

## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*How do you measure up on the happiness scale? How happy are you with your life? Have you, ever, pondered these questions? At one time, it was determined that the average, healthy paterfamilias dreamt of owning a big and shiny motor car, resplendent in chromium bumpers and sporting a white-painted, running-board, a 42-foot sloop, perhaps a little village house in the New Territories, and being married to a wife who had the body of Aphrodite and possessing eternal health. Today, owning a large motor car can be a real pain, especially in Hongkong, and as for owning a 42-foot sloop, it is akin to owning a hole in the middle of the ocean, into which one throws money on a monthly basis. As for a village house in the New Territories, it may not be safe to stay there, considering all of the free travellers, popping over the border with Hongkong, many of whom are very disreputable characters. And being married to a woman with the appearance of Aphrodite may well be courting trouble if a man is not well endowed and does not have sufficient money to satisfy her shopping needs. For a woman, I suppose happiness to most of the fairer sex comprises having a faithful, loving, respectful, and intelligent husband, a nice house, a goodly choice of clothes, a loyal and clean maid to do the housework, financial freedom, and possessing health. One thing, however, is missing from all of the above: Creativity. Without creativity, you would go bonkers. You see, My Dear Grandchild, all of the things that I have mentioned for a man and for a woman are, for many, quite within their reach, during their lifetimes. But the one thing that would, really, make one happy is rarely considered: The ability to create. The final product of man's imagination is not the important thing, here: It is the joy and ecstatic excitement in achieving that level of creativity that is considered satisfying to one's soul. Of course, there is no such thing as a perfect level of creativity because, if such a level could be reached, then, there would be no drive to try to attain it. Because it is appreciated that perfection is not within man's grasp, his only knowledge of it may be gleaned by the footsteps, left by others of his tribe in days of yore. It is something akin to finding a large, foreign footprint on a soft forest floor, one never seen before: One knows that the footprint was made by a living being although the phylum of that living being is unknown. But it must have trodden the soil else there would be no footprint.*

*Some people enjoy drawing or painting; some people enjoy playing music; some people enjoy writing; some people knit as a hobby; some people learn Latin or ballroom dancing; and, in all cases, it is the joy in the struggle to try to achieve a personal goal that is the most important thing. One should not fall in love with a motor car, a sloop, a village house, a handbag from Hermes, but one should fall in love with the struggle to attain one's highest potential, whatever it might be. According to my doctor, people who are creative and practise their art while living a fairly sensible life, have noticeable greater activity at the left prefrontal cortex of their brains and suffer from less high blood pressure than those who are not creative. Strangely, scientists have determined that, over the past 50 years or so, there has been very little increase in the happiness scale of most people in the developed world (Hongkong inclusive). The reason for this has to be that people do not spend a sufficient amount of time, engaged in activities that promote happiness. The need to acquire baubles in order to suggest status will never make one happy for very long; and, a man's motor car fades in importance within the first year of its purchase. Such material things do not promote happiness for very long. It is an illusion to think that money and power may be equated with happiness. They do not and will not, ever. What, really, makes one happy is the ability to sing and to enjoy the singing and the song; to dance to the beautiful melodies of a Strauss waltz; to sit and to listen to a Puccini opera; to write a poem to a loved one and to feel that tingling feeling along one's vertebrae after the poem has been composed; to paint the sun, rising over the horizon on a summer's day. In short, happiness is to be able to experience a mental orgasm.*

*It is a medical fact that the more that a husband and wife engage in sexual intercourse, so the bonds between them become stronger and stronger. It is nature's way of guaranteeing that the sire will stay to help with the raising of the fruit of the sexual union. So, in my opinion, is it with creativity. Once the mental hook of creativity is lodged in a person's brain, as with the trout with a hook, firmly implanted in its mouth, so it stays there, promoting more and more creativity, and no matter how much one struggles, one cannot dislodge this hook. All of the greatest composers, writers, poets, artists, etc, led lives whereby happiness was achieved in struggling to attain what they considered the unattainable. It was art for art's sake; beauty for the sake of seeking it, where-ever it was hiding; musical compositions, unique and breaking new and unexplored motifs. There is rarely a monetary reward for creativity, but there is that satisfaction that feeds the very soul of man and liberates him to a higher level than he can ever hope to attain by the accumulation of money, boats, motor cars, houses, etc.*

*So, the question as to the level of one on the happiness scale is the measure of a person's drive to be creative, regardless of the proficiency of one's art.*

*And, now, I have to create dinner for Bo-Bo. Gads! What a task to try to satisfy a fat frog of a man!*

*Talk to you next week.*

*Chief Lady*

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