



CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

1608 Seventh Street, Moline, Illinois 61265

(309) 762-0167

www.belgianmuseumquadcities.org



February, 2015

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

February 7th	Waffle Breakfast	7:30 to 11:00 a.m.
February 7th	Belgian Lacemakers	1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
February 9th	Board Meeting	4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

Visit the Center for more information and to stay updated on current events.

Schedule for Volunteers

The February schedule is as follows:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Gift Counter</i>	<i>Host/Hostess</i>
Wed., Feb. 4th	Alan Hoyt	Alan Hoyt
Fri., Feb. 6th	Joan DeClerck	Rose VanAcker
Sat., Feb. 7th	Celie Donohue (am) Grace Fisher (pm)	Barb Michalek (pm)
Wed., Feb. 11th	Mary Lou Andrae	Bonnie Newman
Fri., Feb. 13th	Celie Donohue	Gene Donohue
Sat., Feb. 14th	Mary Gardner-Karcher	Mary Gardner-Karcher
Wed., Feb. 18th	Barb Coppens	Linda Polich
Fri., Feb. 20th	Georgia Slininger	Bev Fulmer
Sat., Feb. 21st	Jan Irwin	Jan Irwin
Wed., Feb. 25th	Margaret Wadsworth	Bill Wadsworth
Fri., Feb. 27th	Bob Francione	Bob Francione
Sat., Feb. 28th	Millie Kale	Millie Kale

*Contact Celie Donohue at (309) 792-8246
as soon as possible if there is a schedule conflict.*

Happy Valentine's Day – February 14th

Please Check Ahead

During these winter months, please check ahead before visiting the CBC. We want everyone – visitors and volunteers – to be safe.

OPEN Wednesday, Friday & Saturday 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

**Waffle Breakfast 1st Sat. of each month @
Friends Circle, 701 - 18th Avenue, Moline**

News of the Membership

Congratulations to **Fred Polich** on celebrating his 71st birthday January 16th.

Thank You to: Sr. Marilyn Roman for donating the children's puzzles.

Sympathy is offered to: **Ralph Sr. and Martha Vroman** on the death of their son, Ralph Jr., who died December 23rd in Reno, Nevada; **Robert and Betty VanDeVoorde** on the death of Robert's brother, Richard, who died December 25th in Rock Island; to the family of Diane DeBord, Coal Valley, who died January 8th; and to **Donna Cavins** on the death of husband Jim, who died January 19th.

The Kleine Winkel

Machine-made lace Madonna's, crosses, kitten-in-a-basket, etc. have just arrived from Belgium thanks to our "lace runner" Carine Serck. We also have beautiful butterfly pins in three sizes. For a limited time, the Winkel is selling Belgian waffle mix, with instructions, for \$10.00/bag.



FEBRUARY
WAFFLE VOLUNTEERS



As this newsletter goes to press, the volunteers for February's waffle breakfast will be Angie Jennes, Cheryl Westin, Steve Slininger, and Karen VandeKerckhove. Mike Kerckhove will make the mix and start the coffee, Joan DeCap will cashier, and Catherine VanHecke will make sure all runs smoothly.

Chocolate Fans, Take Heed

A world shortage of cocoa, the key ingredient to chocolate, is on the horizon. The world will produce one million tons less by 2020, than currently produced, leading to shortages and price explosions. Cocoa farmers, with an average age of 55, are leaving the business because world prices are so low, and the farmers are not being succeeded by younger generations.

You have been warned.

Belgians Find Dementia Treatment

Molecular biologists at the University of Leuven and the Flemish life sciences research institute VIB have made global headlines with ground-breaking research on a treatment for dementia. The researchers simulated the origination of dementia in the lab and were able to repair the genetic defect.

The research team examined three patients with frontotemporal dementia and transformed the patients' skin cells into stem cells. The stem cells were then manipulated to simulate cells of the cerebral cortex.

The team tried to develop brain cells that were affected by dementia, but didn't succeed. Further research on people with and without dementia revealed the reason: a specific "genetic signaling pathway." This genetic transmitter prevented the cells from developing into fully functioning cerebral cortex cells.

Through the repression of a specific plasma molecule found in dementia patients, the scientists were able to replicate healthy cerebral cortex cells. But much more research is needed. To repress the molecule, substances were used that also play a major role in other organs, so the team must search for a more targeted way to molecular repression.

