



# CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

1608 Seventh Street, Moline, Illinois 61265  
(309) 762-0167  
www.belgianmuseumquadcities.org



July, 2022

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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

July 2nd	NO Waffle Breakfast/Center Closed	
July 9th	Belgian Lacemakers	1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
July 13th	Board Meeting	5:30 to 7:00 p.m.
August 6th	Waffle Breakfast	8:00 to 11:00 a.m.

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

## Meet Ursula



She is German, born and raised in Brussels, educated in the U.K. and Germany, and lived in the U.S. Her name is Ursula von der Leyen and she is the first woman president of the European Commission.

Ursula was born in Belgium in 1958, as her father was one of the first civil servants assigned when the European Commission was created that year. The family moved to their native Hanover, Germany area when her father became the head of a food company there.

Ursula enrolled in the London School of Economics, but switched to the study of medicine at Hanover Medical School. She became a Doctor of Medicine in 1991.

She became active in local politics and was elected to the Parliament of Lower Saxony. Following Angela Merkel's election as Chancellor, Ursula was appointed Minister of Family Affairs, then Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, and later, Minister of Defense.

In 2019, Ursula was elected president of the European Commission where she gets things done. The E.U.'s pandemic recovery plan, climate change, E.U. sanctions against Russia, and support of Ukraine all testify to this. Her leadership has helped raise the partnership between NATO and the E.U. to unprecedented levels.

And now you know a little about Belgian-born Ursula.

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

## The Story of "Spey"

In our May newsletter, we gave you a little information on Omer VanSpeybroeck, the first Belgian jazz musician in the United States. How the Story of "Spey" came about was due to an article about the Happy Belgians seen by Leslie Verpoorte in the *Het Hievsblad* newspaper. Verpoorte contacted the magazine *Het Land van Nevele* and would write a jazz history of Omer Van Speybroeck. André Bollaert would write about the Van Speybroeck family. Unfortunately, Verpoorte became ill, and Bollaert took over the job of writing both sections. Stijn Bollaert worked on translations. What turned out to be a surprise discovery was that none of the Van Speybroecks knew that Omer was a jazz pioneer.

A Brussels author and expert in jazz, Marc Danval, wrote the *Histoire du jazz en Belgique* and first recognized the name Omer Van Speybroeck as the first Belgian jazz musician in America. Danval should be proud of his discovery and in noting the importance of Van Speybroeck in the history of Belgian jazz.

Omer was born in Nevele on January 31, 1901. His father was René, a baker, and mother Marie Van den Braembussche, a shopkeeper. Rene departed for Moline in March, 1902. When he found permanent work, he sent word to his wife to join him in Moline. She and Omer left for Moline in August, 1902. Two more children were born in Moline and East Moline; Romanie in 1904, and Arthur in 1907 (but who died in 1912).

The Van Speybroeck family first ran a grocery and then opened "Speybroeck's Clothing Store" in East Moline. It was successful and the family dream of a better life came quickly.

Omer's interest in music started with piano lessons in grade school. By the time he was 15 years old, his interest turned to the saxophone. With the skill he learned by that time, Omer started a little "Belgian" band which played in local taverns. Around 17 years of age, he met Mervin Rank and joined Rank's small band.

Omer joined the Muscian's Union in 1920 and then was found as a saxophonist in several different orchestras. His first was Gib Horst's Imperial Players in Wisconsin. In 1921, Omer joined Doc Wrixon and his Capitol Orchestra. That group played on the *Capitol* steamer on the Mississippi River. He and Bix Beiderbecke replaced the saxophone and coronet players who had left the band. A year later, he returned to Gib Horst in Wisconsin. That orchestra was booked into the LeClaire Hotel in Moline.

In 1923, Omer joined the George Haschert Orchestra and played Peoria. In 1924 he was in Cincinnati at the Virginia Entertainers Night Club. From there, it was back to Chicago night clubs and on steamboats on the Mississippi where Dixieland music was the most popular.

The Chicago Hot Spots, with Omer on sax, went to Europe and played a performance at the Emitage in Paris. Omer's appearance only lasted two days, as he could not produce a work permit. Back in America, Omer joined the Joe Kayser Band on the excursion boat, the *J.S.* He also played in the Midwest with Carlisle Evans. It was with that band in Duluth where Omer met Mildred Jones, a lady who would become his wife.

Omer returned home and married Milly Jones on September 10, 1926. They stayed in Moline and Omer performed at the LeClaire Hotel. In 1927, the couple moved to Chicago and Omer was heard playing in major hotels

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The Story of "Spey"
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and clubs in and around the area. With the Fred Hamm Orchestra, he played in Chicago, Miami, and Detroit.

The last orchestra he joined was Frankie Masters and he played in Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Memphis. In 1936, Omer gave up the professional music business and came back to East Moline to work in Speybroeck's Clothing Store.

But that is not the end of Andraé Bollaert's well-researched and written history or the end of Spey's story. There is more detail and photos coming, as well as background on "The Happy Belgians." Watch for more in upcoming newsletters and, perhaps, on the Center website.



Happy 4th of July!



New Member/Membership Renewal



Member Lid Member Mitglied

It is time to renew your CBC membership. Membership runs August 1, 2022, through December 31, 2023

Please send your member information along with your payment as soon as possible. Membership funds help to support a communal story. A story of shared cultural pasts and presents. A story of cherished family heirlooms, literature, photographs, traditional cooking, and cultural events. A story that invites others to experience the Belgian community heritage. We encourage you to continue joining in the preservation and education of our area's Belgian heritage. Also, we encourage and invite all members to volunteer their time, efforts, and talents – or even volunteer to learn new talents.

The Center for Belgian Culture cannot continue without the support of its members.

Please complete the information below and return the form with membership fees (one per household) to: Membership, Center for Belgian Culture, 1608 - 7th Street, Moline, IL 61265.

----- Detach and Return This Form -----

checkbox New Member (\$35) checkbox Renewal (\$35) checkbox Donation \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Recruited by (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Email (for newsletters and mailing lists): \_\_\_\_\_

Check all that apply: checkbox Please add me to waffle breakfast notification email list

checkbox Please contact me if volunteers are needed Best time to call: \_\_\_\_\_

checkbox Waffles checkbox Fest checkbox Museum checkbox Other

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## **CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE**

*July, 2022*

### **CBC Scholarships Announced**

On Wednesday, June 15th, this year's scholarship award winners were announced by Steve Slininger. Each received a check for \$750 to help with college expenses. Winners were Sophia Sümer, Trevor Francque, and Ephraim Young.

In the coming months, we'll tell you more about each of the winners and reprint their heritage essays. Congratulations to all three!

### **No Waffles in July**

Due to the 4th of July holiday falling on the first Monday after the first Saturday of the month, we will not be having waffles. We need to give our volunteers some time off to enjoy the weekend!

### **Not Safe to Garden**

The Brussels Fire Service recently rescued a woman that had fallen into a 32-foot deep hole in her garden. The hole was concealed under paving stones in a terraced area of the garden. Hearing cries for help, her neighbors dutifully called the fire service. Upon arrival, they found that the woman, in her 50s, had fallen vertically to the bottom and sustained several broken bones. She was taken to the hospital for treatment, but how she wound up in the hole to begin with is still to be explained.

