

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week: Royal commentator Dickie Arbiter



'I've been ice-skating since I was a child. I still go five times a week at 6am – I don't do jumps but I love to dance on the ice'

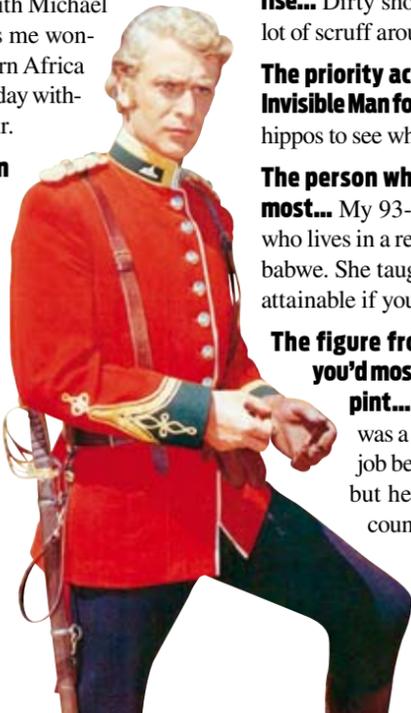
The prized possession you value above all others... A silver apple engraved with the letter 'D' that Princess Diana gave me for helping with her first solo work trip to New York in 1989. I was media manager for Charles and Diana for five years.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... I wish I'd been a better dad. I was a single parent to my daughter Victoria after her mum and I divorced when she was three. I missed so much time with her until she was ten because of work.

The film you can watch time and time again... Zulu with Michael Caine. It makes me wonder what Southern Africa would be like today without the Zulu war.

The temptation you wish you could resist... German marzipan. It has a thin layer of dark chocolate and I can eat a whole box.

Right: Michael Caine in Zulu. Above right: Ice skating. Far right: Elephants at a watering hole



The book that holds an everlasting resonance...

The Scramble For Africa by Thomas Pakenham. I spent 13 years in Africa when I was young, and this tells how greedy Europeans developed the continent.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... If you want something in life, go out and get it.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Dirty shoes and nails. There's a lot of scruff around these days.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd swim with hippos to see what they're like up close.

The person who has influenced you most... My 93-year-old mother Ruth, who lives in a residential home in Zimbabwe. She taught me that anything is attainable if you really want it.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pint... King George VI. He was a shy man forced into the job because of the abdication, but he stepped up when our country needed him.

The unending quest that drives you on... To make sure the day isn't wasted.



The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A pair of cuff links given to me by a girlfriend in 1965. They were stolen from my home in south London in 2002.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Ice-skating. I started as a child. I'm 74 now and still skate five times a week at 6am. I don't do jumps but I like to dance on the ice.

The poem that touches your soul... Charles Wolfe's The Burial Of Sir John Moore After Corunna, about the great general dying in 1809. It's so emotive.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... I give the impression that I'm always right. In truth I probably *am* right – but not *always*!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... My headmaster telling my mother that I must leave school before my O-levels because I wasn't working. We duly went to live in Rhodesia, and leaving school without any exams made me live on my wits.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a painting called Field Of Battle, painted by Queen Victoria's eldest daughter Princess Victoria. It's owned by the Queen and I saw it while working at Buckingham Palace. It depicts a woman holding a soldier who's died in a battle in Crimea. I'm amazed how the Princess captured such anguish.

The song that means most to you... The Evening Hymn And Last Post. It's usually played by a military band and reminds me that each day at sunset, someone somewhere's lost a loved one.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd start the day with an early morning skate, then have breakfast of grapefruit, kippers and coffee at The Wolseley. Later my wife Rosemary and I would walk around Paris, which would magically have far fewer Parisians! We'd have lunch at Fouquet's restaurant. I'd have oysters and steak tartare. I don't drink alcohol much, so I'd just have Coca-Cola. Later we'd relax at a game lodge in Zimbabwe

and go for a swim before heading out on a walking safari to see elephants at a watering hole at sunset. We'd end the day in New York having dinner at a simple diner with Victoria, who's 40, my grandson Raff, who's 11, and my son-in-law Ryan. I'd end up back at home completely knackered!

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The day I found my uncle Harry Stock's war grave in Israel. He died aged only 24 in 1947 when he was with the British Army in Palestine. I last saw him when I was five. He was a wonderful man and I've always thought about him.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my dad, Hans, died soon after I turned six. He'd been terribly ill with TB and diabetes. Soon afterwards I was shipped off to boarding school, which was horrific.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To anchor a TV chat show. Do they hire old people?

The philosophy that underpins your life... Live it to the full.

The order of service at your funeral... No service, just a party. I want the song Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered, dancing and for people to get drunk!

The way you want to be remembered... Despite his bluster, underneath it all he was a pretty OK guy.

The Plug... My book, On Duty With The Queen is out now (Blink Publishing). Visit www.dickiearbiter.co.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: FIONA HANSON, GETTY, REX

PS...

Everyone's favourite bear hits the big screen in sure-fire hit *Paddington* – in cinemas from Friday. *The Wind In The Willows* is brought magically to life at the Royal Opera House from Wednesday. And Olly Murs' new album *Never Been Better* is out on Monday



NEXT WEEK

- Marcus Wareing on his new MasterChef role
- Wow your guests with the best festive party food
- Monty Don solves your gardening problems
- Britain's best TV listings