

Goh Foong Meng

Dearest grandson,

As you celebrate your very first National Day in Singapore today, I can't help but remember the video your father took when all of you were in Frankfurt last year at this time. It was a record of how you spent Singapore's 40th Birthday as a tiny 11-month old baby. Though there was no parade or fireworks, he recorded the National Anthem and community songs in the video.

I was so relieved that your parents chose to register you as a Singaporean though you were born in Germany. In fact, they had no second thoughts about it. Do you know they had to go through much trouble to get your Singapore birth certificate and passport when they traveled with you to Berlin as a one-month old baby in the trip that took 10 hours?

I think it is important to let you know in writing so that you may get to read and appreciate this significance as a Singapore citizen when you grow older. We had wished to let you remember Asian traditions and values that we have been impressing upon you even at your tender age.

You decided to be born early and this caused your retired paternal grandparents to be on high anxiety as they had just touched down at the airport and your mummy had already begun the contraction while waiting to meet them. It meant your dad sped straight to the hospital!

Your grandparents were there not only to provide the support for your mum during her confinement but to receive you with their love. Do you know that this tradition of family ties began even when you were in your mummy's womb?

I am sorry I could not be there to celebrate your arrival because I am a working grandparent but there was no compromise for I constant reminded you about our ties and culture by sending you special items such as the traditional paper lanterns as well as the modern battery-operated lanterns for the Mid-Autumn Festival, books, flash cards and CDs in English and Chinese to nurture you since you were a tiny baby.

In this modern world, the technology helps much to bring us closer. Though we were far apart, we could view your photos over the internet. Your parents were very busy but they knew we were eager to see your development and so they posted your photos regularly. You would be bewildered to see our elation whenever we logged on to your "Fan Club" and "watched" you over and over again.

And then, after what seemed a long time, you were ready to be back, with your very delighted parents who were coming HOME after 3 years of overseas posting! The joy of seeing you and being close to you is beyond words. The most amazing discovery is you seemed to know we are part of your family and you immediately allowed us to carry you or play with you.

Your adaptability is impressive as you have never complained about the heat in this island home after living 15 months in a temperate country. You do not even need to sleep in an air-conditioned room. It may be because as a baby, you have traveled farther and more than many adults, covering nearly all major European cities and right up north to Iceland! You were also accustomed to meeting all kinds of people so that when you are back here, you smile and greet people of all races! It's rather rare as most babies would display stranger-anxiety.

Now that you are back, do you know both *gong gong* and *po po* have to adjust our lifestyle so that we can help look after you? Both your Mum and Dad have to work and so the decision is to put you with the infant care full day. We volunteered to help fetch you back to our home daily. It is not easy as we have to walk to and from the MRT stations for both the journeys. But you are such a good baby and you liven up the journey because you always enjoy the train ride as well as the walk back, looking at the things around you.

It is common that we halt to let you watch the plane fly past or a cat/dog that passes by. You chatted and sang at times. These are all the precious moments we cherish.

Dearest grandson, we have a lot more fun and loving time together as you grow. For now, we are intrigued by how fast you learn. You are able to understand and speak and sing in both the English and Chinese languages! You also consume a variety of food, bread, cakes, noodles, rice, both western and eastern cuisines. Isn't it amazing that you are truly a global Singaporean!

Now the best thing about being a grandma is I can enjoy helping to look after you, unlike being a mum who is responsible for raising you!

Your loving *popo*