When Sister Marie Dorothy Eagan died in 1998, she was the longest living IHM to that point and had been in the congregation for 87 years.

Born on April 10, 1893 in Dowagiac, Mich. She was given the name Anna Loretta. When her mother died leaving five children to be raised, four girls and one boy, her father brought the girls to St. Mary Academy. The “Orphans’ Book” on Sept. 16, 1903 listed Loretta (10), Margaret (8), H. Florence (7), and Eileen (5). Loretta, as she was called, came to Monroe in the fourth grade and entered the IHMs July 2, 1911 at the age of 18.

She began teaching in 1913 and continued for 53 years in Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois. Her first mission was St. Mary, Lorain, Ohio and her last St. Cecilia, in Detroit. Her longest stay was at Immaculata High School (Detroit) from 1941-1956. She was one of the 15 founding members of the faculty. Sister Marie Andre Walsh, the last living member of the group, recalls those days.

She explains that Immaculata girls, like students in all IHM schools, only knew their teachers by their religious names. Information about their birth names was not divulged. So, of course, students were challenged to locate that information and share it. Each sister had a “charge” beyond teaching; Marie Dorothy’s was the bookstore. One day when it was very crowded, a girl entered and called out in a loud voice for all to hear, “Is there a Loretta Eagan in the store today?” Marie Dorothy’s very noticeable blush told all that her name had been announced.

In 1966, she retired from teaching; and, in 1968, she moved to the Motherhouse. She enjoyed growing roses in the rose garden there and painting, which she did well into her nineties. Among her art works were hand painted place mats, note cards with exquisite watercolor roses, and paintings of her favorite subjects, bluebirds.

In 1994, she entered the infirmary. On the occasion of her 104th birthday, she requested beer and received it. On her 105th birthday she had more than 100 visitors, including some former students. A staff member at the time said that her health was very good for 105.

Over her lifetime, she had lived through the terms of eight popes and 20 presidents. She had vivid memories of the old Motherhouse at the corner of Elm and N. Monroe, the opening of the Hall of the Divine Child in 1918, the fire that destroyed the Academy in 1929, and the opening of the new Motherhouse and Academy in 1932.

Her number in rank was 479, and when she died Oct. 24, 1998 at the age of 105, she had lived longer than any sister in the 153 year history of IHM.
Rita McFarland Always Ready to Help

During the 1990s, when IHMs still returned to the Motherhouse from long distances for summer visits, they often stayed in Pagani. It was a hospitality center located in the A-corridor of second floor and was ably managed by Marguerite (Ann Philip) Daly, IHM. The visitors enjoyed being there and having good times together. One such group included sisters Mary Jane (Marie Mark) and Shirley (Marie Robert) Hinks, Marjorie (Ann Gregory) and Rita (Lucita) McFarland, Jean (Incarnita) Burbo, and Anne (Ann Jerome) Crane.

One of the many good times had during those summers involved Rita McFarland, always a very generous person who looked out for the needs of others. When the topic of lending cars to other sisters came up, Rita talked about how she would find it hard to refuse a request, even when the driver’s capability was in question. And, that sparked what happened later.

While Rita was away one afternoon, the group crafted a letter supposedly from Sister Marie Dorothy Eagan who had just recently celebrated her 100th birthday. It read like this.

Dear Sister Rita,
I wonder if you would be so kind as to lend me the use of your car. I have some very important errands I need to run over town Monroe, and I am no longer allowed to drive Motherhouse cars. I would be most grateful for your kindness.

Gratefully,
Sister Marie Dorothy

The note, which was placed in the room where Rita was staying, caught her attention as soon as she returned. After reading it, she was beside herself with worry. Walking into the lounge where the group had gathered for conversation and fun, Rita announced, “I don’t know what I’m going to do. Sister Marie Dorothy asked to borrow my car. I know she shouldn’t be driving anymore, but she said she has some real important errands she has to run and needs a car. How can I say no? But, I’m really worried about my car and I need it to drive back to Florida next week. What if something happens to it?”

That was about all the group could take before breaking into bursts of laughter. And, Rita being Rita, laughed with everyone.

12 IHM Centenarians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. Frances Clare Hardy</th>
<th>1895-1996</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Rose Magdalen Heuser</td>
<td>1898-1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sr. Christine Hattendorf</td>
<td>1905-2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sr. Elizabeth Zeestraten (Alexia)</td>
<td>1908-2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sr. Therese Martin Hart</td>
<td>1911-2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sr. Rose Xavier Dunn</td>
<td>1908-2014</td>
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<td>Sr. Isabel</td>
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