

# Up close and personal with Harry Potter

by Chamali Kariyawasam

Harry Potter is the protagonist of the acclaimed fantasy series of six books created by J. K. Rowling on the magical goings-on at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. For most that have read the series or watched the films, he needs no introduction. In the novels, Harry is famed throughout the wizarding world for being the only known person to have survived the Avada Kedavra the Killing Curse. He is the only child of James and Lily Potter. He has inherited his father's untidy jet-black hair and his mother's bright green eyes. Harry is described as being small and skinny for his age in the first few novels. His round glasses have long since become quite a trend with young Potter fans.

The author categorises Harry as a "Half-Blood" wizard in the series, because although both his parents were magical, his mother, Lily Evans, was "Muggle-born". (To be considered a "Pure Blood" wizard, both parents and all four grandparents would have to also be wizard.)

As a wizard, he has many traits both physically and mentally that set him apart. The lightning-bolt scar on his forehead is the bane of his life and is

started at by many a wizard. It is known that the scar is a remnant and proof of Voldemort's attempt to murder baby Harry. In later books, it bums painfully as an indicator of Voldemort's presence, or whenever the Dark Lord is feeling extreme moods. The scar has conferred not only a vista into Voldemort's thoughts but is thought to have passed on some magical attributes of his on to Harry.

Harry is a "Parsemouth" and has the ability to communicate with snakes, a skill associated with Dark wizards and considered innate in descendants of Salazar Slytherin. Many saw Harry's ability to have cast successfully and repeatedly the Patronus Charm to repel soul-sucking Demogorgons from his presence as impressive.

Harry also had the ability to fully resist the Imperius Curse (one of three Unforgivable curses making the victim surrender to the commands of the caster), slighting even Lord Voldemort. Harry has developed above-average wizard duelling skills. Like his father, Harry is an exceptional Quidditch player.

Despite continuous grief and losses of loved ones Harry remains sensitive and retains the ability to love. He has substantial leadership skills and



Harry Potter author J. K. Rowling

ability to teach as when he creates Dumbledore's Army and leads the group against the Ministry of Magic and teaches his cohort Defence Against the Dark Arts. He is loyal to the extent of willingly risking his life for friends. Likewise, he inspires the same loyalty from his closest friends.

In the books he is portrayed as receiving average-to-admirable marks in most classes. His wizarding exams results cast him as a bright student. He has the ability to cast cer-

tain spells successfully after watching others perform them just once. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* he successfully performs the Expelliarmus spell (the dispelling of the wand of a rival) without any practice, having watched Snape perform it a number of months earlier.

He masters several spells created by the Half-Blood Prince without any lessons. However, he is unable to cast effectively Unforgivable Curses, in particular the Cruciatius curse to cause pain to another, indicating an innate inclination towards 'white magic'.

One of his character flaws seems to be his near-extreme mood swings. He is prone to bouts of anger or strong emotions, in which he sometimes causes damage to enemies and also emotional turmoil in friends. As the series progresses and he experiences more terrible events, the depth of his emotion becomes more apparent. Nevertheless, in the sixth book, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* shows Harry in moments of control over his emotions.

He experiences the inability at times to open up to others. He attempts to solve everything by himself, and experiences self-doubt at times. He has a heroic nature seen as a savior complex by Hermione Granger - his closest female friend at Hogwarts. He is not easily swayed to alter his intuitive judgments about people - as with Professor Snape, who gains Dumbledore's trust but never Harry's. He often refuses to accept advice or criticism from someone he doesn't like.

This fictional character, voted amongst the '100 best fictional characters' in 2002 is undoubtedly intricately



Russian fans react as they get copies of J.K. Rowling's new book "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows", at a bookstore in Moscow, Saturday, July 21, 2007. (AP)

thought out by the creator. There are number of tangible character traits, weaknesses and interpersonal relationships which show up with great clarity as the series makes it journey towards the seventh and final book.

Much like the protagonist who gets step motherly treatment from his adoptive family,

the debut novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was handed to twelve publishing houses, all of which rejected it. In June 1997, Bloomsbury published Philosopher's Stone with an initial print run of only one thousand copies. It hit the stepping stone to a phenomenal future. Jo Rowling's fascination with fantasy at an

early age and perhaps her own personal experiences of loss and toil, seem to be reflected in her creation.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, the seventh and final book in the Harry Potter series was on July 21, 2007. The series itself grows from an enchanting children's tale to acquire a dark reality-

edy but with a human touch like the first of the cult series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* will undoubtedly tie up several loose-ends and lend more interesting insights into the most popular wizard of modern times.

Happy Reading, Harry Potter Fans!



## Paris Hilton's parents are proud

Los Angeles (CanadaNow)

Paris Hilton says her family are very proud of her.

The 26-year-old socialite, who recently completed a prison sentence for driving with a suspended licence - boasts she has already built up an impressive entertainment and fashion empire and her parents couldn't be prouder.

She told Entertainment Tonight: "I have been working very hard. For 26 years-old now and started Paris Hilton Entertainment and my clothing line."

"My grandpa, my dad, my mom, everyone is so proud of me, so it feels really good to accomplish so much so young and to be an entrepreneur at 26."

Paris, who famously starred in a homemade sex video leaked on the internet - says designing clothes was her childhood dream and she has many "exciting" plans for her line.

She said: "It's exciting, this has been a dream of mine ever since I was a little girl. I'm fashion designing. I do jeans, I do sportswear, we're going to do shoes, purses and I also have my own doggie line coming out."

The "Simple Life" star also revealed she is working on a new fragrance and a book.

