



## Felix Petrie Leonard

January 9, 1932 - May 25, 2022

There is always a story behind a story. In 1915, the United States invaded Haiti and sent in the Marines. Hercules Léonard, son of a judge, Durand Léonard, left Haiti for Cuba because the U.S. military at the time was taking young middleclass Haitians and training them to be officers in the Haitian army. Hercules

left Haiti to venture into the Dominican Republic and eventually to Cuba.

In Cuba, while working as a colporteur and a literature evangelist, he went into the house of a Jamaican-Cuban Family. There he laid eyes on a young lady named Imla Petrie. They fell in love, were married and out of that union were born four children; Marcel, Hermine (Henriette), Félix and Francesse.

Félix (Féfé) was born in Bañes, Cuba which is a municipality and city in the province of Holguin, Cuba on Friday January 9th, 1932. He was the third child born of Hercules Léonard and Imla Petrie. Shortly after his birth, the Léonard family decided to uproot from Cuba and set sail to Haiti, the country of origin of his father, Hercules. The family moved to Petionville, Haiti where he met his paternal family and emancipated himself as a youngster.

During his formative years, Félix attended “Les Frères de l’Instruction Chrétienne” where he excelled academically in mathematics, philosophy, French, and some English as well. He and a classmate (Dr Jean-Louis Murat) were constantly angling for the highest qualifications of the class. Upon completion of his primary schooling he did his secondary schooling at the “Lycée Pétion” where he forged lasting friendships at school.

As a young man in Haiti, Féfé was athletically talented, especially Haitian football known as soccer. He and childhood friends Max Fauquier (goalie), Enoch (goalie) Pierre (fullback), Emmanuel “Mono” Compère (Right Fullback), Nougést (Fullback), Marc Deveaux (Left Midfield), Horatius (Right Winger), Serge Guerrier, Serge Pôthèl as well as others formed an all Haitian soccer team called Les Pirat (The Pirates). Félix played number 8 as the Half fullback or “demi volant” and served as Team Captain along with his teammate, Jean Devèsin. Félix was later credited for saving the soccer field upon learning that it was being turned into a private pool by elitist developers.

Félix wrote a letter to the President of Haiti advocating the importance of the soccer program to aspiring youths in the community, where in turn the President granted his request to preserve that land.

Haiti back then like now offered few options for those who were not independently wealthy, politically connected or did not have a godfather (padrino/parrain). In the meantime, his mother Imla, emigrated in 1948 to the United States. He was left to live with his uncle Gérmain Léonard to finish his schooling. Upon finishing secondary school, he had few options. At the time he had a cousin (Roger) Frérel Léonard who was a physics and math teacher. Frérel was also secretary-general of the “Parti Socialiste Progressiste” of Haiti. Through contacts of the International Socialist party, he was able to get a scholarship to study engineering in what was then East Germany. His studies as well as his passion for soccer took him to East Berlin/Leipzig and Dresden where he learned to speak fluent German. In September of 1965 he received his Degree in Engineering from the University of Dresden, Germany whereas a Haitian he set out to settle in what was then the “iron curtain”.

An opportunity was presented miraculously for him to visit his family that had now fully emigrated to the United States (NY). This turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory. Keep in mind that this was at the height of the cold war. On the one hand he was able to be reunited with his mother, father, sisters and brother but on the other hand it took him forever to legalize his immigration status. His answer to investigating officials was always that he was apolitical in the Cold War but he was looking for opportunities to further his education. As fate would have it, his opportunity came from a Soviet bloc country.

Upon arriving in the US, he renewed acquaintances with friends in the Haitian community. Once in New York, he worked at the Commodore Hotel, which is now known as the Grand Hyatt Hotel after it was bought by Trump. While there, he met one of his best friends, Pierrot Salnave, who introduced him to his sister in law, Myrna Mary in 1974. Félix and Myrna later married on February 22, 1975. Out of this union was born his only begotten son Hervé. He dedicated himself to his loving wife Myrna and to his son Hervé. They lived and worked in Brooklyn, NY until an opportunity presented itself for him to move to Detroit, Michigan in 1979.

