

“American Ambassador Needs to Shorten Visit to Gent by ‘Incident’ with Mother-in-Law”

“High-Level Visit Falls from Stairs”

“Howard Gutman, the American Ambassador, needed to shorten his official visit to Gent unexpectedly due to an unfortunate incident. During the visit, his 87 year-old mother-in-law fell in the city hall from the stairs leading up to the Throne Room. There was a moment of panic, but in the end, the damage remained in the end limited to a broken wrist.”

“Still there was a little panic for a moment, at 12 o’clock yesterday noon when the American Ambassador and his spouse – escorted by a delegation from the city administration – were getting explanations about the works of art in the Throne room. From the hallway, all of a sudden, stumbling and panicky screaming sounded. It became apparent that the 87 year-old mother-in-law of the Ambassador had fallen from the one but highest step of the stairs, and had landed five steps below on her back on the floor in the hallway. Her husband – worried – was sitting bent over her.”

“Mayor Daniël Termont himself immediately called an ambulance and also let doctor Dino Barillari, who in his function of consul for Italy was also part of the visit, come back for a first check-up.”

“Open Wound”

“From that first check-up appeared that the woman had an open wound at the back of her head, but no motor issues, and she also alertly reacted to what was said to her.”

““You are still with us and it will remain that way. You are apparently feeling guilty that you are messing up the visit. That is the mother-in-law I know. You are 86 and you are going to make the Belgian press here’, the Ambassador – who at that moment had already been calmed about the seriousness of the matter – joked. ‘We will say that you prevented an attack. I just got a gold medal and a dragon from the mayor. You deserved that gold medal now, I will keep the dragon.’”

“To which the mother-in-law replied: ‘I am actually 87, not 86!’ In the meantime, the nurses were on the spot and after consultations, the Ambassador decided that he would himself continue the visit and that his spouse and father-in-law together with someone from the city admin staff would go to the emergency service of the AZ Sint-Lucas hospital. It was there that a broken wrist was diagnosed.”

“The delegation after went to the port for a lunch and a tour. The intention was to meet each other again for a visit to the ‘Adoration of the Lamb’ at the St.-Baafs Cathedral. Until the last moment, that remained the intention, because the mother-in-law could quickly leave the hospital, but because she felt a little weak, the company in the end chose to take the direction Brussels, instead of city center.”

The two articles in the grey boxes read:

<p><u>“‘Luckily It Ended Well’”</u></p> <p>“Mayor Daniel Termont – on the outside at least – remained calm during the ‘incident’ in city hall, with his BlackBerry called right away an ambulance and in a business-like and clear-cut way reported what had happened. Immediately after he summoned a doctor present in the city hall.”</p> <p>“In the late afternoon, the mayor was able to heave a sigh of relief. ‘Always a pity of course, such an incident, but those things can happen. It came out that a courier of the city admin staff had spontaneously offered help both to the father-in-law as the mother-in-law of the ambassador, but those people friendly declined the help. The ambassador took it all well. Upon saying goodbye, I have invited him to come to the ‘Gentse Feesten’ in an informal way’, so the mayor said.</p>	<p><u>“‘Each Year 10,000 Euros for Celebration of Treaty of Ghent’”</u></p> <p>“The college of aldermen will on Thursday discuss the proposal to put aside from now on 10,000 Euros per year from the city marketing fund for the preparation of the commemoration in 2014 of the Treaty of Ghent, which in 1814 put an end to a conflict between the United States and Great Britain.”</p> <p>“A non-profit organization prepares the commemoration of hat celebration and would get the necessary means for that. Mayor Termont ended his speech yesterday already with an allusion to that celebration: ‘Whoever is at that moment mayor of this city, he will in 2014 receive the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the President of the United States. But President Obama is of course already welcome earlier too.’”</p>
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