



**BELGIAN CLUB SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

**2013 HAPPENINGS**

Hello friends,

Well here it is 2013 is gone and a new year is upon us. Time sure does fly. In December we had our 6<sup>th</sup> annual brunch at the Brussels Bistro, and as usual it was a great success and the restaurant was full of smiling faces as they savored the Belgian specialties. 2013 goes out with a bang and Happy New Year 2014.

I will begin by a recap of 2013.

We had our annual reception at the Consul General's residence as we have had for as many years as I can remember. Thank you to Mr. Rudi Vestraten and Madame as they welcomed all the Belgian Club Members, friends and VIP's into their home. The turnout wasn't as big as usual but maybe because it was on a week night but that was the only available date on the busy calendar. I wasn't able to mingle with all the guests as I was preparing the appetizer buffet. Thank you to Madame Mireille as she baked all the delicious desserts. The reviews from everyone after the fact was that the food was all delicious. Many long term members noted the change in procedure (no sign up at the door, no renewal of memberships, no ballots for voting, no Van der Mersch award and no speech by the current BCSC President). Each Consul will host events in his own manner and we should graciously accept and understand that this is his residence and should abide by his wishes. I thank him and his lovely wife for hosting this event and hope we will be welcome in his home in the future as this event was a success.

We go on with our next event which was the Chandeleur/Lichtmis...we just call it our Crepe Party since we never seem to have it on the actual February 2<sup>nd</sup> date...This is an event that is held at someone's private home and usually in the backyard, so having it in the beginning of February could be a little risky with the rain...not as risky if we were back home in Belgium though!!! We were happy to serve about 50 people on that day...lots of crepes and lots of stuffings too...Off to the races the club went in April...great turnout there too and thank you for all those that brought a dish to share. There were a lot of bets placed and quite a few wins...laughter was heard all around...what a fun day.

In the beginning of June our Prince Philippe came to town on an Economic mission, I don't need to elaborate on that since an email went out to everyone about the mission. I had the pleasure of being at the cocktail party to meet him. As I stood to shake his hand I couldn't help myself but to actually tell him what my papa asked me to....right after expressing my gratitude I said "My father sends

your father a big hello, as they played tennis together when they were young.” Prince Philippe laughed and responded “that was many, many years ago” I said yes it was. He laughed and it was sincere. Now that he has ascended to the throne, I will have the honor to say I met our King Philippe...attached is the 2013 version of “The King and I.”

In August we had my favorite event...the Los Angeles Pétanque Club hosted the Belgian Club of Southern California for a wonderful day of Pétanque and Lunch in Rancho Park. It is a fun tournament for everyone from young children to our well-seasoned adults, from newbies to advanced players. Marc Claessens, our new President came to say hello and introduce himself as the new President.

On that note, please remember that our club is a non-profit organization, we need our members to attend our events and support our club. Donations are always welcome too. Please RSVP to our voicemail for all events requesting a response. It is imperative as we lose a lot of money when people RSVP, but do not show and we have purchased the food needed. I wish everyone a very happy summer and end of year. Hope to see you soon, take care, live, love and laugh...

Your resigned president,

Christiane (Chrissy) Lion



# New Year's Reception 2013



Jannette Dropsy



On Thursday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013 the Belgian Club celebrated its annual New Year's party at the Consulate's house. It was a wonderful evening filled with fabulous food, great drinks, and friends that we rarely get to see! This event is a special event to the club and we love to see all of the Belgian Club members and their families to celebrate and start off the New Year with well wishes for everyone to flourish and prosper throughout the New Year. The new Consul General Ambassador Rudi Veestraeten and his wife Mireille opened up their home and we were all able to introduce ourselves and get to know them. We also got a sneak peek at Mireille's beautiful mosaic art pieces. She has quite the talent! A great big thank you to Chrissy Lion for the delicious food and hours upon hours that she spent preparing such a wonderful feast! We are so grateful for her many talents and her relentless dedication she has for the club! Thank you also to the board for arriving early, setting up, and greeting people at the door and ensuring a successful event. We look forward to seeing everyone at the next event! And again Happy New Year!!



