

# CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE



Of Western Illinois

712 - 18th Avenue

Moline, Illinois

(309) 762-0167



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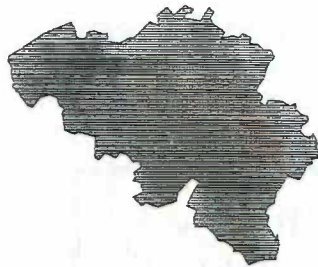
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## Annual Dinner Meeting

JULY 1999

A lot of fun was had at the annual dinner. **Bonnie Newman** did a great job of organizing it. **Vern Merriman** was the auctioneer, and many good items were brought in to be auctioned. The auction brought in a total of \$176.00. A great time was had by all that attended.

## Get Well Soon

Get well wishes go out to **Al Loete**, our fearless president. He is recovering at home from a fractured vertebra. We wish him a speedy recovery.

CBC member **Reggie Schrader, Glen Ellyn, IL** has been named **Chicago-area Volunteer of the Year for the Sears Retirees group**. She was honored with a plaque at a recent dinner.

## Belgian Roots Workshop on Vacation

For the past several months we have been meeting the third Thursday of each to search for our Belgian roots. This group will **not** meet in July or August. We will resume in September.

Names being researched by the group include, Aerens, Beckaert, Brackevelt, Bruggeman, Claeys, De Bruyne, De Kezel, De Neve, De Roo, Hudders, Kerckhove, Martens, VandenBossche, Vande Rostyne, Vander Vennet, Van Hulle, Van Kirk, Van Steenhuyze, Vercautere, Veralleman, and Wyckhuys, among others. We are all looking for contacts in Belgium, so if you know people there with any of these surnames, please let us know.

If you have an interest in any of these names, we will be happy to put you in touch with the person researching that family. Send your request to: Genealogy, CBC, 712-18<sup>th</sup> Ave., Moline, IL 61265 or email Joann Loete at: [Anniejo60@aol.com](mailto:Anniejo60@aol.com).

Better yet – plan to attend our meeting in September! Watch for an announcement of the meeting in the Sept. newsletter.

Thank you to **Yvonne Warlop** for the **Flemish prayer book** donated to the CBC.

**CENTER ACTIVITIES**

**June Waffle Report**

**Maxine Lambrecht** and family hosted the June waffle breakfast. It was a beautiful sunny day. Our total receipts were \$590.00. Thank you goes out to the following workers: **Mike & Mel Lambrecht, Sharon Loete, Dane Loete, Gene Donohue, Ron & Bev LaSalle, Steve & Cathy Lambrecht, Lynne & Glenn Collier, Mary Mortier, and Margie Britz.**

**Memorial Day Waffle Report**

Once again we had a great turnout at our Memorial Day waffle breakfast! This has become a tradition for many families, and it was great to see all there. Our total receipts were approximately \$1025.00!!! Thank you goes out to the following workers: **Maxine Lambrecht, Jim Lambrecht, Ron & Bev LaSalle, Lucy DeWaelche, Dorene Mummert, Art Holevoet, Paul Holevoet, Helen Foote, Gene Donohue, Gene Fowler, Mary Mortier, and Marion Knock.** This would not have been such a success if not for all our wonderful volunteers.

**Memorial Day Rolle Bolle Tournaments**

**Bill Fischer** advises us that the Memorial Day Tournaments held on May 30<sup>th</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup> at Stephens Park were enjoyed by enthusiastic bolders. On Sunday, 61 men and 24 women competed for the prize money. On Monday, 57 men and 14 women participated in the tournament. Prize money of \$300.00 donated by the Olde Towne Business Association, was split up among the bolders. Bill says, "Thanks to all who helped". **Gerry Verstraete** for tending to the courts, - dragging, chalking, etc., and the **Suhrs, Len, Ken, Carl & LeRoy**, for running the men's games with help from **Glen Hostens III, and Mike Motley.** **Mary Jane VanBelle and Iene Chamra** ran the women's games. The Memorial Day Rolle Bolle Tournaments and the Waffle Breakfast at The Center were the extent of activities in the Olde Towne area this past Memorial Day weekend.



