



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*The anarchy that followed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina is sufficient to make one lose confidence in human nature. What kind of people are the citizens of New Orleans to loot and kill, obviously indiscriminately, as the dead and the dying lay on so many corners of so many streets, the innocent victims of the worst storm ever to hit that historic city? What were these people stealing? Clothing, shoes, electric toasters and all manner of bric-a-brac, most of which was of little value. The looters appeared to be stealing for the sheer joy of the commission of the act, without much consideration as to the value of their ill-gotten gains. The television reports showed, mainly, that the thieves were blacks, not whites. This is likely to indicate that the looters were among the poorest people of the city. Martial law had to be imposed. Shame on The Land of The Free and The Home of The Brave! It is worth recalling the horror that was Kobe, Japan, on January 17, 1995, when an earthquake ravaged that city, killing six thousand, four hundred and thirty three people. It was another natural disaster of immense proportions. Japan had not experienced an earthquake of such a magnitude for the previous seventy two years. Shock and disbelief was written on the faces of the survivors of that earthquake. Known, today, as The Great Hanshin Earthquake (阪神淡路大一震災), it measured 6.9 on the Richter Scale and lasted some fifty two seconds on that fateful morning, at 5:46 am. The damage from this natural disaster cost Japan about \$US100 billion. I recall the television coverage of the disaster and saw one Japanese hero after another, trying to help the injured where-ever possible. There were no telecasts of looting, of killing, of lawlessness, only man, trying to help his fellow man. What is it, in times of extreme adversity, in the Japanese culture that is missing in the American culture? It is worth considering because it is obvious that the Japanese are doing something right; the Americans are doing something very wrong. The Code of Conduct of the Japanese in times, such as these, is to be admired; the acts of the looters and killers of New Orleans are to be abhorred. Yet, mark the difference: During World War II, the Japanese soldier, for the most part, was ruthless, killing innocent women and children as well as enemy soldiers, without any seeming compunction, whatsoever. The Japanese soldiers were known to have raped hundreds of women in Hongkong, the Philippines, Burma, Malaysia, China, and other parts of Asia, and they took young Asian girls to be their sex slaves whenever a comely female could be found. Not so for the American soldiers although there must have been incidents of depravity, but never on the scale as that which was perpetrated by the soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army. The American Army of World War II comprised men, who claimed to be of the Christian belief, mainly, with a smattering of other religions, all of which were monotheistic, however. The Japanese Imperial Army, on the other hand, comprised, for the most part, Shintoists, adherents of the religious system which incorporates the worship of ancestors, nature-spirits and other divinities. In times of war, man commits terrible, completely inhumane deeds. This is, sadly, because man enjoys killing man when it is encouraged by his society. In times of peace, however, man changes his general demeanor and he becomes, what we like to call, civilised. But that, certainly, was not the case in New Orleans, the other week. And it contrasted, markedly, to the way that the people of Kobe rallied behind the authorities in order to help, during the natural disaster that befell the city in 1995. It is worthy of some study to try to determine what triggered that situation in New Orleans, last Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, following the laying waste of the City of New Orleans. My heart goes out to the innocent victims of The Gulf States, who suffered for no fault of their own. And my anger rises when I think of those looters and gunmen, who took the opportunity to rape, steal and kill for the joy of committing such depravities. There is an old Chinese proverb that says it all: Seung Leung But Zheng, Ha Leung Wai (上樑不正下樑歪).*

*Talk to you next week.*

*Chief Lady*

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