# The Chandleur Lichtmis celebration



2013

It was another wonderful Belgian tradition that we in California celebrated on March 10<sup>th</sup> 2013. The chandleur / Lightmis. Or just another reason for all us Belgians to get together to eat, drink and meet up with friends. It looked like a typical Belgian day outside. A little cloudy but Dry. Oh wait, it would have rained in Belgium. A typical California day. Our host Sandy Casci welcomed us to her home again this year. Our chefs Max and Felix Legrand were flipping away in the Kitchen. By the time guest started to arrive, they had a mound of crepes ready for us. Chrissy had prepared a feast again for all of us with Volle Au Vent, Cream Spinach, Steak Tar Tar, and many more traditional items. Of course the Filet Americain was gone in seconds. She must have been cooking for days. On the other table we had all the sweets and fruit. It did not take long before my son found the Nutela What an ultimate feast. We also want to thank Pascal Dropsy for preparing the batter, and Max and Giselle for the fantastic Belgian pies and Felix for the Caesar salad that is now world famous. Sandy's mom also made a few Tart au Riz. Boy where they great. We also auctioned one of them at the end of the day and Chris and myself were in a bidding war and at the end we decided to split the pie. My mom Ingrid feasted on that for days. We had about 40 people show up and they all enjoyed the day. This was also a great time to meet the new board for 2013. After our president Chrissy Lion gave her speech we also had a big award to present. Our Vincent VanDerMersh award. This is recognition for a person that is not on the Board that goes above and beyond to help the club. This year recipient was Monique Lateste-McCue for all the help she has given us for years.

We want to thank the Board for helping and a special thank you to Sandy and her daughter Ainsley for hosting this event again this year. We had many compliments on the food and drinks and everyone left happy with a full tummy and restarting their diet again on Monday.

Don't miss all our planned events this year

Alain Missoul



## **2013 : Year of the Los Angeles Aqueduct (decision of L.A. City Council)** *Brigitte Gaviola*

This year we celebrate the centennial of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

During its first century of existence, Los Angeles - founded in 1781 - used the Los Angeles River as water supply. However, late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city experienced a big boom and the river was not up to the needs of the city any more. Where to find water? At the same time, the Owens Valley with its Owens River - fed by the waters of the Sierra Nevada - and the Owens Lake, north of LA (those who take the 395 to ski in Mammoth or to climb Mount Whitney are familiar with these places) was inhabited by farmers who faced irrigation problems. They were promised a new irrigation system but a series of tricks and lies resulted in a river *diversion* instead of irrigation. Indeed, the decision was taken to *build an aqueduct* ! Labor began in 1908 and gave work to 5,000 people for 5 years. 233 miles of steel pipes 12 feet in diameter, 142 tunnels with one 5 miles long; 120 miles of tracks and 500 miles of roads just to bring the materials and tools to the building sites, 240 miles of telephone lines. The water was, and still is today, channeled through the simple principle of gravity.

November 5, 1913, 40,000 people were present to witness - northeast of the San Fernando Valley - the arrival of that precious water rolling down the hill into the Los Angeles Reservoir, west of 5 in Sylmar. The **Los Angeles Aqueduct** was alive. The chief engineer was an Irish immigrant called William Mulholland, as in Mulholland Drive. A large fountain is dedicated to him in Los Feliz.

The City of Angels was thrilled and alive but the Owens Valley was devastated because as soon 1920 agriculture became very difficult and in 1927 even impossible because the Owens Lake dried out; yes, in 7 years ! Violence erupted known as the *California Water Wars*.

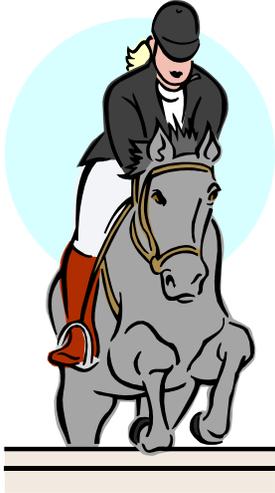
If you go to Google maps, you can see where the Aqueduct actually starts: between Big Pine and Independence, in Aberdeen, check the river, east of the 395. Follow the Owens River and you will see it is slowly agonizing going southwards, to die in the dried Lake.

For details on the construction: <http://laaqueduct100.com/our-legacy/aqueduct-top-ten-project/>

Photos and testimonials: [http://laaqueduct100.com/Owens\\_Valley](http://laaqueduct100.com/Owens_Valley) <http://www.ovcweb.org/owensvalley/Waterhistory.html>

Now, to make things a bit confusing, what we call "the" LA aqueduct is actually composed of two aqueducts. The second was built in 1965, parallel to the first, starting from a reservoir south of Owens Lake. It joined the first one in the Cascades that you can see on the east side of the 5, at the junction with the 14. Next time you drive up north, just have a quick look to the right.