Paris - who was dropped by Warner Bros, following poor sales of her self-titled album released last summer - is also returning to the recording studio to work on her second album.

# Beating diabetes the Stone Age way



Stone age people



Fruits



Fruits

Diabetes could be avoided if people ate a Stone Age diet of fruit, nuts, root vegetables and lean meat or fish, a study suggests.

Scientists put 14 glucose intolerant heart patients on a "Palaeolithic" diet, eating foods similar to those early hunter-gatherers lived on when they walked out of Africa 70,000 years ago.

Cereals, dairy products, refined fat and sugar, which provide most of the calories of the modern diet, only became staple foods with the

start of agriculture about 9,000 years ago.

The first group was compared with a similar group of 15 patients who adopted a Mediterranean diet, featuring whole-grain cereals, low-fat dairy products, fruit, vegetables and unsaturated fats.

After 12 weeks, all those in the Palaeolithic group had normal blood glucose, and blood sugar rises had fallen by 26 per cent.

The Mediterranean group, however, suffered from boosted blood sugar after eating carbohydrates,

and most had symptoms of type 2 diabetes. The blood sugar rises had fallen by only seven per cent.

The main difference was a much lower intake of dairy products and grain foods, including bread, and higher fruit consumption in the Palaeolithic group.

Dr Stefan Lindberg, from Lund University, Sweden, said: "If you want to prevent or treat diabetes type-2, it may be more efficient to avoid modern foods than to count calories or carbohydrates."

While any possibility of a cure for Alzheimer's is several years away, lifestyle choices may affect your risk of contracting it, says Jerome Burne.

In some mice were put into a tank of water in a research lab in New York recently, something remarkable happened.

Instead of swimming aimlessly around, they were able to find their way back to an underwater platform that they had visited before.

It was a breakthrough because these mice had been genetically engineered to develop Alzheimer's disease and should have been as slow-witted, confused and forgetful as human sufferers.

They had received a new vaccine that can dissolve a protein, called beta-amyloid, that progressively clogs up neurons in the brain.

As a result, their memory and problem-solving abilities were returning. For the first time since this dreadful disease was first identified more than 100 years ago there is the possibility of a cure on the horizon.

"In before-and-after images from brain scans carried out on the mice it's clear that globes of toxic plaque have almost gone," says neuroscientist and biochemist Dr Menelas Pangalos.

"And you can reverse their memory to normal, like a young mouse."

Dr Pangalos is a vice-president of the drug giant Wyeth and one of the 350 scientists working exclusively on developing treatments for Alzheimer's. The company is gambling \$450 million (£243 million) on finding a cure for this condition, which affects five million people in America and 700,000 in Britain.

We should all be very grateful about what seems to be going on in these rodent brains and for the new feeling of optimism the results are creating, because an increasing number of us are likely to have a personal encounter with Alzheimer's, either as sufferers or carers.

The disease attacks 20 per cent of people between 75 and 84 and nearly

half of those over 85, and the numbers are rising.

But even if everything goes well, swimmingly you might say, no new drug treatment will be coming on stream as a result of this work for at least seven or eight years.

So what are you to do in the meantime to fend off Alzheimer's or to help someone who has it?

Pharmacologically, your options are also not prone to it. Recently, however, there have been some promising results with a more specific approach involving homocysteine, an amino acid found in the blood. "There's good evidence to link high homocysteine with poor memory in older patients," says Prof David Smith, director of the Oxford Project to Investigate Memory and

low-calorie diet.

This was the highly controversial implication of another rodent experiment in New York, reported by scientists at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine last year.

Researchers found that by putting mice bred to develop the disease on a low-calorie, low-carbohydrate diet - there is no indication of how many equivalent calories a human should get - they were also able to reduce the amount of beta-amyloid clogging up their brains.

Apparently the diet triggered production of a protein called SIRT1, which is associated with longevity. Calorie restriction has long been known to enable animals, and possibly humans, to live longer.

Your social life could play a part too. Just having a good network of friends may stave off Alzheimer's, according to researchers at the Rush University Medical Centre in Chicago. Although people with Alzheimer's have plaques and tangles in their brains, experts have known for years that many people show up with plaque but without any of the symptoms of the disease; the plaque seems to have no effect on their mental abilities.

What the Rush University team found was that the bigger your social network - estimated by the number of relatives or friends who visit you regularly - the better your chance of not being affected if you do develop plaques and tangles in the brain.

So, until that vaccine clears human clinical trials there is quite a bit you can try in order to keep yourself sharp and alert to the end. Have friends round - a lot. Eat healthily, and consider making yourself familiar with your homocysteine levels and how to keep them down.

If you are very determined, you might brave the miseries of low-calorie dieting, or even go one step further and fast, since there is some evidence that fasting for one day and eating as much as you like the next can have the same effect.

Telegraph Group London

## Can food save your memory?

Aging (Optimal).

Studies have found that people with homocysteine levels above 12 - with nine being generally considered a healthy level - have three times the risk of damage to brain cells. What's more, scans show that the brains of Alzheimer's patients who have high homocysteine shrink faster.

We all need some homocysteine. The body makes it from protein and if the metabolism is working well, rapidly turns it into other useful compounds needed by the brain. To do this, the body needs a good supply of B vitamins such as folate and B12.

This is why some scientists and nutritionists believe that checking your homocysteine level and then bringing it down if it is too high could be a targeted way to help stave off Alzheimer's. The way to bring it down is by taking supplements of B vitamins along with several antioxidants.

Smith is testing this idea in a trial involving a large group of elderly people given B vitamins. The results won't be out for another couple of years.

The nutritional possibilities don't stop there. It might just be possible to reverse Alzheimer's by going on a

