



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*This is the final installment of my adventures and misadventures in Xi'an.\_*

### *Day Four*

*This was the final day of our trip to Xian. It was a very interesting day, too. We went to a State-run manufacturer of jade and got a real education about the magical rock which almost has the hardness of a diamond, but which is semi-transparent and comes in Imperial Green, black, lavender, mutton fat and black and many secondary colours in between. I bought 2 pieces of lovely lavender jade, in spite of the dagger looks from Bo-Bo, my froglike husband. Then, it was off to a State-run, silk manufacturer. Here I was disappointed, not so much in the education or the quality of the silk, but in the lack of care in the material's final preparation into clothing and bed linen. However, I learned all about silkworms and how the precious material is produced from cocoons. Also, eating the silkworm pupa is considered a delicacy in the region, I learned.*

*Then, back to Xi'an Xian Yang International Airport for the trip home. Now, the horror part of the 4-day trip to Xi'an. While one is told to be at least 2 hours early before the schedule departure, we had to wait 3 hours in all before we could even get to the First Class Lounge at the regional airport. Standing in the Business Class, check-in line, along with about 50 other passengers, I could not understand the reason that the line was so slow. I discovered, to my amazement when it was my turn to obtain my assigned seats, that the 2 girls and one man, doing the check-in procedure, did not know how to operate the computer system for checking in passengers. Everything was working well ... except the brains of the Dragonair staff. At one point, I and Bo-Bo were mistakenly assigned to seats in the Economy Class. At another point, during this ordeal, I and Bo-Bo were named differently. Then, our names could not be identified by the compute, at all. As so it went on until, eventually, I had to take a firm hand. When, eventually, we passed through Customs and Immigration and tried to enter the First Class Lounge, we were told that there was no room. Further, there was nothing to eat in the lounge, in any event. When we boarded the airplane, there were only 8 seats in the Business compartment! Of those 8 seats, 2 seats were occupied by Dragonair staff, and I and Bo-Bo and another married couple occupied another 4 seats. Then, I thought to myself: For what reason did we have to wait for more than 3 hours to be checked into the Business compartment of the airplane? The answer was that, no matter which category of seat one had booked, everybody is treated equally – that is poorly.*

*And that was the essence of my trip to Xi'an, China, once the Capital City of my Motherland. What did I learn? Well, among many things:*

- 1. I did not enjoy the food of the area very much;*
- 2. The people of region lack decorum and it will take decades before they can fully understand that spitting is not a nice thing to do, especially in public places;*
- 3. Many of the men, especially the nouveau riche, think nothing of attacking a waitress at the slightest provocation (I, actually, witnessed such an attack at an expensive restaurant);*

4. *Few motor-car drivers follow the rules of the road and it can be very hazardous to attempt to negotiate the streets of the city;*
5. *Language is a real problem for Cantonese people or people from Shanghai and the West because only a dialect of Mandarin is spoken, for the most part;*
6. *People are generally discourteous and can appear to be quite menacing when going about their business; and,*
7. *There is an obvious lack of accountability at public places, from airports to hotels. At the Xi'an Xian Yang International Airport, for instance, an important instruction to Europeans was displayed upside down so that it looked like a completely unknown language. The word, 'beer', is often spelt as 'deer'; Vodka as 'Wodka', and a toilet is often called 'washing room'; and so on.*

*I shall be visiting other parts of the Motherland in due course because I feel that the country has a tremendous future, but it will take a long, long time before the country can match the standards of the West. And being able to attract tourists is vitally important for my country. Having attracted tourists, however, is one thing, but keeping them as repeat customers is something else, again. Courtesy is vital for the Motherland if it wants to compete with other tourist destinations in Asia. China has a great deal to offer the tourist, but the country must become sensitive to the needs of the well-heeled tourist ... otherwise we shall lose the game.*

*Talk to you next week.*

*Chief Lady*



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