## ***Santa Anita Soiree:***



They were off and running! That is...the Belgium Club members and guests who attended the Santa Anita Race Track on Sunday, April 14th. Along with the horses, the attendees were off and running to place their bets.

We shared a sunny day at the race track sharing food, drink and our tales of winning (and losing).

By the second race we settled into the exciting atmosphere and place a bet on “Promiscuoussuances.” Being experienced gamblers, we chose our horses by their names. The fourth race had several of us placing bets on “Beer Meister”. (Did we mention Dos Ecquis? & Party Machine?)

By the ninth race, we didn’t know if we had won or lost but we didn’t care because we had such a good time that it didn’t really matter.

Anita Dixon & Shelley Goodman

Photos by Christine



July 21, 2013

My Dear Board Members:

I am writing this letter with a very heavy heart as this is my official letter of resignation. Due to pressing obligations, including family, work and health issues, I must give up this position. My resignation will be official on Sunday, July 21, 2013. At that point I will hand over the reigns to my First Vice President, Marc Claessens. I am confident Marc will do a terrific job and wish him the best of luck.

It has been my pleasure and honor to have been your President for the past year and 7 months. I could not have asked for a better board and I thank you all very much for your support throughout the years.

I hope to be attending future events and will continue to support our Belgian Club as best I can. If it were not for the club, I would not have met most of you. Our friendship means the world to me and I am privileged to have you as my friends and intend to keep it that way.

Best of luck and thank you very much for everything.

Very truly yours,



Christjane-Anny Lion

## A fan from afar: following the Diables Rouges / Rode Duivels from Southern California

By Nate Wunderman

One of the Belgian national traits is a desire not to be noticed. This probably stems from being Western Europe's favorite battleground (usually involving foreign armies) since the time of Julius Caesar. Unfortunately, things and people that come from Belgium tend not to get the international notice they deserve, leaving others to claim credit or status for theirs. Whether it is the Swiss with chocolate, the Germans with beer, or the French with *Vlaamse Fritzes*. A similarly somewhat unnoticed thing coming from Belgium worthy of attention is the national soccer team. Those who ignore what is going on with the *Diables Rouges / Rode Duivels* are missing out on one of the football stories of recent vintage.

Following Belgian football has always been a challenge in the United States; and before the Internet, was a challenge to stay current with. While the Internet has been a god send to American dwelling footie fans, as US 'mainstream' sports news media largely ignores the world's most popular sport, it has its' own challenges and quirks to get around in order to follow the Belgian National Soccer Team.

After a long period of international footie ignominy (no qualification for any senior FIFA or UEFA competition since World Cup 2002), the *Rode Duivels* are on the upswing with an ethnically diverse and youthful core that presaged their arrival on the scene with a great run in the 2008 Olympics Men's Soccer Tournament. This has occurred due to the arrival of a 'Golden Generation.' The stigma of being labeled a golden generation can easily turn into a poisoned chalice though: just ask any Portuguese about theirs of the late 90's, early 00's.

All the more surprising about the young Red Devils is that their emergence caught the Royal Belgian Football Federation (URBSFA / KBVB) by surprise, and have been at times wanting in the proper handling of such precocious talent. There have been stories of training ground bust-ups and pique-laden behavior by the young starlings, as well as Francophone players not reacting well to the old-school coaching methods of Flemish former head-man George Leekens (who has since gone on to coach & be fired by Club Brugge), and which saw the team fall just short of qualification to Euro 2010 thanks to a 1-1 to Azerbaijan in Baku.

Since then, former Red Devil standout and budding politician Marc Wilmots has taken over the helm and has steadied the ship. The team is in UEFA Group A with Croatia, Serbia, Wales, Scotland, & Macedonia. Based on prior form, the bookies had Croatia and Serbia going through, but the precocious Red Devils upset that apple cart: a 3-0 defeat of Serbia at Stadion Crvena Zvezda in Belgrade being the highlight of their good results that has them as of the writing of this piece in first place in their qualifying group. They have not been immune to stumbles though, as a home tie to Croatia (whom is even with the Red Devils on points, but behind on goal differential) was two points lost, with the return leg in Split still to be played.

