From top: the Himalayas, Starbucks, 10 Downing Street, yoga, All About Eve with Bette Davis and Gary Merrill, Joan Collins, and a doll's house

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: Dynasty legend Stephanie Beacham

'People think I'm snooty but I'm not, I'm just deaf! I'm not ignoring them, I simply haven't heard them'

The prized possession you value above all others... My freedom. I'm from the first generation of women who've been free to choose. The buck stops with me.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Saying 'That's a daft idea' in 1986 when I was invited to invest in a little coffee shop business. It went on to become Starbucks! If I'd gone for it I'd be super-rich now. I'm furious with myself.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd spend all day with my boyfriend Bernie [Greenwood, a doctor]. We'd start with a dawn walk in the Himalayas, then breakfast in Katmandu. I'd have a yoga lesson in Goa, southern India, then a swim in the Maldives. After lunch at the Plaza Athénée Hotel in Paris, we'd look at the impressionist paintings in the Musée d'Orsay before heading to Broadway in New York for the hottest show in town. Dinner would be at the city's Upstairs At 21, and I'd end the day walking on the beach with my dogs by my home in Malibu.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Saying 'Yes', when I should say 'No'. All too often I overload myself and leave people short-changed.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Autobiography Of A Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda. It's about his journey to meet holy people and has a spiritually magical quality.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd go to No.10 and listen to the rationale behind the rubbish our leaders tell us.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People eating while they're talking to me on the telephone. Finish eating, *then* call me! The only chomping sound I can bear is when my dogs eat.

The film you can watch time and time again... All About Eve with Bette Davis. It has so many great lines.

The person who has influenced you most... My mother, Joan. She taught me so much, particularly the importance of posture and manners.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The great US economist J.K. Galbraith, who could explain to me what's going on with the world's banks.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Write thank-you letters. Children are given so much these days, yet politeness seems to be forgotten.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I'm obsessed with miniature things. I have two fully furnished doll's houses and now have thousands of objects for them.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My grandmother's beautiful 19th-century jade ring, which was stolen at a New York hotel in 1997. I've had entire jewellery collections wiped out in two burglaries, but that ring was particularly special.

The unending quest that drives you on... The truth. Just give me the truth and I'll be able to deal with it.

The poem that touches your soul... The hymn God Be In My Head from 1558 has been with me all through my life. It's beautiful and the words are so true.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm snooty. I'm not, I'm just deaf! I've been deaf in my right ear since birth and only have 80 per cent hearing in my left. People sometimes call out to me and I walk by because I haven't heard them, not because I'm ignoring them.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Being cast in Dynasty in 1985 took me to America and changed everything. It also brought Joan Collins into my life. I've always admired her hugely.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd put David Cameron in the stocks for a day, so people could tell him what they think. I'm so angry that our politicians don't listen. Don't make us rise up like the Arab countries so we can be heard.

The song that means most to you... Forever by English folk duo Turin Brakes. It's so romantic and I think of it as mine and Bernie's song.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Working with Ava Gardner in 1970 on The Ballad Of Tam Lin, my first major movie. She was fabulous.

The saddest time that shook your world... Two friends committing suicide shook me greatly. I find the tragedies so hard to reconcile and wish I'd paid more attention in both instances.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I'd like to make a great movie that people remember.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Good, better, best… Never let it rest until the good is better and the better best.

The order of service at your funeral... I want my daughters, Phoebe and Chloe, to scatter my ashes in ten of my favourite destinations around the world so they can experience each place. I've already bought a burial plot in Dunster, Somerset, next to Mummy and Daddy, so I'd like my headstone and a pinch of ash there.

The way you want to be remembered... As a good mother, a fun friend and a talented actress.

The Plug... Stephanie Beacham and Joan Collins are reunited in Snickers' new ad campaign, 'You're not you when you're hungry'. www.snickers.com ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

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