



# CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

1608 Seventh Street, Moline, Illinois 61265

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www.belgianmuseumquadcities.org



October, 2021

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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

October 2nd	Waffle Breakfast	8:00 to 11:00 a.m.
October 9th	Belgian Lacemakers	1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
October 11th	Board Meeting	5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

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

## News of the Membership

Condolences are offered to **Rosemary and Tom Lootens** and family on the death of their son Martin, 53, of Dallas, TX, who died May 9, 2021.

## Oldest Belgian Man Has Died

The oldest Belgian man, priest Jozef Smets, died at the age of 107 in early September. Smets received a papal blessing from the Bishop of Antwerp three years ago, as he had served as a priest for 80 years.

Smets was born in 1914 and passed away at a care home where he had first served as a chaplain and later become a resident. He became Belgium's oldest man in July after the passing of 109-year old Sylvain Vallee.



Smets was well-known in the Antwerp Kempen District. He first started as a parish vicar in 1938, then became director of a secondary school in Hoogstraten. He also served as a vicar in Geel and as a dean.

(Thanks to Colin Clapson at VRT)

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

## Scholarships

The recipient of the 2021 Ruth Lambick Van Tieghem Scholarship is Jessica Elliott. She is a graduate of Davenport Central High School and is attending the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Her major is Marine Biology and Environmental Science, with a minor in French.

Jessica is an Iowa State Scholar and was ranked first in her high school graduating class. She is on the Dean's List at UNCW. She is an active volunteer on campus and in her church. The Van Tieghem family is pleased to honor Jessica with the 2021 scholarship.

**Heritage Essay**  
by Jessica Elliott



My grandfather was an incredibly hardworking man, as anyone who met him could attest, and without his work ethic and motivation, my life as an American would be nonexistent. My grandfather, Leon Boussmaere was born in Brugge, Belgium, in 1924. As he grew, he flew kites out over the North Sea and skated along the ice of the canals to get butter for his family during the war. I never had the pleasure of meeting Leon, but his stories were passed down to me through my grandmother Ruth and mother Laurie. I vividly remember sitting next to the fireplace in his home, listening in awe at the stories of my Belgian heritage.

When Brugge was overrun in World War II, my grandfather lived under the floorboards of his childhood home and translated messages from German to English and French, working for the Canadian and U.S. underground. Through this time he suffered from and conquered illness and the constant threat of exposure. After the war ended, his skill for language led him to become a chauffeur, driving rich Americans around Europe to hotels, casinos, and famous tourist attractions. On a stop in Switzerland, Leon met Ruth Bumbach, a young Swiss girl visiting a friend. They exchanged letters in the following years and when Leon moved to America to work as a carpenter in 1956, he invited Ruth to come with him with the promise of marriage.

With only \$5 in his pocket, Leon began to work. They saved for years and eventually collected the money to buy property in Moline, Illinois. Leon used his carpentry skills to woodwork and build a home, digging the foundation himself when not at work. In 1979 Leon passed away due to lung cancer, leaving behind his handmade home, Ruth and his daughter Laurie - my mother. Then, in 2001, I was born. I've always regretted never having the opportunity to meet my hard working grandfather, but I've seen the love he left by dancing along to the record-player with my

grandmother, playing with wooden hoops in the yard with my older brother, learning how to play Rolle Bolle at Stephens Park, and visiting my close relatives along the North Sea in Belgium.

Just as strong as my Belgian heritage, is my Swiss heritage. I have a great appreciation for both countries, as I had the opportunity to visit them and see the intricate history they hold. The impressive castles, beautiful mountains, and fast-moving trains give each country a serendipity that I never felt growing up in Davenport, Iowa. I visited a couple times when I was younger, but more recently, I got to go back to Europe and see both Switzerland and Belgium. I met more relatives on each side of my family and fell even more in love with the welcoming presence of the Belgian community. I even got to see where the general store my grandfather's family owned was, and could picture him working in the store and skating on the beautiful canals.

Despite the many miles between me and my ancestral countries, I still feel tight connections with my relatives there and hold the experiences I had close. My family celebrates Belgian and Swiss holidays, duetching eggs and putting Swiss candles on our Christmas tree. Every once in a while, we stock up on Swiss and Belgian foods from Katy's in Moline, where my grandma spoke in Switzer-Deutch with the owners. I love the questions I get about the two flag stickers on my water bottle and always answer with pride, "That's where my grandparents came from." I try to live my life to make my grandparents Leon and Ruth, who built their lives here completely themselves (literally from the foundation up), proud and honor my heritage and their memory.

My Belgian and Swiss heritage inspired me to pursue a French minor at my university, and I was planning on visiting Denmark and the Scandinavian peninsula through the study abroad program in May, but it was cancelled due to the pandemic. Although this opportunity was unfortunately taken from me, I plan to travel to Europe after I graduate to immerse in the culture more fully, or work with the Peace Corps and put my French skills to good use. My grandfather could speak seven different languages, and his great language skill in part inspired me to pursue another language in my high school and college experience, hoping to put it into use after I graduate.

During this past year, the pandemic has forced many new challenges into my life, including moving back across the country home from college in the middle of the semester, and then online school from March to the

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Scholarship Heritage Essay  
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present day. I've evolved as a student and as a new adult, learning how to fend for myself, live on my own in Wilmington, and stay on top of my many obligations. For many months, my mental health has suffered and I've struggled, but the perseverance and stick-to-it attitude of my grandfather is always what motivates me to keep working and striving to be the best I can be.

