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My father Kenneth Tynan, the enthusiastic smoker



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Tracy Tynan sitting at her father's feet in 1963 CREDIT: ELSBETH JUDA ARCHIVE, VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

By **Tracy Tynan**

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Tracy Tynan remembers her father, the writer and critic Kenneth Tynan

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My earliest memory of my father is of the cloud of smoke that emanated from his office, where he wrote, and the distinct tap, tap, tapping of his manual typewriter (an auditory experience now available only through the Hanx Writer app).

His office was a tiny space between the living and dining rooms, although I don't remember us ever using the dining room; my parents ate most of their meals out, and I dined with the au pair in the kitchen.

“If I can't smoke, I can't write; and if I can't write, what's the point of living?”

The office contained a desk, a chair and bookshelves. On the desk were my father's typewriter, two piles of paper (white and carbon), and a couple of overflowing ashtrays.

My father always had a cigarette in his hand, held in such a way that he could simultaneously type and smoke, as pictured here. It was as much part of his identity as his unique sartorial choices, such as the faux-ocelot-skin trousers he is wearing in this photo (with one-year-old me beside him as an accessory).

My father did most of his writing at night: he would start when he came back from the theatre and continue into the morning hours. I would hear (and smell) him putting the finishing touches to his beautifully formulated reviews as, in later years, I passed through the pong, down the circular staircase, on my way to school.

His love affair with cigarettes continued until the day he died, at the age of 53, from the combined effects of emphysema and smoking. He tried to stop many times, but it never stuck. He took a certain pride in saying that he was the only person ever to get a full refund from a famous money-back-guaranteed 'quit smoking' course.

His reasoning was, 'If I can't smoke, I can't write; and if I can't write, what's the point of living?' It was hard to argue with that kind of logic.

His determination reached almost catastrophic proportions during his final hospital stay, when he insisted on sneaking cigarettes in his bed while attached to an oxygen tank, endangering not only himself, but an entire wing of the hospital.

As for me, I did not escape the lure of smoking. But when I moved to Los Angeles in the mid-1970s, I had an epiphany. Coming over a hill from the airport, I saw the city laid out before me, a cloud of yellow smog hovering over it.

It took me back to the cloud of smoke that wafted above my father's office door. And there and then, I decided to quit.

Wear and Tear: The Threads of My Life, by Tracy Tynan (Duckworth Overlook, £18.99), is out now.