

Obituary

Dr. Maurice Lev

Dr. Maurice Lev, who was born on November 13th, 1908, in St. Joseph, Michigan, died in Chicago on February 4th, 1994. With his passing, pediatric cardiology lost one of the few figures who had straddled the evolution of the specialty. If Helen Taussig was the giant of clinical pediatric cardiology during its development, then Maurice Lev and Jesse Edward, the latter still happily going strong, filled this position for the pathology of congenital cardiac malformations. Lev's interest in the field was established through his landmark paper with Saphir on the morphogenesis of the transposition complexes. This was published in the 1930s. Lev's commitment, and contributions, to the field are shown by the fact that he was still publishing important papers in the 1990s. This is an enviable record. Lev also pioneered the important link between the conduction tissues and congenital cardiac malformations. John Kirklin, the unequivocal giant of cardiac surgery, has told me how, in the early 1950s, the belief was that the cardiac conduction system did not exist. In view of this concept, surgeons could not understand why they produced traumatic heart block. Dr. Kirklin tracked Dr. Lev down to a hospital, I think, in Miami. Lev soon clarified the location of the conduction system and used this experience to generate a series of landmark papers. He also became deeply involved in analysis of

congenitally malformed hearts and, with Drs. Gasul and Arcilla, produced a textbook which was well ahead of its time. He established his central position in the Chicago area, working from the Hektoen Institute, where he clarified additionally the substrates of ventricular pre-excitation and congenitally complete heart block. It was in this area that I first had the privilege of meeting this enthusiastic and inventive investigator. Our paths crossed subsequently many times at the national meetings where, together with Dr. Bharati, Lev coordinated the pathological demonstrations which, for very many, were the high spots of these annual events. To many of us "on the outside," but interested deeply in the field, it seemed a strange decision to banish Maurice from the Hektoen Institute. Undeterred, he reestablished things, together with Bharati, at the Deborah Institute in New Jersey, before returning to Chicago at the Heart Institute at Christ's Hospital, supported vigorously by René Arcilla and Michel Ilbawi. Sadly, I was unable to see him during my visit to Christ's Hospital in January 1994, but his memory lives on in the extensive legacy of his scientific works. His career is an example to us all. We can but try to emulate it.

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