



Maria Mitrani Leon

January 17, 1923 - January 1, 2023

Maria Leon, 99, was born on January 17, 1923, in Habana, Cuba and passed away on Sunday, January 1, 2023.

Maria was the second daughter to David Mitrani and Elisa Rodriguez, both born in Kirklareli, Turkey. Her siblings, Lucia Susi, 100 years old and residing in Miami, Salvador Mitrani, who passed in August 2020, and his widow Victoria, who resides in Fort Worth, TX, and Sofia, who passed in December of 2017, and her husband Chalon, who passed in 2007.

Maria married the love of her life, Victor Leon in July 1944 in Habana. Victor passed away in September 2008, at the age of 102. She loved her children and family intensely.

Maria, besides from being a fabulous cook and baker, was a spectacular entrepreneur, and was very instrumental in building a very nice variety store in the town of Guanabacoa, Habana Cuba where they resided all of their married lives while they lived in Cuba. She totally expanded the merchandise they carried after partnering with husband Victor, who previously had a men's working clothes store in the central market in Guanabacoa. She had the idea to expand to women's clothing and fine perfumes. Her parents had a small factory in Habana where they embroidered fine women's blouses, and she insisted on carrying their merchandise. Their merchandise was a huge

success and shoppers would come from miles around to purchase the beautiful blouses.

Victor and Maria had to make the very hard decision to let their children Jacob and David leave Cuba for the US in 1961, after Fidel Castro took over the reins of government there and declared Cuba to be a Communist stronghold. When they made that decision, they did not know if they would ever see their children again. Their hopes were that Castro would be overthrown and they would then return to Cuba. They knew the two were going to be in good hands in the Jewish community in the US. Sure enough, the partnership of Hebrew immigration Aid Society and Jewish Family Service in Denver, CO made it possible for Jacob and David to live peacefully, be educated, and grow healthfully until Victor and Maria were stripped of all their assets in Cuba and had no other choice but to also leave the country and join their children in the US. They became proud Americans, always commenting on how fortunate we had all been to have such wonderful support from our Jewish community in Denver, CO and later here in Texas. They were residents of Beaumont, TX since 1963 and members of Temple Emanuel there and moved to Houston in 2002. They became proud members of Beth Israel at their arrival in Houston.

She is survived by her children: Jacob and his wife Barbara, whom Maria often referred to as her daughter and was previously married to Arlene, and David who was married to Lynne until her passing in 2005. She is also survived by her grandchildren Alisa and Lauren, children of Jacob and Arlene, and Deborah Lieberman and Bradley Gruen, children of Barbara. Great grandchildren Hayley and Elan Lieberman, born to Debbie and Ryan Lieberman, and Brynlee Faigle born to Lauren Leon Faigle and Damon Faigle. Nieces and nephews Jaime Illel, Emma Aidlin, Moses Rodriguez, Rachel Rosen, Elisa Nudleman, David Mitrani. Grandnephews Morry and Max Mitrani, Cameron Nudleman, Ben Rosen, Eva Schneider, Sam Rosen, Esther

Rodriguez Krych, and Adam Rodriguez. The family would like to extend their deep appreciation to Maria's caretaker, Bridget Brown.

A memorial service will be held on Monday, January 16, 2023, at 11 AM at Congregation Beth Israel, 5600 N. Braeswood Blvd., Houston, TX 77096. For those wishing to view the service remotely via Live Stream please use the following link: <https://www.beth-israel.org/about-us/news-events-upcoming-events/livestreaming/>

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Houston Jewish Family foundation, or to Congregation Beth Israel.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JAN 16. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Congregation Beth Israel
5600 N. Braeswood Blvd.
Houston, TX 77096

Tribute Wall

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“ *Such a sweet gentle woman. Sending good wishes for peace and comfort to her family. Her memory is a blessing.*

Toby Newman - January 03, 2023 at 05:44 PM

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I loved Maria. I just looked her up to see if she was still at the Medallion where she lived with my mother, Faye Kotin, for so many years. Maria shared her recipe for biscotti with me and I made them to take to her and my mother when I would come visit from Colorado. She told me they were good and I believed her. She was so strong and focused on living a good life. I so admired her exercise regiment and overall spirit. I'm happy to know she lived to be 99. Shana Tova, Karen Alkayam

Karen Anne Alkayam - September 26, 2025 at 09:56 PM