

Leaving Hong Kong with Susan

When we returned to the United States after our first term in Hong Kong, Susan had been born there and was about twenty months old. On the advice of the US Consulate, we had put her on her mother's passport rather than creating one of her own. After we had said our goodbyes and disappeared into the customs and immigration section of the airport, we got a shock.

The official said, "May I see Susan's birth certificate?" I replied, "She is on her mother's passport." He answered, "We do not have her particulars so we must see the birth certificate." "I couldn't believe it and said, "The birth certificate is packed away in a barrel in storage under all our household items in a mission storeroom."

The officials conferred and returned to say, "The rest of you can leave but Susan must stay." I was getting frustrated, and her mother was in tears, tightly clutching Susan, "She's just a baby!" I said. They conferred again and finally concluded with, "She can leave with you now but when you return to Hong Kong, you must have the birth certificate."

When we did return the next year, our colleagues had retrieved the birth certificate buried in storage and mailed it to us. Of course, no one asked for it.