



NOW: Paul isn't ready to kiss his career goodbye for the sake of his health

**P**AUL Eddington's illness took centre stage when a West End audience watched him crash to the floor during a performance of Harold Pinter's *No Man's Land* last April.

"I heard somebody speak. Apparently it was me," says the actor, recalling the fateful night at the Comedy Theatre.

His famous *Yes Minister* character Jim Hacker would have known how to handle what came next as reporters and photographers beat a path to his door, inquiring what was wrong.

*Paul did his best. He put up a screen in his hall to prevent people peering through the letterbox.*

"But I wouldn't answer questions about my health and I became the actor with a mystery illness. We all know what *that* is," he says darkly, referring to Aids.

"I've been married for over 40 years yet people say, 'Oh, married people are the worst'. The best thing to do was shut up."

One headline ran: Paul. Is it cancer?

Another described him as haggard and blotchy, with his hands covered in blisters.

Today, commiserations about his health continue. At a recent BAFTA ceremony one guest announced



EXCLUSIVE  
by TANYA REED

how terribly sorry he was to hear about Mr Eddington's troubles.

"What troubles? What do you mean?" replied Eddington, aghast. "Fifty years on the stage and I'm about to start a new production. Surely it can't be that bad?"

It isn't. Paul Eddington, star of the highly successful TV series *The Good Life* and *Yes, Minister*, is a diabetic who is loath to follow doctor's orders but hell-bent on acting for as long as possible.

Next month he starts rehearsing for *Home*, which will tour Britain from next month before going to the West End, alongside his old *Good Life* co-star Richard Briers. The opening scene will show two old men in a home for the elderly and dotty.

**T**HERE should be no chance of him collapsing mid-sentence this time - although the actor admits he hasn't quite caught up with his health regime.

Nevertheless, he's aware of all the dangers and reels off what he should do - eat carbohydrates and not

drink without taking food as alcohol lowers the blood sugar level.

"This was the problem when I fainted," he says. "It was only for a second and I just went. But I leapt to my feet and carried on."

"When you take the pills you have to eat. I took the pills and didn't feel like eating. That was all."

He suffers from mature onset diabetes, a tactful way of referring to old age. He has to take pills regularly and has cut out sugar.

"Too much sugar weakens the arteries, too little and you can go into a coma," he says. "You can faint away. If it's bad enough you don't come to."

*His fans will be relieved that it hasn't come to that. In many minds he's still Jerry Leadbetter living with Penelope Keith's Margot in deepest Surbiton.*

Re-runs of *The Good Life* have kept him forever young. In fact, he is 66.

"I like watching the series - I had rather more hair then," he says. "I've still got some of the clothes - window-pane suits and bell-bottomed trousers. My daughter wears the leather jacket I used on set. She's thrilled with it."

"I'm sorry not to have done more of *The Good Life*. They were going very well, selling all over the world. Why stop? But my colleagues were more ambitious, they wanted to do something else."

Today, Eddington insists he belongs to another era

# The truth about that awful picture by Paul Eddington

and that young people don't know him because he's so much older than his *Good Life* role.

"I'm looking a bit different, but I've had my share of the limelight," he says.

"Now I'm quite ready to fade into the background."

Despite that, he is still recognised wherever he goes.

At Amsterdam's Schipol airport last month, he was greeted by a Dutch cashier in duty free with the words: "How nice to see you again, Mr Eddington." During one trip to Istanbul, he was

besieged outside a mosque by a group of children who knew his real name.

"It was like being a pop star. I had to run away, they were chasing me down the street."

*These days Paul, who is married to actress Patricia Scott, is more concerned that their eldest son makes his mark as an actor.*

Last year Toby Eddington appeared in Shaw's *Widowers' Houses* at the

Chelsea Centre theatre. Before Christmas, he acted briefly with his father for the first time in a one-off reading in aid of the charity Shelter.

He did drama classes on the quiet while selling oriental rugs by day - and he is now desperate for his big break.

"It got me in the end," smiles the 34-year-old. "I'd like to do a lot of things. Does an actor ever stop waiting for the big part? I can't say no to that."

Paul adds: "Toby's like me. I've seen his acting and

'I became the actor with the mystery illness .. and v