



Ila Fay Pauley

June 16, 1943 - September 1, 2026

Charleston, West Virginia

Ila Fay Pauley died in Charleston on September 1, 2026, at eighty-three. She was born there on June 16, 1943, when a chemical plant was a clock and a river was a weekday neighbor. She learned a steam table before she learned a highway. A tray, she said, is a kind of sentence: it has to arrive complete.

Twenty-six years of her life went into a cafeteria that fed people who treated gravy as a weather report. She started washing pans that never quite came clean. She ended as the woman who could tell, from the sound of a pot, whether the rice would hold through a late shift. She kept extra milk without making a speech about it. When a storm closed the plant she still opened the kitchen, because weather is not an excuse to skip a meal.

She married Garland Pauley in 1964. He sold insurance and died in 2002. They raised a son and a daughter who still argue about who got the last piece of caramel cake. Ila kept the garden of cannas, and the habit of leaving a casserole on a porch without a speech.

Grandchildren remember a woman who corrected their thank-you notes more than their homework, who kept a biscuit tin of paper clips, and who could name every auntie in the sanctuary by the hat she no longer wore. She died in Charleston, in the heat she had always said you could live with if you dressed for it. The kitchen is someone else's now.

Services

A funeral in Charleston with one familiar hymn, sung slowly. A gift to a church benevolence fund is welcome.

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