



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I have an important question for you, today: Where do all the top-class leaders of the world go when they get to be too old to serve their people? I remember the late Queen Mother of England, having to be helped to walk with her horrible varicose-veined, infested legs. I am told that she had to have daily massages of her calf muscles otherwise there was some concern that the enlarged veins in her legs would crawl up her body and go into her head. And, then, she might have imploded. It is a pity that the Royal House of Windsor was not told of reflexology (that is the scientific name for foot massage therapy). Had the Queen Mother known of reflexology, she would have been in Heaven. I have it done to me every day when I am in town. I have a Shanghainese lady, the best in the business, who comes to do my feet on a daily basis. It makes me feel like a new woman. That is one of the reasons that I look so young even though I am forty-six years old. Varicose veins are terrible things, you know. Chinese ladies do not, usually, have them unless they work in the fields. Planting rice in paddies can put undo strain on one's legs, you know, but, luckily, such work is performed by those 'other' people, thus limiting the confounded affliction of varicose veins to that small group of people. Of course, one day, we must do something for the common folk, but that is of low priority, just now. You and I have not had to go to the fields to plant rice so we don't know too much about such things, but I have it on good authority that that which I have expounded is, in fact, the case. Somebody has to plant the rice, I understand that, and it is only correct and proper that there should be specialists at the art of rice cultivation. And such a job should be reserved for the common folk, who do not need an education, only a good back and short, stumpy legs so that they do not have to bend too far. To each his own, as Confucius would have said. I am happy that I was not born to be a rice planter because I and my people are the thinkers; the commoners are the rice planters. There is a song in the Philippines about planting rice. It is the National Anthem. The words are:*

*Planting rice is never fun,  
Work from morn to setting sun,  
Never stand, never sit,  
Never stop a little bit.*

*I used to administer an art gallery, some years ago, just as a giggle, but I, always, had the staff do the walking while I did the talking. Running an art gallery is, in many respects, similar to being a used-car salesman in Jerusalem: Just move the stock; and, then, count the shekels, as any good Jew might say.*

*Getting back to my question in respect of the vagaries of age as it affects people, such as Grandpa, as it is, when I deliver my Back Open-Hand Salute to my people, I note that, sometimes, my right shoulder starts to hurt. My doctor tells me that it is my rotator cuff – that is that set of muscles and tendons that holds the arm to the shoulder joint and permits the rotation of one's arm. I told my doctor that I have to greet my people in the time-honoured fashion of the Back Open-Hand Salute and that he must do something to alleviate my discomfort. What I do for my people! Only you and my immediate family are aware of my many sacrifices. I suppose you know that I used to be a nurse in England, some years ago, prior to the time that I ran an art gallery. I furthered my*

*nursing education by attending Boston University in Massachusetts, the United States of America. But I always was careful with my legs. After all, legs, like diamonds, are a girl's best friend, aren't they? I talked to your Grandpa about starting a home for ageing, top-class Chinese leaders when they determined to retire from public life, but he said that cash is a little short, just now. However, he has a plan whereby he will get the Civil Service Union to agree to salary cuts of its members over the next few years and, in that way, there will be money, made available, to build a mansion for retired top-class Chinese leaders. After all, I cannot be expected to live in a common house/flat like the common people, after being their leader for such a long period of time. I was thinking about the design of the retirement mansion. I have decided that it should appear to be humble from the outside, but, inside, well, that is another matter. I shall make certain that few people step over the threshold of the mansion in order to avoid any possibility of them getting jealous. Being humble is an endemic Chinese trait. The way that I look at the situation is that if the British, when they were administering Hongkong, could have all kinds of servants, looking after them, motor cars with chauffeurs, a slush fund for buying this and that, etc, for what reason can not top-class, ethnic-Chinese leaders of the territory enjoy a standard of life, comparable to that which they enjoyed while in public office? I am referring, of course, to Grandpa and me, specifically. I mean to say, I doubt that Mrs Chris Patten, today, carries her bags when she travels ... and her husband, the last white Governor of Hongkong, lost his job and had to suffer a big loss of face when leaving these shores. But, even so, his wife, still, lives in luxury in London. I doubt that she has to go to the supermarket in order to buy a tin of baked beans or some marmalade. So, for what reason should I and Grandpa not have lots of benefits after it is time for us to step down? After devoting so much of my time to getting to the top position, and, then, looking after the benefits of my people for so many years, is it not only correct and proper that I should be looked after by the taxes of the people whom I used to administer? Right is right and fair is fair. Ah! Grandpa is returning: I can smell him. Must rush in order to make certain that there is a sufficient supply of toilet paper in the you-know-where.*

*Love you,*

*Chief Lady of Hongkong*

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