**Belgian Beer**

At an event hosted by the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., on May 20, beer guru Michael Jackson regaled a sell-out audience of 400 people on the glories of Belgian Beer. His illustrated lecture highlighting Belgium's geographic position "right in the middle of the beer belt," its monastic brewing traditions and the artisanal care that goes into contemporary beer-making was followed by a tasting of ten different beers from Belgium. Jackson ended the evening by signing copies of the recently published third edition of his book *The Great Beers of Belgium*.

- *Belgium Today*

Copies of his book are for sale at the gift counter at The Center. Use the coupon below and get \$2.50 off when you buy Mr. Jackson's book *The Great Beers of Belgium*.





**News in the Belgian Community**

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



**Earl and Mary Anne Witte**, Moline, observed their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary June 17. The former Mary Anne Coopman and Mr. Witte were married June 17, 1939 in Sacred Heart Church, Moline.

**Maurice Kerckhove**, past commander of the Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars, was the main speaker at Memorial Day Services at the national cemetery on Rock Island Arsenal Island.



**Belgian Born Deaths**

**Clementine 'Tienie' Fluegel**, Taylor Ridge, died Thursday, May 20, 1999 in Rock Island. Clementine Timmerman was born Oct. 19, 1906, in Ghent, Belgium, the daughter of Camiel and Emma Lemon Timmerman. She married Francis Fluegel in 1925. He died in 1981. Survivors include sons and a daughter-in-law, Robert and Phyllis Fluegel and Thomas Fluegel, Taylor Ridge; and a brother, Cyril Timmerman, Moline.

**Martha Squire**, Davenport, died Wednesday, May 26, 1999, in Davenport. Martha Marie Hugaert was born May 17, 1904 in Brugges, Belgium, to Philemon and Maria Louise (Velge) Hugaert. She married Clifford Squire in 1925. He died in 1987. Survivors include a son and daughter-in-law, Clifford and Mary Squire Jr., Rockford.

**Deaths in the Belgian Community**

**William Smet**, 93, Moline, died Tuesday, May 25, 1999 at home. He was born Jan. 29, 1906 in Republic, Mich., the son of Arthur and Marie Van Damme Smet. He married Ethel Baker in 1927. Survivors include his wife, a daughter, Virginia Mountain, Moline; sons and daughters-in-law, William and Sarah Smet, Sherrard, and John and Daisy Smet, Viola; sisters Margaret Kurth, of Washington state, and Evelyn Coussens, Coyne Center; and a brother, John Smet, Moline.

**Florence DeClercq**, 83, East Moline, died Thursday June 10, 1999 in Silvis. She was born Feb. 1, 1916 in Moline, the daughter of Frank and Martha Sansale. She married Alois "Weiss" DeClercq in 1937. Survivors include her husband; daughters and sons-in-law, Mary Ann and Jim Minson, East Moline, Barbara Jean Barlow, Silvis, and Anna Marie and Jody Oltman, Geneseo; sons and a daughter-in-law, Chuck DeClercq, Clinton, Joe and Sharon DeClercq, East Moline, Albert DeClercq, East Moline, and David DeClercq, Moline; and a sister, Esther Karben, Moline.

**Susie Lema**, 88, Moline, died Tuesday, May 18, 1999 in Silvis. She was born March 22, 1911, in Rock Island, the daughter of Arthur and Elodie Bonami DeMuynck. She married Cyril J. "tip" Lema in 1929. He died in 1962. Survivors include a son, Richard Lema, Moline.

## A Visit to Belgium

*CBC member Julian Vercoutere, recently returned from a trip to Belgium. An account of his visit appeared in the Wingene, Belgium newspaper, issue of March 26, 1999. A reprint as it appeared, follows:*

### ***Back in Wingene After 87 Years – Julien Vercoutere, John Vercoutere and Jane Vercoutere Vershaw realize their American dream.***

A little bit unexpectedly a few inhabitants of Wingene who carry the surname Vercoutere received a letter of a certain Julien who wanted to visit his native country Belgium. This is remarkable, if you know that Julien will become 88 on the first of May and that he's never visited his native country since he left with his parents to Moline in Illinois on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August in 1911.

