Going Dutch

2016 March

In this issue

Switzerland
Christmas Markets
Adventures in India
AWC Red, White & Blue Gala

American Women’s Club of The Hague
Going Dutch
March 2016

The gluhwein was flowing as we explored the Dusseldorf Christmas Markets on a rare cold day in an unusually warm December.

Celeste shares her experiences at a friend's wedding in India.

Our Women with Dutch Partners Group had a great time celebrating the New Year with an action-packed gift exchange.
AWC Clubhouse
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Tel: 070 350 6007
info@awcthehague.org
www.awcthehague.org

Going Dutch Magazine
goingdutchmag@gmail.com

Clubhouse Hours
Tuesday and Thursday
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Monday, Wednesday and Friday Closed

2015-2016 AWC Officers

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awcthehague.treasurer@gmail.com

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Becky Failor
Rachel Kuppers
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Committee Chairs

Activities  Mallery Clarke
Assistant Treasurer  Rebecca Wood
At Home in Holland  Becky Failor
Board Advisor  Jessie Rodell
Caring Committee  Naomi Keip
Community Service Coordinator  Pamela Pruis
FAWCO  Elizabeth Kennedy
Heart Pillow  Eileen Baker
Holiday Bazaar  Ginny Mees, Barbara Bremer
Library  Laurie Martecchini
Kid’s Club  Open
Membership Coordinator  Rebecca Niles-Pourier
Newcomer Activities  Greetje Engelsman
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Programs  Roberta Enschede
Public Relations  Loren Mealey
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The Arts  Jane Choy
Tours  Jan Essad, Seannette Meserole
Volunteer Coordinator  Laurie Martecchini
Webmaster  Julie Otten
Website Assistant  Open
Women with Dutch Partners  Open

AWC Purpose Statement

The AWC of The Hague is an association formed to provide social and educational activities for American women living in the Netherlands and to promote amicable relations among people of all nations as well as acquiring funds for general public interest. The association does not endeavor to make a profit.

Deadlines: Submissions are due no later than the last Monday of the month preceding the publication month. For example, for the May/June issue, submissions are due before Monday, March 28.

Please Note: Articles submitted to Going Dutch will be published subject to space limitations and editorial approval. All rights reserved; reprints only by written permission of the Editor. Please email to: goingdutchmag@gmail.com

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MARCH 2016
Message from the President

by Becky Failor

Spring is almost here! The days are getting longer and longer. There are crocus, tulips and narcissus all around. Keukenhof Gardens will soon open. It is a time of renewal and hope.

Our spring Red, White & Blue Gala will be on Saturday, April 16. We are marrying the red, white and blue of both the American and Dutch flags. This gala is our main opportunity during this Club Year to raise funds to provide hope and renewal for Stahili Foundation, MCH Antoniushoeve Ziekenhuis’ Look Good, Feel Better, and SPOSA Child (see page 24 to learn more about these beneficiaries). The AWC donations make a difference in the lives of the children we’ve come to support by these excellent charities. While this event is a fundraiser, it is also a FUN-raiser, a time to get together for a festive evening with your AWC friends as well as other local friends. Please mark your calendar to join me at this wonderful and fun gala night. If you’d like to help with the planning and organization of this wonderful event, please contact Karla Kahn at community@awcthehague.org.

There has been so much praise and warm feelings from the Tender Loving Care Dinner held on February 13. The women who were our guests were given a night to forget their feelings from the Tender Loving Care Dinner at the Fish Club in Kijktuin. What a great tour and insider tips we received during our visit to the Forepark Sligro. Were you with us for the Chili Cook-off? The spicy chili and laughter warmed the night. You will have to wait to hear who is the current holder of the Best Chili Winner’s Apron!

I encourage you to join us on Thursday, March 10 for our General Meeting (see following page). Our special guest speaker will be Keith Stadler, the Superintendent of the Netherlands American Cemetery in Margraten. This is the only American War Cemetery in the Netherlands, where 8,301 American soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the freedoms of others during World War II have been buried and the names of another 1,722 Americans are inscribed on the Wall of the Missing. You can show your honor to these men and women by coming to hear this special talk.

Afterwards, please stay for our annual Helping Hands Handbag & Accessories Auction (see page 31). So much fun, even if you don’t buy much! In the meantime, please bring your lightly used handbags and accessories to the Clubhouse for donation.

With warmest wishes,

Becky Failor

March General Meeting

by Roberta Enschede

Our guest speaker for this month is Keith Stadler, the Superintendent of the Netherlands American Cemetery at Margraten. Superintendent Stadler was appointed by the American Battlefields Monument Commission. He is responsible for Margraten where there are 8,301 American World War II graves and the Wall of the Missing on which 1,722 names are inscribed.

Margraten is about Major General Maurice Rose, the only general buried there who his comrades said “was killed where he worked and most of the time – up front.” It’s about Robert van Klinken, a Dutch-American auto mechanic from Washington who died in the land of his forefathers on September 20, 1944. It’s about Medic PFC Lloyd R. Smith, known as Smitty. It’s about Pvt. Dellapenta, one of the Screaming Eagles who was a sophomore at Cornell University when he volunteered, and before he died wrote home that he was “bothered by men going to Mass with their knives and guns strapped on.”

Margraten is about six Congressional Medal of Honor recipients; three whose names are here. Their white crosses have a gold star, and on the length of the cross in gold, the words Medal of Honor:

Plot D, Row 21, Grave 10: Staff Sergeant George Peterson, New York, March 30, 1945
Plot D, Row 3, Grave 32: First Lieutenant Walter J. Will, New York, March 30, 1945

Still to be spoken are the names of 8,294 heroes who rest under the crosses and the stars and 1,722 from the Wall.

Superintendent Stadler knows the stories of farm boys and minister’s kids and auto mechanics and poets – veterans of the Normandy landings, the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle of Arnhem, Nijmegen, Etten-Leur and Best.

“Each man has a name,” and a story to tell.

An Israeli poet wrote, “Each man has a name,” and with that name is a story – a life. Margraten is not just a vast expanse in the green of Limburg. It is not just 8,100 white marble crosses interspersed by more than 200 Stars of David and 1,722 names on the Wall of the Missing.

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He is driving from South Limburg to give this presentation.

We hope you will come.

You are welcome to bring friends.

Childcare will be available if it is requested for more than two children. Requests must be submitted to Becky Failor at president@awcthehague.org no later than March 8.

Thursday, March 10
Social time: 10 a.m.
Meeting: 10:30 a.m.
Light Lunch: Noon
Handbag Auction: 1 p.m.
AWC Clubhouse
www.groupspaces.com/AWCTheHague/item/990029
Some of you might recall when I confessed that I was a dinosaur as I had yet to embrace mobile technology and start using a smart phone. Well, those days are over! Much to my dismay, just as I was packing to leave for six weeks in Tokyo, my husband James surprised me with my very own iPhone. I was very skeptical as I’d had lousy luck using other touch screen devices, but I realized the importance of having a means to communicate with my daughter Ashlynn and access maps during our trip. Little did I know just how much I’d come to rely on that phone!

After our plane touched down in Japan, the first stop we made was to a kiosk selling SIM cards where I purchased a data-only package allowing me mobile Internet access. I thought I couldn’t make phone calls since I didn’t have a phone number, so I was surprised when my phone rang. Ashlynn quickly figured out that she could call me for free using WhatsApp or Facebook from the phone supplied by her modeling agency. I was relieved that James had the foresight to ensure that Ashlynn would be able to reach me as I hadn’t anticipated just how crazy her schedule would be or how often we’d be able to meet up for lunch.

Since returning to Holland in early September, I rarely use my phone for making phone calls. Instead, I have finally learned the appeal of WhatsApp (the world’s largest instant messaging service, sending messages over the Internet rather than via cellular networks). When Veronica, our eldest, left for university, James set up a “family chat” which we all use on a daily basis. She sends us updates and photos of her new surroundings and friends, which allows us a more intimate look into her days away from us than phone calls alone could do. What a big change from the days when I left home; phone calls were costly and there was no Internet, so I can only imagine how left out of my new life my family must have felt. My girls also don’t fight over who gets to use the phone next like my sister and I did constantly.