Seeing the Red Devils play on any sort of American television (even on such online alternatives as ESPN3 or Fox Soccer To Go) is much more problematic though. The soccer broadcasting powers-that-be assume that whatever audience they have would prefer to see UK national teams, followed by traditional powers with large ancestral followings such as Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and France. So unless a game is against one of the aforementioned 'following' teams, Red Devils fans outside of Belgium's borders are left to our own devices in order to see games. The 'device' I most utilize is [www.atdhe.eu](http://www.atdhe.eu). Be advised though. The links to live feeds usually contain a lot of pop-up ads and require a bit of patience to dismiss them. Another good thing to do is to turn off the locator on your browser unless you enjoy reading 'Your location is forbidden' notices in different languages. Also expect to see feeds in either English or Serbo-Croatian, as the ones in Flemish or French rarely show up on athde.eu.

Not to be out done, ordering soccer gear from Belgium is even more of a Kafka-esque experience than trying to watch a game. The exclusive online retailer for Belgian national team gear, [www.dinasport.be](http://www.dinasport.be), has yet to be able to process American addresses or credit card conventions (their drop-down menu does include the USA though, so that is something). I had my order sent to my mother's apartment in Brussels, and she forwarded the merchandise to me.

This lack of desire to fulfill orders from outside where they expect infects Belgian professional teams as well. RSC Anderlecht's online fan shop ([www.rsca.be](http://www.rsca.be)) does not even envision anyone outside of Belgium, France, the UK, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands ordering anything...and RSCA is supposed to be Belgian club football's ambassador to the world. Consider this: I have been able to purchase online gear from smaller teams in Germany ([www.fcstpauli.com](http://www.fcstpauli.com)) & the Netherlands ([www.sc-heerenveen.nl/feansjop](http://www.sc-heerenveen.nl/feansjop)) just to name a couple. It is not too much better at the two other big clubs, Standard de Liege (they will not ship outside of Belgium at all) and Club Brugge K.V. (beyond their standard destinations, they ask you to contact them). Needless to write, this is not an inexpensive proposition.

That having been written, it is beyond cool to be the only guy at your pick-up soccer game in the park to be sporting Belgian gear...so the effort is worth it.





## This 21st of July 2013 was a very special day.....

*First*, our traditional National Day BBQ fell for once on the exact date. *Secondly*, it is the day where our King Albert II abdicated and where his son Philip succeeded to him thus becoming our new king. To celebrate this historical day, we had a photo of both our kings hanging on a pole with a third one showing our president Chrissy greeting Prince Philip while in L.A. with the economical mission. *Thirdly*, because our president Christiane Lion announced heavy hearted that she would resign (I was going to say "also abdicate" but it would not be the proper term, would it). She really has too much to deal with right now and taking a break from the presidency was needed.

Told you, a very important day, this 21 July 2013.



Chrissy was at the beach around 6:45 a.m. to reserve 2 tables and realized she was not the first one. Imagine, a group had sent someone at 5.30 a.m. (crazy, I know) to be sure to have the table they wanted. For whomever never went to Mother's Beach, I just want to explain that there are about 25 long cement picnic tables with benches right off the beach, protected by a roof against too much sun or drizzle. By the way, let me remind you that this month of July has seen some rain, yes rain ! Incredible.

Several board members arrived around 9, 9.30 and 10 as to help set up. Next to us was a church group who held a beach mass at 11.00 with a musical band; that was lively! We explained to them where Belgium is located and why today was historical; we also brought the boombox and played our national anthem for them. Instantly, they all stood up, young and old. I am always impressed how much respect Americans are showing for the symbols of patriotism.

From 11.00 onwards, the guests arrived. A salad here, cheese platter there, a dessert or two or three. The potluck table got full of delicious and colorful dishes. Chrissy - with some help (thanks Chris) - was taking care of grilling the hamburgers offered by the Club to all the guests. Everyone mingled and enjoyed their lunch, some even brought their own meat to throw on the barbee. The kids went in the water and the adults had a good game (or two or three) of volleyball. Boy they





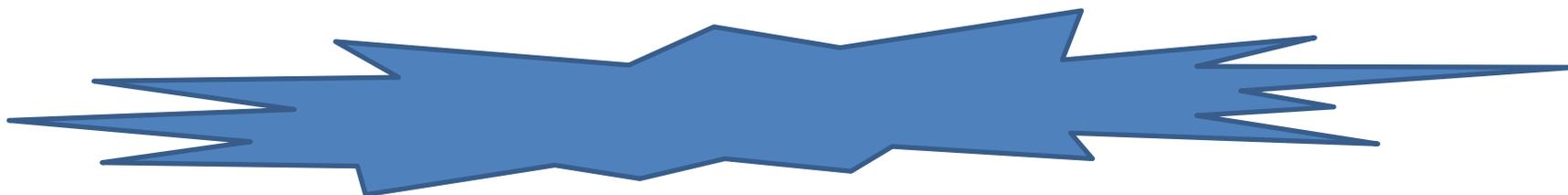
seemed serious!!!

