- Rupert Penry-Jones on his racy scenes in the new series of *Whitechapel*
- Make every day a MasterChef day with our simple recipes from the series
- Jamie Oliver's delicious seasonal salads
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings