



CENTER FOR BELGIAN CULTURE of Western Illinois, Inc.

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



January, 2020

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

January 4st	No Waffle Breakfast	
January 4th	Belgian Lacemakers	1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
January 13th	Board Meeting	5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

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

Schedule for Volunteers

The January schedule is as follows:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Gift Counter</i>	<i>Host/Hostess</i>
Wed., Jan. 1st	Closed	Closed
Sat., Jan. 4th	No Waffles (a.m.)	Barb Michalek (p.m.)
Wed., Jan. 8th	Bonnie Newman	Mary Lou Andrae
Sat., Jan. 11th	Mary Gardner-Karcher	Mary Gardner-Karcher
Wed., Jan. 15th	Steve Slininger	Steve Slininger
Sat., Jan. 18th	Diana Slininger	Diana Slininger
Wed., Jan. 22nd	Bob Francione	Bob Francione
Sat., Jan. 25th	tbd	tbd
Wed., Jan. 29th	Diana Slininger	Diana Slininger

*Contact Diana Slininger at (309) 792-2790
as soon as possible if there is a schedule conflict.*

And Still a Problem

There is still a lot of war ammunition lying on the bottom of the North Sea just off Knokke-Heist. It was dumped there after both world wars, and it's estimated that there is 35,000 tons – some of it leaking – and not far from a beach. Recent water samples show low concentrations of mustard gas. Earlier samples showed that TNT is leaking into the sea water, and no one is sure what happens if the two contaminants come in contact with one another. While the minister responsible for the North Sea says there is no reason to panic, he is pressing for a pilot project to see if the ammunition can be removed safely.

**OPEN Wednesday & Saturday 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Waffle Breakfast 1st Sat. of each month**

Ruth Lambrick Van Tieghem Scholarship

This year's recipient of the Van Tieghem Scholarship is Christian Elliott. He is a graduate of Rivermont Collegiate and is attending Augustana College. His major is Anthropology and Environmental Studies. Christian is active in Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity, World Relief, Augustana Reading/Writing Center as a peer tutor, and is a Marketing Assistant at Augustana. The Van Tieghem Family is pleased to honor Christian with its 2019 scholarship.

HERITAGE ESSAY Living Like Leon



by Christian Elliott

My grandfather was born Brugge, Belgium, and spent his summers hand building box kites and flying them over the winds of the North Sea in Blankenberg. Leon Alphons Prosper Marie Boussemaere was born in 1924 and enjoyed a wonderful youth, but then had to grow up fast when World War II found his hometown. Throughout the war, he lived under the subfloor of his parents' home aiding the war effort as a translator for the allied forces underground. After the war he worked as a chauffeur, driving rich Americans around Europe to places like Switzerland where he met my grandmother Ruth, always Nana to me. In 1956 he moved to Moline, Illinois, with five dollars in his pocket, got a job at the Millworks as a carpenter, and asked Ruth to come live with him in America. Bravely, she left everything and joined him, and they built a home and life together by hand in Moline. Both made sacrifices and worked hard as new U.S. citizens, and their work ethic and courage are why I'm here today. Though I never met Leon (he died when my mother was a teenager) my family's descriptions of his life and mannerisms have made him a personal hero of mine. His memory and Nana's direct influence throughout my childhood have shaped the person I am today.

My happiest childhood memories all involve my joint Belgian-Swiss heritage. The memory of Nana's cooking – cheese fondue, Zopf bread at holidays, apple beignets – and her stories of her life in the Swiss countryside and

of Leon, are forever with me. I remember Nana telling me how proud Leon would have been to see his grandson doing well in school, becoming a Boy Scout, and learning French (which he spoke, along with six other languages). I remember the description of Leon I heard over and over, so foundational to his character it was engraved on his gravestone – “he nought complained.” Despite the hardships he faced – surviving a war, moving to a new world with nothing, always working to support his family, fighting lung disease caused by that hard work in the mill – he always tried to make the world a better place for others and he never complained. Nana and my mother always told me they wished I could have known him.

