

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's adventurer Ranulph Fiennes

The prized possession you value above all others... My Kobold Land Rover watch, which I use on expeditions because it takes a battering. Bill Clinton has one.

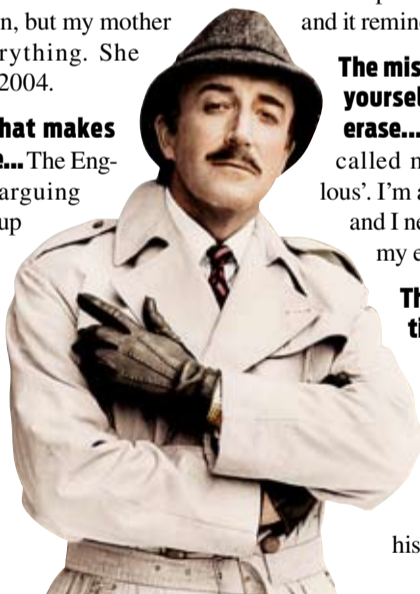
The book that holds an everlasting resonance... One Man In His Time, the memoirs of the Russian-American aristocrat Serge Obolensky. I had to précis it at Eton – doing so has helped me write 25 books.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A revolver I bought when I was fighting for the Oman army against Communist rebels in 1968. It went missing from my home in 2005.

The person who has influenced you most... My mother Audrey. My father was killed in the Second World War before I was born, but my mother taught me everything. She died aged 92 in 2004.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... The English and Scots arguing about the break-up of the UK. My DNA is mixed between the two nations.

Right: Peter Sellers in *The Return Of The Pink Panther*. Above right: chocolates. Far right: Stalin



The temptation you wish you could resist... Chocolate – a year ago I was told I'd develop type 2 diabetes if I didn't stop my chocoholism.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not taking the photography course the Army offered me after I left aged 25.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd watch my ten-year-old daughter Elizabeth at school. She never tells me much about her day.

The song that means most to you... The Mealie Song. It's about corn on the cob – we made it up at school in Cape Town and it reminds me of fun times.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... Prince Charles once called me 'mad but marvellous'. I'm actually pretty normal and I never take eccentrics on my expeditions.

The film you can watch time and time again... *The Return Of The Pink Panther* from 1975. I still laugh myself silly at Peter Sellers' accent and his crazy fights with his Chinese servant Cato.



The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Healthy foods, because there's so much conflicting information. I'm 71 and I try to keep healthy, but I know that if it tastes good it's bad for you and vice versa!

The unending quest that drives you on... To raise £20 million for charity from my expeditions. We're at £18.2 million.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The moment fellow explorer Charlie Burton and I were collected by our ship in September 1982. We'd been travelling for three years to become the only people to circumnavigate the world on its polar axis. We'd been floating on an ice floe for three months before we were found.

The poem that touches your soul... It's not a poem, but I like Churchill's saying, 'It will be long, it will be hard and there will be no withdrawal.' I keep it in my head during difficult times.

