



Letters from East of Nowhere

Daddy's Words to Live, Drink & Die By

a Memoir

by F. Kennerly Clay

Generational Effects of Alcoholism Get Spotlight in Pennsylvania Woman's Story

Father's rich legacy includes genetic and behavioral propensity for addiction

F. Kennerly Clay's Memoir, **LETTERS FROM EAST OF NOWHERE**, to Launch on Father's Day

(Wayne, PA) – It has been more than 30 years since Kennerly Clay, 54, of Wayne, Pennsylvania consumed alcohol. “I got sober when I was 21 years old,” she shares, pointing out that her drinking excesses happened before she was even of legal drinking age.

Clay had been drinking since her preteen years. “It wasn't until I was about 16 when my mother got sober and started educating me about the dangers of alcohol that I realized I might have a problem with it myself. I grew up around alcohol,” she says.

In her soon-to-be-released memoir, **LETTERS FROM EAST OF NOWHERE *Daddy's Words to Live, Drink & Die By***, Clay

shares that her mother was an alcoholic (who ultimately chose recovery) while her father was a nearly wet-brain alcoholic who died as a result of his addiction. “My siblings have struggled with alcohol as well,” she says.

The Clay family is not alone. The CDC estimates that about 15 million Americans or six percent of the population has alcohol use disorder. So, a lot of people are likely to relate to Clay’s story.

LETTERS FROM EAST OF NOWHERE begins with Clay reflecting on her father’s legacy. One that is deeply intertwined with his addiction. “*My father’s mugshots are strewn all over the internet, permanently recording the places he got arrested for being drunk and disorderly the last 15 years of his life. He wore out his welcome with cops and with family in places like Brunswick, Maine; Greenville, Maryland; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Vero Beach, Florida,*” she writes.

Francis Edward Clay may have gotten locked up repeatedly, and been a severe alcoholic, but to those who loved him, he was so much more. “He was handsome, he was witty, and he was a prolific writer,” says his daughter.

While crisscrossing the country as a truck driver, and later in life as a hobo, by thumb, he wrote numerous information-filled, culturally attuned, and warmhearted letters to Clay as well as to her half-siblings. “After my father passed, we were all present to the fact we’d saved these letters he’d written to us over the years when he was on the road. We figured we should do something with them to kind of pass down his wisdom to our own children from their grandfather,” explains Clay.

One idea was to publish the letters in book form. As she started reading through them, however, Clay realized they contained so much more than advice on life.

“I saw that my story was in there somewhere and needed to be told,” says Clay. “There was this narrative in the letters my father had written to me. It was like excavating lost treasure.”

Clay says that as she read through the letters sent to her, her life story naturally unfolded. She was particularly drawn to stories revealed in letters unearthed from her father to her mother from 1965 to 1968—when they first met in college at William & Mary and



Author Kennerly Clay has written for myriad U.S. magazines and newspapers. She is the co-author of *The Buzz on Travel* and an ebook *Calling of Ancestors: Finding Forgotten Secrets in My DNA*. She resides with her husband and two sons outside of Philadelphia. Find her at kennerlyclay.com.

later moved out to San Francisco to be a part of the Haight-Ashbury hippie scene—where Clay was conceived. Her parents got married a year later in 1969, and in 1970 the family moved back to the East Coast.

Shortly after relocating, the family unit fell apart. Kennerly Clay wasn't even three years old when her father left home. "*Because I was so young when my parents split up, I didn't have to go through what an older child would. I wore their divorce like a badge of honor in the 1970s, long before all the other kids started wearing it,*" she writes.

Throughout the narrative, the author shares what it was like to be a child of divorce, and how through her father's second marriage she became part of another family. She also shares how the book itself is really both a gift *to* her father and *from* him.

"I think he would have been exceptionally thrilled, happy, proud that I did what he wanted to do, which was write something meaningful that captured the spirit of some of his life, which he was never quite able to pull off himself. My father was a writer. But he was also a drinker, and the drinking won," says Clay.

Looking back, Clay believes she and her family members were likely genetically predisposed to addiction. According to a study published in *Scientific American*, and referenced by the American Psychological Association, at least half of a person's susceptibility to addiction can be linked to genetic factors.

Brain imaging suggests that people with fewer dopamine D2 receptors are more likely to become addicted than those with many of the receptors. How many of these receptors people have is, in part, genetically determined. Environment also plays a factor in whether someone will become an addict.

Clay likens her story to the one told by Jeannette Walls in her memoir, *The Glass Castle*, about her dysfunctional family and a father similarly afflicted with magical thinking. *The Glass Castle* was made into a movie starring Woody Harrelson and Naomi Watts in 2017.

"I would love for my book to be made into a movie too. All of the elements needed for a motion picture are in there," says Clay.

For more information about ***LETTERS FROM EAST OF NOWHERE, Daddy's Words to Live, Drink & Die By***, check out the book website: lettersfromeastofnowhere.com.

The book is set for release on June 18, 2023, which happens to be Father's Day.

About the author

Kennerly Clay began her career in New York City with a degree in fashion merchandising, marketing and management. She got her start in the magazine publishing industry as an advertising assistant at Town & Country magazine when she was 19 years old. From there she went on to work in distribution, promotions and editorial at Hearst Magazines and got her first published blurb in American Style magazine, a Whittle communications pub, where she worked as assistant to the editor. Today, she works as a senior content strategist for a digital marketing agency.

Kennerly earned her BA in English with Writing Emphasis at the University of San Francisco where she graduated summa cum laude. During her years in San Francisco, she worked for author, celebrity socialite, and global diplomat, Pat Montandon, founder of Children As The Peacemakers, where she gained experience in public relations and writing grant proposals, not to mention creative visualization and guided meditation. After college she embarked for Japan and spent three years teaching English to Japanese junior high and elementary school students through the Japan Exchange & Teaching Programme.

Kennerly credits her time in Japan, and traveling extensively throughout Asia, the South Pacific, Central America and Europe with informing her international perspective. Her adventures include mingling with Zapotec Indians in Oaxaca, drinking bilos of kava under the full moon in Fiji, skydiving in New Zealand, koala snuggling in Australia, riding elephants in Thailand, trekking Nepal's Himalaya, shooting an AK47 in Cambodia, and dancing in the streets of Chau Doc to Santana tunes with a toothless Vietnamese grandmother.

She now lives an adventurous life with her husband and two sons in the Philadelphia suburbs. Kennerly is also passionate about wildlife and promotes wildlife corridors in the United States through web and social media content (Give Wildlife a Brake).

LETTERS FROM EAST OF NOWHERE, Daddy's Words to Live, Drink & Die By is due out on Father's Day 2023.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This feature article and the accompanying photography are available for your use copyright-free and cost-free. If you prefer to arrange an interview of your own with Kennerly Clay, and/or wish to secure a review copy of her book, ***LETTERS FROM EAST OF NOWHERE, Daddy's Words to Live, Drink & Die By***, contact Rachel M. Anderson, Publicist, at 952-240-2513 or rachel@rmapublicity.com.