

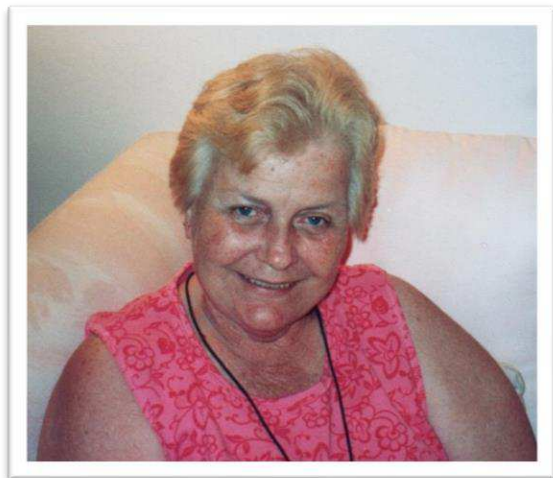
Marie-Esther Haflett, IHM



Marie-Esther, born on Labor Day, always considered it a bonus when the first day of school landed on her birthday because she loved school. If she had a passport early on that recorded address changes, Marie-Esther's would have had many stamps as her family moved often requiring her and her two sisters to change schools each time.

Initially raised Episcopalian, she became Catholic at age of ten. At age 16, while living in Miami, her invitation to consider religious life came via Audrey Hepburn in *"The Nun's Story."* When Marie-Esther asked her pastor about it, she was given a book with information on 300 communities. She chose to write to two congregations and the IHM response set her journey in motion.

With a Michigan stamp now on her passport of life, the high schooler who did her homework while watching TV and practicing flute during commercials, began her journey as an IHM. During the postulate, she recalls questioning the logic of "If we don't go out for our daily walk when it was raining, why would we go when it is snowing given that snow is just frozen rain?"



Her passion for the sequential served her well throughout the years she taught mathematics and economics.

Her early years of frequent moves set the stage for Marie-Esther's missionary spirit. To this day, her favorite quote is from IHM co-founder, Louis Florent Gillet, CSsR, "I desire to be everywhere when I see so many needs." The bulk of her ministerial passport includes Puerto Rico and Africa. Marie-Esther's biggest challenge came when serving in Kenya and

she was asked to teach economics without ever having had a class in it. She did well to stay a step ahead of her students and eventually returned to the U.S. to earn a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Notre Dame.

A providential plane ride in 1993 provided Marie-Esther a ticket for her return to the realm of mathematics. She was heading back to South Africa at a time when visas for missionaries were difficult to secure. A priest noticed Marie-Esther reading the African Synod document. As they talked, he invited her to consider working at Uganda University. She wrote to the president of the university and recalls the tenor of the reply, “...received your letter last night. It was a letter sent by God. We need you.”



The Ugandan stamp in Marie-Esther’s passport of life would prove most rewarding because it used all her talents and paved the way for others to follow. Each time she changed leadership positions at the university; her previous role was filled by a Ugandan. “It was exactly what missionary life is about ... be there for the people and then let it go so that the native people can continue the work.”

Marie-Esther’s love of patterns and formulas eventually spilled over into her hobby of needlepointing custom configured images and solving Sudoku puzzles. In retirement, she continues to enjoy being a math tutor and assisting in the IHM SLC Service Office.