



CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

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Closed but Waffles for Sale

Although the State has relaxed its rules pertaining to COVID, the CBC will continue to be closed. The waffle breakfasts are still discontinued, as are the lacemakers' meetings at the Center.

However, we will again offer **frozen waffles and sausage for sale** at the Center on Saturday, February 6th, from 1:00-4:00 p.m. A package of waffles (4 squares) is \$4.00 and a package of 4 sausages is \$3.00.

News of the Membership

Thank You to **Kevin Rafferty** and **Millie Kale** for their monetary donations to the Center.

Sympathy is offered to the family of **Donna DeGreve Cavins**, 79, of Moline, who died December 26, 2020.

Belgian Robin Hoods

I have found it interesting that Belgian visitors to our area had only heard about rolle bolle, but had never seen it played there. Some had never heard of it. The older visitors knew about archery, but I'm willing to bet that younger people here don't know that much about that sport, brought here from the emigrating Belgians. Thanks to a 1941 newspaper article I discovered, we're going to learn more about this once-popular sport.

To say popular would be an understatement. Over 150 participants took part year around in a unique brand of archery called popinjay. Three or more contests would be held weekly in Moline, Rock Island, and East Moline – every week – with 50 or 60 archers on hand for every round. Often times, participation at a meet ran as high as 100.

Popinjay shooting involves shooting wooden pegs off a rack for prize money. While uncommon in this country, it was one of the oldest sports practiced worldwide. It began in the Middle Ages when poles, on which the

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Belgian Robin Hoods

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“birds” or targets were placed, stood permanently in most of the villages of Western Europe. The game was one of Belgium’s most popular sports.

Men who came here from “the old country” brought their bows and arrows with them, or had them sent after their arrival. Contests were soon organized here, with the first ones held in a lot where the Overlook retirement complex in Moline now stands.

Eventually, a system of contests was set up for each Sunday of a month at one of four locales. The first Sunday’s event was held at the Belgian-American Brotherhood in Rock Island. The second was at Moline’s Friends Circle, the third at the Arena Gardens in East Moline, and the fourth was at the Eagles’ country home on the Rock River. If there was a fifth Sunday in a month, one of the contest locales would repeat.

Of course, impromptu contests were also held. During the summer, VanHooreweghe’s Tavern in Moline held contests on the second and fourth Friday nights and every fourth Friday night the rest of the year. All shooting took place indoors with the exception of the Eagles’ country home.

How did a contest work? In the case of an outdoor shoot, a rack containing the “birds” is hoisted to the top of a 106’ pole. The bowmen stand at any point around the pole while shooting. Indoors, the rack of “birds” is placed on the floor or a stage, in a slanting position, and the shooters stand back 70-75’ away.

Now, picture the letter “A” with four arms attached to each leg of the “A” at a slant away from the archer. That is the rack. The “bird” at the top of the rack is called the “top bird,” and is worth the most prize money. Below the very top is the first sidearm, and on each end is a “side bird.” It is worth half the prize money as that of the “top bird.” The second sidearm has “birds” on its ends called the “lower birds.” Their prize money is half that of the “side birds.” The “birds” on the third and fourth sidearms are the “premium birds.” They pay half of what the “side birds” pay. On the lower arms, there are several other targets that pay off smaller amounts. In all, there are about 35 “birds” to a rack.

Shooters knock the ‘birds’ off the rack using blunt-headed arrows. If you think that sounds easy, remember that the “birds” are from 75’ or 106’ away. Oh, and did I mention that the “birds” (actually wooden pegs with feathers attached) are about ½” in diameter? Each “bird”

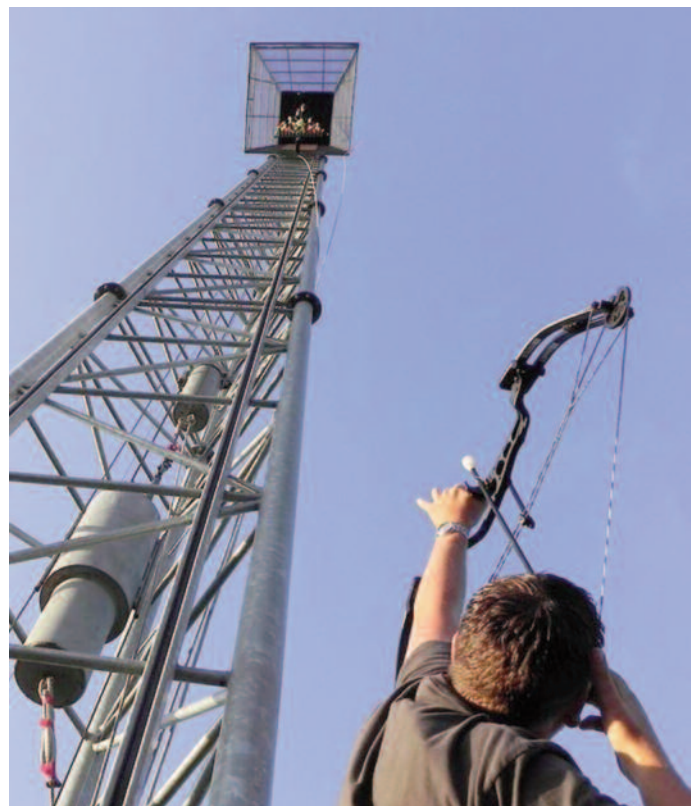
has a hole through which the target is fitted onto a 5” metal pin protruding from the rack. Those archers must have had some great eyesight and a strong pull on the bowstring!

