

30 Sept 94

Dear friends,

Okay, we admit it. At heart we really are itinerant gypsies, and all this talk about hoping to "settle down" to a "normal" routine is pure delusion! Faced with a choice between staying put and going off on a new adventure, we can't help choosing the new adventure!

Which brings us to this latest development, namely moving from Belgium to London! Jim has been promoted to a new job as "Editorial Director, European Publishing" for Philips Media, and his new boss suggested that he would be more useful if based at the publishing group's head office in London. Wendy was all for it without a moment's hesitation, and kids quickly saw the advantages of living in a world capital where all the attractions are in English!

In some ways, we are sorry to leave the Continent so soon. There were dozens of short trips still to do; we were all expecting to be farther along in our French, and some of us had hoped to pick up a little Dutch before leaving. A year was just long enough to finish the adjustment but not long enough to cement many lasting friendships (though we have hopes for a few). We'll miss the markets, the local toy store, and the *frites* stand! Knowing that we would miss the high quality of Belgian cuisine, we all indulged ourselves with mounds of *croissants* and *pains chocolats* in the last few weeks of our stay there!

Though it seems too soon to leave, we certainly did take advantage of our time on the Continent. We couldn't have traveled more without collapse! We saw a good deal of northern France, especially

on two trips to Normandy this spring, and we had lovely excursions to Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg, the Rhine, a great skiing trip to Austria, a couple of excursions to Holland, and the odd trip to Paris, Cologne, and the like. Wendy saw more of Belgium in sightseeing trips with guests, as well as excursions with friends. She particularly enjoyed a short trip to Prague. Jim's work took him to Munich, Vienna, Cannes, Milan, Amsterdam, Zurich, Basel, and Montpellier. Unlike his earlier transatlantic trips, which usually allowed a day or sightseeing, these quick European forays offer only an evening's stroll or perhaps an hour in the local museum — but still worth doing!

The kids have been remarkably responsive to all the cultural stuff (not that they have much choice!), and they can all tell the difference between Gothic and Romanesque now! They've all picked up some French, not just from school but from negotiating purchases from the corner grocer and the toy store. And they have been connoisseurs of chocolate!

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We are now settling into the southern London suburb of Kingston-upon-Thames. We're at the eastern end of Kingston, next to Wimbledon and near a main road into London. (The address really should be Kingston upon A3). The combination of quiet, leafy suburb with handy transportation and proximity to the city makes this almost the equivalent of our neighborhood in Bethesda! We are living in a comfortable house with a large garden; it's a bit far from the city, but when we are home, the peace and quiet is wonderful, and kids really enjoy having a little more outdoor play space than they had in Brussels.

After a year in Belgium, moving to England seems like moving halfway home! Not only does everyone speak our language (more or less), but there are many cultural points in common, including a fondness for fresh milk, large cereal boxes, ice cubes in drinks, and fast food. (If it's going to be bad, it may as well be fast.)

The best thing about the move to England, we feel, is that we are able to send the kids to truly excellent schools. After the first few weeks, things seem to be working out very well.

Emily is going to Broomwood Hall, a girls' school south of the Thames in Wandsworth. She's the only American, and Emily likes to know what's going on, so it's been a little difficult for her to learn the ways of doing things that are simply "understood" by everyone else. But she's well ahead of her classmates in French, and in "Maths" she's caught up in a matter of days with girls who have been doing the "times tables" for a couple years already.

Sanford is attending Sussex House, a boys' school on Cadogan Square in the heart of Chelsea. Sanford loves being in an all-boys school, and he is doing well, despite the challenging academics. Sussex sends its boys on to places like Eton, Harrow, etc, but from Sanford's stories about practical jokes and general horsing around, it sounds a bit like a fraternity house! Also, Sanford has signed up for fencing — a sport in which Sussex House has been the undisputed champion for a dozen years.

Colin is having the biggest adventure and the most thorough indoctrination of English culture: he is attending Ashdown House, a "junior" boarding school set in the rolling countryside of East Sussex. He's never appeared so confident and happy as he did on his first week end home. He's made the

soccer team, taken up the clarinet, and his favorite subject is Latin. Is this our Colin?

The price we pay for our lovely hideaway is a fair amount of travel time: Wendy spends an hour and a half delivering and collecting Sanford and Emily, and Jim's commute is always at least an hour (by bus and tube). It is a bit much, but on the whole, it all seems worth it.

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We realize the art of letter-writing is nearly extinct, but we get so much pleasure from hearing from our friends back home. Drop us a line! Or send a fax to 011-44-81-949-8085. Or send an e-mail messages to Compuserve 76117,1736 (our only truly permanent address).

Itinerantly yours,

Wendy and Jim Hoekema