

Family stories

In some families, choosing St. Jerome's is becoming a tradition

“We encouraged the children from the time they were toddlers to aim for university,” says **Liz Hoover (née Walsh, BA '75, Geography)**. “Of course we hoped they'd do well academically. But more than that, it was such a positive experience for us. We would never trade those years for anything, and we wanted very much for them to share that joy.”

When the time came for daughter Amy to decide on a university, Liz and her husband **David Hoover (BA '74, Religious Studies)**, tried to step lightly. “We never overtly tried to influence Amy's choice,” David says. “We really left it up to her.”

“But when she chose St. Jerome's, we were delighted,” Liz adds.

David's earliest memory of St. Jerome's features the Registrar of the time, Brian Eby. “I had some scheduling problems when I arrived and he told me to go to the gym and take it easy for a few hours. When I got back it was all worked out. He really went out of his way to make us welcome.”

“I never felt lost at St. Jerome's,” Liz says. “Coming from a very close-knit family and circle of friends, I was nervous when I first visited the

qualification courses for religion. They both feel that the integration of spiritual and academic life at St. Jerome's influenced their career choice. Not that Liz needed much encouragement, coming from a family in which teaching is “just something you do naturally.”

Amy and her younger brother Jeff heard all about St. Jerome's from their earliest years. At family get-togethers, especially with Liz's sister, **Margaret Bak (BA '78, English)** and brother-in-law, **Michael Bak (BMath '77)**, memories were aired and photo albums handed around.

The children heard about how their parents met at a football game and got acquainted while making preparations for Sunday evening Mass. They liked hearing how their father played basketball for St. Jerome's and had friends on the national-championship-winning Waterloo team.

“They did some crazy things,” says Amy, now a third-year English student. “They both took part in floor runs—the guys sneaked into the girls' residence and grabbed things, and the girls retaliated.”

The Hoovers have returned at least once every year to revisit their old haunts. Amy recalls those trips with fondness. While still a very small child, she became familiar and comfortable with the campus. Early on, she made up her mind. “I always said I'd go to St. Jerome's.”

By her final year at high school, however, the decision wasn't so cut and dried. “Choosing a university, Waterloo was third on my list,” Amy says. “But after taking tours of all three, it moved up to first.” The deciding factor was the community atmosphere at St. Jerome's. “I'm a very social person, and at St. Jerome's people seem to be really interested in you and glad to see you.”

Marian O'Connor (née Van Berlo, BA '80, English) and **Frank O'Connor (BA '80, English)** also encouraged their daughter Jessica and son Justin to aim for university. “We always told them what a great time we had at St. Jerome's,” Marian says. “We told them what a wonderful experience it was, both academically and for the sheer fun of it. But when Jessica was choosing a university, Frank and I tried not to say too much. We were afraid that if we tried to encourage her too much, she might decide against it.”

Like David and Liz Hoover, Frank and Marian O'Connor met at St. Jerome's and lived in residence. “Visiting between rooms in residence was very important: the talking, the making friends,” Marian says. “I knew people who had lived off campus and then moved into Notre Dame, and they found residence a much more enjoyable life.”

“What I remember is how easily you could walk into the lounge or into a room in residence and strike up a conversation,” says Frank, who was a prefect in third and fourth years. “You could find something in common with almost



David and Liz Hoover were delighted when daughter Amy (center) chose St. Jerome's.

Photo: Ron Hewson

college on March Break. So many people—how could you ever be a part of that? But St. Jerome's had such a wonderful community spirit, I felt at home from the start.” Later, as a student ambassador, Liz made other potential students feel welcome.

After graduation Liz and David earned BEd degrees and went to teach in Durham Region. Liz is now teaching junior kindergarten in an Oshawa Catholic school, while David, at Monsignor Paul Dwyer high school, is Head of Religious Curriculum and director of additional