



Isaac Dvoretzky

January 24, 1928 - February 17, 2017

A brilliant mind and a warm heart are stilled. On Friday, February 17, 2017, 21 Shvat 5777, Isaac Dvoretzky left this world. He was born in Houston on January 24, 1928 to Max and Anna (Greenfield) Dvoretzky. As the oldest of four children and the son of immigrants, Isaac was always motivated to use his extraordinary intellect to make the world a better place.

When we look at a person's resume, looking back at his achievements, the most prominent features are education and work history. After graduating from San Jacinto High School in Houston, at 16 Isaac continued his education in the Chemistry Department of Rice University, though he was already learning about chemistry and experimenting as a young boy. Isaac Dvoretzky, Chemistry Major: BA Honors Program, MA, PhD. He was a member of the honor societies Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Lambda Upsilon, and Sigma Xi.

Though he was courted by the most esteemed academic research chemists of the day, Isaac had one only employer his entire professional career. Upon completing his PhD in 1952, he was hired as a research chemist by Shell Development Company. He rose up the corporate ladder to research supervisor, department manager, PhD recruiting, and liaison with universities and professional scientific societies. He also represented Shell in supporting the educational community - graduate, undergraduate and pre-college.

As a Shell research scientist, he patented discoveries in petrochemical

processes. His research activities brought him professional recognition through publication in scientific journals, and invitations to participate in numerous research conferences. He retired in 1994, after 42 years with Shell.

But this is only the beginning of Isaac's resume. He was personally involved in science and mathematics education, consulting on local, regional and national levels, even after retirement. He contributed significantly to pre-college science education enrichment materials sponsored by organizations such as the National Science Teachers Association and the National Energy Foundation. He was active in a dozen professional organizations, always focusing on the advancement of science and science education.

Isaac's commitment to his alma mater was outstanding, and he remained active in a variety of Rice University organizations, both professional and social. At the Rice University Center for Education he was program advisor for the Model Science Laboratory and the Education for the Energy Industry project. He played an active role in creating the Rice University Center for Nanoscale Science and Technology. He was a member of the Shepherd Society, Friends of Fondren Library, Rice Historical Society and ROMEOs, and a dozen other Rice University councils and organizations. In 2003 he was given the Rice University Meritorious Service Award.

One of the achievements of which Isaac was most proud was his role in facilitating faculty interactions between Rice University and The Technion - Israel Institute of Technology. This was the culmination of a love affair that began as a crush when, as a young man, he first read of the Technion in a scientific journal. He learned that the establishment of a technical school was a priority to rebuilding the Jewish homeland. This made him happy because the Technion was the amalgamation of great science with the Land of Israel. After many years of service in the American Society for Technion on both the local and national levels, he was invited join the Board of Governors of the

Technion, and was awarded an Honorary Fellowship in 2006 - the highlight of one of his many trips to Israel.

What doesn't appear on Isaac's resume is the schooling he received at home, in heder, and at his uncle's knee - his Jewish education. His mother taught him to read Yiddish and Hebrew as she read aloud from the weekly Der Amerikaner. By age 7 he was able to lead services, and by 12 was teaching other boys to read Torah. It soon became clear that while this education was not recognized by the state, it was fundamental in shaping the man Isaac was to become.

He was a Jewish scholar, and was known as both gabbai and baal tfillah at the Beth Yeshurun chapel named for his mother's cousin, J.B. Greenfield. He was chairman of the Adult Education Ritual Committees of Beth Yeshurun, and active in the Houston Kashruth Association and the Houston Commission for Jewish Education, as well as a founding supporter of the Hillel House of Houston. All the while, he was involved in activities such as being Science Fair Mentor at Emery/Weiner School and lecturer at numerous adult education and interfaith programs. At home, he taught his own children to read Torah, and was delighted that both his son's and his daughter's B'nei Mitzvah Torah portions were the same as his.

At one point, Isaac served as chairman of the JCC of Houston's Chamber Music Series, also writing program notes for every concert. This gave him the opportunity to combine a contribution to the Houston Jewish Community with his passion for music. For decades Isaac held season tickets to the Houston Symphony Orchestra and the Houston Grand Opera. He boasted that his extraordinary collection of classical LP's and CD's was larger than that of the Rice University Music Library. His love of music brought him to the Beethoven piano recital where he met Connie, his beloved wife of 28 years.

Isaac was preceded in death by his parents and by his brothers Louis and Edward. He is survived by his adoring wife and soul mate Connie; by his children, Rachel Dvoretzky and her husband Allan Levine, Aaron Dvoretzky and his wife Sharon Spielman, and Rebecca Kristovsky and her husband Gil; and by his sister Sarah Marks and her husband Al. He also leaves beloved grandchildren Noga, Gabriel, Itamar, Rena, Raphael and Ayla; nieces and nephews; and loving step-daughters Alexi Holford, and Nicole Holford Lockney and her husband Tom. He will also be missed by his former wife, Zelda Dvoretzky. The family would like to recognize and thank his longtime caregiver, Nery Vasquez.

The funeral will be held at Congregation Beth Yeshurun on Monday, February 20, 2017 at 1:00 p.m., followed by a graveside service at Beth Yeshurun Cemetery, North Post Oak Road. The family can be visited afterwards at the home of Isaac and Connie in Missouri City.

In lieu of flowers, those who would like may make a donation in his memory to the American Technion Society (www.ats.org).