

**AFTER** four decades as a successful writer in three different worlds – advertising, showbusiness and the internet – New Yorker Marshall Karp turned to a life of crime.

His first murder mystery, *The Rabbit Factory*, was published in 2006. This year, his 11th book, *NYPD Red 5*, hit the top of the bestseller charts.

Co-authored with James Patterson, it is the fifth book in a series about a pair of detectives sworn to protect and serve New York's rich and famous.

Marshall and wife Emily married in 1969 and have two children, Adam and Sarah. They also have a 12-year-old grandson, Zach, and a black Lab named Kylie, both of whom are spoiled rotten.

#### 1. Nickname?

Chainsaw. It's a street name I picked for myself when I taught a writing class at a maximum-security prison. But it never really took, so I'm stuck with Marshall. However, many of my friends who can't spell call me Marshal.

#### 2. Best and worst things about your job?

There's no worst. But at the very beginning of the creative process, it's daunting to stare at a ream of paper and wonder how I'm ever going to take 26 letters and turn those 500 blank pages into a novel.

The second most difficult time for me is when the book is done. You'd think I'd be overjoyed at giving birth to this incredible labour of love, but after the long gestation period, I am emotionally drained. I call it post artum depression.

The best part of the year-long process happens suddenly and unexpectedly when I have that breakthrough idea that I know will stun my readers. If I were a scientist I'd yell 'eureka', but I'm a mystery writer, so I just break out into a self-satisfied grin and whisper 'gotcha'.

#### 3. Favourite musician?

Johnny Cash. In a world of glitz and glamour, he was the Man In Black, the legend who rocked the iron bars and stone walls of Folsom Prison.

I recently went to Nashville and spent hours in the Johnny Cash Museum. His life was filled with heartbreak, and he had his share of demons, but instead of letting it destroy him, he put it to music. And with that iconic voice he shared his life with the world and somehow made us feel better about our own.

#### 4. Favourite film?

*12 Angry Men*. The original (1957) with Henry Fonda, Lee J Cobb, and EG Marshall, written by Reginald Rose and directed by Sidney Lumet. At its core, the film is about serving justice, which has been an underlying theme in my books and my life.

#### 5. Sports team?

I was a diehard Brooklyn Dodgers (baseball) fan back in the day when their roster included Duke Snider, Pee Wee Reese and Jackie Robinson, the man who broke the colour barrier in baseball.

But somewhere during my teenage years I found out that sports teams are a business enterprise, and I watched my beloved Dodgers pack up and move across

# MY LIFE IN 20-ish QUESTIONS

## MARSHALL KARP

the country to Los Angeles where the money was. I've rooted for other sports teams over the course of my life, but never with the passion I had for Dem Bums from Brooklyn.

#### 6. Optimist or pessimist?

When my son was eight years old, he summed it all up. He said: "If we walk past a vacant lot, mom thinks that winos and drug addicts are going to move in. Dad sees a big empty space and thinks he can set up a tent and put on a show."

For me, the glass is always half full, and I can't wait to run out and get more water.

#### 7. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Touchy question at my age. But I'm an optimist, so I see myself happily vertical.

#### 8. Last book you read?

*The Woman in the Window*, by AJ Finn.

#### 9. Last film you saw?

*The Rider* is based on the true story of a real American cowboy. Brady Jandreau was a rising star on the rodeo circuit when his career was cut short by a devastating head injury. Director Chloé Zhao recreates his struggle to find a new purpose in a docu-fiction film that stars the real Brady Jandreau, his actual family and includes a riveting performance by Lane Scott, another injured rodeo rider, who is partially paralysed and incapable of speech.

#### 10. Favourite TV show?

*Breaking Bad* for drama. *The Simpsons* for pure laughs.

#### 11. Favourite holiday destination?

In the winter, my wife and I try to find somewhere warm where we can fly non-stop in fewer than four hours. It's usually a Caribbean island, and most recently a



**NYPD RED CO-AUTHOR: The prolific James Patterson**

quiet resort near Playa del Carmen, Mexico.

#### 12. Favourite dish?

I'm one of those Americans who just loves British food. Just kidding. If I had to eat my way through one country for the rest of my life, I'd pick Italy.

But my roots are Hungarian. My grandmother was one of seven sisters from Fehérgyarmat, a tiny town in eastern Hungary. And boy, could they all cook. My favourite was grandma's stuffed cabbage – and nobody could ever make it the way she did.

She also made incredible chicken soup, and I remember when I was learning to cook, I asked her for the recipe.

"I'll give you the same old-country recipe just like my mother gave to me, and her mother to her," grandma said. I sat there, my pencil poised.

