



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I have been taught, from a very young age, that cleanliness is next to Godliness. So, when I see people, dirtying up my Hongkong, I get furious. And who are the worst offenders? The Filipino half-a-decks, of course. Every weekend, my Government has to spend millions of much-needed dollars in cleaning up areas of Hongkong and Kowloon, those places where the half-a-decks congregate to suck on their chicken bones and eat their rice on Styrofoam plates – which are not biodegradable, of course. Hongkong is suffering a major budgetary deficit and the money, used to clean up after these servants of Hongkong, is desperately needed to shore up the depleted Government coffers. These people just don't care, it seems to me. What can one expect from non-educated, or just partially educated half-a-decks? After the New Year revellers went home on the morning of January 1, 2003, I went with some of my friends and some Government servants to survey some of the streets of Hongkong and Kowloon. My God! I was shocked. It seems to me that Hongkong people complain a great deal – listen to the many complaints of Legislative Councillor Emily Lau and her followers – but I see very little in the way of people, doing things to ameliorate the situations about which they complain so vociferously. So, on New Year's Day, I did my thing. And, my dear, you have no idea as to the response that I received. My social secretary had to spend days, sifting through the letters of congratulations to me. You know, I even joined in to be a broom-pusher in cleaning up some of the mess. I even had a blister to prove it (photograph enclosed). And other people, following my example, pitched in the moment that they realised that I, the Chief Lady of Hongkong, was there, getting her hands dirty, so to speak. There is a lesson to be learned from all this: I lead; others follow. It will, always, be that way, I suppose, because leaders are leaders and followers are followers. And there is good reason for this, you must understand. Grandpa was still in bed while I was sweeping the streets of the garbage, left by the irresponsible people of Hongkong, who, after guzzling down copious quantities of alcohol and colas, of one description or another, left their empty bottles of this and that and those horrible Styrofoam plates on the streets of my Hongkong. I told the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Patrick Ho, that I expected action from his department of Government ... or else. He can be replaced, you know. It would not take long to find a replacement for Mr Patrick Ho and, in fact, I think that I know a very nice young man, who is very clean and who could easily take over in the event that Mr Patrick Ho does not measure up to my expectations. Grandpa has little time to take care of matters as mundane as keeping the streets clean so it is left to me to get things done. I was thinking that I would require all of the half-a-decks of Hongkong to carry small waste-paper tins when they come down to Central Hongkong and Tsimshatsui on their holidays and on the weekends. The only problem with the idea is that they may use these waste-paper tins for cooking pots. And that would make the situation even worse. I know that there must be some truth to this prospect because I have been told about an Indian, domestic airline that caught fire after a passenger forgot to extinguish, completely, the burning charcoal in her portable curry pot. It happened only recently, Grandpa told me, but the government of that third-world country has kept the matter quiet because it is a little embarrassing for the curry eaters of the world. It seems that a female passenger was cooking up a meal in the aisle of the economy section of the aeroplane and was having such a good time with the curry (it was a chicken curry, as it turned out) that she was unable to know the difference between chili hot and temperature hot. The aeroplane lurched a little and the smoldering charcoal, unbeknown to the revellers*

*in the economy section, did not realise that the still-burning charcoal had been relocated from the portable curry pot charcoal burner to underneath some of the seats. A little time later, the charcoal had caused a fire in the economy class, causing the aeroplane to crash. Luckily, there were not too many fatalities, but I am told that the population of Madras was not too happy with the quality of the curry that had been fired up on the domestic airline. Chicken curry will be served in the economy section of all Indian carriers, henceforth, in order that there be no more necessity for passengers to have to cook their own curry in the aisle. However, the boiling of Indian tea is still continuing in the aisle, with the passengers, using Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) instead of charcoal. I suppose that the same things happen in the Philippines where domestic airlines cater for the half-a-decks, mainly. I wonder what is the difference between an Indian half-a-deck and an Filipino half-a-deck. Well, that is just about it for this letter.*

*Love you,*

*Chief Lady of Hongkong*

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