

**Remembering Margaret (Kevin Mary) Hughes, IHM**  
**Aug. 3, 1940 – Feb. 11, 2021**



Margaret was the fourth child born to Mary Helen (O'Mara) and Paul Hughes. Margaret was very proud of the fact that her dad was a fireman. After he passed away, Margaret never lost her love for firemen. In fact, one of her favorite places was a Thai restaurant near the Eastern Market in Detroit. I believe that she loved it because it is housed in a former firehouse. But now I am ahead of my story.

Before Margaret arrived in the family on Aug. 3, 1940, the Hughes' had a daughter, Julie, and two sons, Patrick and Frank. The fifth child, Paula, was born three years after Margaret. Margaret attended Assumption Grotto Grade School and often recalled a favorite story of her years there. On nice days the teacher would take the class out to the cemetery and let them eat their lunch on the graves. Thus, began a tradition in her adult years of spending time in the cemetery while breaking bread there. A good friend, "old Charlie," or as he sometimes called himself "agent K-9," and I would pack up some food and head to Woodmere Cemetery where graves date back to 1868. Being Irish and having kissed the Blarney on a couple of visits to the old sod, Margaret would look at a grave and tell a story about how the person died and details of how she imagined the person's life. After the story telling was done, we would all sit down on an old blanket and enjoy food, friendship and lots of laughter. But now I am ahead of Marge's life story.

She attended Girls' Catholic Central High School. The family lived on the East Side, not far from Six Mile Road and Gratiot, so she took the Gratiot bus downtown. About her high school days, Marge said that she was not a "goody-two shoes" like her good friend who also entered the IHMs. That friend belonged to sodalities and other pious groups, while Margaret liked to skip a class or two and take the bus downtown to Hudson's where her mother worked. Before going in to see Mrs. Hughes, the girls would smoke a cigarette and then chew a lot of gum. Mrs. Hughes would usually buy them a Coke. During the summer, Marge and her younger sister Paula would go up on the roof of their house, put on baby oil and sunbathe.

Mr. Hughes made a makeshift swimming pool for the kids in the backyard. At some point, he purchased an acre of land in Rochester near Paint Creek where he taught them to swim. The kids would either sleep in the car or in a makeshift trailer and would often go into town for an ice cream cone. Marge was a big fan of Elvis Presley and won an essay contest about why she loved Elvis. She won the prize: a couple of tickets to the premiere of *Love Me Tender* at the Fox Theatre.

In 1958, Margaret answered the call to consecrated life as an IHM Sister, taking the name Sister Kevin Mary. Margaret writes that Joan Figurski and Beverly (Karen) Eklund entered with her. Why did Marge pick the IHMs rather than the Dominicans? Mother Anne Marie told her

that her blue eyes would go better with the IHM blue habit rather than a white one. Later in life she liked to tell stories about the formation years: writing and acting in plays, picking fruit, and the secrecy when a person was leaving. When Fran Mlocek left early one morning and no one was told, all assumed that Fran left the community. There was great delight when she returned that evening after taking the CPA exam!

Margaret was kind to a fault unless she thought someone was abusing or mistreating people or animals. She loved teaching at various schools in Southeast Michigan, including Erie and Port Huron, and particularly in Detroit, where she spent most of her teaching years. She regaled stories about teaching at Holy Trinity and Holy Redeemer. Friend "old Charlie" lived next to Trinity and would sometimes bring boxes of cereal for the students in Margaret's classroom. The students would make little boats to put the cereal in for their snack. A student remarked that Charlie must be rich to be able to give them cereal. During her years at Trinity, Marge's niece Barbara would stay with her during summer breaks and ride bicycles around the neighborhood. People often remarked to Marge, "what a nice daughter you have." Barbara said that she was always amazed at how Marge remembered everyone's names and if she got temporarily stumped, she would slowly say "A...B...C, yes, that is it, Caroline." Many years later when I lived with her, Marge still used the A-B-C method to recall someone's name.