Although the camera isn’t as good as my trusty Nikon, I do like having the ability to take a photo on a whim. I originally opened an Instagram account merely so I could stalk my daughters, but now I find myself posting photos of unusual things I spot as I’m out and about. I use the Nike app as a GPS to track how far James and I go during our training walks for our planned trek this summer to cross England by foot (if all goes well, you’ll find an article about our adventures in the September issue). And Google Translate was invaluable while in Japan and has come in very handy in Holland as well since mijn Nederlands is slecht (my Dutch is bad).

On the darker side of things, I am more-or-less addicted to a word game (James would claim it’s “more” because I play it all the time when I’m using public transport, but I’d assert it is “less” because I have managed to control myself from ever playing it at home). I am definitely guilty, however, of hitting the on-button much too frequently to see if I’ve missed any messages. So I might not be a dinosaur any longer, but the jury is still out whether that’s truly a good thing.

It is a good thing that my husband is not the type of guy to say, “I told you so!” because I really deserve it in this case — of course, to be honest, he usually is right. (Editor’s note: James added this last paragraph when he was proofing this article.)

People are prisoners of their phones. That’s why they’re called Cell Phones.
~ Anonymous
Welcome New Members!
Cynthia Lardner
Kimberly Lynch
Mary Ann Nation-Greenwall
June Postal
Holly Savoie
Daniella Smith-Walonker
Daniela Stewart

Are you a Newcomer or a potential Member? Are you looking for something special in the American Women’s Club? Maybe you need help with understanding how to work an appliance, how to read a bill, where to find particular products, how to apply for a public transport card (OV-chipkaart), or something else—the list goes on and on! I am a Dutch re-pat and I am happy to answer any kind of question. Please feel free email me at awcthehague.newcomers@gmail.com.

Newcomers
by Greetje Englesman

March Birthdays
Georgia Regnault  4
Amber Gatewood  12
Mary Adams  13
Melanie Stringfellow  18
Kathryn Cok  20
Mary Jo Willemsen  20
Sarah Dunn  24
Jaimie Keppel-Molenaar  26
Pamela Prijns-Bott  26
Joyce Ann Starks  27
Marilyn Tinsay  31

RSVP for all Newcomer Activities directly on AWC GroupSpaces.com. Direct questions to awcthehague.newcomers@gmail.com.

Appeal for Front Desk Volunteers
by Dominique Duysens

Have you ever stopped by the AWC Clubhouse on a Tuesday or Thursday to drop something off, search the library for a travel guide, or just wanted to pop in for a chat and cup of coffee? Or have you called to ask a question? If so, then you have benefited from the wonderful ladies who volunteer to serve at the Front Desk. As a volunteer organization, the AWC needs each Member to find a way to contribute. If you have some free time on either Tuesday or Thursday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., please consider volunteering to “man” the desk.

Not only would you be in charge of the Front Desk activities (such as processing emails, phone calls, etc.), but you would be the heart of the Clubhouse during those hours. You would get to know a lot of Members, interact with potential Members, be in the know about what’s happening at the AWC, and be part of the activities that take place during your shifts. We need you!

If you would like to volunteer or discuss working with us further, please let us know. Pick which day works best for you (and don’t worry if you can’t make every Tuesday or every Thursday) and then please contact Siska Datema (who makes the schedule of volunteers) at s.datema@outlook.com or me at awcthehague.2ndvp@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Ongoing Activities

Book Club: Daytime
The AWC Book Clubs are open to all book lovers and are always open to new Members. There is no obligation to attend every meeting or lead a discussion. We take turns bringing a snack. If you’ve always wanted to try out a book club, you have two options per month. You can now register yourself for either (or both!) Book Clubs on the AWC GroupSpaces.com website. Any questions? Please email Teresa Mahoney for the daytime group or Rebecca Fry for the evening group at awcthehague.bookclub@gmail.com. Happy reading!

The March Daytime Book Club selection is The Farm by Tom Rob Smith:

This page-turner is a psychological thriller written with the intricate plotting and pacing of a spy novel. Imagine if you were in Daniel’s place. His mother told him that his father and other men in the community were involved in a terrible crime. His father, however, claims his mother had a psychotic breakdown. Is she a liar, a fantasist or a victim of a conspiracy? Join us for this en-thralling he-said she-said mystery.

Thursday, March 24
10 a.m.
AWC Clubhouse
FREE

Recap of the December Discussion
The Buried Giant: Was there a book in the time when they let us have a candle? Was it a son, or perhaps the lost little girl, who gifted us with writings that we could see before the fog settled on our land, Princess? Hazy words in candlelight—or was it in the dawn?—float somewhere in my remembering. If these sentences grab you, then you may enjoy this fantasy set in Arthurian England. Maybe. Or maybe it’s a conceptualization of the nature of memory or brain function of the late middle aged. The only one who is certain what this book is about is the author, who seems to have written it for himself or to hear himself called a “genius” by book reviewers and half of the AWC Daytime Book Club. We couldn’t agree on this one. Half of us hated it and didn’t finish it; half of us enjoyed and want to read it again.

Book Club: Evening
The March Evening Book Club selection is Song of the Shank by Jeffery Renard Allen:

Thomas Greene Wiggins, born a slave in Georgia in 1849, became an international sensation as a pianist, performing under the name Blind Tom. This historical novel ranges from Tom’s boyhood to the heights of his performing career, including encounters with opportunist teachers, crooked managers, crackpot healers and militant prophets. History and fantastical invention bring to life a man who profoundly changed all who encountered him.

Wednesday, March 16
7:30 p.m.
AWC Clubhouse
FREE

Daytime Book Club Planning Ahead:
Thursday, April 28: The Road to Little Dribbling by Bill Bryson
Thursday, May 26: Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates
Thursday, June 23: The Children Act by Ian McEwan

Evening Book Club Planning Ahead:
Wednesday, April 20: The Harder They Come by TC Boyle
Wednesday, May 18: Early Warning by Jane Smiley
Wednesday, June 8: Amnesia by Peter Carey

Recap of the December – January Discussions
The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: We gave this story a mixed review. On the one hand, it was an easy, plot-driven read that neither bored nor taxed the reader; on the other hand, we found the title and the author’s explanation of what he thought he achieved with this novel too ambitious. Perhaps this book would be a good choice for those who prefer an uncomplicated beach-type read. Those of us who had loved the author’s previous work, The Imperfectionists, were disappointed.

The Buried Giant: Fans of Ishiguro can again count on a major departure in topic and style, as the author seems to generate a totally unique work of fiction every time. This novel defies ready description, and can be read as either a straightforward fantasy tale or pure allegory. While we gave this book 4 out of 5 stars, those considering adding it to their lists should expect and enjoy obfuscation, half-plots, and dungeons and dragons.

Chat, Crafts & Cake
Let’s get creative! The AWC is open to all crafters. If you’ve been looking for an open space large enough to lay out that king-size quilt, or need more table space to organize your photo albums or scrapbooks, or just need an excuse to stitch, pack up your supplies and bring them to the Clubhouse so you can chat with fellow AWC Members while you work. You might even be able to pick up some suggestions from a fresh pair of eyes. Each week, a different Member will bring a cake made from a never-before-tried recipe for tasting and critiquing. We’re sorry, but babysitting is not available and thus we can’t accommodate children. Questions? Contact Suzanne Dundas if you have any questions.

Friday, April 8
7:30 p.m.
AWC Clubhouse
Free

Cranium Night
Everyone is good at something and Cranium is an adult team game that gives everyone a chance to be a “game hero.” Up to four teams compete using charades, puppeteering, sculpting, drawing, word play and trivia—14 skills in all. It’s fast-paced, lively and a lot of fun. And, it’s perfect for the AWC because “the more the merrier.” We’ve designated the second Friday of most months as Cranium Night. Come alone or bring a partner but please be on time—we’ll begin promptly. Contact Suzanne Dundas at awcthehague.crafts@gmail.com to notify the Club at awcthehague.finance@gmail.com to cancel a reservation prior to the cancellation deadline. Please note that there will be NO REFUNDS (no exceptions) after the cancellation deadline. Members may find a substitute in lieu of cancellation provided that arrangements are made with the tour, activity or event organizer. Members shall be held responsible for their guest reservations in accordance with this policy.