## Back In Time

Longtime readers of this newsletter know I enjoy local history. And I would really love to find more old photos of the Olde Town area. But digging around an old copy of the *Moline Dispatch*, I stumbled onto something I never knew.

Of course I well-remember Art Goethals. My mother purchased many pairs of shoes for me at his store. The PF Flyers were always a hit buy for me. The fact that the CBC had a home in Art's building for many years, added to the nostalgia of shopping at Goethals.

What I did not know was that the original Goethals Clothing and Shoes store was not where I thought it was. The business started out further east, at 843-18th Avenue. Back in the day, that address must have been in the Sonnevile Building.

Over the years, addresses along 18th Avenue must have been revised, as that address number does not exist. If it did, it would be in the middle of 9th Street. And although this advertisement does not show it, Goethals and Sons also sold furniture at one time.

Every day you can learn something new. You just have to look for it.

Commencing Saturday Feb. 29th, until March 14th

# The Biggest Reduction

Ever Seen in Moline Will Be At

## GOETHALS BROS.

Clothing & Shoe Store, Moline, (Bluff)

**\$1,000.00 Worth Premiums Given Away Free—\$1,000.00**

Men's suits 20 percent off and a hat worth from \$2 to \$3.	Men's fancy socks 20 percent off.	Boys' 7½c and 50c fancy shirts ..... 35c
Men's overcoats 20 percent off and a hat worth \$2 to \$3.	Men's hats and caps 20 percent off.	Men's 50c underwear ..... 35c
Boys' suits 20 percent off and a hat.	Men's gloves 20 percent off, etc.	Men's \$1 sweaters ..... 35c
Children suits 20 percent off and a cap.	Men's shoes 20 percent off and a pair of socks.	Boys' \$1 sweaters ..... 35c
Men's pants 20 percent off and a pair of suspenders.	Ladies' shoes 20 percent off and a pair of stockings.	Boys' 50c underwear ..... 25c
Boys' knee pants 20 percent off and a pair of suspenders.	Drygoods 2c yard less than it used to be.	Boys' 10c working shirts ..... 35c
Men's 50c work-shirts ..... 35c	Also trunks, suit cases, umbrellas, etc., 20 percent off.	Men's belts 20 percent off, etc.
Men's 50c fancy shirts ..... 35c	Boys' overcoats 20 percent off and a hat.	Boys' shoes 20 percent off and a pair of socks.
Men's fancy shirts 20 percent off and a necktie.	Children's overcoats 20 percent off and a cap.	Children's shoes 20 percent off and a pair of stockings.

**DON'T FORGET THE PLACE**

**GOETHALS BROS., 843 18th Ave., Elm St. line**  
**The House of Confidence**

## Glad to be Back Home

You've probably seen the photo of the little girl skipping on the tarmac of Melsbroek Military Airport after her family was evacuated from Afghanistan. The photo has gone around the world, but who was that little girl and what was the story of her family?

Sayed Mujeeb Sadat, his wife and four children were on holiday in Kabul when the government collapsed. The family has been living in Belgium for seven years, and this was the first opportunity they had to visit. They took a late holiday because they first wanted to be fully vaccinated.

Sayed saw how the Taliban were gaining control of larger and larger swathes of the country. He feared there would be no escape if the Taliban took Kabul, and he booked an earlier return flight back to Belgium. The family was to depart on August 18th, but the airport closed on the 13th.

Sayed and family traveled to the airport several times. He stated, "Up to 40,000 people were waiting outside. They should have let us through. We were Belgian passport holders, but they wouldn't let us through. They showed their weapons again and again."

The family was eventually given a time and location in the city to be collected by a bus that took them to the airport. From Kabul, the journey went to Islamabad, Pakistan and on to Melsbroek Airport in Belgium where the family was both happy and relieved. It was when they were leaving the airplane that daughter Neha skipped along the tarmac. Reuters' photographer Johanna Geron captured that moment.

"I never want to return to Afghanistan," said Neha. She thought she would never get away and was really happy to be home in Belgium. Her father added that they hope the situation improves, and they are one day able to visit family once again.

We're just glad they're safely back home in Belgium!

(Thanks to Colin Clapson)



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## Bet You Didn't Know

Leo Baekeland was born in Ghent in November, 1863. He graduated with honors from technical school at 17 and earned a PhD in chemistry at the age of 21.

He had already invented and patented a process to develop photographic plates using water instead of chemicals. He then perfected a process to produce a photographic paper that would allow enlargements to be printed by artificial light. Baekeland called it "Velox." It was the first commercially successful photo paper, and Eastman Kodak purchased the rights and process from Baekeland.

Having been successful with Velox, He began experiments with phenol and formaldehyde. Using the right combinations of the two materials and under correct temperature and pressure, he created the first moldable plastic. He called it Bakelite. It marked the beginning of the age of plastics. It was the first material that held its shape after being heated. Telephones, radios, and electric insulators were made from the material, as it had excellent electrical insulation and heat-

resistance. Bakelite applications soon spread to most branches of industry.

At the time of Baekeland's death in 1944, Bakelite was used in over 15,000 different products. No doubt everyone still has a product or two in their home made from Bakelite; a phone, small radio, coffee brewer, etc. It was all thanks to the father of the plastics industry, Leo Baekeland from Ghent, Belgium.