Grandma looked left, looked right, quickly glanced behind her, then leaned over and whispered: "First you steal a chicken."

#### 13. Earliest memory?

I was four years old. My parents rented an apartment in Harlem. Summer nights I would look down from my fourth floor window at the taxicabs below as they dropped off their passengers for the outdoor concerts at Lewisohn Stadium. Today, the cabs in New York are all yellow. But back then, they were every colour in my Crayola box. I was mesmerised, and I knew right then what I wanted to be when I grew up. A cab driver.

#### 14. Of what are you most proud?

I don't think you're asking me to pick one of my kids over the other, so let me focus on my professional life.

I have a special place in my heart for two breakthrough advertising campaigns I created in my younger days. I've written 12 novels, but nothing can ever take away the feeling of finishing the first draft of my first book.

But if I get to heaven, and I'm asked how I used my God-given talent to make the world a better place, I'll talk about the pro-bono work I've done.

Working with Vitamin Angels I created a programme that has prevented hundreds of millions of children from blindness and death caused by Vitamin A deficiency.

And if someone says, "but what did you do for the Jews?" I'll tell them about the Yom Kippur Hail Mary speech I wrote that resuscitated a dying capital campaign, and raised enough money to build a synagogue in Woodstock, NY.

#### 15. Most embarrassing moment?

Back in my advertising days I was the creative director on a beer account, and when one of our commercials (about a dog who could fetch his owner a beer) became a media sensation, a morning talk show wanted to do a feature on it.

I didn't write the commercial. A young team who worked for me did it, but the client felt they were too junior to represent the brand on TV. They insisted I had to be the spokesperson. After all, I knew the brand inside out.

What I didn't know was the answer to the first question.

"So of all the breeds of dogs in the world, why did you pick that one, and what other dogs did you consider?"

I was dumbfounded. I knew the marketing, I knew the brand strategy, I knew the sales numbers, but I wasn't there the day they were casting for dogs. I sat there eyes wide, mouth open, heart racing – on live television.

Embarrassing moment doesn't begin to describe what I felt. Eventually I fumbled out an inane answer, but I never recovered, and the memory haunts me to this day.

#### 16. Hero/heroine?

My Uncle Icky. Staff Sergeant Irving Ziffer was born in 1918 and raised in a tough New York neighbourhood. A true patriot, he was in the first wave of troops to be sent to the Pacific after Pearl Harbor was attacked.

He was wounded twice and each time insisted on returning to the front lines. He was offered two battlefield commissions, but turned them down because that might mean he'd have to operate behind the lines, and he wanted to be on the front with his men.

I once asked him if he were brave, patriotic, stubborn, or stupid. His answer – all of the above. I don't think so. There are no stupid heroes. And he has always been mine.

#### 17. What do you do in your spare time?

Spare time is a myth for writers. Even when I'm doing nothing, my brain is firing on all cylinders. But there was a point about 25 years ago when I did have some free time, so I took flying lessons. I wasn't interested in getting a pilot's licence. I just wanted to solo. And I did.

