

**Esther Ann Whalen, RSCJ**  
March 14, 1923-December 5, 2018

Esther Ann Whalen was born in New York City, one of three children, with her sister Mary and her brother Grover, Jr., of Grover A. Whalen and Anna Kelly Whalen. Her father, a former Police Commissioner of New York (1928-1930), also served as the city's official greeter for over forty years, known as "Mister New York," and was named the head of the New York World's Fair in 1939.

Esther Ann attended Eden Hall, then received her B.A. in Philosophy from Manhattanville College in 1945. The same year, she entered the Society on September 7 at Kenwood under the direction of Marie Louise Schroen, and made her first vows May 27, 1948. After first vows, she went first to Stone Ridge, where she was surveillante of the middle school on two separate occasions. During these years, she completed a M.A. in History from Villanova University in 1954, the same year in which she completed probation in Rome under the direction of Reverend Mother Zurstrassen. She was professed on February 10 of that year.

In the following years, Esther Ann served as headmistress first at Elmhurst and then in 1967 at Eden Hall. Her students from these years remember her as devoted to them, interested in everything they did, from hockey field to basketball court to music practices for special feasts. When Eden Hall closed in 1969, she and most of Eden Hall's rising senior boarders moved together to Newton Country Day School of the Sacred Heart in Newton, Massachusetts, where Esther Ann became headmistress and the students finished their final year. It proved to be a very difficult year, and in 1970, Esther Ann left Newton to join sisters from three different religious orders and one lay woman in an experiment in intercommunity living. The community, located at Mount St. Rita in Cumberland, Rhode Island, was named "Mont Joie." The sisters lived a simple life, with a minimal budget of fifteen dollars a week, sharing responsibility for cleaning, cooking, shopping, and even making their own clothes. Esther Ann was coached on how to use a sewing machine by another sister. This type of community living became possible after the reforms of religious life of the Second Vatican Council.

Esther Ann lived at Mont Joie for a number of years and was secretary to two provincials of the Sisters of Mercy, Providence Province. Both provincials praised her work, citing her diligence and sensitivity. In 1980, while working for the Sisters of Mercy, she was offered the position of director of public information at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island. Thus began a thirty-year relationship with the University, where she also served as director of publications and coordinator of special events, among other positions. Known by Salve Regina faculty, staff, and students for her fierce work ethic and attention to detail, Esther Ann's dedication to Salve Regina was legendary. She began and coordinated the university's Circle of Scholars program, an educational program that flourishes to this day with more than six hundred members, many of whom fondly remember Sister Esther's commitment to lifelong learning. Her longtime tenure on campus earned her the fond nickname of "walking encyclopedia" in recognition of her vast and readily accessible institutional knowledge. She was also instrumental in establishing the equestrian team, which stemmed from her own love of horses while growing up.

Esther Ann was also known as "Salve's sailing sister" for starting a sailing program that received national and international attention by winning championships. Sailing was one of her greatest joys, and she was never happier than when cruising up and down Narragansett Bay. She had a special affinity for the student-athletes who were a part of the Seahawks sailing team. She was inducted into the Inter-Collegiate Sailing Association Hall of Fame during a 2008 ceremony at the prestigious New York Yacht Club. She was also a past recipient of ICESA's Outstanding Service Volunteer Award. To honor Sister Esther's legacy in the sport and to ensure that her passion for

sailing is carried forward, her family established the \$100,000 Sister Esther Whalen Sailing Endowment at Salve Regina University.

Her lifelong passion for sailing extended into the Newport community, and her family joined with Salve Regina to make a gift in Esther's honor to help the Museum of Yachting repair its floating dock at Fort Adams State Park, where ICSEA staged National Championship racing. A longtime member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Castle Hill Flotilla 806, she taught Navigation courses for them. She also received a medal of honor for service on operational patrols, and a commendation for relief duty.

At age 85, Esther Ann was still serving as the sailing team manager and even had a sailboat named after her, a boat she credited as the fastest in the fleet. Her love of sailing had started at a young age, when she asked her father for a sailboat. He bought her a twenty-seven-foot sloop and she spent much of her childhood sailing on Long Island Sound. She carried the love of the sport throughout her life.

The students loved "Sister Esther." They all knew her and would hail her from afar as she walked across the campus. When she was no longer able to drive, a security officer would pick her up at her apartment in Newport and take her to the library. She could have read at home but she chose to go to the library because that's where the students were. If there was a noon Mass, an officer would take her there, then to lunch in the college cafeteria and then home to rest. A security officer, faculty members, the sailing coach, and the president of Salve who first hired her attended her funeral.

In 2012 Esther Ann moved to the Abba House Community in Albany, and then to Teresian House, where she was lovingly cared for by her sisters and the staff. The departure from Salve Regina was not easy for her, but when it was clear that she could no longer stay there, she had her bags packed, ready to go. A friend who often spent time with her at Teresian House remembered that they did not have spiritual conversations. They watched horse shows and dog agility on TV. She read dog stories to Esther Ann, over and over again! During the two last two nights of her life she read them to her again.