Even more remarkable is the fact that Julien doesn't have any close relatives anymore in our country. He's descendant from the famous family of millers who runned the mill in the centre of Wingene. After daddy Jules had moved to America, he came back to Belgium in 1910 to get married to Marie Veralleman. Julien was born on the first of May in 1911 and a few months later the family went to Moline. "The man who worked 50 years in a rubberplant actually wanted to visit his native village and country a long time but the disease of his wife kept him from doing this. Now he intended to come over together with his son John (51) and his daughter Jane (56). On the internet he traced several inhabitants of Wingene who carry the surname Vercoutere", says Willy Vercoutere who received a letter from Julien.

"We don't know yet the exact relationship between Julien's family and ours", says Willy. "Together with sister Mauritia, who works in the local retirement home *St. Anna* and who's mother was related to Julien, we started to prepare Julien's visit. Julien asked us to book a hotelroom and to organize a party for the family Vercoutere. At first we thought that we would bring together only ten people but on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March more than 80 distant relatives were present in the party hall. Dad, son and daughter Vercoutere stayed two weeks in our country. In a rented car they drove from Zaventem to Wingene. The first week they stayed in hotel *Molenhof* and they tried to meet as much relatives as possible," continues Willy his account. "The contact was very good in spite of the fact that Julien speaks only a few words of Flemish. One of his biggest concerns was to pay off the debt that his grandfather had made in the local retirement home *St. Anna*. Before his mother moved to America in 1911, she put her father in the retirement home with enough money for the rest of his stay. But the amount wasn't enough and now Julien paid off his grandfather's debt.

The family party was a success. Julien organized a lotery and everybody became a prize. After that Julien and his children made a minitour across Flanders. They visited relatives in *Oostnieuwkerke* and *Eeklo* and they were in *Oostende*, *Brugge* and *Gent*. It was a real pleasure to Julien to walk barefoot in the Northsea. However, they couldn't stay long. According to them, they will definitely come back. Besides the interesting human contacts he made, Julien, an optimist who enjoys life, learned also to appreciate the Belgian beer and chocolate. He bought himself a T-shirt with the words 'Belgian Beer' on it. We're already invited at the party he intends to give at his home on the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday" concludes Willy. – (*Lieven Lams*)

## The Beguinages of Flanders

### A Rich Past, a Fascinating Present, and a Secure Future

Reprinted from *Flanders*, March 1999

The Flemish beguinages are a permanent and unique testimony of the medieval mystical movement from which they grew. Beguinages only really became widespread in Flanders because they received support from the Church, the local nobility and the feudal lords and their successors. In other European countries the movement was banned from the beginning of the 14th century.

Almost every Flemish town or city of some importance had - and still has today - one or even two beguinages, where the *mulieres religiosae* (the religious women) lived together in a community. These were widowed or single women who sought an independent but committed life outside the recognized religious orders and their vows of eternal fidelity and poverty. Today 26 beguinages still remain in Flanders. Such a concentration of beguinages is only found in Flanders.

Within the evolution of society the beguinages bear witness to the existence of many generations of unmarried women who were Conscious of their cultural and social role and their ability to build a self-governing community. Everyday life was based on spirituality and solidarity; indeed this solidarity exceeded the boundaries of their 'town of peace.' This ambivalence has been a century-old source of fascination for laypersons, feminists and experts such as Professor Julia Kristeva, Principal of the Ecole Doctorale de Paris 7, who entered the public eye with her psychoanalytical studies.

#### Authentic Architecture

The beguinages display architectural and planning features that have withstood the test of time and which create a living environment that is much prized today. Their current form and structure reflect an evolution over the centuries which saw periods of prosperity and temporary neglect resulting from events in the regional and

international history, including the French Revolution and the religious reformations such as the Counter-Reformation. The formal authenticity of the beguinages is therefore the result of successive 'authentic periods' during which the beguinage was extended or a small number of buildings were added at various times befitting the overall environment of the beguinage in question. The beguinages thus concurrently manifest fundamental coherence, organic growth and diversity in design. This also applies to the century-old alterations -most of which are non-structural and fairly limited in size and therefore have no disruptive effect on the overall set-up - which have a feeling of authenticity and congruity.

