

## **Ambassador in Villers-la-Ville**

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### **“The U.S. Ambassador on a Visit to the Abbey”**

“In the U.S., His Excellency sometimes likes to be on a TV studio. Profile of the friendly Ambassador who visited the abbey of Villers-la-Ville.

“U.S. Ambassador Howard Gutman has visited the abbey of Villers-la-Ville. He was first received by the authorities at the city hall, where he signed the golden book and exchanged the traditional gifts with Mayor Emmanuel Burton. Friendly, dynamic, and with an efficient sense of humor, the U.S. diplomat has already visited more than 300 Belgian communes and cities. ‘I sometimes visit small ones where there is just one post office and one pub. Having not been announced, I simply go to the city hall, which is sometimes closed, then I go to the local pub and introduce myself,’ the Ambassador explains.

“During the meeting at the city hall, the Ambassador inquired about the situation of the commune, its unemployment rate, and its specific problems. ‘Is the crisis hurting you?’ he asked. ‘In the U.S., unemployment is a major problem,’ the Ambassador added. The Mayor, Emmanuel Burton, considers that the crisis (in Belgium) is more political than economic.

“Being a diplomat, the Ambassador obviously refrained from asking questions about the institutional crisis, questions to which no one would have been able to give an answer. About the Belgian weather, the Ambassador said that it changes all the time, being sunny one hour and then raining the next. ‘Except at the coast, where it rains each time I go there. I do not know why,’ the Ambassador noted.

“He will attend the July 21 ceremonies. ‘I went to rent a tuxedo to attend the Te Deum. I only wear that once a year.’ His residence in Brussels is next to the Park and he knows that there will be a lot of Belgians in the Park. ‘Last year, I was in the U.S. on July 21 and I went to the Belgian Embassy, which is superb,’ he said.

“Accompanied by the local authorities and his staff, Howard Gutman visited the abbey, with Andre Schneider as a guide. He learned that the first real multinational

existed as early as the 13rd century, with 500 Cistercian abbeys throughout Europe. At the end of the visit, the Ambassador and his staff were received at the Mill of the Abbey restaurant.

“Before being appointed Ambassador by President Barack Obama, Howard Gutman was considered one of the best Washington lawyers by the *Washingtonian* magazine. Having graduated from the Harvard Law School and the Columbia University, he once was the special assistant of FBI Director William H. Webster. He was also advisor within the Obama Committee during the Presidential campaign. He appeared in the K Street TV Series and – no surprise – played the role of a lawyer in Tim Robbins’ Noise movie.”