

A bully? did hit

Well, 'Piranha Teeth' a few drug dealers

THE chairman, a rubicund man with a gale-force voice and peeling nose, shakes my hand and runs off. A minute later he sprints past again. "It's to do with tourism," he's bellowing to the minion scuttling behind him. He's Sir Jocelyn Stevens, chairman of English Heritage, reputedly a monster and one whose nicknames are Piranha Teeth and Terminator 3. We're in his Savile Row headquarters. A notice on his office door reads: "The floggings will continue until morale improves."

Just as people mention their bunions or sinuses to a doctor they meet at a party, so Sir Jocelyn, 65, gets his ear bent about chimney stacks and the car park at Stonehenge. An odd position for a man who revitalised Queen magazine, launched Radio Caroline, saved the London Evening Standard, was managing director of Express Newspapers, deputy chairman of the Independent Television Commission and rector of the Royal College of Art.

He should have ended his term as chairman of English Heritage last month. But it has been extended for another five years. So he'll continue to flog, shake up and sack, while all the time raising the membership and profile of English Heritage, which is responsible for the conservation of ancient monuments and listed buildings. In 1974 he told The Sunday Times: "I don't really care about history too much." Today he says, in his Prince Charles cum sergeant-major voice: "I was drunk. I've always been fascinated by it."

Tall, good looking and extremely charming, he has bushy eyebrows and strong features. He wears a stripy shirt and a bangle, which he has never removed since a Kenyan tribal chief gave it to him 40 years ago. "I asked who they were carrying in such state on camels. He said, 'Handicapped members of the tribe; those who have been nearest God'. Then he clasped my hand and put on the bangle." A decade later Sir Jocelyn's son Rupert was born with cerebral palsy.

Sir Jocelyn, 65, believes in portents and fate. "I've always had the feeling of some kind of outside force in one's life." Eight days after he was born, his mother Betty died of septicaemia. She was 24. "My mother wrote a diary. To J whom I shall never know", when she was pregnant. She seemed to know she was fated. I believe there's a force that guides, shows, drags one along."

He claims to be unworried by the prospect of death. "I haven't even thought about it or made a will."

Sir Jocelyn, a prime player in Princess Margaret's circle, is known for his gossip column appearances over the past 50 years. He is portrayed as a member of the international jet set, flying to Palm Beach shindigs in a private jet, holding birthday parties of wall-to-wall tycoons and titles and commuting between Gstaad, Hampshire, Cheyne Walk in Chelsea and evenings at Anna-

The Earl of Snowdon, whom he has



Sir Jocelyn Stevens
CHAIRMAN OF ENGLISH HERITAGE

The Caroline Phillips Interview

known since prep school, is his best friend. "Wasn't it extraordinary?" he says, when I ask him about Snowdon's secret 20-year love affair with Ann Hills, which ended tragically on New Year's Day when she overdosed on pills and champagne. "I never knew he had an arrangement and I don't know anybody who did. He'd make a very good spy."

Sir Jocelyn's family on his mother's side was the Hulton press dynasty. His ex-wife Jane is lady-in-waiting to Princess Margaret and he says he didn't recognise the selfish, rude Princess of the recent televised portrait Secret Lives.

His long-time lover is the philanthropist Vivien Duffield, daughter of the late financier Sir Charles Clore.

"This jet-set business is a bit of a myth. I'm actually quite a single, isolated person. I don't have an incredible numbers of close friends. I've lots of nearly close friends," he counters, holding his hands behind his head.

"I've spent more time working than playing. Most of the Sixties I was getting Queen magazine out on my own, having fired all the staff." He laughs.

This brings us to his other reputation: as a bully. Putting him in charge of the Royal College of Art was, it

was said, like putting King Herod in control of childcare. "I behaved like a fascist cannibal beast if you believe the reports. But I was asked to stay on for life."

Then there are all those oft-told stories — firing a secretary over the Tannoy, throwing Lady Rendlesham's typewriter and filing cabinet out of the window, cutting off transatlantic phone calls with scissors, shouting at conservationist John Anstey, a polio victim, to get out of his English Heritage office. In 1992 on Desert Island Discs, he appeared almost to relish this reputation.

SIR Jocelyn swigs his coffee. "I don't like being thwarted. I have been a bully. There are incidents of which one is terribly ashamed when one has gone for someone who can't answer back," he says, characteristically and royally employing the word one. "I'm a perfectionist, driven mad by people who don't get it absolutely right."

