

Rabbi M. Davis, 72, scholar, civic leader

PALM COAST, Fla. — Rabbi M. Davis, 72, of Classic Court S. died yesterday at home. He was the husband of Marion (Cronbach) Davis.

Born in Providence, he was a son of the late Jacob and Sadie (Marks) Davis. He had been a summer resident of Narragansett for many years.

Rabbi Davis attended Brown University before moving to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he received a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Cincinnati, and a master's degree in Hebrew letters from Hebrew Union College, where he was ordained in 1949. While there he organized the Hillel Foundation of the University of Cincinnati, and served as its first director.

He moved to Lexington, Ky., in 1951, where he began a five-year service as rabbi of Congregation Adath Israel, director of the Hillel Foundation at the University of Kentucky, government chaplain for the U.S. Public Health Service (Prison) Hospital for drug addicts, and regional director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations for the Ohio Valley and Kentucky/Tennessee areas.

During this time, he helped create the Kentucky Committee of Desegregation and was instrumental in desegregating the University of Kentucky.

Moving to Indianapolis, Ind., in 1956 as rabbi of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, he became president of the Indianapolis Council on Human Relations, served on the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights, helped create Community Action Against Poverty, appointed to the City Housing Commission, and headed the Indianapolis/White House Conference on Adequate Housing.

In the area of inter-racial activities, he served on the board of the United Negro College Fund, was twice named honorary chairman of the NAACP, received the medal of St. Martin de Porres from the Catholic Inter-racial Council, and marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from Selma, Ala., to Montgomery, Ala.

In 1967, he became the senior rabbi of the Jewish Community Center of White Plains, N.Y. There he was involved in a variety of activities ranging

from the United Farm Workers (board member) to the Police Benevolent Association, and served as chaplain of the White Plains Police and Fire Departments. He served as president of the Westchester Board of Rabbis, and for 13 years, he was on the faculty of Manhattan College.

Rabbi Davis has been honored by Marian College (Doctor of Humane Letters), Hebrew Union College (Doctor of Divinity), and Evansville University (Medal of Honor). In 1972, he began a career of combating cults, founding and serving as the first president of Citizens Engaged in Reuniting Families. In 1988, he received the Congressman Leo Ryan Award for his anti-cult activities, and at the time of his death, he served as a director of the American Family Foundation, and on the advisory board of the Cult Awareness Network and the National Committee of Cults and Missionaries.

In 1987, he became rabbi-emeritus of the Jewish Community Center. Following his retirement, he continued his rabbinic activities as visiting lecturer and member of the Presidential Council of the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York, a member of the board of the Jewish Federation of Volusia and Flagler Counties, rabbi of Congregation Shalom Aleichem of Kissimmee, Fla., and a columnist for the National Jewish Post and Opinion.

Besides his wife he leaves two sons, Rabbi Jay R. Davis, rabbi of Temple Beth Shalom, Vero Beach, Fla., and Rabbi Michael A. Davis, rabbi of Temple Beth El, Fort Pierce, Fla.; two sisters, Hannah Feibelman, and Carlie Zimmerman; a brother, Albert Davis, all of Cranston, and three grandchildren.

The funeral will be held Friday at 11 a.m. at Temple Beth El, Orchard Avenue, Providence. Burial will be in Sinai Memorial Park, Warwick.

DAVIS,
Rabbi Maurice

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