

Conduct class in Walloon Belgian



A SIX WEEK COURSE in Walloon Belgian is being taught Tuesday evenings at Algoma High by Josie Wautlet.

There has been much interest in learning to understand the Walloon dialect among those of Belgian ancestry in this area. Besides the one at Algoma, Mrs. Wautlet has taught two other evening courses at Southern Door High and is on her third.

People take the course for various reasons — some plan to visit their "old country," while others just wish to learn more about Belgian culture.

Mrs. Wautlet (right) is pictured with her Algoma class. From the left are: Seated — Jean Martens, Ethel Tabordon, Hildegard Jonet, Millie Vandeveld, Esther Mraz and Lynn Mraz. Standing — Wayne Tabordon, Elmer Willems, Ewald Martens and Ken Mraz.

It's a little ironic for these people to be studying

Walloon because their ancestors were strictly forbidden to speak Walloon in school and were punished if they did.

Walloon is one of two major Belgian dialects — the other being Flemish. "In Belgium each community has its own special twang in the way they pronounce their dialect," noted Mrs. Wautlet.

There wasn't any material available to help Mrs. Wautlet teach the course so she had to make her own. She translated a French text into Walloon and is using that for a course guide. She has written to Belgium to see if she can obtain a Walloon primer.

Mrs. Wautlet learned to speak Walloon during her childhood. Her grandfather, Francois LeGrave, lived with her and he only spoke Belgian and French. So everyone else in the household used Walloon to speak to him.

— Record-Herald Photo