

# No small accomplishment

*Vera Golini, a professor in Italian Studies at St. Jerome's, is now director of Women's Studies at Waterloo*

**W**hen our students graduate they take with them something new and valuable," says Vera Golini, who began a three-year appointment as director of Women's Studies at the University of Waterloo in July 1997. "They leave with a bountiful knowledge of the history, the culture, and the accomplishments of women."

Golini's move to an administrative office after 22 years of full-time teaching and program development (she set up the minor program in

Italian and Canada's first Italian language correspondence courses in the early '80s) is not as dramatic a shift as it might appear. A professor in Italian Studies at St. Jerome's University, Golini continues to serve on a dozen boards and committees, including current terms on the University of Waterloo Board of Governors and Senate. She is also vice-president of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies. "But first comes my commitment to my teaching and my students, who motivate my work in the service sector."

In fact, Golini still teaches in both Italian and Women's Studies: this year, a course on Canadian Women Writers of International Origins. Jocelyne Legault, advisor to Waterloo's

vice-president (academic) on Interdisciplinary Programs, says students' comments on Golini's teaching in Women's Studies are "glowing," and adds, "Already she is giving her own imprint to the program." Michael Higgins, academic dean of St. Jerome's, says that her teaching in Italian is "quite simply excellent."

Together with Mary Clare, the Women's Studies administrative secretary, Golini helps students make informed choices from the program's great variety of courses. Women's Studies courses come from all over the campus: about 50 in all, including 16 from St. Jerome's, with 28 more from Wilfrid Laurier University.

Waterloo has just launched a four-year BA, which will see its first graduates in fall 1998. Seven courses are also approved at the graduate level, while eight courses are available by distance education: more than at any other Ontario university.

A well-stocked resource room is located beside the administrative offices in the PAS building. And, especially for researchers in the social sciences, the Doris Lewis Rare Book Room in the Dana Porter Library has "the best retrospective archives in Canada relating to the history of women," according to Susan Saunders Bellingham, head of Special Collections. Waterloo has been collecting in this field for more than 30 years.

The Golini family came to Canada from Italy in 1956. "After the war, we came from nothing—no money, no language. All we had was a desire to have a future better than what we could have back home." As an undergraduate, Golini supplemented a bursary and scholarship from McMaster University with income from whatever jobs she could find. "My wish for graduate studies was confirmed after a summer job at a glass factory in Hamilton, where I worked shifts on the assembly line. It was a job from hell, because of the heat, the speed, the smoke, the sleep I lost. And the oppression I witnessed, and the swearing I had to hear night and day. After that, I knew for certain that I would not stop school until I had gone as far as I could possibly go."

With an American scholarship, she earned an MA in Italian at the University of Colorado. A teaching assistantship, a scholarship from the University of California, and a Canada Council grant let her complete her PhD at Berkeley. "That was when women with PhDs were relatively few," she notes. "It was a sign of real accomplishment to have earned one's degrees at different universities."

She achieved her ambition, but at a price. "In the '60s and '70s it was much more difficult than now to attain a profession, and have a 'life' too," she observes. "Now, when students ask me about personal choices, I encourage them to find a balance in their lives. Women today have more choices than ever, and that is progress in itself."

Today, Golini's life is not devoted exclusively to the university. She is also a board member and cultural director of the K-W Italian Cortina Club. The club's social and cultural activities involve people of all ages, including children, through the Italian language program Golini set up in 1979.


Publishing on Italian literature and Italian Canadian women writers, and compiling a bibliography on Italian Canadian writings keep Golini busy. But she still finds time to jog, go horseback riding, swim, and visit her family in Hamilton. "I am very close to my family: it is among the many pleasures that have kept me in southern Ontario." That, and the family warmth that has been "the centrepiece of life at St. Jerome's" over her more than two decades there. 



Photo: Ron Hewson

*As director of Women's Studies, Vera Golini helps students find their way through the great variety of courses and resources available at Waterloo.*