



Dr. Helma Fire

December 24, 1936 - January 12, 2026

Dr. Helma Mauer Fire, beloved daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, aunt, great-aunt, and friend, went home to Jesus peacefully while at her home in Tallahassee on January 12, 2026, at the age of 89. She was born to the late Victor Gustav Mauer, Sr. and the late Helen Irene Rosta Mauer on December 24, 1936, in Youngstown, Ohio.

At the age of 18, Helma met Charles (Chuck) Fire and from then on, they were inseparable. Six months later they were engaged and later married on May 25, 1957, at St. Nicholas Catholic Church in Struthers, Ohio.

A 1954 graduate of Struthers High School (Ohio), Helma entered Youngstown College (Ohio) as a math education major on a scholarship. Influenced by her sister's death from leukemia the next year, she changed her college major to Medical Technology. After 16 years of intermittent study, in 1970 Helma earned her B.S. cum laude in Medical Technology and a B.S. cum laude in Education in 1971 both from Youngstown State University. Pursuing her love of education, she earned her M.S. in Education from the University of Miami in 1979 and her Ph.D. in Education from the University of Florida in 1985.

While earning her undergraduate degrees, Helma was employed by St. Elizabeth Hospital as a Medical Technologist and teacher for its School of Medical Technology. In 1971, she began her full-time classroom teaching

career as an 8th grade Science teacher at Windham Middle School (Ohio). Upon moving to Miami, Florida in 1973, Helma wrote and taught science curricula for grades 3-12 at the Summit Academy of Learning. In 1976 she served as the first Clinical Microbiology Lab Supervisor at University of Miami School of Medicine's Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. Helma was a part-time adjunct professor and supervisor of students at Nova Southeastern University from 1992-1994. During her tenure at Miami-Dade College, Medical Campus, beginning in 1980, she fulfilled roles as adjunct professor, assistant professor, department chairperson, associate professor and full professor until her retirement in 1996.

Helma was elected to Kappa Delta Pi education honorary, Phi Kappa Phi scholastic honorary, and was a member of Beta Sigma Omicron social sorority. She was a member of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, American Society for Microbiology and the American Association for Clinical Chemistry. In 1988 Helma became the first Florida- licensed provider, writer and teacher of medical laboratory continuing education classes at Miami-Dade College. In 1990 and 1995 she was awarded grants from the Wolfson Foundation for the development of college curricula. Helma was elected to the "International Who's Who in Professionals" in 1997 and in 1998, to the Registry of "Most Outstanding Women in Business".

In 1990, Helma and Chuck co-founded Florida Excell, Inc., a continuing education provider for Clinical Lab Personnel, humbly beginning in the family's garage serving Florida clients and growing to include national and international patrons until 2024.

Helma and Chuck were active parishioners at St. Richard Catholic Church in Miami as choir members and Eucharistic Ministers. In Tallahassee, at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, the couple were members of a Small Christian Community and presenters for Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

As a Girl Scout Leader for both her daughters' troops, Helma tirelessly led meetings, craft projects, cookie sales and camping trips. Helma and Chuck were fortunate to have enjoyed many years together on land and sea as they glamped across the Southeast in their motor home and sailed aboard cruise ships in the Western Hemisphere.

Helma took pleasure in playing the piano, collecting antique bells, stamps, Santa figurines, and Gone with the Wind-themed plates. She enjoyed photography, reading, genealogy, devising new recipes, and creating memory books.

Helma will be remembered for her devotion and commitment to her family, integrity, perseverance, kindness, and attention to detail in all things. Her dedication to the education profession and unique, conscientious and enthusiastic teaching style inspired her students to excel beyond their own expectations.

Helma is survived by her children, Ken Fire, Kathy Fire and Karen Hollenbeck (John) all of Tallahassee; grandchildren, Matt Baranovich (US Navy), Kathryn Hollenbeck, Kristyn Hollenbeck, Katelyn Pentz (Tyler), and John Hollenbeck; great-grandchildren Ava, Aubrie, Aden, and Bonnie; and friends, especially those at Good Shepherd Parish. She also leaves family in Ohio; sister-in-law, Marlene Mauer and nieces, Jennifer Molaskey (Erik), Vicki Bruno (Emil) and Laura Crowgey (Judd); grand-nephew, Evan and grand-niece, Emma.

Preceding her in death were her sister, Victoria Josephine Mauer, her brother Victor Gustav Mauer, Jr. and her loving and cherished husband, Chuck Fire, of whom she said, "...partnered my every effort, and was the light, soul mate, and love of my life, for 65 1/2 years."

Helma's Memorial Mass and Celebration of Life will be at Tallahassee's Good Shepherd Catholic Church on Saturday, February 28, 2026, at 12:00 noon. Both Helma and Chuck's inurnments will be held at the Tallahassee National Veterans Cemetery in June 2026.

Helma's children express their immense gratitude to the nurses and staff of Westminster Oaks Bertrand Health Center for lovingly and patiently caring for their mother. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to Vitas Healthcare Hospice, whose invaluable and personal support to the family is deeply appreciated.

Cemetery Details

Tallahassee National Cemetery

5015 Apalachee Parkway
Tallahassee, FL 32311
(850) 402-8941

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

FEB **28**. 12:00 PM (ET)

Good Shepherd Catholic Church
4665 Thomasville Road
Tallahassee, FL 32309
<http://www.goodshepherdparish.org>