We were about 45 attendees, a very nice group: several members and as many non-members, if not a bit more, which is actually a bit of a concern. Why would one not become member if one likes to join the events of the Club ? I invite the non-members who were at the BBQ to become members, it would be a pleasure to welcome those new - or renewed - members.

I wish to end this article by emphasizing the enormous amount of work that our now past-president Chrissy Lion has done for each and every event of our Club; she's the first on the spot to set up the place and the last to leave. And you should see her car when she arrives ... a moving van, not even a cat could be passenger !

From the bottom of our heart, THANK YOU Chrissy.

*Brigitte Gaviola*



## Pétanque August 18, 2013

Luckily we have one of the highlights of the activities from the Belgian Club: Pétanque. I know we all enjoy this event very much!



Getting up early in the morning heading to the courts, and looking forward to seeing everyone there ... It always feels good to see the familiar faces.

Everybody in a good mood, the sun shines, coffee and croissants are ready and the 'wine, Belgian Beer and Ricard ' is waiting for us later. Let the games begin.



With the guidance of experienced players of LAPC we all do the best we can. Concentration and laughter, it is all part of the game. For me the laughter is more important after a stressful week. I think we are all there to enjoy the day and each other's company.

Two rounds before lunch and Ricard and Steak Tartar then two rounds afterwards.



While some were working the grill and other helping to serve lunch, Chrissy our so called resigned President was of course helping in the kitchen and the food was delicious.

The Barbeque was great and the Ricard perfect and refreshing.



After lunch we played a few more games and ended the day with the awards presentation, we even had some Belgians sneak into the medal rounds. To all of them congratulations and to the others keep on practicing for next year. Marc Claessens our current President did show up for a quick speech. I know my family can't wait. We also wanted to thank all the kids that showed up this year and they seemed to get a hang of the game very quick. A special thanks to the Los Angeles Pétanque club for letting us participate and their great hospitality.

I hope to see all of you at the next event.

Alain Missoul and the BCSC Board



# Belgian Club's Annual Brunch.

On Sunday, December 8, the Belgian Club of So Cal had their 6<sup>th</sup> annual brunch at the Brussels Bistro in Laguna Beach. As always it was a success. The quaint restaurant was decorated with our country's Flags flowing in the slight breeze. Our club's banner at the fore-front making its usual statement. Brigitte and I were at the entrance anxiously waiting for our members and their friends to check in. Once the guests arrived the tray passed appetizers started making the rounds. Tomatoes stuffed with our Belgian Grey shrimp straight from the North Sea. Croquettes of cheese and of grey shrimp to follow....Oh, I am so hooked on the cheese croquettes. The little cups of white asparagus soup. The spoons of Escargots and many other hors d'oeuvres to wet our appetite. Once seated a few speeches were heard.



Our new President Marc Claessens introduced our Consul General Ambassador Rudi Vestraten and his wife, Mireille. Our Consul Alain LeRoy was there with his lovely wife Isabelle.

Mussels and Frites were of course one of the main highlights of the day...all you can eat too!!! Each person was given their individual little casserole of Mussels. We then, table by table, proceeded to the buffet. The pastry shells waiting to be topped with the vol au vent, Carbonnade Flamande and Belgian Endive au Gratin....again...all you can eat...but of course, no doggie bags



please!!! To follow.....a beautiful dessert bar. Mousse au Chocolat, varieties of homemade tarts and me, the

non-sweet tooth's favorite....the Café Liegeois. This year we even got home made Gauffres de Leige...with the pearl sugar in them...oh my all time favorite...Reminded me of walking through Brussels and smelling the gauffres in the air.



A huge thank you to Thomas, the chef/co-owner for putting this on for us. I would like to thank the entire staff for working around us...you may have had to push and shove us a little but all worth it. The Belgian Club of Southern California also wants to THANK YOU, The Brussels Bistro for being our 2013 Sponsor!!! Please check out the Brussels Bistro's link on our website.

Merci, Dank u et a bientôt...Chrissy Lion.



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Please contact us: (310) 512-7780    Or    send your advertisement to our MAILING address:

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Your advertisement will appear in The Newsletter AND on the BCSC website: [www.Belgianclubsocal.com](http://www.Belgianclubsocal.com)



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