Margaret later ministered in Puerto Rico with Barbara Zimmer for one month. Here, she realized she wanted to work where most people, in her estimation, were very poor. She told this to Mary Jo Maher, who in turn asked Val Knoche to see if Honduras would be a place for Marge to minister. "Margarita," as she was called in Honduras, enjoyed her pastoral ministry with Val Knoche, Barb Zimmer, Anne Marie Hughes and Donna Schroeder. Marge, being Irish and having a "wee bit of the devil" in her, told the local priest that Anne Marie was her mother. The priest believed it, but Anne Marie did not think it was funny at all. Two of Marge's favorite tales of her time in Honduras really stand out. Did you know that Margaret was an ambulance driver? True, Margarita drove a pregnant lady three hours to the hospital after she had one baby and the other one would not come out. All survived! On another occasion a bus overturned, leaving many injured people. Barb and Marge put thin foam-rubber pieces in the bed of their pickup truck and Marge was ready for another three-hour trip to the hospital with the injured. At the hospital, a boy, not badly injured, was separated from his father and the 3-year old was left on a gurney in the hallway. "Hermana Margarita" stayed with the child all night until the doctor came in the morning and reunited father and son.

Margaret returned to Detroit in 1989 when her mother was to undergo heart surgery. Later that year Margaret had surgery herself.

Margaret and I were part of the community at St. Vincent before moving into the IHM Helder Camara house on Hubbard Street. When the house was sold, we moved next door to an upper flat above 97-year old Paul G. At 97, it was difficult for Paul to keep a very clean house. So, Margaret and I took a trip to see my mother in Philadelphia and brought home one of her best "mousers," Nikita, a beautiful black cat with many times nine lives. After a few months or so, a young Main Coon cat came into the yard and made itself at home. Paul told us to bring the cat

in but to give it a German name. We called her "Gretchen." In late 1996 we moved again to a lower flat on Leverette Street located by Ann Currier and became good friends with the landlord, Joe X.

Margaret was very pleased in 1999 when the *Michigan Catholic* newspaper came to photograph us holding Niki and Gretchen for St. Francis Day! Margaret loved many people and all animals (except snakes), so our house was never empty. Friends, "old Charlie" Bulette, Carol Favor and Frank Mullen were frequent visitors among the guests coming for parties and to play cards. Margaret had parties for every occasion: Founders' Day, birthdays, St. Valentine's Day and of course the most sacred of all days, the party after the St. Patrick's Day parade. Many of Margaret's family and friends would never miss the Paddy's Day gathering.

Marge would bring Charlie and some kids from Redeemer down to the fledgling garden, which existed before the current organic garden began, to join me in working in the garden. Their favorite task was harvesting the crops, some of which was taken to the kitchen and some for the kids to share with their families at home. Marge and friends also helped in picking ginkgo leaves on campus that were then sold to another friend who had owned an herbal medicine plant.

In the late 1990s Marge left teaching and returned to Marygrove College to earn certification in correctional science, completing the program in May 2000. In 2001, Commander Barbieri invited Marge to join Detroit's 4<sup>th</sup> precinct as a Legal Advocate for Domestic Violence. This began more than 10 years working with victims of domestic violence through the police districts. Margaret was keenly aware that half of her students from Trinity and Redeemer worked in police services and the other half were in jail. She visited many of her former students in prison. Margaret treasured receiving the Star of Detroit, an honor reserved for police who served above and beyond the call of duty.

Margaret's sister Paula wrote, "Margaret was an ocean of affection, and pure kindness. She was a lover of her rescued cats and her garden. She was a soldier, a healer and an advocate. She loved a good story, a shot of Jameson's Whiskey and Guinness Beer. Many people and animals loved Sister Margaret Hughes. She was kind and composite to both two-legged and four-legged beings. The only people that got Marge's goat, so to speak, were those who were verbally or physically unkind to any of God creation."

Written and delivered by Anne Mamienski, IHM  
Feb. 18, 2021