It was in Detroit that Félix was reunited with his mother Imla, eldest brother Marcel, Aunt Amy, cousins Mono, Serge August, Owen, Ruth, German, Dinora, Lidia, Luis, Lorenzo and Vincent (El Néne) as well as childhood friends. Félix loved the idea of living in a city that was not only predominantly African American but ran by its first elected black mayor, Coleman A. Young.

Fate would have it that he would work for a German company called ThyssenKrupp Steel where he worked side by side with his former soccer teammate's little brother, Arnold Compère. The two friends were inseparable and together were able to overcome the racial persecution that most immigrants faced at the workplace. They broke many barriers, which ultimately gained them the utmost respect from their white colleagues. Félix was later presented with the first Black History Award by his peers for demonstrating on a daily basis how to persevere under adverse conditions and for being an example for young black men to follow.

Félix took pride in becoming a US citizen. He never missed an election, as he was always passionate about world politics. Félix made sure his son was a registered voter and had his driver's licenses by 18. He wanted to ensure that his son knew the importance of exercising his right to vote and that independence in being our own drivers. He was also adamant about his son becoming a positive and productive member of society. As such, he instilled the importance of Family, Love, Education, and great Work Ethic.

Féfé had a presence about him. He was the life of the party! A Bon Vivant, raconteur, blagueur. He was well known for being a sharp dresser with a distinctive laugh, endless jokes and stories, great advice, and always willing to give a helping hand. He was very forward thinking and outspoken. He was the center of attention at any party. The last to leave but the first one to speak up and provide some witty tale about someone or something he experienced. He was a source of inspiration and wisdom for so many he encountered. A source of encouragement and strength. There was no problem that could not be overcome and at his worst still with a little laughter.

He was fearless throughout his life and had an unmatched optimism that would accompany him until his last breath. Félix transitioned peacefully into eternity on May 25th, 2022, at the blessed age of 90.

He was preceded in death by his father Hércules; his mother Imla; his brother Marcel and his sister Francesse. He is survived by his wife; Myrna, his son; Hervé; daughter in law Samia Léonard, Granddaughter; Solèil Jihan Léonard; his sister Hermine (Henriette), nephews, nieces, cousins, multiple family and friends.

#### Zoom Instructions

1. Go to [Kempfuneralhome.com](https://www.kempfuneralhome.com).
2. Click on your loved one's photo. You are now on their Tribute Page.

3. You should see a tab labeled photo & videos (or it may be labeled media, depending on your device). Select that tab.
  
4. Just before the service starts, you will see an icon labeled Webcast (or it may be labeled external video, depending on your device). Select the icon.
  
5. You will begin to launch into the zoom meeting.
  
6. Wait for host to let you into the meeting.

# Previous Events

## Strolling Visitation

JUN 2. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Kemp Funeral Home & Cremation Services  
24585 Evergreen Rd  
Southfield, MI 48075  
info@kempfh.com  
<https://www.kempfuneralhome.com>

## Family/Friends Time

JUN 3. 2:00 PM - 2:30 PM (ET)

Kemp Funeral Home & Cremation Services  
24585 Evergreen Rd  
Southfield, MI 48075  
info@kempfh.com  
<https://www.kempfuneralhome.com>

## Funeral Service

JUN 3. 2:30 PM (ET)

Kemp Funeral Home & Cremation Services  
24585 Evergreen Rd  
Southfield, MI 48075  
info@kempfh.com  
<https://www.kempfuneralhome.com>

# Tribute Wall



“ *Kemp Funeral Home & Cremation Services created a Webcast in memory of Felix Petrie Leonard*



Kemp Funeral Home & Cremation Services - June 03 at 02:24 PM

LM

*Sending Love cuzoe* 🌹❤️

Lisa Mary - June 03 at 03:25 PM



“ *Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of Felix Petrie Leonard.*



June 02 at 04:11 PM

TM

“ *The Joseph Family of Detroit, MI purchased the Basket of Memories for the family of Felix Petrie Leonard.*



The Joseph Family of Detroit, MI - May 31 at 07:31 PM