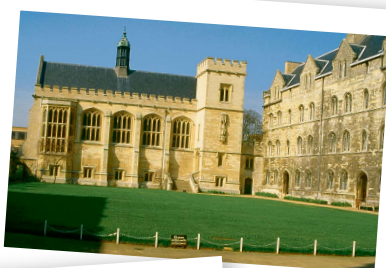




Desert in Namibia, Dickens's *Hard Times* and Oz as General Perón with Stephanie Lawrence as Evita, in 1982



Oxford University, Canterbury Cathedral, Jeff Bridges in *The Big Lebowski* and Brahma beer



The prized possession you value above all others...

The prospectus for Oxford University in 2011 because the cover had a map of the city with the streets renamed after famous former students. My name is bang in the middle of the city near Sir Walter Raleigh and Oscar Wilde. To have my name among such luminaries fills me with pride.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend...

The years I missed not having my father, Owen, in my life. He died when he was 62 from a virus when I was in my mid-20s. It was such a tremendous shock to lose him.

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

I'd watch the sunrise from the top of the white cliffs of Dover and have breakfast in the National Trust cafe up there – fresh, local fried eggs, bacon and sausages. Then I'd arrive at Picinguaba in Brazil, a fishing village between Rio and São Paulo. It's the most spectacular spot in the world to swim. I'd have fresh fish cooked at a local bar for lunch with a few cold Brazilian beers, like Brahma. In the afternoon I'd go to Port Willunga in South Australia for another swim. I'd then go to the nearby McLaren Vale vineyard for a bottle of d'Arenberg red. I'd end the day in a hut in the Namibian desert. You can sleep on the roof surrounded by sand dunes and the most beautiful night sky you'll ever see.

The temptation you wish you could resist...

I adore potatoes in all their cooked forms. Boiled, mashed, roasted and, of course, chunky chips fried in lard at an old-fashioned chip shop.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance...

Hard Times by Dickens. I read it when I was ten. I had a middle-class upbringing in Canterbury, Kent, and that book opened up a different world, one of suffering and endurance.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...

I'd stand beside the conductor John Eliot Gardiner during a performance. He brings such emotion out of his musicians.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...

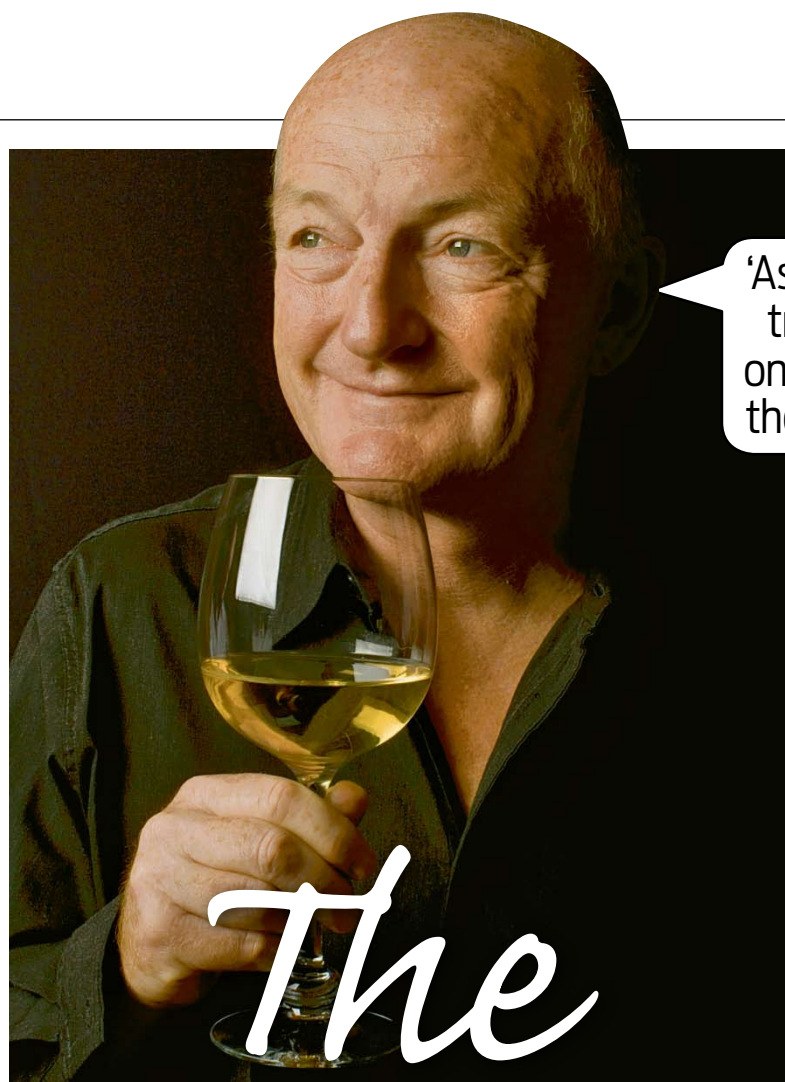
Cheating of any kind in life, but particularly in sport.