>> 16
Dinner Club
Sign up to share dinner at home with AWC friends and spouses/partners. Kathy Tomblyn will set the dates, place couples (or individuals) randomly, and assign the hostess. Then each hostess will set a theme and guests will be asked to prepare a dish. For example, if the theme is Italian, then one person might bring antipasto, one brings bread, one brings Italian wine, etc. The hostess may choose to cook the main course or do it all, but then you might be asked to contribute some money towards the cost. It will be up to each hostess how they want to structure the meal. You may be asked to host one dinner for eight, six or four guests (depending on your space at home) and then you will be a guest at someone else’s home the next time. This is a fun way to share an evening with new AWC friends while enjoying a great dinner. No need to worry as you don’t have to be a gourmet chef! Mark your calendar for future dates: Saturday, July 2. Contact Kathy at kthdsgns@aol.com to join in the fun. Saturday, April 30 Locations and Meals Vary Sign-up deadline: April 23 www.groupspaces.com/AWCTheHague/item/991386

Heart Pillow Project
The AWC is in its 8th year of making heart-shaped pillows to support the arms of breast cancer patients in local hospitals. Each pillow is made with tender loving care, wrapped in a plastic bag tied with a beautiful bow and a message signed by a volunteer. No sewing skills are needed; just the ability to cut and stuff! What a wonderful way to meet new friends while contributing to a worthy cause. The emails we receive are so touching and show that women are linked everywhere to this terrible disease. We are proud to provide women with something not only practical, but comforting as well. If you can cut fabric, stuff fiberfill, thread a needle or tie a bow, we need you! No sign-up is necessary. For more information, contact Eileen Baker at awcthehague.heartpillow@gmail.com. Tuesday, March 29 Noon – 2 p.m. AWC Clubhouse FREE Visitors Welcome www.groupspaces.com/AWCTheHague/item/1022908

Out To Lunch Bunch
If you’re interested in making new friends and exploring new restaurants throughout The Hague, then this is the group for you! Rather than setting one specific day of the month, we will change our days each month in order to accommodate a variety of schedules. Once we have decided on the date and restaurant for that month, the details will be posted on the AWC Facebook Group and in eNews, and registration will open on GroupSpaces. If you have a favorite restaurant in your neighborhood you’d like to share with the group, please contact Kathy DeBest at debestj@comcast.net.

Pilates
Pilates is a form of exercise developed by Joseph Pilates which emphasizes body development through core strength, flexibility and body awareness. Pilates works the deeper, more stabilizing muscles of the spine and the abdominal wall. Doing Pilates makes you stronger, longer and leaner. Ineke Latour, certified STOTT Pilates® Instructor and AWC Member, will teach Pilates classes at the AWC Clubhouse. You will be monitored and corrected to enjoy responsible, safe and effective Pilates training. Email Ineke to sign up for these classes and pay her directly. Bring your own towel; Ineke will supply mats and props. All levels are welcome. Participants should arrive at the Club at 10:15 a.m. so class can start promptly at 10:30 a.m. Wednesdays 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. € 15 per class Members (€ 20 per class nonmembers) Min 6 / Max 10 Contact: Ineke at Latour@globalswing.com

Walkie Talkies
Taking a walk with friends is the perfect way to start your week! Join us for an energetic walk and talk. We meet in front of the Clubhouse each week and then walk to a variety of destinations between the beach, woods and city. Occasionally, we take longer walks which we announce on the AWC Facebook Group. Sign up for this group on GroupSpaces.com to get email updates or email Emily van Eerten at vanereten@gmail.com or Greetje Engelsman at awcthehague.newcomers@gmail.com. Mondays 9:30 a.m. FREE

Tennis League
The AWC Tennis Group plays doubles every Tuesday in Warmond. Ladies move up and down the courts according to a ladder tennis system. The emphasis is on having fun! The league is available for all levels except true beginners. If you are interested in being placed on the sub list, contact Molly Boed at mollyboed@yahoo.com. Tuesdays (except specific holidays) 1 – 3 p.m. Dekker Tennis Courts Veerpolder 14, Warmond

AWC Guest Policy
Guests are welcome to participate in AWC activities and tours on a limited basis. As a nonmember, a guest is limited to attend two functions per calendar year and will be charged an additional nonmember fee. Only Members are entitled to use babysitting services.
Flowers, Foliage and Fun
This eclectic workshop has something for everyone! AWC Member Jaimie Keppel will guide you through making ten cards in three different motifs using a rainbow of colors. From designs that range from trees to bountiful balloons to fresh and festive flowers, you’ll leave with a card for any occasion and every person.

Sunday, March 6
3 – 5:30 p.m.
€ 20 Members (€ 25 nonmembers)
www.groupspaces.com/AWCTheHague/item/1031298

Trivia Quiz Night
Back by popular demand! Join us for a lively evening guaranteed to be fun-filled with laughter, some friendly competition, and prizes for the winners. You don’t have to be a master of trivia to play because you’ll combine your particular area of expertise with others. We’ll serve light snacks, soda, beer and wine. Come with your own team of six or meet new friends once you arrive.

Friday, March 11
7:30 p.m. sharp
€ 8 Members or Partners
(€ 12 nonmembers)
Cancellation deadline: March 7

**One-of-a-Kind Activities**

by Mallery Clarke

Tour of La Trappe Brewery
The Koningshoeven Brewery is one of the few breweries in the world authorized to use the “Authentic Trappist Product” logo. Ale can only be called Trappist when it has been brewed within the four walls of a Trappist monastery under the supervision of the monastery’s monks, and when part of the proceeds is earmarked for charity. If you love Trappist beer, you won’t want to miss this tour! La Trappe is one of only two Trappist brands of beer brewed in the Netherlands. We will tour the brewery, watch a movie about life at the monastery and have a taste of your choice. This will be followed by lunch (at your own expense) in the Tasting Room and the chance to enjoy even more La Trappe (also not included in price of tour). Transportation details will be emailed to participants.

Saturday, March 12
8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Bierbrouwerij De Koningshoeven Eindhovenseweg 3, Berkel-Enschot
€ 15 Members or Partners
(€ 20 nonmembers after March 5)
Limit 10

RSVP directly on AWC GroupSpaces.com.
Direct any questions to awcthehague.activites@gmail.com.

Payment must be made within 5 calendar days of reserving or your name will be moved to a waitlist. Payment can be made in the Front Office by PIN or by bank transfer to the AWC account NL42ABNA0431421757.

Your Color Silk Scarf Workshop
We all have a piece of clothing that just doesn’t work for us because the color isn’t right. In this workshop taught by AWC Member Gabrielle van der Winden, you will get a color assessment for your most complimentary colors. You will then be given a corresponding set of textile dyes to make your own 100% silk scarf at this workshop in Gabrielle’s home-based workspace in Wassenaar. Gabrielle will explain different kinds of painting techniques. You don’t need to be extremely creative or an expert painter to create a beautiful scarf. As silk is a natural product, the result will always be wonderful. While the scarves steam to set the paint, you can watch a demonstration on how to tie a scarf. You will go home with a personal color-card and a beautiful 100% silk scarf in your best colors.

Thursday, March 17
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
With Color Analysis: € 50 Members
(€ 55 nonmembers)
Scarf only: € 35 Members
(€ 40 nonmembers)
Maximum 5
Cancellation deadline: March 14
www.groupspaces.com/AWCTheHague/item/1035458

A Healthy Living Workshop: Feeling Great & Looking Fabulous
A healthy lifestyle is forever. Take a little time for yourself and adopt those healthy habits that will have you feeling and looking great! ACE Personal Trainers and Health Coaches Helen Essers and Fiona Bradley, along with STOTT Pilates Instructor Trainer and MELT Level 2 Certified Instructor Jolanda Hoefnagel, will present some of the latest updates on women’s health. Through interactive sessions, you will be amazed at the instant release of tension in your body that you will experience after your small-group session with Jolanda. During a coaching session with Fiona, you will find out what type of eater you are and how “mindful” eating can give amazing results. Helen will show you how healthy eating can be easy and fun without “forbidden” foods. Finish the afternoon with a food preparation demonstration (and tasting) with a focus on snacks. This workshop is sure to be an inspiring way to put you on a path to a healthy lifestyle or to give you continued motivation to challenge yourself even more.