#### *Different Types*

Beguinages are basically small walled towns that were built on the edge of the fortified town and city centres, often on boggy plots near a river. With the exception of some - Sint-Truiden for instance they were later incorporated within the walls of the towns or cities as these spread over the subsequent centuries. Others were moved and rebuilt within the town or city following the destruction that took place during the religious wars. The ground plan of the beguinages is strongly determined by the endeavor to make optimum use of the local topography, for instance the water from the river for everyday use and for textile production, later to be replaced by lacemaking. Beguinages come in one of two basic types: one is built around a square and the other takes on the features of a town.

The 'square' type consists of a central area, of a variety of possible shapes. These areas are either paved or lawned and edged with rows of trees. Around this square, the church, the infirmary and the house of the 'Grootjuffrouw'



(similar to a mother superior) stand out because of their size and their architectural design. Kortrijk, Diksmuide, Dendermonde, and Hasselt are some examples of this type.

The 'town' type is characterized by a chess-board street plan, based on that of the then 'new towns'. The beguinages in Lier, Mechelen and Tongeren are examples of this particular type. When some of the beguinages were further developed during the 17th century, an inner courtyard was added, as was the case in Leuven, or one or more alleyways, as in the Klein Begijnhof in Gent or in Brugge. And so what is known as the 'mixed' type was created.

### *Renovation And Rebuilding*

On the whole we find the same communal functions in the beguinages, including the infirmary, often with an adjacent farm and the 'Table of the Holy Spirit', which served to provide assistance to the needy beguines. Besides the dwellings that housed one or two beguine owners - 1 and often also foreign origin - the beguinage also comprised communal houses where the less well-off beguines lived. The growing number of beguines following the Counter-Reformation and the rise of the beguinages in the 17th and 18th centuries meant that the existing buildings were renovated and rebuilt and new building work was undertaken to produce the type of development described earlier. Such works were in keeping with the municipal regulations, which sought to ban timber framing and thatched roofs and imposed the use of stone and brick in order to prevent fire devastation. The cottages have always kept their original function as living quarters and as such bear witness to the way of life and local urban architecture in the 17th and 18th centuries. They illustrate the inherent regional and cross-border diversity related among other things to the use of local materials and the continuation of popularized stylistic traditions.

### *Baroque With A 'Flemish' Feel*

The churches on the other hand fit in with the mainstream architecture of the day and display a variety of styles dating from the 13th

encompassing the evolution from the transitional Romanesque Gothic (Sint-Truiden) to late-Classicism (Aalst).

The lavish baroque architecture that gives the church in the Groot Begijnhof in Mechelen an Italianesque feel, has more of a 'Flemish' feel in Gent and Lier and in Hoogstraten, for instance, is given some regional simplification.

The gates that have been preserved - usually replacing older ones - manifest a conscious monumentality typical of baroque, as in Diest, Lier, and Oudenaarde for instance, or of classicism, as in Brugge and Leuven.

### *The Revolution Brings Changes*

During the French Revolution the beguinages were sequestered and taken over by the Commissions des Hospices Civils - the predecessor of today's social welfare organizations - from which time they mostly housed the town's needy families. Very soon, however, a number of beguines settled amongst them and took up their previous way of life and religious practices again. Following a revival - the Neo-Gothic beguinage in Sint-Amandsberg was built at that time (1873 to 75, under the direction of J.B. Bethune and his apprentice architect A. Verhaegen and thanks to the patronage of the Duke of Arenberg) - the number of beguines gradually dwindled after the First and especially after the Second World War. This of course subsequently caused considerable problems with regard to the preservation and use of the beguinages.

### *Cultural Heritage*

The act of 7 August 1931 regarding the classification of monuments and landscapes and subsequently the decree of 6 December 1976 regarding the protection of monuments and cities, towns, and villages, as well as other initiatives related to integrated preservation all safeguarded the future of this cultural heritage.

From the 1960's onwards, particularly with the impetus of the restoration of Leuven's Groot Begijnhof under the direction of Prof. R.M. Lemaire, the interest in rekindling the life

and consequently the general appreciation of the Flemish beguinages grew. Leuven's beguinage was taken over by the University in order to house a new - this time intellectual - community consisting of students and lecturers. It was at the time also a test-case for the numerous other problems facing urban renewal, and the work undertaken in Gent, Lier, Hoogstraten, etc. for the preservation, restoration, and change of use are proof of this. The diversity of the initiatives and projects, varying from overall restoration to more specific work, is in fact directly related to the various types of owners and occupiers, such as the O.C.M.W. social welfare organizations, non-profit-making organizations, private owners, etc. All these initiatives are indicative of the opportunities for redesignation of use in which the potential qualities of this architectural heritage, resulting from the endeavor to achieve a balance between community living and secluded living, are reconciled with present-day requirements related to housing and cultural tourism.

