



CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

1608 Seventh Street, Moline, Illinois 61265

(309) 762-0167

www.belgianmuseumquadcities.org



June, 2021

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Waffles are Back!!!

The waffle breakfast is back again for the months of June (Saturday, June 5th) and August (Saturday, August 7th) at the Friends Circle from 8:00-11:00 a.m. We will continue with Covid procedures at the breakfasts. We will NOT have a breakfast in July, because it falls on the weekend of the 4th.

Also, the Center itself will reopen on Saturday, June 5th from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

From Our President

One of my main goals as President is to at least double the membership in the Center for Belgian Culture. We currently have about 130 members in our association. And like me, most of our members are over 65 years of age.

The CBC Board appreciates all that you do for the Center. We have re-started our waffle breakfasts and will be re-opening on a regular basis, but we need more members to help us with the restart and, literally, to keep the Center's door open.

In the next few weeks, in the mail, I will be sending you a membership drive form along with a self-addressed envelope. On the form, I would like you to give me the names and addresses of: your daughters and sons; your cousins, uncles, and aunts; your Belgian neighbor down the street; and anyone you think would be a good candidate for becoming a CBC member. Please send that information form back to me, and I will contact them about becoming a member.

After all... it's your heritage. It's their heritage. We need to keep the CBC sustainable.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call or email me. I thank you, in advance, for your help in getting us off to a fresh start - or giving us some needed momentum - after a very difficult past year.

Sincerely,
Bill Cornelis
309-781-0040
RealEBCorny@aol.com

OPEN Saturday 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Waffle Breakfast 1st Sat. of June and August

Some Friends Circle History

I recently ran across an item noting the creation of the Friends Circle. As one of the early Belgian-American clubs in the area, I thought you might like to read a little more about its history.

On April 18, 1915, a group of Moline Belgians came together for fraternity. Its key mission was to provide relief for members who were ill or out of work, and to help secure employment for those needing jobs. They called it Vriendenkring, or Friends Circle.

During that initial meeting in the practice hall of Notes Band, nominations were made and an election of officers was held. Heading the new group were: Gaston Veys, president; Camiel Vermeulen, vice-president; Remi DeFenster, secretary; and Joe DeBisschop, treasurer.

By mid-May, quarters were under construction in the Sonnevillie Building on 18th Avenue and 9th Street. The new group had 80 members, made up mostly of members of Notes Band, the Moline Bicycle Club, Moline Pigeon Club, William Tell Club, and the Art & Friendship Club.

Over the next few years, the Circle began citizenship classes, created committees for caring of the sick members in local hospitals, held social events, and grew the membership. During April of 1918, the group began offering free medical services to all members and their families by Dr. Prudent Sterck. Sterck was originally from Termond, Belgium and had his office in the Sonnevillie Building.

In June of 1920, Friends Circle purchased the former Pleasure Dream camp near the foot of 7th Street on Rock River. The camp had two buildings. One would contain a club hall, dining room, and kitchen, and the other was a warehouse and garage. A bathing beach would be added, and the facility would be a summer camp for members.

Now with 270 members and still growing, the Circle needed new quarters. The clubroom in the Sonnevillie Building was no longer adequate. Charles Krone, a Notes Band member and former head of the night school for the foreign born, let a contract for a building, which would contain five stores on the ground floor and apartments on the second floor, at 701-707 18th Avenue. The building would be 66' wide by 134' deep. Construction began in April 1923. In September, Friends Circle moved into new, much larger quarters on the second floor of Krone's building.

Naturalization classes, social events, securing work for its members, and growing the membership continued for

the Circle over the next 12 years. The notes on the Rock River property had also been paid off. In early 1936, the Circle board announced it would make another purchase.

Charles Krone had become involved in a variety of businesses. He owned a hardware store, operated several taverns including the Grey Gables in downtown Moline and one in his building at 7th Street and 18th Avenue. In early 1936, the People's Savings Bank foreclosed on Krone's building.

Friends Circle reached an agreement with the bank in February to purchase the Krone Building. By March, the Circle, now with 350 members, had already received pledges for one-third of the purchase price. However, when the pledge drive stalled, the purchase could not be completed. Instead, the owner of the tavern on the corner, Ed Peters, purchased the building.