Tuesday, March 22
1 – 3:30 p.m.
AWC Clubhouse
€ 35 Members (€ 40 nonmembers)
Minimum 10 / Maximum 18
Cancellation deadline: March 11
www.groupspaces.com/AWCTheHague/item/1031377

Take a little...
Mini Spa Night
Why not shake off the winter blues and treat yourself to a mini spa night at ASPA, an organic spa in The Hague? We’ll meet at the spa and indulge in up to two 30-minute treatments per person (at own expense). You will receive one glass of Prosecco (tea and coffee are also available) as well as nibbles.

Treatment options include:
• Manicure €35
• Eyebrow threading €15
• Make up application lesson €35
• Hair styling €45
• Neck, shoulder & back massage €45
• Mini facial €35

When booking on GroupSpaces.com, please indicate your treatment choice(s). Payment for all treatments by bank transfer is due by March 16, after which no refunds are possible.

Wednesday, March 23
7 p.m.
ASPA
Alexanderplein 2, Den Haag
Cancellation deadline: March 16
www.groupspaces.com/AWCTheHague/item/1036838

Hungry Birds Food Tour
If you are a foodie, or even if you are not, you won’t want to miss this unique walking tour of one of the most vibrant areas of Amsterdam: De Pijp (The Pipe). This area has grown into a popular, hip neighborhood which offers many different types of foods. During this food adventure we will try Dutch street foods as well as tastes from colonial influences (Indonesian and Surinamese). Our Hungry Birds guides/storytellers will introduce us to several (at least 10!) small family eateries and local places with personality – the kind of places that are run with the owner’s hearts and where locals are happy to line up. This is truly a fantastic way to explore Amsterdam and to connect with people over tasty foods, drinks and inspiring stories. Great for spouses, too! We will travel to Amsterdam via the train. Travel and meeting information will be given to the participants the week prior to the event.

Saturday, April 9
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
€70 Members or Spouses
(€75 nonmembers)
Minimum 8 / Maximum 14
Cancellation deadline: March 26
www.groupspaces.com/AWCTheHague/item/1031376

Dutch Royalty and Democracy
Koningsdag (King’s Day), the celebration of King Willem-Alexander’s birthday, is at the end of April. We thought this would be a good time to explain the relationship between royalty and democracy (government, parliament and the King) in the Netherlands. How does it work and who is the boss? Who better to teach us than our very own Greetje Engelsman-Postma?

Wednesday, April 6
10 a.m. – Noon
AWC Clubhouse
FREE
www.groupspaces.com/AWCTheHague/item/1034222
Visit to Keukenhof Castle and Gardens

Our visit will start with a guided tour of the Keukenhof Castle (www.kasteelkeukenhof.nl). This castle is situated next to the Keukenhof Gardens in the heart of the flower bulb region known as de Bollenstreek. The castle was constructed as a manor house in 1642 during Holland’s Golden Age and was used as a summer country retreat. After the tour, we will enter the Keukenhof Gardens (www.keukenhof.com) and have lunch at our own expense. Following lunch, you will experience the most beautiful spring garden in the world! Over 7 million tulips, daffodils and hyacinths fill more than 32 hectares with color and fragrance. We will walk through the gardens and discover the latest trends in gardening and get new ideas from the seven inspirational gardens. This year’s theme is the Dutch Golden Age.

We will meet at Starbucks at Den Haag Centraal Station (DHCS) to take the train to Leiden Centraal (bring your OV-chipkaart), and then catch a special express bus to Keukenhof (this ticket will be purchased in conjunction with your Keukenhof Gardens entrance ticket). Please buy your ticket online in advance for the Keukenhof Gardens: www.keukenhof.com (unless you are driving, choose the € 24 Combi Ticket which includes the bus from Leiden).

We will pay for the tour of Keukenhof Castle at the door (€ 7.50 for regular entry or free with Museumkaart). Thursday, April 21
Meet at DHCS at 9 a.m.
Maximum 15
www.groups.com/AWCTheHague/item/1030872

Farmer’s Cheese Making Workshop

We will visit a cheese farm where we will be shown how cheese is made according to traditional methods. This informative hands-on workshop will show you the total process of cheese making. During the 1.5 hour workshop, you will see, learn and taste everything about farmer’s cheese, including “grass cheese” which is made of milk, fresh from the cow. You will have a chance to taste different kinds of cheeses and get information on how to store your cheese the best way. We will be picked up from the train station by the farmer in his hay wagon and also dropped off there. After the workshop, we will have lunch at Kasteel Woerden (at your own expense).

Wednesday, May 11
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Boerderij de Boerinn, Kamerik
€ 30 Members (€ 35 nonmembers)
Minimum 10 / Maximum 25
Cancellation deadline: May 1
2016 Red, White & Blue Gala

by Teresa Insalaco and Karla Kahn

Saturday, April 16
Nieuwspoort
Lange Poten 10, Den Haag
6:30 p.m. Reception
8 p.m. Dinner
Followed by Music and Dancing

T he American Women’s Club of The Hague has an 85-year history of philanthropy, whereby we have touched and improved lives in our community in The Hague and beyond. The tradition of giving back has been the primary focus of our organization since its inception and continues to this day with the generous support of our Members. Since 2002 alone, our charity galas have donated over €1.5 million to our beneficiaries.

Please join us for this fun evening with an auction, dinner and dancing. Tickets are €85 for AWC Members or partners and €110 for nonmembers. For additional information, please visit www.redwhiteandbluegala.com. For questions or to volunteer to assist the Gala Committee, please email info@redwhiteandbluegala.com.

Red, White & Blue Gala Beneficiaries
Our 2016 Red, White & Blue Gala will support the following organizations:

Look Good Feel Better
Look Good Feel Better for women at MCH Antoniushove in The Hague is a community service program that provides useful information specifically tailored to help women deal with the appearance-related side effects of cancer treatment. Guided by experienced volunteers from the cosmetic industry, patients learn how to care for their skin and apply make-up to help minimize the appearance related side-effects of their treatment. Women are also shown practical and creative ways to help deal with impending hair loss – with the opportunity to try on wigs, headscarves and turbans to suit their needs. The workshops are designed to empower the women with practical tips and tricks to boost their self-esteem and confidence while undergoing treatment. Your support of the 2016 AWC Red, White & Blue Gala will help fund these workshops so they can be free of charge to local women undergoing cancer treatment in The Hague.
www.lookgoodfeelbetter.nl
Word reached the Club at the beginning of January that Honorary Member Henriette Kohlinger-Bosman passed away on December 29, 2015, at the age of 90. Hedy, as she was known to us, was born in The Hague and lived in Wassenaar until moving into the Martha Flora Nursing Home in The Hague. She was a petite, quiet and always well-groomed woman, who stood for years at the side of her American husband, Charles Kohlinger, who was very active in the American Chamber of Commerce. I was pleased to see that in her last years, she attended several of the Honorary Member Teas at the Club.

We send our condolences to her family and friends.

SPOSA Child

Based in the Netherlands, Stichting SPOSA Child (Save and Protect our Sexually Abused Child) was established in August 2010 as an independent, small, non-profit charity foundation. Through the gift of education, its mission is the rehabilitation and healing of sexually and physically abused children on the island of Negros in the Philippines. The 2016 AWC Red, White & Blue Gala will support SPOSA’s efforts to provide a complete education through sustained funding for their scholarship program for 13 girls. The SPOSA Child Educational Scholarship Fund covers costs such as uniforms, books and other school materials, physical education, transportation, meals and reintegration counseling. AWC Member Marilyn Tinsay serves as the Chairperson of SPOSA Child. www.sposachild.com

Stahili Foundation

Working with families and community in rural Kenya, the Stahili Foundation uses education as a tool to end exploitation, to keep children in a family together, and to break the cycle of poverty. While most of the children that Stahili supports have either endured years of abuse and exploitation in an orphanage or have faced other vulnerabilities, they have loving relatives or members of the community who want to care for them, but cannot due to severe poverty. Stahili empowers the children’s guardians and allow them to give the children a life they deserve. Stahili monitors their well-being and provides them with:

• Protection from exploitation, cruelty, and abuse
• Education through post-secondary school
• Access to medical and psychosocial support
• Food, clothing, and hygiene needs
• Shelter

Encouragement and mentorship Stahili currently supports 36 children from the ages of 5 to 24 and plans to send their first student to university and to advance an additional number of students to high school in 2016. AWC Members’ support of the 2016 AWC Red, White & Blue Gala will fund these goals. AWC Member Michelle Oliel is Co-Founder of the Stahili Foundation. www.stahili.org

Hedy Kohlinger-Bosman
by Georgia Regnault

Word reached the Club at the beginning of January that Honorary Member Henriette Kohlinger-Bosman passed away on December 29, 2015, at the age of 90. Hedy, as she was known to us, was born in The Hague and lived in Wassenaar until moving into the Martha Flora Nursing Home in The Hague. She was a petite, quiet and always well-groomed woman, who stood for years at the side of her American husband, Charles Kohlinger, who was very active in the American Chamber of Commerce. I was pleased to see that in her last years, she attended several of the Honorary Member Teas at the Club.

We send our condolences to her family and friends.

AWC Ladies at the AWCA Gala

Contd from page 25
# March 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
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| ![Windmill](image1) | ![Windmill](image2) | 1 Chat, Crafts 'n Cake 10 a.m.  
AWC Tennis 1 p.m. | 2 Pilates 10:15 a.m.  
De Stijl, Mondriaan & Appel exhibits 11 a.m. | 3 Wassenaar Coffee and Conversation 9 a.m.  
AWC Board Meeting 10:30 a.m. | 4 | 5 |
| 6 Flowers, Foliage & Fun- Card Making Workshop 3 p.m. | 7 Walkie Talkies 9:30 a.m. | 8 Chat, Crafts 'n Cake 10 a.m.  
AWC Tennis 1 p.m. | 9 Pilates 10:15 a.m. | 10 Coffee 10 a.m.  
General Meeting 10:30 a.m.  
Helping Handbags Auction Noon | 11 | 12 Tour of La Trappe Brewery 8:30 a.m. |
| 13 | 14 Walkie Talkies 9:30 a.m. | 15 Chat, Crafts 'n Cake 10 a.m.  
AWC Tennis 1 p.m. | 16 Pilates 10:15 a.m.  
Out to Lunch Bunch 1 p.m.  
Evening Book Club 7:30 p.m. | 17 Your Color Silk Scarf Painting Workshop 9:30 a.m. | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 Walkie Talkies 9:30 a.m. | 22 Chat, Crafts 'n Cake 10 a.m.  
AWC Tennis 1 p.m.  
Feeling Great & Looking Fabulous Workshop 1 p.m. | 23 Pilates 10:15 a.m.  
Mini Spa Night 7 p.m. | 24 Daytime Book Club 10 a.m. | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 Walkie Talkies 9:30 a.m. | 29 Chat, Crafts 'n Cake 10 a.m.  
Heart Pillow Workshop Noon  
AWC Tennis 1 p.m. | 30 Pilates 10:15 a.m. | 31 | | Spring is in the Air!  
April 7: Mauritshuis' Storage Depot  
April 9: Amsterdam Street Food Tour  
April 16: AWC Red, White & Blue Gala  
April 21: Keukenhof Gardens and Castle |
New Hopes for FAWCO in 2016

New Brand: A new logo and a refreshed mission statement are to be adopted and launched this month at the interim meeting in Frankfurt.

New Target Program: The education and awareness phase of the next Target Issue, education, is to be launched as well in Frankfurt.

New Event: SAVE THE DATE! A jointly sponsored FAWCO / The FAWCO Foundation Symposium, Backing Women: Stand Up Against Human Trafficking, will be held October 7 to 9, hosted by the International Press Club of The Hague. If you are interested in attending and have more questions on this event, please contact AWC Member Mary Adams.

Don’t Forget to Register to Vote......Yes, AGAIN!

It’s that time of year again, and 2016 is going to be a big year. We fought for the right – let’s use it!

Remember that the law says that overseas Americans must register every year, so even if you are used to receiving your ballot, request it anyway. If you don’t receive your ballot in time and want to use the “emergency” federal write-in absentee ballot (FWAB), you must have requested your ballot in a timely fashion this year. Here’s how you do it: Go to the FAWCO home page (www.fawco.org), click on “Register to Vote” at the bottom left, and then Request Your Ballot / Register Now.
Spring Party & Easter Egg Hunt
Calling all kids: the Easter Bunny is coming to the AWC! Hosted at the AWC Clubhouse, we will have a party with yummy snacks, fun crafts and games. The Easter Bunny will make an appearance, and your photos will help to prove “there really is an Easter Bunny.” We will enjoy hunting for hidden Easter eggs and each child will take home an Easter basket. Please note the number and ages of the children when registering through GroupSpaces. Feel free to invite your friends!
If you have questions or want to volunteer to help with this fun event, contact me at northern_autumn@hotmail.com or 063 155 0370.
Saturday, March 19
3 – 5 p.m.
€ 5 per child or € 12 per Member family (€ 8 per child or € 15 per nonmember family)
Cancellation deadline: March 13

Heart Pillow Project
BSN Students Make Heart Pillows
Among the many Heart Pillows delivered last year, 20 sets were made by a very special group of students from the British School in the Netherlands in Voorschoten. In addition to their academic studies, they must complete CAS (Creativity, Action, Service) Projects to fulfill a requirement for their International Baccalaureate Diploma. The Heart Pillow Project provided an opportunity for them to develop their creativity, set clear goals and give back to their community. The BSN Family Association generously donated the funds needed to purchase the fabrics and other supplies. Once the pillow sets were completed, they were passed onto the AWC and we donated them on their behalf. They did a great job!
**The Dutch Daily**

*by Eileen Harloff*

**Just Have Patience**

How often have you been told by your family, teachers, friends, even by strangers, to have patience? The thought behind this admonition is that eventually something, somehow, will happen. And this is just what took place at the beginning of this year when, after 50 years of promises, the missing 7 kilometers of the Rijksweg A4 between Schiedam and Delft was finally officially opened. This new link will lessen the pressure on the A13 and part of the A20, as well on other roads around Rotterdam for an estimated 128,000 vehicles per working day. Why the half-century delay? The planning procedure called for discussions with potentially affected citizens that often led to protests, which led to revised plans, which, in turn, must again go through the lengthy planning procedure. Finally, the discussions, protests and changes have taken their laborious course and the road is open.

**From the Hotel World**

The Van der Valk Hotel in Tiel is the first hotel in the country to fill a hole in the market by setting aside 60 rooms for people needing nursing help; for example, chronically ill people who want a short vacation stay, patients who have left the hospital but cannot yet care for themselves at home, or caregivers who need a break. The ward is served by a professional nursing team who are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The cost of an overnight stay, including food and drinks, is € 245. The local care sector has been surprised by this unusual move of the hotel and has not yet given its support or approval.

**Meet My Teacher**

Recently, students from the Thamen School in Uithoorn, North Holland, were introduced to a new temporary math teacher named Zora. She made quite an impression when she began to a new temporary math teacher named Zora. She made quite an impression when she began

**Waste Not – Recycle**

The idea of a restaurant serving food that would normally have been thrown away has been quite an impression when she began to a new temporary math teacher named Zora. She made quite an impression when she began

It certainly is seldom that such an unusual animal is born, but this is what happened in January to the astonishment of the owners of a dairy farm in Nieuwburg. This unique calf has four normal legs and two extra complete legs arising behind its head. While young, it’s cute; when it’s full grown and weighs almost 900 pounds (400 kilos), it’s a different kettle of fish. For the present, the dairy farmers are planning to keep the calf, and give him loving care as long as he requires. Tomorrow will take care of itself.

**Unusual Oyster**

Another surprising gift of nature has come from the world of bivalve mollusks: the pearl oyster. These oysters can produce pearls by covering a tiny parasite with nacre, an iridescent substance otherwise known as mother-of-pearl. In general, a pearl appears once in 15,000 oysters. Imagine the surprise of a fish dealer in Yerseke in Zeeland when, at a mussel festival last August, he opened a Japanese oyster fished out of the Oosterschelde and immediately spied a pearl. After examining it more clearly the following day, he was further amazed when he found nine more pearls. A further examination by x-ray discovered that there were actually 21 pearls in the oyster. Such an unusual find led to great interest by many people to own such a unique oyster, so the fish dealer decided to put the pearl-filled oyster up for auction. To his amazement, it was bought for € 2,600, which he then donated to the Princess Máxima Center for the treatment of children with cancer. The buyer, who remains anonymous, donated the oyster to Naturalis, the natural history museum in Leiden, where it can be viewed by the public.
Announcements

IamExpat Fair
This year’s IamExpat Fair will be once again held at Amsterdam’s Westergasfabriek, a former gasworks that serves now as a major cultural venue. The fair will be located in Zuiveringhal West with stalls from a wide range of businesses and organizations covering topics such as education, banking, housing, careers, taxes, family, health and leisure. Workshops and presentations will be running throughout the day in Het Ketelhuis. For free tickets, register on www.iamexpatfair.nl.

Saturday, March 5
10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Westergasfabriek
Pazanistraat 37, Amsterdam

DFAS Art Lecture
Meet me at the Waldorf
Built at the height of the Depression and famous even before it was opened, the Waldorf Astoria Hotel on Park Avenue in Manhattan was enjoyed for its glittering Jazz Age interiors created by leading European designers, artists and sculptors. This is DFAS’ 25th Jubilee Lecture. Lecturer Mary Alexander has 30 years’ experience as a lecturer, with a Master’s Degree in History of Art from University College London. Non-DFAS member fee is €12. www.dfas.nl

Tuesday, March 8
Doors open at 7:30 p.m.
Lecture begins at 8 p.m.
Cultural Centrum Warenar
Kerkstraat 75, Wassenaar

TEFAF – The European Fine Art Fair
The world’s leading art and antiques fair will be held in Maastricht from Friday, March 11 – Sunday, March 20. This massive fair features 50,000 art objects from 275 dealers from 20 countries in a space as large as 7 football fields. What sets this fair apart from others is that, despite the dealers being the world’s finest, each item is still investigated for its quality, condition and authenticity. Even contemporary works are vetted and checked against The Art Loss Register. Enjoy the stimulating atmosphere full of dealers, collectors, academics, art critics and curators from major museums around the world. If you’re unable to attend, consider purchasing the catalog which is a work of art in itself. For more information, go to www.tefaf.com.

St. Patrick’s Festival
The Grote Markt will be transformed into the “Groene Markt” to celebrate all things Irish. There will be an Irish market as well as Irish dancers and bands.

Sunday, March 13
Groete Markt, Den Haag
1 – 7 p.m.

Amsterdam Boat Show
From Wednesday, March 16 – Sunday, March 20, the HISWA Amsterdam Boat Show will be held at the Amsterdam RAI. As the largest watersport exhibition in the Netherlands with over 250 exhibitors and 40,000 visitors anticipated, it features a huge range of boats, nautical accessories, sportswear, vacations and water sports services. There is free entrance for children under 17 who will enjoy the Water Fun Zone where they can surf on real waves. For more information and discounted advance tickets, see www.hiswarai.nl

Keukenhof Opens
Each year more than seven million flower bulbs are planted in the historic park in Lisse, which opens its doors for the spring season on March 24. The central theme for 2016 is the “Dutch Golden Age,” the era when Holland became rich through worldwide trade, featuring a 100,000 flower bulbs in a mosaic of a Delft Blue tile on which the trade across the seas and the rich canal-side houses of Amsterdam are depicted. Consider joining the AWC for a visit (see page 22). www.keukenhof.nl

Movies That Matter Festival
The Movies that Matter Festival, an initiative of Amnesty International, takes place Friday, March 18 – Saturday, March 26 at Filmhuis Den Haag and Theater aan het Spui in The Hague. This festival presents around 70 human rights feature films and documentaries from around the world. Many of these films will be screened for the first and only time in the Netherlands. Most film screenings are followed by an in-depth program which might be an introduction, debate or talk show. Most films are in English or subtitled. For the program and tickets, go to www.moviesthattermatterfestival.nl.

New Bike Parking Downtown
Since last spring, The Hague has done a lot to improve the bike parking situation downtown. New parking facilities for 2,600 bikes have opened on the Grote Marktstraat and Rabbijn Maarsenplein, under the central public library and behind the Bijenkorf. Construction will shortly begin on an underground facility for 8,500 bikes in front of Den Haag Centraal. The use of bikes in The Hague increased 12% between 2010 and 2014 with even larger increases predicted in the future. In addition, all guarded bike lock-ups can now be used free of charge for the first 24 hours.

The Hague to Get Ferris Wheel
The Hague gemeente has given the approval for a 130-foot (40-meter) high Ferris wheel to be constructed on an “island” on the northern side of the Scheveningen Pier. Construction will take at least 15 weeks with the aim to be completed in time for summer. A ride in one of the 30 air-conditioned cabins will take approximately 20 minutes. In addition, approval has been granted for the construction of 13 hotel rooms on the pier. www.pier.nl

Photo courtesy of RAI / HISWA 2015

Photo by Lorraine Bodewes

Photo by Marnix van den Broek
A Modern Art Tour
We will have a special tour of two interesting modern art exhibits at the Gemeentemuseum. If you don’t have a Museumkaart, save time by buying your entrance ticket online in advance at www.gemeentemuseum.nl. Lunch (at own expense) will follow for those interested.

Mondrian & De Stijl
Piet Mondrian and De Stijl (“The Style” was a Dutch artistic movement from 1917 – 1931) finally have a permanent home-base in the Netherlands. Besides Rembrandt and Van Gogh, the body of work of De Stijl is the only art form to be included in the Canon of Dutch History (50 topics providing a chronological summary of Dutch history). Yet until now, there was no one place in the Netherlands where you could go to get an overview of this most important Dutch contribution to modern art. Without De Stijl, not only the homes and streets, but the very cityscapes of the western world would look very different. Moreover, the group that grew up around Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg continues to inspire artists, designers and architects to this day. The Gemeentemuseum is now dedicating an entire wing to Mondrian & De Stijl, allowing the museum to showcase the world’s largest Mondrian collection.

Karel Appel: A Retrospective
Internationally, Karel Appel (1921 – 2006) is perhaps the most renowned Dutch artist of the latter half of the 20th century. Since it is now ten years since his death, it is time for a new generation of visitors to look afresh at an oeuvre that many people still associate with Cobra and the 1950s, although it actually spanned a period of more than 60 years. In this major retrospective, therefore, Cobra is just one of the many aspects of Appel’s work that will be reconsidered from a number of (sometimes unexpected) points of view. The show will revisit, for example, the artist’s early interest in psychopathological art, his stylistic experiments and his highly personal – and sometimes almost abstract – interpretation of traditional subjects like the nude, the portrait and the urban or rural landscape. This exhibition will be a pivotal part of a wider international reappraisal of Appel’s work, which is also to include exhibitions in Paris, London and Washington.

Mauritshuis
Mauritshuis Plein 29, Den Haag
€ 12.50 Members (€ 15 nonmembers)
PLUS Museum Entrance Fee (€ 14 or free with Museumkaart)
Minimum 10 / Maximum 15
Cancellation deadline: March 30
www.gemeentemuseum.nl

Storage Depot
In and Out of Storage Depot Tour by Jane Choy, Docent
Through May 8, the Mauritshuis will display works that are usually hidden from public view. Only 300 items, which is relatively few compared to other art museums, remain behind closed doors in the Mauritshuis’ storage depot. They are often used as replacements, for instance, when a piece goes into restoration or is loaned to another museum for an exhibition. Featuring 52 paintings, the behind-the-scenes exhibition will answer many frequently asked questions including: what kinds of paintings are kept in storage, how did they end up there and why aren’t they hanging in the galleries? Highlights, as well as some low points, will be on show. If you don’t have a Museumkaart, save time by buying your entrance ticket online in advance at www.mauritshuis.nl.

Thursday, April 7
6:15 – 8 p.m.
Mauritshuis

Tour of the Royal Stables
The Royal Stables are responsible for preparing and providing all transport for the Royal Family. In the past this was just horses and carriages, but now the Stables also deal with cars, trains and aircraft. The best known of their carriages is the Golden Coach (De Gouden Koets), which was a present from the people of Amsterdam to Queen Wilhelmina on her ascension to the throne at the age of 18 in 1898. The Golden Coach is made of timber, which is covered with a layer of gold leaf. The pictures on the coach depict many allegorical symbols. The Golden Coach is used only once per year on Prinsjesdag, the opening of Parliament on the third Tuesday in September. Join us for an exclusive visit to this heritage-listed site in The Hague that is not normally open to the public. Please bring a valid ID with you.

Wednesday, May 25
2 – 4 p.m.
Royal Stables
Hogewal 17, Den Haag
€ 10 Members (€ 12.50 nonmembers)
Minimum 10 / Maximum 25
Cancellation deadline: May 12
www.gemeentemuseum.nl

Highlights of Mauritshuis’ Storage Depot
Our Indian Adventure: Part 1

by Celeste Brown

ike many people, I have a “bucket list” of things I want to do or accomplish in my life. Many of them have been checked off (skydiving, performing in front of a large audience, making people laugh/smile) and others are still hanging in suspense (literally, since one of them is bungee jumping!). Little did I know, though, that a friend’s wedding invitation would be the key to crossing two other items off of my list: to visit India and to attend an exotic international wedding.

Sangbreeta is a 28-year-old friend from Leiden Toastmasters. In the last few years, I have become her “Leiden Mom,” a kind of surrogate mother since her own parents live in Nagpur, India. Sangbreeta came to Leiden to complete her Master’s Degree and, upon graduation, she moved over to Leiden to work as a professional and later as a teacher. In the last four months, I have become her “Leiden Mom,” a kind of surrogate mother since her own parents live in Nagpur, India.

My husband Jaap and I were already making plans for our Indian adventure. Where would we go? Nagpur, of course, would be the site of the weekend long festivities. It is located exactly in the middle of the country, which gave us access to anywhere and everywhere. We would be invited to both! Plans began to be hatched.

It was soon announced that they would have two weddings: the first one would be a civil service in Leiden in early August and the second one would be a traditional Hindu wedding in Nagpur in early December. And we would be invited to both! Plans began to be hatched.

The August wedding was a typical Dutch wedding at the Leiden Stadhuis (city hall). The most exotic aspect was that several of her aunts wore beautifully colored saris even though her mother chose to wear a chic western-style cocktail dress. It was a special day to meet Sangbreeta’s parents and other family members, knowing we would be seeing them again in India four months later.

The wedding was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for us. The bride’s parents had organized a weekend full of special events for their family and close friends as well as their 25 international guests. Friday evening was a get-together dinner at a local private club. The food was prepared and served outside, which was perfect for us. Despite the fact that December is “winter” in India, the 77° F (25° C) daytime temps made it comfortable “summer” temps for those of us from the Netherlands. No coats/​jackets for us! The female Indian guests were ablaze in beautifully colored and decorated saris and the men in long kurtas and Nehru-style vests.

Saturday morning was a tour of a local Hindu temple for the international guests. After lunch, all the ladies were treated to mehndi which is henna applied in elaborate designs to the hands of the bride and her family and friends. A “bangle man” from the local market was on hand to make sure the ladies’ arms were sufficiently decorated with colorful bracelet bangles. Sunday afternoon was the haldi ceremony where turmeric paste is applied to the faces of the bride and groom by family and friends.

Both mehndi and haldi rituals are Vedic customs from the Vedic period of Indian history when the oldest scriptures of Hinduism were written. They are intended to be a symbolic representation of the outer and the inner sun. Vedic customs are centered on the idea of “awakening the inner light.” It is tradition to wear yellow clothing to the haldi, which I suspect comes from the possibility of getting yellow turmeric on your clothing which won’t come out in the wash! >> 42

Our first major decision was to decide how long we would be gone: three weeks. So we started with that parameter. Five days in Nagpur and the rest on the road. We also decided that during our time on the road, we wanted to spend two nights in each location/hotel so we would save ourselves from the daily exhaustion of traveling, sightseeing and then moving on.

Our final itinerary? Delhi for two days before heading to Nagpur for the wedding festivities followed by two weeks of traveling: Agra, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kumbhalghar, Udaipur, with Mumbai as our final stop. It turned out to be a good schedule, and we returned home on December 20 with an unexpected extra suitcase, over 2,000 photos, and unforgettable memories of the sights and sounds of spectacular India.

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Saturday evening was the Sangeet, the traditional song and dance evening. What fun! Everyone enjoyed the full dinner and open bar, but the entertainment was the highlight. The bride and groom created a skit to illustrate the beginning of their relationship and family members contributed their talents as well. Friends were asked to participate in the group numbers and the groom’s medical school friends “let their hair down” as dutiful back-up dancers. The evening ended with a dancing free-for-all!

The highlight of the weekend was, of course, the wedding evening itself. Since the couple would prefer not to have their photos published, you’ll have to take my word that the bride looked stunning in her red and gold sari and the groom spectacular in his traditional long Indian jacket and pointed shoes. The reception started around 7:30 p.m. as invited guests ascended the decorated stage to greet the couple and their parents, present their gift, and have a photo taken. Dinner for the 500 guests was served buffet-style both inside and out.

The wedding ceremony started around 10:30 p.m., a later time than originally planned since it was deemed necessary that it take place “at the most auspicious time.” It began with the Hindu priest, father of the bride, and groom sitting under a square canopy in the hotel garden. The father and groom took turns repeating the old Sanskrit text that was read aloud by the priest. About an hour later, Sangbreeta (hiding her face behind two betel leaves) was carried by male friends (including Jaap) in seven circles around the groom, then Sangbreeta and Justin threw flower garlands around each other’s necks seven times as well. They then took their places on the ground under the tent with the priest for more rituals: a fire ceremony, the bride’s mother holding a scarf over the bride’s head, the couple’s hands being tied together to symbolize their connection, walking together on seven nuts on top of seven betel leaves on the ground to symbolize moving together through life’s hardships, the groom applying red powder to the bride’s hair to mark her as a married woman, family members repeating Sanskrit text and tossing flower petals on the couple, and much more. The ceremony ended at 1:30 a.m.

During the wedding, I sat in my front row seat watching the rituals unfold in front of me, mesmerized by the colors, unfamiliar activities, unknown language, but somehow understanding the reasons behind all of it. Universal themes of love and connection seem to exist beyond the boundaries of language.

Next to the wedding rituals, another “ritual” was taking place. It is a tradition that the bride and groom are barefoot during the ceremony. The bride’s friends and groom’s friends go to great lengths to steal and hide the shoes of “the other side.” If the shoes aren’t located by the end of the wedding, negotiations begin to determine how much money must be paid to get the shoes back. Somehow Jaap and I were unaware of this tradition until, at a certain moment during the wedding, a friendly scuffle broke out as some friends tried to steal (or recover) shoes. During an attempt to protect the groom’s shoes, the best man’s trousers split in a very embarrassing way. By the end of the evening, the groom’s friends paid 7,000 rupees (€98) to get the groom’s shoes back that originally cost only 600 rupees (€8.40)! By that point, everyone was happy (they were paid) or tired (it was a long weekend). The bride’s family went to find some food since they hadn’t eaten all evening. The hotel was very accommodating and no one went to bed on an empty stomach.

The next day, the international guests who hadn’t yet departed and local family gathered one last time to share stories and email/Facebook addresses over lunch. Everyone was tired but happy, but none happier than the bride’s parents. Dipankar and Khushi Moitra are the proud father and mother who had traveled to the Netherlands in August to see their daughter marry in the Dutch style. But they were committed to giving their only child a full Bengali wedding, complete with cultural traditions from their home city of Calcutta. They were the ultimate gracious hosts, smiling and greeting everyone with their innate warmth. Jaap and I feel a strong kinship with Dipankar and Khushi and we look forward to welcoming them to our home when they come to visit Sangbreeta and Justin in the Netherlands.

Next month’s Going Dutch will include “Our Indian Adventure Part II” which will focus on our travels, our misconceptions of the country and its people, and some “lessons learned.” Stay tuned.
After the Holidays Get-Together

Celeste Brown graciously opened up her home once more to the AWC Women with Dutch Partners group. It was, as the Dutch like to say, very gezellig with about 20 AWC Members in attendance. Anne van Oorschot took the train all the way from Tilburg and then a bike rental from the railroad station. That’s dedication!

Everyone brought a favorite finger food. Kim Vered’s salad was a huge success. She even had to email the recipe to everyone.

We exchanged fun gifts and then some of the ladies “stole” gifts! Don’t get worried. It was part of a game Celeste introduced. The idea was that if you picked a gift you didn’t like, you could look around and steal one from someone else. The victim of the theft could then pick another gift. One woman stole house slippers and another stole a clock, in spite of the fact that the person who had originally chosen the clock had hidden it from sight. It made for some good laughs and, of course, character analyses!

On a serious note, it was a gathering of women who have much to share whether they are new or have lived in Holland a long time. Women married to Dutchmen have different experiences. They bridge two worlds. That can be a challenge or a blessing and sometimes a bit of both.

Celeste and all who joined in the fun hope that even more of our friends will join us next year.

Thank you, Celeste. You reached out and we shared a very happy beginning of 2016 together.
I
n last month’s issue of Going Dutch I shared some thoughts about arriving in Switzerland for a skiing holiday. Those adventures now continue as we make our way onto the ski slopes.

Upon our arrival in Thun, Switzerland, I wished to be annointed in Swiss fairytale dust, so we climbed up the mountain to the castle. We were greeted by a small sign on the door that said: Closed. We carefully picked our way through a garden trail, stepping over scaffolding and refurbishing tiles, cement, etc. until we arrived at another gate with a sign that said: Open at 1 p.m. With a few hours to kill, we decided to walk down the mountain to explore the old city.

The walk down was really nice, because we were on an ingenious medieval covered walkway. This gazebo acts as an intersection between four crossroads. Turn right or left and you can cut across the mountain to residences. Continue downward and enter the old town. Go upward and the final destination is the castle and churches. The mountain pedestrian highway is still in use, as many of the locals passed by with their shopping bags. We made our way down a steep wood-arched walkway to the town center. Thun traces its heritage from the 12th century. It was initially established as a river crossing and grew to become a flourishing market town by the 15th century.

When we reached the town, I realized what the guidebook meant when it mentioned “walking on rooftops.” Obere Hauptgasse is a doubledecker street with shops above and below the balconies. Thun was a major ceramics center from 1880 to 1930. The well-known Thuner Majolica is very distinctive slip-decorated earthenware using bright colors against a dark background. For a long time, pottery was practiced on small farms to produce goods for their own use called bauernkeramik, meaning farmer or peasant-style ceramics. Demand for peasant-style ceramics soared with tourism in the 19th century. In the trade’s heyday, many manufacturers presented decorative ceramics, exhibition pieces and Thun Majolica at fairs in Paris and London. Sadly, not one shop in Thun carried Majolica pottery. Our day in Thun ended with a nice fish dinner (no, not tunafish!).

With Grindelwald out of the running for skiing, Jerry decided that Murren was our best bet. We stopped in Lauterbrunnen to rent skis. I think of ski preparation as a dark mathematical art. You present your boot size, height, weight and then calculations are done to ensure maximum speed and safety for the slopes. I was relieved that the man behind the counter turned out to be from Montana. He seemed relieved to talk in English. We had a chat and I ended up with Blizzards, complete with my name (as shown here). Jerry loaded the skis into the car and we set off for two days of adventure.

The Murren ski lifts are about 20 minutes away from Lauterbrunnen. I must admit that I feel a bit like a child when it comes to ski prep. Jerry hustles around, pulling off my snow boots and easing my feet into the ski boots; he tightens the straps and clicks while at the same time somehow managing to get ready himself. I sat on the tailgate and started to pull off my boots. I reached around for my ski boots… wait a minute. I found one, but where was the other? I had a flashback: I left my ski boot on the sales counter at Intersport. I smiled up at Jerry. “What’s wrong?” he asked. “Well, I think we need to re-boot this ski session.” “Re-boot? What are you talking about?” I gulped, “I left my other ski boot at the store.” Just like in cartoons, his eyes popped out. “Let’s go get it.” We piled everything back into the car. We raced back to Intersport, where Montana grinned and held out the boot. Then zoom – back to the parking lot.

Here is the first gondola from the central parking. You can see Jerry’s Blizzard skis with my baby Blizzards hiding in the corner. As we got further up, we could see more of the valley. I think that skiers feel a certain anticipation in the gondolas. Most of them are excited about hitting the slopes. I take the opportunity to see what ski clothes are popular. Last year, transparent ski boots were the rage.
I learned to ski in Colorado when I was already in my 30s with a fully developed sense of terror of being out of control. Jerry learned as a teenager and was fearless on the black slopes – skiing backwards, downhill, anything for a challenge. We are a perfect mismatch. I am cautious. I worry that I will fall. I worry that I’ll go too fast. I worry that we won’t have time for lunch. Don’t get me wrong, I do like to ski. I like to ski slowly down a wide road with a small tilt and no bumps. The last time I skied in Austria, a kamikaze snowboarder ran me down. Since then, I like to ski by myself. Lots of people make me very nervous and I tend to talk to myself while I ski, “I can DO it. I CAN do this. Ohhhhhhh!”

I like how most skiers always take a pause to observe before they begin. I am on the lazy winding blue road, which is intersected by several red and black routes. Here a group of skiers decide to go off track. They are making final adjustments before they take the plunge. As I pass them, I am muttering to myself, “left pole, RIGHT pole…” as I have a bad tendency to use the wrong pole. Jerry is skiing behind me on this first run. We make it all the way down with a few totters and no falls. I am ecstatic, “Let’s go again!”

We ski into the chair lift area. On the way up, I tell Jerry that he can ski the blacks, as my challenge will remain on the blues. He usually skis two slopes to my one. The first day, I did not fall at all. The second day, however, all I did was fall. In fact, I fell flat on my face right before the chairlift. It was one of the awkward positions – the one that coined the word “akimbo.” I couldn’t seem to coordinate leg movement with my skis on. It was exhausting to try to maneuver myself to a sitting position, which seemed to take an ice age with other skiers whizzing past me. Suddenly, a helping hand was there – a snowboarder. When Jerry schussed in five minutes later, I proclaimed, “Lunch break.”

Even though lunch on the mountain is always expensive, I love this part of ski culture. It is ski-in and ski-out mentality – always the same uninspired fare of bratwurst, spaghetti and schnitzel – but there is something special about a casual meal in your ski clothes under the open sky, watching adults play in the snow. We had two mountain lunches. I’ll tell you about the first one, but then I’ll have to kill you…. as we were on Her Majesty’s Secret Lunch Service.

The James Bond film was shot here in 1969 and the production company actually co-funded the completion of the revolving restaurant. If you look at it through your Bond eyeglasses, you will see Piz Gloria, the secret allergies investigation clinic owned by the dastardly Ernst Blofeld. In the movie, it is supposed to be close to St Moritz; hence the name Piz for mountain. But who cares about the movie when Mother Nature can put on a 24-hour show of 200 mountain peaks? For those who really need a bond-ing experience, the restaurant also has an exhibition, shop and film screenings. However; I was there on a lunch mission. If I had not been at an altitude of 9,150 feet (2,790 meters) and wearing my Blizzards, my order would have included a “shaken-not-stirred” martini.

Unfortunately, it has lost a bit of its 1960s glam; definitely more French fry sightings then Diana Rigg sightings. Sadly, Piz Gloria has become a truck stop in the sky – but hey dude, there is a thin line between tacky and cool! The allure and sexy setting keeps a snazzy, fizzy, piz-zy excitement in the air. Confession: I wandered about taking a million photos of the mountain peaks. The majesty of nature was more intoxicating than a gin martini.

There are certain things that a camera cannot capture – the pounding of your heart, the sunshine, the blue sky as a parasailer floats by, the stillness, the gurgling of your stomach after a full meal of spatzle laced with smoked bacon… so to end my Schilthorn experience, I will show you the Lauterbrunnen Valley – all the way to the mist of Lake Thun of the mighty River Aare.

The next installment: travel with me by rail to the top of Europe in freezing storm conditions and then re-join the Aare River in the historical Swiss capital of Bern.
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