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## 'I like his tie'

Voters pick candidates without thinking

With presidential elections coming closer, people must start deciding for whom they want to vote. But before they decide, maybe they should stop to think about why they make their choice.

The Lincoln Star did an unofficial survey last week asking people who they would vote for and why, if the elections were tomorrow.

Instead of voting for the candidate with the most experience or the one who would make the best decisions, those surveyed in downtown Lincoln based their choices for the next U.S. president on appearance and name.

Answers included voting for Paul Simon because he wears a bow tie, voting for Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis because he "looks reliable" and voting for Jesse Jackson because "he's handsome and he has a lot of charisma."

It's nice to know that people are concerned with the important things.

Candidates campaign so that people will know how they stand on

the issues.

Then people have the duty to choose the candidate who they think will make the best policies for the country.

A candidate shouldn't be chosen because he reminds the voter of Uncle Bob.

If the next president's policies turn out to be less than desirable, the complaints will start pouring in. But who's doing the complaining? The people who chose him because "he's handsome" or because they "like to listen to him."

People may not think their vote makes a difference, but if enough people like Democratic Rep. Richard Gephardt because they "like the sound of his name," Gephardt could be our next president for that very reason.

Issues are the most important factors in the presidential — or any other — election. If people are going to take the time to vote, they should vote for the candidate who will represent their views — not for his bow tie.



## France's daily bread is pain

Culture shock wanes as exchange student goes 'beyond zebra'

**Editor's note:** Lise Olsen, a former Daily Nebraskan staff member, is studying and working in Villeneuve, France. Her column shares some of the adjustments she has made since leaving Lincoln.

You have to learn to accept the absurd.

Take a ride in "two horses" to "The Bear." Drink a "kwak" and try not "to have the cockroach." Pretend everything's "the owl" even when someone is "breaking your foot."

At first, confusion reigns. A feeling of separation. Of helplessness. Some call it culture shock: a period of adjustment to another language, country, menu, shoe size, phone system.

Slowly, you begin to solve the riddles: "Two horses" is the Citroen company's funny-looking and cheap car; "The Bear" is a bar in Belgium, and "kwak" is a Belgian beer served in an hourglass. When you "have the cockroach," you're depressed. "Owl" means super, and when you're bored it's usually because someone's "breaking your foot." All are French expressions.

Living in another country means learning a new way to think, even to exist. Some lessons involve pain.

"Pain" means bread in French; it's good and can be had on just about any street corner for a few francs. But if you eat too much, you get fat — even pleasure can be painful.

It's hard to eliminate the pain of adjustment. So you have to learn to try to enjoy it, even when it isn't edible.

I arrived in Europe Oct. 5, 1987. My luggage got here later.

Madonna, Michael "Bad" Jackson, "Dallas," McDonald's and Ronald Reagan were already here. Forget congressmen and ambassadors — these people and businesses are the representatives of the United States.

And I, with my blue jeans, blonde hair, Timex watch and 35mm camera, am also a representative of my decadent, upstart culture — whether I want to be or not.

French students ask me questions like: "Are the Indians still mad that you stole their land?" "Do people really die after having been turned away from a hospital because they didn't have insurance?" "Why did the Americans fight a war that France already lost (Vietnam), and if they were going to fight, why didn't they send enough soldiers to win?" "Do people really worry about who

they're having sex with?" and "Why don't blacks and whites get along?"

I have to say, yes, some Indians are mad; yes, people die; I don't know why we fought in Vietnam; yes, people are scared, and I don't know why racism is so strong.

In other words, just about every day, I look at an ugly portrait of the country where I was born, and no amount of verbal acne medicine, wart remover or plastic surgery seems to make it look better.

Then about every night, I see Reagan smiling on the TV news.

Painful.

Lise Olsen



Then there's a more primitive source of frustration — relearning simple tasks. Of course, the tasks really aren't that different, but the tools are. There are 7-Elevens for late-night food runs; phone numbers are eight digits; shoe size is 40; and at the grocery store, a combination of Super Saver and Target, there are boxes marked "pate" that contain spaghetti.

Then there are the national folk heroes, jokes and movie stars that everybody knows but me.

In many ways, the first few months in another country are like a party in your nightmares:

You walk into a crowded room where everybody knows everybody else and fail to see a familiar face. What's worse, you thought it was a costume party and you can't go home to change.

