

Arlene (Ann Stephen) Jekielek, IHM

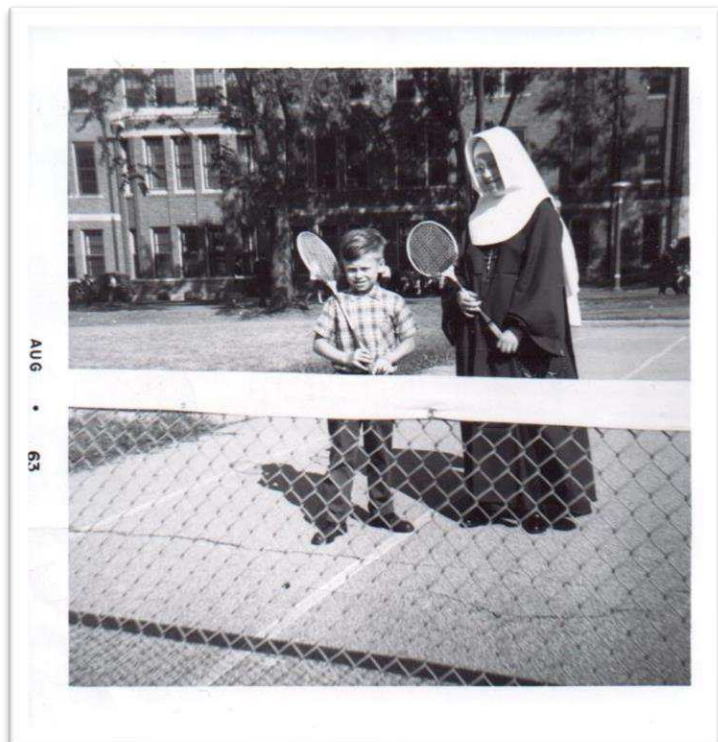


Sister Arlene Jekielek was taught by IHMs. She switched to a school with Racine Dominican Sisters for her senior year in high school and visited each community that year. She lived with the Racine Dominican postulants for a few days and later spent time with the IHMs. It was a dark and dreary day and she remembers thinking, "No way, no how am I coming here!" But a gift for her mother made her choice apparent. "I bought a planter for my mother

during a trip to Boblo Island. The nun mentoring the trip looked at it and said, 'I guess you made your decision.' The planter was a nun in blue. I thought, 'I did: the blue nuns.'"

Sister Arlene's first ministry was teaching first grade. She became involved in the civil rights movement and the day Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed, "I found out as I went to school. I told the students that today was something special and started crying. A little boy whose family was very active in the movement said, 'That's all right, sister, I'll tell them about it. Go to the back of the room and get ahold of yourself.'"

Sister Arlene taught high school in Florida for two years when her ministry path abruptly changed. She became head of the secretarial pool for the Archdiocese of Miami, which led to her going with the bishop as his secretary when he was given a diocese in Pensacola-Tallahassee. He was later moved to Corpus Christi, Texas, and asked her to join him as his executive secretary. She was appointed chancellor, only the third woman chancellor in the United States, and oversaw the administration of pastoral care offices, archives and human resources. "When they gave me my



goodbye party, they told me they thought I was checking up on them when I would visit the offices. It took a year before they realized I was not! One of the maintenance men dressed all in black the day I left because he was sorry I was leaving. That touched me."

Sister Arlene took a sabbatical year before ministering as a secretary at St. Louis Community College in Missouri. She returned to Michigan to care for her parents and

worked for the IHM Congregational Business Office in Monroe, the Detroit Health Department, the Covenant House and the Development Office at Marian High School. She eventually stopped and cared for her parents full-time until they died.

She served as Pastoral Care secretary at the Motherhouse. Now she accompanies sisters to doctor appointments, shops for them and helps at the library.

Arlene is grateful to the congregation for all their love and support and the many opportunities she has had as an IHM. She is confident that whatever the future holds it is meant to be.