On December 5, 2018, Esther Ann went quietly and peacefully to God. At her funeral Father Jeffrey l'Arche, the Teresian House chaplain, commented on her colorful socks and the fact they gave her away. She always sat at the back entrance to the chapel next to the door and apparently often exchanged words with Fr. Jeff that gave him a sense of her strong opinions and that she was not likely to change them!

One of her friends in the community wrote: "As I was listening to the Sermon on the Mount, I suddenly heard these words of Jesus as if I'd never heard them before. And I never heard them with the clarity that I heard them then – "Let your word be 'Yes,' 'Yes' or 'No,' 'No;' anything more than this comes from the evil one" (Matt 5:37). It was a like a revelation, for in my mind's eye, I saw Esther Ann almost as if she were standing before me, and I saw what I had always intuited but now recognized vividly, that in simple integrity and obedience to the Gospel, Esther Ann's 'Yes' was always 'Yes,' and her 'No' was always 'No.' I heard in those words, Jesus' description of Esther Ann Whalen."

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## Esther Ann Whalen, RSCJ

Sister Esther Ann Whalen, a member of the Religious of the Sacred Heart who devoted her life to her religious order and appointed ministries, the Salve Regina University community and the sport of sailing that she loved so dearly, died on Wednesday, Dec. 5 at the Teresian House in Albany, N.Y.

Born on March 14, 1923 in New York City, Sister Esther was the daughter of the late Grover A. and Anna Whalen. Her father, a former New York City police chief who served as the city's official greeter under Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, was known as "Mr. New York," a fitting nickname for the man who was the master of the ticker-tape parade as well as the organizer of the 1939 World's Fair.

Sister Esther is predeceased by her parents, her sister Mary Whalen McLaughlin, and her brother Grover Whalen, Jr. She is survived by her nephews, Andy Saul of Media, Penn., Steven Saul and his wife Jane of Littleton, Colo., and Mark McLaughlin of Bradenton, Fla., and several grandnieces.

Sister Esther professed her sacred vows on Feb. 10, 1954 and dedicated her life to the Religious of the Sacred Heart. Prior to her arrival at Salve Regina, she was the special assistant to the president of the Sisters of Mercy, Providence. In addition, she served in a variety of roles at Sacred Heart institutions including Elmhurst Academy, R.I., Newton Country Day School, Mass., and Stone Ridge Country Day School in Washington, D.C.

Known by Salve Regina faculty, staff and students for her fierce work ethic and attention to detail, Sister Esther's dedication to Salve Regina is legendary. Over the span of more than 30 years, she served in a variety of roles, including director of public relations, director of publications and coordinator of special events, among others. She coordinated the university's Circle of Scholars program, which flourishes to this day with more than 600 members, many of whom fondly remember Sister Esther's commitment to lifelong learning. Her longtime tenure on campus earned her the fond nickname of "walking encyclopedia" in recognition of her vast and readily accessible institutional knowledge. She was also instrumental in establishing the equestrian team, which stemmed from her own love of horses while growing up.

One of her greatest joys was time spent sailing and she had a special affinity for the student-athletes who were a part of the Seahawks sailing team. She helped start the university's sailing program more than three decades ago, and was inducted into the Inter-Collegiate Sailing Association Hall of Fame during a 2008 ceremony at the prestigious New York Yacht Club. She was also a past recipient of ICSA's Outstanding Service Volunteer Award. To honor Sister Esther's legacy in the sport and to ensure that her passion for sailing is carried forward, her family established the \$100,000 Sister Esther Whalen Sailing Endowment at Salve Regina University.

Her lifelong passion for sailing extended into the Newport community and her family joined with Salve Regina to make a gift in Sister Esther's honor to help the Museum of Yachting repair its floating dock at Fort Adams State Park, where ICSA has staged National Championship racing. A

longtime member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Castle Hill Flotilla 806, Sister Esther also received a medal of honor for service on operational patrols, and a commendation for relief duty.

Sister Esther loved being on the water and in her later years at Salve Regina often accompanied the Salve Regina sailing team, proudly coaching, with megaphone in hand, from her position on the chase boat during practices and regattas. One of the boats in Salve Regina's fleet is named "Sister Esther" in honor of her commitment to the program, which catapulted to national prominence during her tenure.

Those who had the privilege of knowing Sister Esther can now rest assured that she is enjoying fair skies and heavenly sailing, with God as her co-captain, and is most likely instructing Him on how to best navigate the waters ahead.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 11 at Teresian House, 200 Washington Ave. Ext., Albany, N.Y. Gifts in Sister Esther's memory may be made to her beloved Salve Regina Sailing Team, care of Salve Regina University, Office of Advancement, 100 Ochre Point Ave., Newport, RI 02840.