Prize money back then for each contest totaled from \$25-\$35.00. The top “bird” paid from \$4-\$7.50. It was possible for a good shooter, who shot regularly, to make as much as \$200 for a year of shooting.

While the purists used wooden bows, steel bows became more widely used. For a while, war almost erupted over which bow was better. But according to Felix Martin, who made steel bows, steel kept the sport going. Felix stated, “After a man breaks two or three wooden bows, he’s ready to quit. But he can keep going with a steel bow.”

August Claeys, at age 75 and ranked as the oldest of the old-timers in Quad-City archery, scoffed at steel bows. He brought his from Belgium and has been using it for 59 years.

There’s your primer on Belgian popinjay archery. Hopefully I’ve explained it well enough that you could understand how the sport was contested. Thanks to Jim Dix of the Moline *Dispatch* who wrote the original article, I now have a better understanding of the sport. I wonder if popinjay is still as popular in Belgium as rolle bolle is in Western Illinois.



She Helped the Resistance

Janine de Greef, 95 years old, died on November 7, 2020. Why is this notable? At 16 years of age, she became a member of the Belgian resistance helping smuggle hundreds of downed Allied airmen to safety. Her family was credited with saving more than 320 of the 800+ downed airmen who survived being shot down over Belgium. Most of the airmen were British, but 108 were American fliers. Janine was a courier/escort for the Comet Line and was believed to be one of its last surviving members. Here's more to the story.



or German if questioned and how to hold their cigarettes. She told them to never jingle change in their pockets, as Europeans rarely do, and to never chew gum. She even had to teach a few of the men how to ride a bicycle.

By 1944, the northern escape route of the Comet Line had been disrupted by the Germans, and the southern part came into peril. The de Greef family used the Comet route to escape to Spain and then to England.

Following the war, Janine was awarded the King's Medal for Courage in the Cause of Freedom by the British, as well as French and Belgian gallantry medals. She returned to Brussels with her family and worked as a commercial attaché at the British Embassy.

When the Nazis invaded Belgium in 1940, Janine escaped Brussels with her parents, brother, and grandmother. Her mother was a journalist, and her father was a linguist and businessman. The family fled to southwest France and settled just outside of Bayonne. Her father found a job as an interpreter, and her mother became involved with the black market. Janine and her brother went to school. When the Comet Line was established in 1941, the family became a key element in the southern section.

Back in Belgium, hundreds of stranded servicemen were evading capture and finding shelter with Belgian families. The men needed to get home, but the route would require them to cross the Belgian border, cross occupied France, hike over the Pyrenees Mountains, and make their way through Spain to Gibraltar. The escapees would need a working knowledge of two foreign languages, cash in three currencies, and false documents and passes for each occupation zone they crossed. They needed help with all of this, and a route was created between Belgium and Spain. That was the start of the Comet Line.

Janine's mother, with her knowledge of the black market, had built up connections with smugglers and other shady characters. She took responsible for leading Comet in southwestern France.

The entire de Greef family worked for the Comet Line. Janine's father used his position at the town hall to gather intelligence on German movements and the official documents the escapees would need in those different occupation zones. Her brother forged the papers and acted as a guide. Janine worked as the Comet's youngest courier and guide.

For three years Janine escorted Allied servicemen from Paris to Bayonne by train, or from Bayonne to the foothills of the Pyrenees by tram or bicycle. She often pretended to be a daughter or a little sister of one being escorted. She taught the airmen basic answers in French

Just Shocking!!

The municipality of Kluisbergen, which sits in the surroundings of the Flemish Ardennes, is in shock. The theft of a 200-year-old angel from the church in the village of Kwaremont is the main topic of conversation among its locals. Usually the municipality only hits the headlines when the Tour de France passes through it.



As is the case with many rural parish churches, the door to the church was left unlocked to allow those who wished to engage in private prayer and reflection to enter freely. But a thief took advantage of the open door policy and removed the angel figure from the pulpit and took it away.

Who and how remains a mystery.

The wooden angel figure is at least 200 years old and was attached to the pulpit that is older still, dating back to the 18th century.

The former parish priest always kept the angel under his bed. He was afraid that it would be stolen, as it must have been considered valuable. When the priest retired, the board of the Saint Amand Church put the angel back on the pulpit.

Evidently it was valuable!

(From *flandersnews.be*)

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“Last Supper” Redo

We’re not being sacrilegious, but Flemish artist Bert Dries has created a novel version of da Vinci’s Last Supper with references of our present plight.

Dries set to work during the lockdown and found his inspiration in the 15th century work by showing Jesus and his disciples at their final meal on the evening before his death.

The artist based his version on the original composition, but has everyone masked and eating junk food. There are numerous religious references too: the pizza comes from “Moses Pizza Place” and the milk hails from “Mary’s Dairy.”

Closed-circuit cameras make sure everyone is sticking to the lockdown rules, and there is no shortage of toilet rolls.



(From *flandersnews.be*)