Friends Circle continued with social events, rolle bolle and archery contests, and naturalization classes. In 1938, a Ladies Auxiliary was created. The auxiliary also created social events, held monthly meetings, card parties, and raised money for worthy causes. A sub-group of the Center also appeared at this time in the form of the Ex-Servicemen's Club. The Circle celebrated its 35th anniversary with the completion of the remodeling of the camp on Rock River in May, 1940.

During WWII, all three groups held events that would assist in the war effort: selling war bonds, organizing scrap and clothing drives, and holding social events that would help with morale in the homeland.

Probably the biggest news came in 1975 when the Friends Circle was able to purchase the entire building from the Peters estate. The club would operate the tavern and move its clubrooms into what was an electrical shop on the first floor. It continued to rent out the other businesses in the building, the apartments, and the second floor hall.

As it begins its 106th year of existence, the Friends Circle continues to provide social events and fellowship. And, of course, is the home to the CBC's waffle breakfasts.

(Info sourced from Moline *Dispatch*)

News of the Membership

Thank you to: **Mark and Debbie Schwiebert** for your very kind monetary donation to the Center; and to the volunteers and patrons at our first “in-person” waffle breakfast of the year. We had a decent turnout, the Covid preparations worked well, the waffles were great, and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

Good Eats

Member Walt Sonnevile recently wrote that Belgian foods might make a good topic for the newsletter, citing several examples. And good ones they were. In 2007, the Center produced a cookbook of Belgian recipes, which were donated by many members’ families. (The cookbook is sold in our gift shop.) That got me thinking . . . I loved honey cake when I was a kid, especially served with warm butter. I don’t often see it in stores, but here is one recipe for *Lekker Koeke*:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2-1/2 c. all-purpose flour | 2 eggs |
| 1/2 c. rye flour | 1-1/2 c. lukewarm honey |
| 1-1/2 tsp. baking soda | 1/4 c. water |
| 2 tsp. baking powder | |

Blend all ingredients together in a bowl until a smooth, semi-stiff dough is formed. Place in a well-buttered bread pan. Bake at 275° for 1-1/2 to 2 hours without opening oven door. Test cake with pastry wire or toothpick; if it comes clean from center of cake, it’s done. Allow cake to stand at least one day before use. Serve sliced and buttered. Keep indefinitely wrapped in foil.



Scholarships

Applications for both the CBC and the VanTieghem scholarships have been received and are currently being evaluated. We will announce the winners on Wednesday, June 23rd, with a reception at the Center. We’ll have a social hour beginning at 6:00 p.m. with light refreshments, and presentation of the scholarships to the recipients at 6:45 p.m. We hope members will join us that evening in saluting the well-deserved students.

Prayer Linked to Shortage

If you are a fan of Orval Trappist beer, you may have noticed that it’s hard to find here and in Belgium as well. One Belgian market limits customers to only six bottles per purchase. At another, one must spend 40 euros before he/she can add Orval to the shopping cart. Why, you might ask.

Orval seems to be a victim of its own success. Demand has grown, while production stays level. Orval is a Trappist beer. Profit is not the main motive of production. The monks just try to generate sufficient funds to ensure the upkeep of their abbey and its community. If profit is made, it’s donated to charity.

The main focus of the monks’ lives is prayer. As a result, they don’t have much time left to devote to beer production. That pretty much explains the shortage everywhere.

By the way, Orval is no ordinary Trappist beer. It is the only Trappist that is brewed under the supervision of a woman master brewer; Anne-Françoise Pypaert, who is the only female Trappist master brewer in the entire world. Production is limited and the monks are not of a mind to brew more of its popular beer soon.

(Thanks to Colin Clapson at VRT NWS)



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A Bit of Trivia



I didn't know this, and I'll bet you didn't either. Anne Douglas, the widow of late actor Kirk Douglas, recently died at age 102. Before she married Douglas, her name was Ann Buydens. She was born of Belgian parents in Hanover, Germany in 1919. Her parents returned to Belgium and Anne Buydens became a Belgian national. During WW II, the fluent tri-lingual Anne subtitled films. It was while working on the set of "Act of Love," that she met Kirk Douglas.

During their marriage of more than 65 years, Ann Douglas supported many good causes. She set up the Douglas Foundation that raised millions to help causes ranging from the homeless to helping people in deprived areas enjoy a better quality of life.