(Thanks to *Flanders Today*)

Castles of the Fields

We know that pigeons are not exclusive to Belgium. An article from the archives of the CBC brings to light the fact that pigeons thrived in a part of Iran as well. Standing 30-40' or higher, the pigeon towers seen in these images date back to the Safavid Empire, 1502-1736. French author Jean Chardin noted that these towers were built to attract huge flocks of wild pigeons, number in the thousands. He estimated that there were more than 3000 pigeon towers in and around the city of Isfahan.

The typical pigeon tower of Isfahan is cylindrical outside, constructed of unfired mud brick, lime plaster, and gypsum. Large towers range from 33-75' in diameter and stand 60' high. They are very common in the fields surrounding Isfahan, but are very rarely seen in other parts of the Iranian plateau where conditions are less favorable for large populations of birds. Situated 5200' above sea level and with ample water flowing from the Zagros Mountains, this area provided an ideal habitat for wild pigeons and large-scale agriculture.

Did the Iranian eat the pigeons? Marco Polo, the famous 13th-century traveler, claimed that the Persians didn't eat pigeons because they "...hold them in abhorrence." Herodotus, writing 1700 years earlier, noted that Persians disliked the taste of the birds, though young pigeons (squabs) are well known to be delicious and succulent.

Another reason why the birds weren't eaten might have had something to do with religion. During the early years of Islam, pigeons were held sacred because of an association with the Prophet Muhammad, much like Christians believed in the sacredness of doves during the medieval period.

What then was the real purpose of the towers? They were designed to collect pigeon dung, which has a high nitrogen content and was a boon for Isfahan's nitrogen-deficient soil. Pigeon droppings are also rich in phosphorus, another fertilizing agent. In short, when mixed into the soil, the dung increased the annual harvest by as much as 50 percent.

A large pigeon tower of the time might have contained 5000 to 7000 pigeon holes. On average, one pigeon creates 6 pounds of dried dung per year. Based on the amount of pigeons and droppings, such a tower could provide enough high-quality fertilizer for more than 18,000 fruit trees or 24 acres of cropland. Pigeon poop made it possible for Isfahan to feed its roughly half-million population. It was also used in leatherworking to soften the material prior to tanning.

And you thought pigeons were only good for racing.

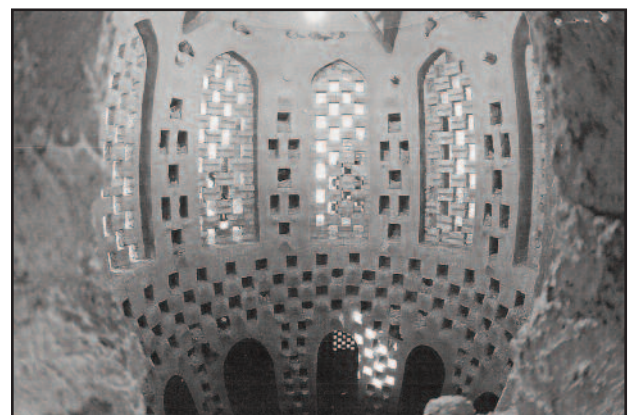
(Thanks to Eric Hansen)



Though many of these towers look alike, no two are precisely the same.



The honeycombed interior offered refuge from nocturnal predators.



The inward slant of the interior wall of pigeon holes ensured that the dung fell to the bottom of the tower for collection.

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Belgium Deploys Troops

In a break with a long-standing tradition that Belgium's military personnel should not be deployed on Belgian soil, soldiers began security duties January 17th guarding government buildings and embassies in Brussels and Antwerp. Military personnel were also stationed in the Jewish section of Antwerp, the Jewish Museum in Brussels, and in the front of the American and Israeli embassies.

According to justice minister Koen Geens, the deployment of troops is a temporary measure – intended to last no longer than one month – in response to the increased terrorist threat to the country.

So far, 150 troops have been deployed, with the number able to rise to 300 if required at other sites. The soldiers will be on static guard, authorized to use force only in self-defense or according to rules of engagement established by the defense ministry.

Coalition party Open VLD chair Gwendolyn Rutten told a news program, "Having soldiers patrolling our streets cannot be considered a solution. Belgium is not Kabul. We cannot give way to fear."

The Antwerp mayor defended the use of military patrols at terrorist targets, which he first suggested two years ago. Mayor Bart De Wever stated, "There have been attacks on the Jewish community in Antwerp. When you see that (the terrorists) have targeted the police, then you see that more firepower on the ground is needed."

The military has been deployed on Belgian soil only twice before: during the general strike of 1960-1961; and in the early 1980s, following a series of terrorist attacks by the so-called Fighting Communist Cells.

(Thanks to Flanders Today)

