



Charlee Irmen

January 11, 1928 - April 27, 2021

Charlee Irmen, 93, died peacefully in her sleep on April 27, 2021, following a long illness. Born Charlene Betty Gates in Jackson, Michigan, on January 11, 1928, to parents Bertha and Russ Gates, who had no other children, Charlee had a lifelong dream to have a big family. When she met Thomas L. "Sam" Irmen at Michigan State College in 1947, she found the man with whom she would fulfill that dream. Together, they made raising a happy family the focus of their lives, eventually building a family tree that included seven children and their respective spouses, 18 grandchildren and their spouses, and 9 great grandchildren. Charlee was the glue that held the family close together despite physical distance, making their homeplace on Holland-Sylvania Road the touchstone that everyone loved to return to. Her annual over-the-top Gramma Chuck's Easter Egg Hunts, which spanned dozens of acres and included cryptic clues, on-the-spot physical tests, and loads of prizes, became family legends. She and Sam were never happier than when the kids and grandkids dropped in on them. Her ability to feed the multitudes at the drop of a hat was outshone only by the laughter that reverberated from every family occasion.

Charlee was a seasoned volunteer but shunned the limelight. Even with preschoolers still at home, she and her friend Marge Oatis developed and taught the first physical education program at St. Joseph's Catholic School in Maumee in the 1960s and a similar program at St. Francis Achievement School in Toledo's inner city. When all the children had started school, Charlee

sought outside employment to keep her busy, starting to work as secretary to the Medical College of Ohio hospital administrator and advancing to a position as assistant to the dean of the graduate school before retiring with 25 years of service. Among her other duties, she became the chief editor of graduate student medical dissertations, also "adopting" foreign students who needed personal guidance, a touch of home cooking, or a temporary place to stay. In retirement, she was the one-woman squad doing all the behind-the-scenes administrative work that enabled Sam to lead the construction of dozens of Habitat for Humanity homes. She was devoted to both her mother and Sam's mother until their deaths at age 99 in 2000.

Charlee and Sam moved to Lakes of Sylvania Retirement and Assisted Living Community in 2019 and Sam passed away later that year, promising Charlee that he would come back and get her once he got himself established. She often prayed for the day they could be reunited in Heaven with their daughter Jeannie, who died at birth. Charlee is survived by her children Pat Irmen (Bridget) of Asheville, NC, Jaine Place of Sylvania, OH, Mike Irmen (Shannon) of St. Croix, USVI, Terry Irmen (Tonia) of Sylvania, OH, JoDee Robertson (Bruce) of Daly City, CA, Betsy Damm (Andy) of Zionsville, IN, and Tom Irmen (Julia) of Holland, OH, as well as 37 grand- and great grandchildren.

A memorial Mass will be held at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Maumee on May 3rd at 10:30 a.m., following an hour of visitation. Due to COVID restrictions, the church requires face masks and social distancing for all attendees. The funeral Mass may be watched live or later online by going to joanofarc.org and clicking on "Watch Live." A private burial will follow the funeral Mass. Charlee requested that, in lieu of flowers, any remembrance gifts be sent to St. Joan of Arc Catholic Parish, 5856 Heatherdowns Blvd., Toledo, OH 43614, or to Promedica Ebeid Hospice Residence, c/o Promedica Foundation, 444 North Summit Street, Ste. 100, Toledo, OH 43604.

Cemetery Details

St Joseph (Maumee)

104 West Broadway Street
Maumee, OH 43537

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 3. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

St. Joan Of Arc
5856 Heatherdowns Blvd
Toledo, OH

Mass

MAY 3. 10:30 AM (ET)

St. Joan Of Arc
5856 Heatherdowns Blvd
Toledo, OH

Tribute Wall

DG

“ Hello Betsy, very sorry to hear about your mom passing. My thoughts and prayers for you , Terry and your family. I would have liked to have gone to the funeral and see you but I just heard today about your mom.

Dan Gaynor - May 07, 2021 at 11:19 AM

“ Having the Irmens as neighbors and, essentially, extended family, was one of the benefits of living on "the farm". And Charlee was part of the reason for that. I never really got to know her per se, but I spent plenty of time at their home when I was a boy, playing and getting into mischief with Tom, and eating "Mrs. Irmen's fresh baked cookies". Funny how one recalls certain details from long ago: if memory serves, she placed fresh-out-of-the-oven cookies on newspaper spread out on the kitchen counters. And she drank a lot of Fresca. And we would sit on stools at the counter waiting for those cookies to cool enough to inhale two at a time.

As the years rolled by and all our lives diverged, as they nearly all tend to do, it made me appreciate having been a member of the large clan that lived on Holland-Sylvania Rd--which certainly included the Irmen family. I'm glad to have had that experience.

So, I am thinking of all the Irmen family and extended family, and hope that you are bearing up well under the weight of your loss. Charlee was a fine lady. She was, like so many who still are or have been part of my life, a sort of role player who made an impression on me during my youth. Even if I didn't really know her or ever have a conversation with her, I am glad to have had my life intersect with hers and her children's over the years.

This is probably not the usual eulogy, but I don't have it in me to do anything differently. So, I'll finish by saying farewell Charlee. Many people will miss you and your presence. Both you and Sam, in your own way, are leaving a hole--one of many--in my heart. I'm glad to have known you, even if in a fleeting way. Ultimately, I knew you through your children and the many interactions I have had with them over the years--especially the decades of the 1960s and 1970s.

Vivamus, moriendum est. Seneca

Paul Anderson - May 04, 2021 at 08:46 PM

TI

Paul, Thank you isn't enough....what an amazing memorial tribute for my mom. Be assured we felt the same about your family. All the best, Terry and Tonia

Terry and Tonia Irmen - May 05, 2021 at 10:04 PM

JM

“ *Pat, Mike, Tom, Terry, daughters, other family, and friends, my condolences on your loss. What an amazing woman and what a wonderful life. I am grateful to have known Charlee. Peace be with you and your family. - J. McKinstry*

Jim McKinstry - May 03, 2021 at 11:16 AM

ES

“ *So sorry we are unable to be there with you. We still remember the wonderful family reunions at your folks lovely home. You are in our thoughts and prayers. With love from Ellen and George Shook*



Ellen and George Shook - May 03, 2021 at 09:34 AM

LN

“ *When Tom started teaching and coaching at St John's High School, Charlee welcomed us and we became friends with her, Sam and all the family. Tom coached the boys in track and cross country. JoDee and Betsy babysat our daughters. We have had a long friendship with Mike. We are eternally grateful for Charlee's warmth, kindness and love. She was a blessing to everyone. We send our love and sincere condolences to all in the family.*

Tom and Lorri Norris

Lorraine Norris - May 02, 2021 at 08:06 PM

GE

“ *Knowing Charlee and your entire family has been a true Blessing, and I have always admired your family greatly. Please know that all of you are in my thoughts and prayers. Thank you for sharing her with me.*

Greg Emmert, Jr.

Gregor, Jr. K. Emmert - May 02, 2021 at 04:28 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Charlee Irmen.*



April 30, 2021 at 07:57 AM

PN

“ *13 files added to the album Irmen photos*



Philip Neitzel - April 29, 2021 at 12:41 PM