

My father said I'd starve if I became an author!

WITH 36 best-selling books and sales of well over a hundred million, Wilbur Smith is one of the best-known authors around, writes Gavin Sherriff.

If his father had had his way, revealed the writer, he would have been earning a living doing something completely different.

"We had a library of books because my mother was a great reader," he explains.

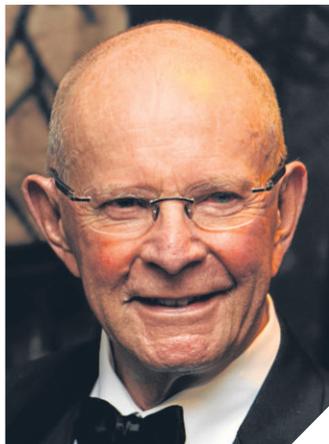
"My father didn't read much at all other than things like farming magazines, but Mum read everything.

"We lived a couple of days away from any of the big towns, but Mother had an arrangement with the library in Bulawayo, and they'd send a big bag of books every couple of weeks on the train that came past the ranch — so I always had plenty!

"I was reading things like John Steinbeck, Biggles, every type of book. I was insatiable.

"I had to hide them from my father because he didn't believe in boys reading fiction.

"I wanted to become a journalist, but my father told me not to be an idiot, that I would starve to death!" Wilbur revealed.



■ Wilbur Smith.

"I became an accountant, but as soon as I qualified, I went straight back to writing.

"Unknowingly, my father helped me to choose writing fiction rather than journalism.

"I spent my evenings writing short stories and then eventually bigger tomes."

Wilbur, who survived cerebral malaria as an infant, says he enjoyed an idyllic childhood in Zambia, then known as Northern Rhodesia.

"For a small boy, it was tremendous," he says.

"My father had a ranch of 14,000 acres and my companions were the sons and daughters of the people who worked for my father.

"I learned to drive a Jeep at the age of 10 and my job was to cut the firewood and keep the dogs and household supplied with meat."

His latest book, *Desert God*, is set in Ancient Egypt, an era he's been fascinated by since childhood.

"At about the time I was able to read myself, Tutankhamen's tomb was discovered and the whole world was agog," he says.

"My mother followed it and awakened my interest in it."

After his first book was rejected by 16 publishers, Wilbur achieved overnight success with *When the Lion Feeds* in 1964.

He recalls: "Within five days of being received in London, it had been accepted and after that, I was able to give up work.

"I was writing about what I knew about, and what a lot of other people didn't — hunting, the tribes, the friendship between an African and a Brit."

Diet

By Alan Shaw

HERE'S something to chew over.

What you think you know about healthy eating might actually be totally wrong.

Florida-based Dr Mike Fenster is known as "America's Culinary Interventionalist", as he's both a board-certified cardiologist and a trained chef.

He's used his medical expertise and kitchen skills to write books on his grassroots approach to food-based health and here reveals eight "diet deceptions" that might make you rethink your ideas about healthy eating.

1 DIET DRINKS ARE TIED TO DISEASE

"PART of this is people thinking: 'Oh, it's diet, I can drink more of it.' But another part of it is about the sweeteners," says Mike.

"Studies have shown the women who drink the most diet beverages often are the heaviest and have a 30% increased risk of heart disease and a 50% increased risk of complications if they suffer a heart attack.

"This is due to increased levels of inflammation, probably from the fact they end up consuming as many or more calories as someone who doesn't take diet drinks — they're just kidding themselves — and the artificial sweeteners affecting their gut."

2 UNDER-SALTED FOOD IS A DIET DISSERVICE

"I'm a chef and I'll go out and give a lecture and a demo and someone will say: 'Wait a second, you said you were a cardiologist and I just saw you put salt on your food!'" says Mike.

"Absolutely! Because I want it to taste good, and when you have fresh food and put a little salt and pepper over fresh vegetables or a salad, or seasoning the beef for a burger, you're only adding about 5% of your recommended daily salt intake to your diet.

"About 77% of the salt in the modern Western diet comes from all these processed foods so if you get something fresh and season it, first, you're actually reducing your salt intake and second, studies have shown when someone has food that tastes good, they end up more satisfied.

"They're happier and



eat less compared to a processed, under-seasoned bland version of the same meal.

"Also, black pepper helps prevent botulism because it's active against the bacterium that causes that type of food poisoning."

3 LOW CHOLESTEROL ADVERTISING IS A FAT TRAP

"WHAT'S funny is manufacturers will put a food out that says 'zero cholesterol', but the way our body produces and uses cholesterol has little to do with eating it," says Mike.

"One of the biggest resources is your own body's recycling of cholesterol. Diet has little impact.

"So when they say, 'This bag of chips has no cholesterol' well, yes, but it's full of the things you don't want to eat so it's not a healthy choice. It's a marketing ploy.

"Eggs have high cholesterol but have



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