You try to escape by hiding near the food table, but you don't recognize any of the funny-smelling hors d'oeuvres. When you work up the courage to tell a joke, nobody gets it. Then everyone laughs when you try to say something serious.

OK, I admit I've done some really stupid things. I would laugh at myself, too. Like when I asked for "rotten cheese" instead of "grated cheese" at the grocery store.

But it's harder to laugh when I'm tired and can't seem to make myself understood. Or worse, when I'm being ignored.

It's a bit like going back to grade school at age 23, but there's no recess.

Almost miraculously, after a few

months of frustration, things start to get better. Calling friends, watching television and movies, taking trains, and counting change again become trivial tasks.

Despite their Levi jeans, rock albums and limited English vocabularies, French students aren't at all like Americans. They party during the week and go home on the weekends. They take 20 hours of class their first year and many flunk out. They chain-smoke cigarettes, often Marlboros, and drink beer or wine on and off campus during two-hour lunch breaks. They kiss hello and goodbye but are often hard to get to know. They have some campus organizations but no sense of a university community.

Then, every once in a while, they crowd the streets with signs and scream loudly enough to make the state give the universities more money or stop them from changing tuition.

In 1968, they almost started a revolution.

As I begin to get to know them, I've begun to understand they expect certain things from me — mostly things many Europeans seem to expect of Americans. They expect me to like hamburgers and fries and drink Coca-Cola. They expect me to be rich.

Sometimes the stereotypes, the questions and the confusion get old.

Of course, I don't have to take it. I can find Americans to hang out with or just accept life without trying to understand it.

Or I can counterattack — ridicule their bad pizza and praise the virtues of baseball, hotdogs and you know the rest.

Yet the best reaction, and probably the hardest, is listening and discussing — not arguing. Letting them open your mind a little and hoping you can open theirs.

That induces what's probably the most painful process of all — challenging your own ideas, your own dreams, your own culture.

Living in another country is a lot like what Dr. Seuss says about going "on beyond zebra" — you see things not many other people do, but there are risks involved.

On beyond tourist, there is a lot more than monuments, tour buses and churches.

And the longer I'm here and the more I see, the more pain I can handle.

Sometimes I wonder if it will hurt more going back home again.

### Letters

#### Achievements of university seldom told

Bravo to John Coffey's column on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Harvard University (Daily Nebraskan, March 1). Working in the Office of Admissions for many years, part of my responsibility has been to broadcast to outside publics the quality of the institution with which we all are involved.

The general attitude is that UNL is a run-of-the-mill institution. It's not general knowledge even among our faculty that in spite of a history of open admissions at UNL, 49 percent of entering freshmen have been in the upper one-fourth of their high school graduating class and 80 percent were in the upper one-half. UNL applicants have been self-selective.

This has been true for years, until the University of Nebraska Board of Regents recently mandated a change

in admission requirements. I am convinced there is much at this university, as far as accomplishments of faculty and students, for which we can all be proud.

However, we seem reluctant to share those achievements with our friends and neighbors. A case in point is my letter to deans and directors a year ago that asked for information about faculty and student accomplishments. The response was minimal, unfortunately. Coffey's column spurs me on to continue asking for and disseminating information on UNL's excellence. Thanks for sharing your insight.

D. Lynn Taylor  
assistant director  
admissions

#### Reader says God knows better than us

Professor Harry Ide's letter (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 29) is suggestive of the following argument: If God has forbidden homosexuality, He has done this either whimsically or for some reason. But I can see no reason why God would forbid homosexuality, so if God has forbidden it, it seems he has done this whimsically.

Even if humans can see no reason why God would forbid homosexuality, this does not count at all against God's having such a reason because this reason may be wholly inaccessible to humans. Because God is

omniscient, it is likely that he often acts for reasons which are far too complex for any humans to understand. But even if there is no reason why God has forbidden homosexuality, it doesn't follow that his forbidden homosexuality is somehow rooted in God's own nature, thus receiving the most fundamental kind of explanation which there can be.

Dave Reiter  
graduate student  
philosophy

### Letter Policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. Whether material should run as a letter or guest opinion, or not run, is left to the editor's discretion.

Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letter should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.