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They speak so well

# Belgians can't believe visitors really American

By JOSIE WAUTLET

Sept. 12, 1974 — We're in a strange, fascinating land, the land of our grandparents, the land of our ancestry. The land itself is much like Wisconsin. It is beautiful and green with hills and farms, forests and rivers. The grass is green and lush and there are small herds of a large off white breed of cattle grazing in the meadows.

It is a peaceful pastoral land. The roads wind and curve around precarious turns. The drivers, including our bus drivers, are a daring breed. They simply toot their car horns and go merrily around the turns, through the tunnels and over the hills.

We were fortunate in being assigned to the home of a farmer, Jean Pierre Gerard, and his wife Regime. Being farmers in Door county it is very interesting to compare our ways with theirs.

The farm buildings are built around a central farmyard.

It is paved with old paving blocks, but the center, about ten feet in diameter, is left unpaved for the accumulation of the days manure from the cattle barn. No one walks "across" the yard.

Everything is very neat and clean, and there are few flies here in spite of the cattle, dogs, chickens and the manure.

Our bedroom window opens upon this courtyard. The weather is fair and sunny, but cool, and we have been sleeping with the window closed. About our bedroom, and most of the house, the furniture is mostly precious antiques, although they just consider it old, having inherited it down the line.

The bed is higher than my waistline and I have been using a chair to climb up and down. It has flowers and curlicues carved on the massive head and footboards and even on the side panels. It is comfortable and we rest well after our adventures of each day.

There are two matching armoires with carvings and huge door mirrors and a large commode with swinging mirror and marble top. The window sills are also marble. One little inconvenience exists - there is no indoor plumbing. We came here to see a different place and it surely is. We enjoy it and ride with the tide, so to speak.

The people here are the kindest and most gracious that I have ever met. They seem to go to any ends to accommodate us. We had planned to visit here a couple of days and then move to a hotel, but our family here is quite insistant that we stay. They are beautiful people who drop their farm chores to drive us the fifteen or so miles into Namur to pick up our tour buses and to meet us again at evening.

Of course, the other members of our group of 153 are in various different situations. I only speak of our own personal accommodations here. It is wonderful to be so well accepted by a family in a foreign land. We are already urging them to come to Wisconsin soon to return the visit. I believe they will.

You cannot imagine the looks on people's faces here when they hear us speak in their native language. They stare and smile unbelievably. They cannot believe that after a hundred and twenty years of separation, we have returned here still speaking the local patois. In fact, some will not believe that we really have come from America.

Yesterday I spoke to a lovely young woman on the street in front of a market. She kept asking it again and again. Finally, I asked her to write her name and address in my notebook and promised to send her a card from America. Then she will believe! Many of them have told us that we speak Wallon better than they do, and it is understandable. Through the years they have absorbed French words into their speech, where ours has remained the pure Belgian Wallon of this area.

There is so much that I could tell. There are people here of almost every name in our Belgian American area. This family asked for us because of our background of farming and also because my grandmother was of the same family name, Gerard. We will be visiting an 84 year old woman who may be the missing link into our lineage here beyond the ocean.

Yesterday we visited an interesting area. High on a mountain top at Floreffe, we visited a monestary built in the year 1185. It is beautiful with hand carved figures, but that is another story in itself. For now,

I must go down with my bedroom pitcher and get hot water from the wall mounted electric water heater for our morning sponge baths. We leave at nine thirty for a trip into France and the southern areas of Belgium.

Our friends here in Belgium love us for coming and send their salutations to all of America. They respect the Americans and have not forgotten our soldiers who helped them in the wars. The shrine to the American soldiers which we visited is very impressive, but it made us feel more like kneeling in prayer and in homage when we remember that nearly 80,000 of our young men lost their lives here.

The world does remember!

A recipe from our hostess, Regime Gerard.

## WAFFLES

2 lbs. butter - melted  
Add 2 lbs. sugar - beat with wire whip  
add 20 eggs - beat with wire whip  
2 lbs. (self rising) flour - sift in gradually as you beat  
5 pks. vanilla sugar. (Its like powdered sugar packets with vanilla flavor.)  
Makes 76 waffles - large.