

In Loving Memory
Of...



Leonie Gumbs

May 9, 1914 - February 20, 2009

March 4, 2009 9am at Sts. Peter & Paul Cathedral

Rev. Neil Scantlebury

Deacon Bill Kenny

Interment ... Western Cemetery 1

"Perhaps they are not stars, but rather openings in heaven where the love
of our lost ones pours through and shines down upon us to let us know
they are happy."

Eulogy for Ann Leonie Gumbs nee Ledee

Ann Leonie Gumbs known as Leonie to most was born on May 9, 1914 on the island of St. Barts.

Her parents were Angelina and Isidore Ledee. She was the first of three children.

While she was still very young, her family moved to St. Thomas and settled in Frenchtown on the site that is now the parking lot of St. Anne's Chapel. That was well before the Chapel was built.

On November 21, 1931, Leonie was married to Jean Emilien Gumbs also known as Emile. His "nick" name was Kaiser. She was just 17 years of age.

The couple had five children. They were John Emile Junior, John Ralph, Evelyn Ann, who is now Evelyn Olive, Helen Ann and Marie Amalia.

Life was very difficult for the young family. Along with her housework and caring for her growing family, Leonie did "straw work" to help out. Emile did various jobs, and finally landed a good job with the U.S. Navy as a civilian employee.

By 1941, Leonie had four children and was expecting her fifth child. She was just 27 years of age. On April 11, 1941, she received the worst news that any young woman could receive. Her husband of only ten years had been killed in an industrial accident at the Submarine Base while working for the U.S. Navy.

The tragedy reverberated through Frenchtown. Everyone was stunned. Young Leonie was devastated. What was she to do? The love of her life was gone! The father of her young children was gone! How would she survive?

The next day, April 13, 1941, Leonie received a spark of hope. She gave birth to her fifth child, another girl. She named her Marie Amalia.

Still bruised from the loss of her dear husband, Leonie was to receive yet another tragic blow. Just a year and one half later, little Marie Amalia died of whooping cough.

Badly beaten by fate, but still determined, Leonie put the care of her children before herself. She pushed herself to continue her life of being a loving mother.

With the help of family and friends, she managed a meager living, always putting her children first.

A neighboring couple who had no children of their own, and who were related to her deceased husband took the youngest girl to live with them. That was Helen. The couple was Mr. and Mrs. Philip Greaux, also know as Philip-ah-Clofa and Nenen Soosoon.

Helen lived with the couple into adulthood. But her mother Leonie and her siblings lived just across the street, so she actually grew up in both homes.

By 1956, Leonie was 42 years of age. Her children were growing up nicely. She was so proud of them. Her eldest son Junior had joined the U.S. Army.

Then tragedy struck again. Leonie received more devastating news. Junior was killed in a train accident on February 8, 1956.

Battered and bruised, Leonie never gave up. Her love for her remaining children never waned. She pressed on with her life, always putting her children first.

She watched them grow up with pride. After they were married, she longed to see her grand-children. She was blessed with many.

She enjoyed them very much. She loved and cared for them as if they were her own children. Her home was their home. That was her delight.

But, there was more sad news to come. On May 9, 1982, her second son Ralph passed away. She continued to bear her pain mostly to herself.

After her home of more than 58 years was damaged by a storm, Leonie moved from Frenchtown to live with her daughter and son-in-law Evelyn and Leopold. A little cottage was built for her in their back yard.

During that time, Leonie was again saddened by the death of her youngest daughter Helen in 2001.

Now, growing feeble, the strain of all her losses was becoming more evident than before. Unable to care for herself anymore, Leonie was cared for by Evelyn and Leopold and their children and grandchildren until her passing on February 20, 2009 at the age of 94.

Until her last days, Leonie remained faithful to her deceased husband, often speaking fondly of him to family and friends.

In spite of all the turmoil and sadness in her life, Leonie remained a loving and caring mother, grandmother, great grandmother and great-great grandmother. She always remembered her family and friends.

She was a fighter to the very end. A trait that was necessary for her survival under the difficult times that she experienced.

MAY SHE REST IN PEACE!

Survivors . . .

Daughter... Evelyn Olive . . .

Son-In-Law... Leopold Olive...

Nieces... Edna Greaux, Shirley Graham, and Valerie
Pereira...

Nephew... Jean R. Greaux...

Grandchildren... Angela Olive, Geraldine Lima, Bunny
Giddings, Thomas Olive, Lawrence Olive, Patrick Olive,
Wayne Harrigan, Linda Maratea, Gregory, Julien, and
Patrick Gumbs...

Special Great-Grandchildren... Heather and Diego Lima, Jada
and Pablo Concepcion and many others...

Special Great-Great Grandchildren... Joshua Greenaway and
Jaiden Kenley and many others...

And many other relatives and friends...