They said they'd never seen him unhappy. They told me I reminded them of him – not just in the way I sat or the prominent mole on my cheek in the same place his had been, but also in my calm demeanor and care for others. It is humbling to be compared to a man of so many virtues – kindness, patience, *role de vivre*, frugality, determination. Whenever compared to Leon, I feel great pride. I wish I could have known him. We've traveled to Europe several times in my life. I remember being very young and flying on a plane across the vast expanse of ocean to see the family I'd never met in the magical new European land of castles and old kind people with accents like Nana's, who had known Leon so many years before and who were my family. This world of snowy mountains, cheese wheels taller than me, alphorns, and cows with huge bells was my Nana's world, and it was mine too. More recently, we traveled together to Brugge, and I felt more connected than ever to my family heritage as I walked past the Boussemaere family grocery store and the canals Leon has ice skated down to deliver food to his family during the war. As I faced the North Sea and felt the cool wind on my face and sand between my toes, standing where he had so many years ago flying his box kite above the waves, letting the wind pull at it until the string he held in sure fingers was taut and the kite a speck in the distance, before freeing it to the vast expanse of the sky and sea beyond into which he would someday venture himself in search of a new life, I felt Leon was with me more than ever. As Nana did before me, I keep the flags of my countries of heritage attached to the radio antennae of the car she gave me. I hold these memories dear in my heart and strive every day to live as I've been told Leon did, and as I know Nana did.

Antwerp and Diamonds Part One

One hears the marketing line “diamonds are forever” all the time, as well as Antwerp as “the” diamond center. There are diamond trading centers around the world, but 86% of the trade in rough diamonds takes place in Antwerp. And half of them come back again once cut and polished. Ever wonder why?

The story starts in India during the 12th century. Volcanos threw out diamonds from well below the Earth’s surface. The Indians found the rough stones pretty and made jewelry from them. According to Antwerp’s diamond museum director Eva Olde Monnikhof, “As Venetians were already getting silk from India, they soon began taking diamonds, too. That’s how diamonds made their way across Europe.” But the trade route was over land, and the Portuguese found they could sail to Europe faster. Those Portuguese were Sephardic Jews. “They went into the diamond business partially because they couldn’t become members of the traditional trade guilds,” explained Olde Monnikhof. “It was one of the industries that was left open.”

Goa, on India’s southwest coast, was eventually colonized by Portugal, and it took over the diamond trade there. There was a Belgian jeweler in the area at that time and was evidently from Antwerp. Whether this man was influential on what happened next is unclear, but when the Jews fled Portugal in the 16th century during the Inquisition, they went to Antwerp. According to Olde

Monnikhof, Antwerp was still a part of the Netherlands and was known for its liberal and free-thinking climate, so the Jews went there, with their diamonds.

Antwerp had a good harbor, so it was easy to continue the trading of diamonds. The stones were still traded rough, but locals soon figured out that diamonds could be used to cut and form other diamonds. Thus, diamond polishing was born and the pretty rocks became shining gemstones.

Following the Dutch Revolt in the mid-17th century, many Jewish diamond traders moved to Amsterdam. Yet by the end of the 19th century, the traders were back in Antwerp. Anti-Semitism was more problematic in Amsterdam than Antwerp, and diamond trading was just better in Antwerp.

(Continued next month.)



Interesting Celebration

At the end of WWII, the Germans launched an unsuccessful counter offensive in the Ardennes that became known as the Battle of the Bulge. The 75th anniversary of this battle was celebrated in Bastogne on December 14-15. As part of the celebration, nuts were thrown from Bastogne’s city hall in reference to General McAuliffe, who answered “Nuts” when the Germans asked him to surrender.

Somewhat symbolic, don’t you think?



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January, 2020

Special Sale

We have tons of frozen waffles, and we're having a special sale. You can get a packaged of four squares for \$2.00/package. Since we are NOT having our usual waffle breakfast in January, this will be any easy way to get your waffle "fix." Buy as many as you'd like any time the Center is open. If we don't get rid of them, we will have to throw them away. What a waste that would be!

Special Thanks

The Center gives a special "Thank You" to Shawn VanDriessche of Timberline Clearing, LLC for sponsoring our December waffle breakfast. Timberline, based in Port Byron, provides pipeline, transmission, and railroad right-of-way clearing and maintenance.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Possible Shortage

Hot items are always in short supply at Christmas time, but Coca-Cola? Union workers at two Coke distribution centers in Belgium blockaded the plants to protest slow talks over reorganization. The unions want greater clarity, especially with regard to job losses. We're not sure if the blockade hit availability of Coke across all of Belgium, but Christmas time and Coca-Cola just go together. As the advertisement states: "Things go better with Coke!"



Please Check Ahead

During these winter months, please check ahead
before visiting the CBC.

We want everyone – visitors and volunteers – to be safe.