The film you can watch time and time again...

The Big Lebowski with Jeff Bridges. I love the way his character always stands up for honesty.

The person who has influenced you most...

My father. He was very religious and he taught me to be good.



'As a boy I wanted to be a train driver. Dad said I'd only earn £10 a week but I thought that was plenty!'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's wine guru Oz Clarke's turn

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

Charles Dickens. I'm fascinated by 19th-century Britain and I'd love to hear him talk about it and for him to tell me how he found his characters. I'd insist on having a pie and pint from his time, then let him taste them from 2013. I think his would be much tastier!

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...

Do to others as you will have them do to you.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...

Railways. There was a railway line at the end of my garden when I was a boy and I'd dream of it taking me to wonderful places and it made me want to be a train driver. My dad said I'd only earn £10 a week, but I thought that sounded plenty!

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...

Time. The unending quest that drives you on... To communicate with audiences.

The poem that touches your soul...

The Lake Isle of Innisfree by WB Yeats always brings me a sense of peace.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...

That I'm just the 'wine man'. I was an actor and a singer for ten years in the 70s and 80s and played big parts on the West End stage, like the lead in *Evita*.

The event that altered the course of your life and character...

Getting into Oxford. I was released from the straight-jacket of a middle-class upbringing. My mum, Kitty, wanted me to be a lawyer, but at Oxford I met other free spirits and it opened up the chance of making a living from my hobbies.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...

I'd dismantle all health and safety laws.

The song that means most to you...

The Irish folk song *She Moved Through The Fair*. It reminds me of my mum, who was Irish. She died ten years ago in her late 80s and I sang it at her funeral.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever...

My wedding at Canterbury Cathedral, where I was a choir leader as a boy, in 1998. I never thought I'd get married, but I did and it was amazing.

The saddest time that shook your world...

The events of 9/11 really shook my natural optimism and put an element of despair in my soul.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...

I'm 64 now and just want to keep doing more – more wine, filming, writing and travelling.

The philosophy that underpins your life...

Carpe diem. Fill every day.

The order of service at your funeral...

I'd like a church service with Cwm Rhondda – *Bread Of Heaven* – sung by a huge Welsh choir. I'd like my ashes buried next to my parents in the memorial garden at Canterbury Cathedral.

The way you want to be remembered...

As a generous, fair and happy man who helped democratise wine in Britain.

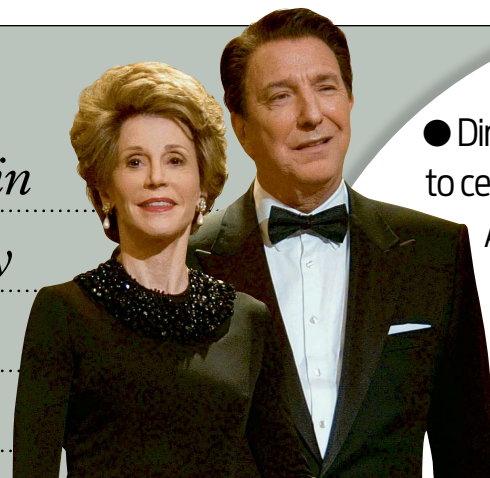
The Plug...

Oz Clarke's *Pocket Wine Book 2014* is published by Pavilion, £11.99. Visit www.ozclarke.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

*See Jane Fonda and Alan Rickman play the Reagans in *The Butler*, in cinemas on Friday. Book for *Twelve Angry Men* with Martin Shaw at London's Garrick Theatre. And *Artpop*, Lady Gaga's new album, is out on Monday*



NEXT WEEK

- Dinner with Mr Darcy? Recipes to celebrate 200 years of Jane Austen
- Jamie's delicious chicken dishes
- Revealed: Beatrix Potter's passion for gardening
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings