

When Claire was studying at Louvain

(translation)

During the academic year 1949-1950, the last year of university in Leuven, my sister and I were staying at the end of the Redingenstreet, opposite the large Beguine convent then being restored. At the rear of the house, the landscape consisted only of cultivated fields. Nearby, we had an outdoor swimming pool and very conveniently the stop of the vicinal tram Tervueren-Louvain, as well as a chapel opened in a Fathers' convent where we could attend a morning mass.

Our landlady was a milkwoman. Every morning the milk was brought at 5 am, which woke inevitably students housed on the street side. The large barrels were transferred into the cart of the landlady which then hitched the horse and would distribute milk to the retail dairies in the city. The horse had his stable in the garden at the rear of the house and had to cross the house, with a few steps, to reach the street. This amused the 13 students living in the house. During her last visit to Hurtebise in 2012, Claire was even mentioning the joy that we had to see this horse in the house. The husband of the landlady did nothing, it seems, and teenage son had to sleep in the bathroom (on a board put on the tub) to save a room.

We stayed at two per room and we took the evening meal together. For breakfast, it was served up to 9 h . and each one would eat according to her schedule. At noon, we had lunch in town or at home upon request. In each room, there was a coal stove that we maintain in our own way. The landlady would provide us with buckets of coal. A very good relationship had been created in our group, especially for me with the four ALM (that was the name of the association at the time) who occupied two rooms on the third floor. Most of us were in last year of studies. Usually we used to leave for the weekend and come back on Sunday night by train or vicinal tram.

The four ALM were : Claire Vellut and Thérèse Simillon, called Simi (†) in the final year medical, Henriette Servais (†) and Simone Bulle, called Bulle (from Switzerland) who studied - I think - pedagogy. We were real friends. We were happy to find ourselves at the evening meal, always very happy, where we exchanged our ideas, our day's adventures and Claire willingly would tell "stories of doctors", a bit racy of course. She also told us that as a child, she really believed to be born in a cabbage, which delighted us ! Every day I joined them for the evening prayer, prepared by one of us in turn.

Having completed my studies in history in July 1950, I joined the Benedictine Abbey of St. Gertrude at Louvain three months later on 29 September 1950. On April 8, 1951, I was admitted to taking the habit ("vesture"), that is to say starting my novitiate. This ceremony takes place in presence of the community but also the family and friends and relations. For my vesture they were very many (maybe 200 people !) since my parents were well known in Uccle, where I was born. It was on that occasion that the attached photo was taken. Three of the four ALM attended the ceremony. The photo is taken in the garden of the St. Gertrude Abbey, we see from left to right : Henriette, Claire, myself and Bulle.

From 1949-1950 until her death, I maintained friendly relationship with Claire.

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