#### 18. How would you like to be remembered?

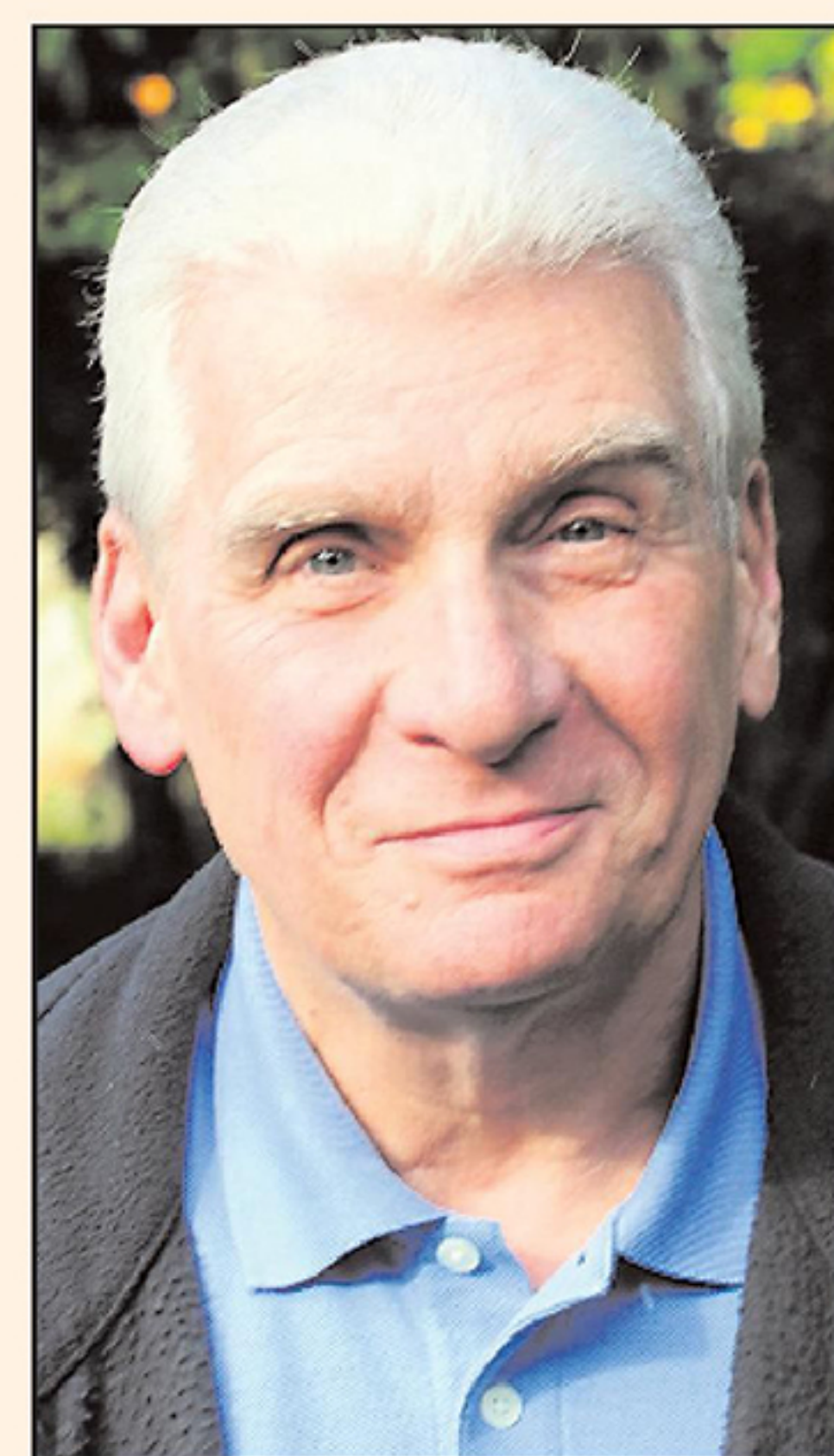
He made us laugh.

#### 19. What's top of your bucket list?

In my twenties and thirties, I was a successful advertising writer. In my forties, I changed careers and began writing for TV and film.

In my fifties, I caught the dotcom wave and was creating websites. By the age of 60 I was writing novels, and worked my way up to bestselling author.

There are a lot of people in the world who would love to reinvent themselves, but they're stuck. With my background of finding new ladders I'm confident I could write the book that helps those people get unstuck. I hope to get around to writing it before I kick the bucket.



#### 20. Who in history would you most like to meet?

Winston Churchill and Mark Twain. Together. At a bar. On a riverboat.

#### 21. Something people might not be aware of about you.

I can bend silverware with my mind, but I can't bend it back, which is why I no longer get invited to dinner parties.

#### 22. Describe yourself in 180 characters (or fewer).

Happy, Grumpy, Sleepy, Dopey – oh wait, not those characters? Never gets tired of making people laugh. Expert at walking the fine line between humility and veiled pretentiousness.

#### 23. What does being Jewish mean to you?

It's what I know. It's who I am. But it hasn't been easy. As a kid growing up in a non-Jewish neighbourhood, I was often the target of antisemitism. In the army, I was one of two Jews in a company of 250 men.

For some, I was the first Jew they'd ever seen. Over the decades I have gone from embracing my religion to rejecting it and, at this point, I have evolved to what can best be described as a secular Jew – not kosher, not religious, but steeped in the culture and traditions of our people and proud of my heritage.

#### 24. What is the best piece of advice you've been given?

If it sounds too good to be true, don't believe it. Years ago my friend and financial adviser, Paul, sat down with a Wall Street hotshot to talk about investing my money.

The man showed Paul stellar performance records. Very impressive. There was only one problem. The guy NEVER lost money. Even in the down markets. Too. Good. To. Be. True.

Paul passed and invested elsewhere. The man turned out to be Bernie Madoff, who, of course, made off with a lot of people's life savings. But, thanks to Paul's wise advice, he didn't make off with mine.

#### 25. Sum up your career in three words.

Lifelong writer. Flunked math.