

## Interview with Tan Teow Bok's daughter

We also caught up with Tan Teow Bok's daughter Audrey, for some reflections about her father.

*In your view, what were your father's most endearing qualities?*

His humility. He was a simple and humble person. Except for a few indulgences, that is food, cigars and liquor, he allowed himself few luxuries or pleasures. He was a person of honour and principle. It was that nature and his basic decency towards others that endeared him to others.

*What were his great loves?*

Other than his work, language was his main love. He was a passionate reader of dictionaries and derived great joy from it, to the last day of his life. To him, that was the greatest treasure trove of knowledge. He would buy new editions of the Oxford dictionary just to keep up with new words and changes in the English language. He was also an avid reader generally. His dictionary was one of his personal effects that we left him with when he was laid to rest.

He was also known for being the man with four pens. This was because he would always have four pens in his pocket with inks of different colours (red, blue, black and fountain ink). His favourite fountain pen ink colour was blue-black. In fact, his batik shirts would always have four pockets, one pocket for each pen.

*You mentioned his indulgences in life?*

Yes, food, cigars and liquor. He had a predilection for cigars, and when I was young, I used to run when he lit up. His stock was ample and once when the distributors ran out of stock, they had to temporarily replenish from dad's stock. Equally abundant was his stock of brandy. I still have them for sentimental value.

*How was your father towards his family?*

He was a devoted father. He would take the family mostly to the beach every school holiday without fail. He also loved the ocean and was an excellent swimmer. He was traditional in his family values and our upbringing. He was the disciplinarian but he never needed to raise his voice or lift a finger, he just commanded obedience from me.

*And his relationship with his staff?*

He was very good to his staff and in return, inspired deep unwavering loyalty from them. To give an example, once the firm's building had a bomb scare. I was then working in the same building. I was concerned that my father who was then rather frail, would not be able to take the stairs in the event of an evacuation. One of the staff Khoo Teck Chye said to me not to worry, he assured me that he would carry dad down if necessary. Another staff Mrs Lee Lye Khuan who was the office manager then, refused to leave the premises saying that if she were to die she would die taking care of the firm.

*Needless to say, your father was strongly committed to the firm.*

Yes, it was his love and he took great pride in it. When he retired, the firm kept a room for him and he continued coming to the office every day to spend his time until the last days of his life.

*Thank you Audrey.*

My pleasure.