**Intrinsic Value**

Due to the intrinsic value of the beguinages they have been incorporated in regional planning and town planning schemes as residential areas with a cultural, historical and/or aesthetic value. Sometimes they form part of urban renewal projects of a social nature; an example of this is the Begijnhof-Heembeemd sector in Mechelen (since 1982).

The beguinage in Hasselt is something of an exception in that since 1945 it has grown into a 'cultural island' within a widely commercialized city. Since the new library was built nearby, the dwellings in the Begijnhof have been converted into conference rooms and exhibition space, whilst the hall erected for that purpose during the post-war period is now used for a programme of events of a wider cultural nature. The current project, entrusted to Italian architect Scarpa jr, seeks to use the inner courtyard to perpetuate the history of this site by incorporating the ruins of the church destroyed during the Second World War into an evocation of this classical construction.

**What The Future Holds**

These initiatives of integrated conservation within the city and society sought to safeguard a future for the beguinages that was akin to their rich past. This secure future became a reality on 2 December 1998, when UNFSCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), which promotes the identification, protection and preservation of our cultural and natural world heritage, classified the Flemish beguinages as World Heritage. As such the Flemish beguinages now enjoy international protection, like some other famous examples including the Delphi archaeological sites and the Acropolis in Greece, the temple of Borobudur in Indonesia, the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador, Mont Saint-Michel and Notre-Dame in Paris.

*Suzanne Van Aerscjt-Van Haeverbeeck,*  
Inventory Co-ordinator, author of the  
'Begijnhoven Werelderfgoed' dossier

**Top Prize at Cannes goes to Belgian Film!**

*Rosetta*, a film by Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, won this year's Golden Palm, the highest award given at the Cannes Film Festival.

During the Festival's 52-year history, Belgians have twice walked away with the top prize for the best short. In 1991, *Toto le héros* earned Jaco van Dormael the Golden Camera, given to the best first-time director; and in 1996 Pascal Duquenne and Daniel Auteuil, co-stars of *The Eighth Day (Le huitieme jour)*, shared the Best Actor award, but this is the first time a Belgian feature film has garnered Cannes' most prestigious award.

The Dardenne brothers, who now have four films to their credit, including *The Promise* which received much critical acclaim in 1997, work in the realistic vein of Belgian director Henri Stork. Their heroes are profoundly human, their stories brutally honest.

*Rosetta* is expected to open in Belgium in September, and will be distributed in the U.S. in the fall.

### Dates to Remember

The Center for Belgian Culture is open Wednesday and Saturday afternoons from 1 - 4. It is staffed by volunteers. We thank the following, who are serving in July:

- Saturday, July 3           **WAFFLE BREAKFAST** Hosted by **Norma Manning & Art Holevoet Evelyn & Al VanPuyvelde**, Host Couple and Gift Counter
- Wednesday, July 7       **Dorene Mummert**, Hostess; **Gen Vrombaut**, Gift Counter
- Saturday, July 10       **Mary Rose DeCoster**, Hostess; **Marion Knock**, Gift Counter
- Tuesday, July 13**       **Board Meeting 7pm at the Center**
- Wednesday, July 14     **Al & Joann Loete**, Host Couple and Gift Counter
- Saturday, July 17       **Bev & Stan Francque**, Host Couple and Gift Counter
- Wednesday, July 21     **Georgia & Louis Slininger**, Host Couple and Gift Counter
- Saturday, July 24       **Lorraine & Harold Krause**, Host Couple and Gift Counter
- Wednesday, July 28     **Bob Hendrickx & Lucy DeWaelche**, Host and Hostess & Gift Counter
- Saturday, July 31       Volunteers needed for this day

- The number of Kosovo refugees number 4,984 in the U.S. and 1,223 in Belgium

**CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE  
OF WESTERN ILLINOIS, INC.  
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