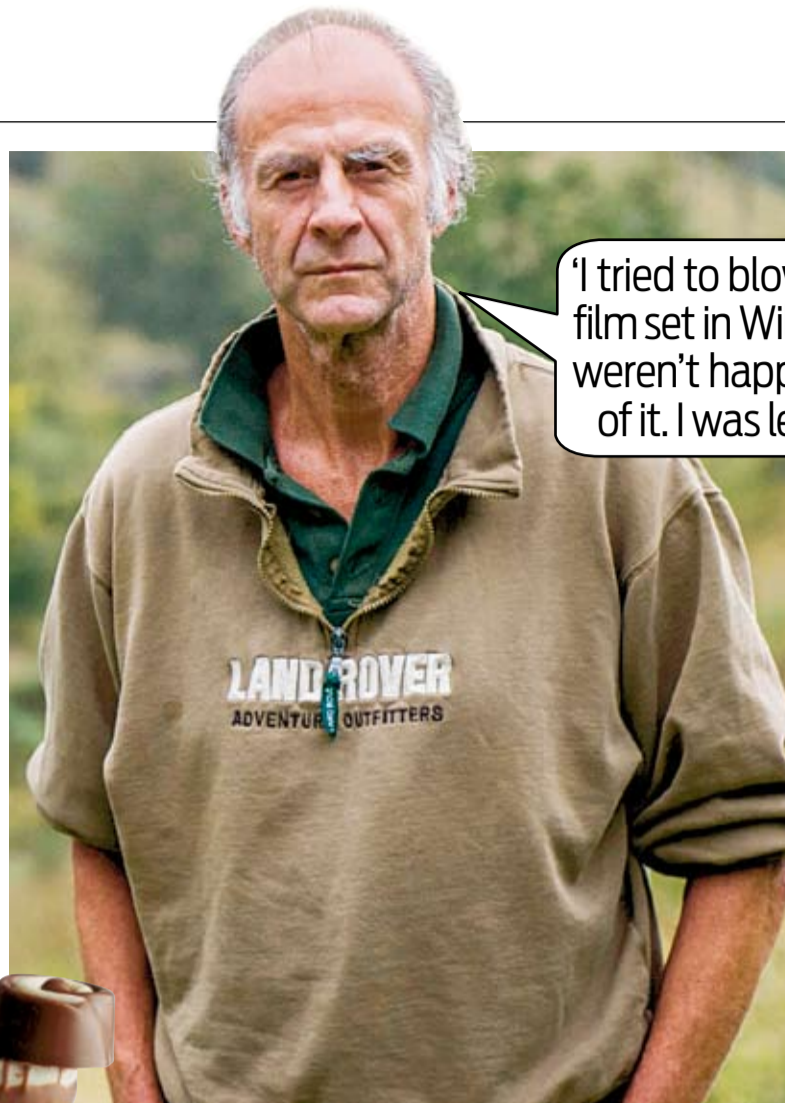
The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... You can always force yourself to believe that your glass is half full.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Not being sent to prison for trying to blow up the set of the *Doctor Dolittle* film at Castle Combe in Wiltshire in 1966. The locals weren't happy with the set, so I thought I'd get rid of it. The judge let me off with a heavy fine.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal the Mona Lisa from the Louvre just to tease the French, then hand it back.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Stalin. He was the devil personified. I'd ask him why he did what he did.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... After 25 minutes of exercise I'd have a bowl of Alpen followed by oatmeal biscuits with marmalade. Then I'd help my wife Louise with the work on our farm in the West Midlands. After that I'd write 1,000 words for my next book, then meet friends from the 1960s in Salalah, Oman. We'd drink coffee under the palm trees on the beach and talk about old times. I'd skip lunch as I'm trying to stay fit. Next I'd go to Loch Maree in north-west Scotland



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for an hour's jog, then fly home to take Louise, Elizabeth and my stepson Alexander, 20, to a cinema to see a fun family film. Louise and I would have dinner in Marrakech. I'd have lentil soup, followed by grilled salmon with spinach and fries, and the house merlot. The day would end at home watching the BBC News At Ten with a mug of Horlicks. Then I'd insist on seven hours' sleep.

The saddest time that shook your world... When Ginny, my wife of 38 years, died of cancer in 2004 aged just 56. I was in total misery for a long time.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I can't reveal it or our rivals will accelerate their own efforts!

The philosophy that underpins your life... If you're aiming to break a world record, keep at it.

The order of service at your funeral... It's between myself and my family.

The way you want to be remembered... He beat the Norwegians [his main rivals on many of his expeditions].

The Plug... Heat: *Extreme Adventures At The Highest Temperatures On Earth* by Ranulph Fiennes is published by Simon & Schuster, £20. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES, FILMAGIC, REX SHUTTERSTOCK

PS...

*Sci-fi meets rom-com in *The Lobster* with Rachel Weisz and Colin Farrell – in cinemas from Friday. Bryan Adams' latest album *Get Up* is out on the same day. And *Mary Poppins* returns to the stage for a national tour starting at the Leicester Curve on Monday*



NEXT WEEK

- Angela Griffin takes us behind the scenes on the new series of *Lewis*
- Sensational cooking made simple with the Savoy's Kim Woodward
- PLUS Britain's most detailed TV listings guide