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Obituary (as in The Canadian Jewish News)

Reconstructionist leader dies at 95

By DAVID LAZARUS

MONTREAL - Lavy Becker, the founder of the Reconstructionist movement in

Canada, died here recently at age 95.

He is remembered as one of Canadian Jewry's most prominent, humanitarian

and charismatic religious figures.

In his eulogy, RABBI RON AIGEN, spiritual leader of Montreal's

Reconstructionist synagogue, Dorshei Emet, said Becker's greatest legacy

will be the way "he touched so many people so deeply, the way he really

cared about human beings.

"He had an extraordinary career in terms of communal service," Rabbi Aigen

added, having served in leadership roles in some 25 Jewish community

organizations.

Becker founded the Dorshei Emet in Montreal - the Reconstructionist

movement's first congregation in Canada - in 1960, and it continues to

thrive to this day. He was also founder of the Orthodox Young Israel

Synagogue in 1921, and the Conservative Beth-El in Town of Mount Royal in

1951.(Mount Royal is one of Montreal's boroughs)

It was within the Reconstructionist movement and community service,

however, that Becker found his true calling.

Rabbi Aigen said that Rabbi Gunther Plaut, senior scholar of Holy Blossom

Temple in Toronto, once noted that after he arrived in Canada, "I was given

a list of the 10 most important Jewish figures I had to meet. Lavy Becker

was among them, and no wonder. He was the incarnation of Jewish concern and

devotion, a broad and encompassing view of Jewish life, and a deep,

unquenchable love of learning."

Born in Montreal to Russian immigrant parents (his father Barnet, was a

cantor), Becker attended school at Montreal High School and McGill

University.

He was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York where he

became a close disciple of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, founder of the

Reconstructionist movement in the United States.

For five years, Becker worked as congregational rabbi in Long Island and

then as a social worker in Jewish community centres in the Eastern United

States before returning to Montreal to become executive director of the

YM-YWHA.

He also served for one year in Europe with the Joint Distribution Committee

(JDC), helping people who had been placed in German displaced persons

camps.

"Lavy's work with the JDC really exemplifies the qualities that were so

quintessentially Lavy: his concern, not only for Jewish life and community,

but above all his concern for human beings," said Rabbi Aigen.

Becker, upon his return to Montreal, left the practicing rabbinate, and

joined his brothers in business, allowing him to devote all his volunteer

energies to Jewish communal work. In that respect, Becker had an "almost

unrivaled career," Rabbi Aigen said.

[ . . . ] After Rabbi Aigen, at Becker's urging, arrived in Montreal to

become spiritual leader of the Dorshei Emet, Becker took him under his

wing. "Lavy not only took me into his community and his shul...he took me

into his heart, as he did with just everyone he knew.

"We were all so richly blessed by this little man who was such a giant on

the stage of 20th-century Jewry. He was, for many of us, larger than life,

and his memory will surely be for all of us." Becker is survived by his

wife Anita (Greenwood), a son, Hillel, and a daughter, Donnie. He was

predeceased by his first wife, Augusta (Shapiro), and brothers David and

Jack.