

# WORLD OF EDUCATION: Trials of Nomadic Teens

by Marie-José Jurkovich

My role as Education counsellor has been too brief for me, but "I must go where my husband goes", and therefore, I must leave. There remains a lot of work to be accomplished, but I hope, in all modesty, that I leave having completed my task. I hope I have been of some help to the students most needing it.

During the transition between my departure and my successor's arrival, I leave you with some thought-provoking excerpts from *The Expatriate Observer*, October 1988.

## COMING HOME

While living abroad, children usually do not realize that they may continue to feel like foreigners no matter where they go. They can move from post to post every three years or so and adjust to each one quite well. Travelling thousands of miles, changing schools, and periodically leaving behind old friends to make new ones, children who lead nomadic lives are trained to adjust quickly to the most foreign of circumstances.

Furthermore, many feel grounded despite their varied experiences because of a strong sense of identification with their native country.

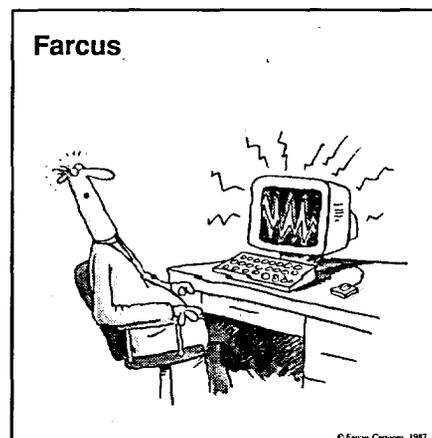
In truth, children who live abroad often feel more patriotic than teenagers who have lived in their own country all their lives. Unfortunately, this feeling is often based on romantic movies, vague childhood memories, stories told by parents, and hasty impressions that the children themselves made while on home leave. When they finally return home for good, they may find that their own country is more foreign than any land they ever encountered, even though the whole time they fancied they knew exactly what the place would be like.

While not all children abroad have harrowing experiences, difficulty communicating with countrymen their own age seems to be a fairly common problem upon repatriation. Not only is conversation difficult, but values differ.

If a child is unhappy upon returning to the home country, you might consider whether the schooling he or she is receiving is comparable to what was available overseas. Not only should it be fairly equal academically, but the school also should be approximately the same size. As one girl wrote: "I went to a school where there were 100 kids (in Syria). Now I go to a school with 1,200. It's a mind blower!"

If a teenager is experiencing culture shock, going to a large high school is not the way to alleviate it. Parents should be advised that if they see symptoms of poor adjustment, changing schools could make a world of difference. Many teenagers returning from abroad have reported that upon changing to a smaller school, they felt comfortable and free to be themselves.

When teenagers suffer an identity crisis upon coming home, parents should encourage them to participate in activities that will draw them out. For many, acting has proved beneficial.



User friendly? Don't make me laugh!  
And what do you mean by artificial  
intelligence?!