

# Worth repeating

## Writer passes past to future generations

ALGOMA — Josie Wautlet did more than listen to and remember the tales of her Belgian grandfather.

Her most recent publication is the story of her grandfather, Francois LeGrave, who lived with her family. "His story just had to be told," she said.



**Lois Kerin**  
Life after 60

*Francois* is a book about a Belgian immigrant who came to America in 1856. Wautlet feels his tales are worth repeating for more than their

historical value. They reflect the personal hardships endured by the families that cleared the land and built farms, only to have them destroyed by the fire of 1871 that raged from Peshtigo to Lake Michigan.

Later, other families lost homesteads in a tornado. Her family found safety in a well.

More personal tragedy came to Francois and Henriette with the deaths of three children in a diphtheria epidemic.

But there are lighter moments and aspects to recount, such as her grandfather's green thumb.

She tells his story in a chatty way, bringing to life the joys, sadness and challenges.

Josie, who will be 76 next

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— Josie Wautlet  
Algoma writer

month, was born in Rosiere, graduated from Brussels High School and Door County Teachers College, and spent several summers at the University of Wisconsin. She taught for four years in her neighborhood, Gardner, which is now Little Sturgeon, and Misiere, working in two-room schoolhouses. She wishes values like truth and honesty could be added to school curriculums. She's proud that her five children are college graduates.

Because her husband, Ed, liked to farm, they retired to Algoma in 1975. Now he is her eyes, reading the work she does each day. Her vision is impaired.

Her disability does not stop her from writing or from telling her grandfather's story to audiences.

"I write every day, mostly from memory," she said.

Josie has published two books of poetry, and her byline has appeared in weekly newspapers and the *Farm Wife News* magazine. She belongs to Door County Writers and Wisconsin Regional Writers Club. "Liz Howell is my critic," she said of the writer who also lives in Algoma.

Josie used her teaching skills while she worked with Homemaker Clubs as a county chairman. She developed and taught a course in Walloon for Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, and authored Walloon tapes and study guides that she still sells.

She and Ed have been to Belgium and have hosted Belgian families. They are members of the Belgian-American Club.

One of her recent efforts had nothing to do with writing, but in preserving still another facet of her grandfather — his bed.

She and her sister, Grace, traced the bed from family to family until they found it in a hay mow.

"We lowered it through a trap door," she said. The bed is now in the Belgian farmhouse at Heritage Hill. Josie served as a resource person for Heritage Hill when the Belgian area was being developed.

Published by Zebra Enterprises, *Francois* is available at the Algoma Christian Book Shop, the Old Country Store, Algoma, and from Josie Wautlet at 1010 Buchanan St., Algoma, Wis. 54201. By mail, the cost is \$6.95 plus \$1.25 shipping for one copy, 50 cents for additional copies. Wisconsin residents add 5 percent sales tax.

*Kerin's column features active and interesting people over 60. If you have a suggested profile, write to Kerin at Press-Gazette, P.O. Box 19430, Green Bay, Wis., 54307-9430.*



Press-Gazette photo by John Roemer

**In print:** Writer Josie Wautlet's latest publication tells the story of her Belgian immigrant grandfather.