"But Lady Rendlesham started throwing things out of the window after one had fired her, so I was helping her clear her office. The John Anstey incident



LONG-DISTANCE LOVE: Vivien Duffield and Sir Jocelyn Stevens

makes it sound like I was tongue-lashing a cripple, but I didn't know he'd had infantile paralysis. He had burst uninvited into my office."

His rages date back to his childhood. He was born with a silver tea service in his mouth, inheriting £1 million from his mother. "The choice was between saving her and me. Because she was a strong Catholic, they decided to save me, which I think was an entirely wrong decision," he has said. "It was horrific to let the mother, who could have had other children, die," he says now. "One is deeply sad about never having met one's mother. One misses that relationship, one has to. One feels one was the cause of her death. If I had any doubts about that, my father used to remind me."

The way he describes his childhood sounds like a slightly fantastical send-up. "I bought myself up largely. I had my own little house-

hold with a nanny, a personal priest, a Rolls-Royce and chauffeur who'd drive me round Hyde Park every day. I had two grannies who'd fuss over one. I was always dressed in white satin." This can scarcely be described as bringing himself up.

BUT it went on until he was four years old, when his father remarried and he rejoined the family. "It could have destroyed one's self-confidence, but it strengthened it," he says. "I know no fear. Not even during my Army career (national service in the Rifle Brigade) when I had bad incidents of bullets and bombs. In a crisis I go completely calm." Has he never felt a lack of self-confidence about anything? "No." Never even a flash of self-doubt? "No," he says, after a moment's hesitation.

At Eton, he was a small, pretty boy, attractive to homosexuals. "By

being tough, I managed to avoid being buggered," he hoots with laughter. He claims he cannot remember losing his virginity. "One had girlfriends all one's life, but one didn't sleep with them in those days. I've always loved girls, but I'm not a sex maniac." He pauses. "But I'm not a homosexual either."

It has been said that he's embarrassed by personal contact. Sir Jocelyn becomes uncomfortable at this description, denying it heatedly.

In 1956 he married Jane Sheffield, a quiet, glamorous woman then aged 19. "I met her knocking about in London, the usual thing. We married because we were in love, love at first sight, very corny. She was a super girl, very good looking."

They lasted 22 years. "The break-up was largely my fault, one didn't spend enough time on it, one regrets that now. It was destroyed by my work — I was a lousy father, always obsessed by work and winning — and Rupert."

HE BECOMES visibly upset as he talks about the son who was born brain-damaged. "It's one of the worst things that can happen. Worse for the mother who believes, quite wrongly, it's her fault in some way. It took us into a terrible world outside medicine. I had a man who used to travel down from Birmingham every Thursday to put horse hairs on his forehead. You go to nutty extremes.

"Rupert developed curious abilities — he could play music backwards on the drums and hear aeroplanes five minutes before they arrived." He lived at home until he was 11 years old and died "in agony from liver failure" aged 24, seven years ago. Sir Jocelyn was at his side.

He exhales deeply and his eyes moisten: "One was very, very upset when he died. He taught one humility and compassion."

As a result of the tensions, Pandora, their eldest daughter, became a drug addict. "Everything from heroin to cocaine. She disappeared from one's life for seven years. One would get calls from matrons in hospitals from New York to London and turn up to see this battered person. I formed a vigilante group, mainly of Evening Standard van drivers. We used to patrol the streets and beat up drug people." He would physically attack dealers? "Yup." He actually got out of his van and hit them? "Mmmm."

One day, with Customs officers, they "moved in with pick helms and broke down a door to be met with a druggy scene from hell". His prodigal daughter, as he calls her now, became clean in a drying out clinic.

His other son Charles, 39, is one of the 12 vice-presidents of Micro-soft and his other daughter Melinda is a journalist.

Sir Jocelyn has been with his lover Vivien, 14 years his junior, for 20 years. She's known to be bossy, philanthropic and intense. "It's a very grown-up relationship.

"She has her own life and charitable interests, so we don't tread on

one another's toes. She lives in Geneva. We have huge diary scheduling sessions and try to get together most weekends. Both of us drive ourselves hard."

Amazingly, he wants to prove himself professionally once again, "returning to make money in the media". To that end, he has taken a directorship with The Television Corporation, a small public television company with considerable outside broadcast interests.

That's what he'll do when he finishes at English Heritage. Then, once again, the floggings will resume until morale improves. But rest assured they will all be done with great charm.

'We don't tread on one another's toes. We have sessions of diary scheduling and try to get together most weekends. Both of us drive ourselves hard'

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