Sister Dorothy McDaniel grew up in Holly, Mich., attending public schools for 11 years. She wanted to go to a Catholic high school but there were none nearby. She contacted three boarding schools but none wanted to admit someone in her senior year.

She told her pastor, who contacted the IHMs, saying he thought she had a vocation. “I didn't know this,” she says. “I had no intention of becoming a nun.”

Sister Dorothy was accepted to St. Mary Academy. During that year, “I fell in love with the nuns. They were just so prepared, so educated, so willing to help you.”

She wasn’t convinced she had a vocation, but a school retreat changed that. Her friends had jokingly warned her that the retreat was “where the nuns snatch you.” After the retreat, a friend asked if she was going to become a nun.

“I laughed and said yes. I was teasing. But that ‘yes’ reverberated in my head. It was the first time I ever gave serious thought to becoming a nun.”

For a graduation gift, Sister Dorothy asked her parents if she could take a road trip; they handed her the car key and their credit card. She and two friends headed west with the stipulation that she had to call her parents each night. She got home and entered St. Mary Convent that August.

Prior to final vows though, Sister Dorothy experienced serious doubt regarding her vocation. Her father died, and she needed permission to attend his funeral. Her father was Protestant, and sisters were not permitted to go to Protestant services. Eventually, permission came to attend the services in the funeral parlor accompanied by another sister. However, she could not go to the gravesite nor stay afterward to comfort the family. Such hurtful rules astonished her and she questioned becoming an IHM. Despite these challenges, her sense of IHM belonging led her to her final profession.

Sister Dorothy started her ministries teaching second grade, followed by teaching math at Immaculata High School. Then she went to St. Stephen, Port Huron, and taught math, chemistry, religion and physics while getting her master’s degree in physics. This was followed by teaching physics, math and chemistry at St. Martin. She taught at Shrine, Marygrove College, Bishop Foley, St. Agatha, Ladywood and Henry Ford Community College.

“I loved teaching. I loved the kids. I still love going back to their reunions.”
Sister Dorothy also spent 15 years in congregational administrative roles, first as treasurer for the Northeast Province, then as Northeast provincial, and finally, as president of the IHM congregation.

She has enjoyed working with so many wonderful people and enjoys the comfortable camaraderie of the sisters. She has become a vegetarian because of the poor treatment of animals, especially in slaughterhouses, and she advocates for vegetarianism.