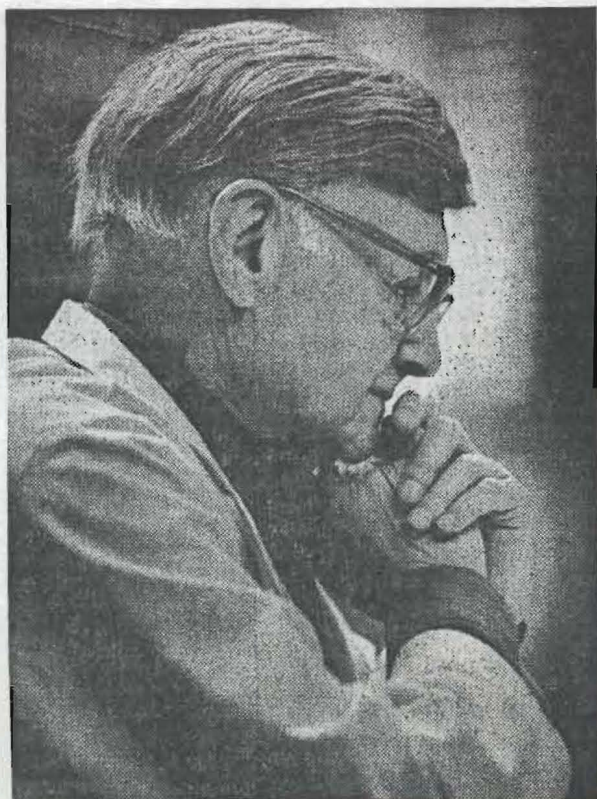


Laszlo Tauber, second from left, with his wife, Diane, left; a family pet, Chatel; his daughter, Ingrid Tauber; and his son-in-law, Frank Taforo.



Tauber, a surgeon, has kept his wartime work in Budapest mostly private, but his efforts are mentioned in a book, top.

50 Years Later, Honors For a Holocaust Hero

2-18-95

By Steve Bates
Washington Post Staff Writer

When the Nazis arrived in Budapest in 1944, Laszlo Tauber, a young Jewish doctor, had a choice: to seek refuge elsewhere or stay and risk death to help the sick and wounded.

He never hesitated. Operating nearly round-the-clock in a school converted to a makeshift hospital, often without running water or electricity, he treated hundreds of Jews who had been shot by roving gangs of Nazi sympathizers.

Tauber went for long periods without eating or sleeping, witnesses say, and when he finally collapsed to doze on the concrete floor, he refused blankets, saying that the patients needed them more. He crammed about 1,200 people into every bed and stairwell of the building until Allied troops liberated the city a year later.

It's a past that Tauber, who fled Hungary at the war's end, has kept virtually locked away.

Five decades later, he has allowed himself to relive it. The soft-spoken Potomac resident will be honored tonight as an unsung hero of the Holocaust. At the private ceremony in Georgetown, coinciding with his 80th birthday, Tauber will receive the Red Cross's highest award, the Medal of Merit.

But the ceremony almost didn't take place. It took months for the Hungarian Red Cross to locate Tauber, and it took prodding from his children to get him to accept the medal.

"It was very painful to remember this," Tauber said in an interview this week. "I did not want to talk about it too much. You just don't go up to people and say, 'I'm a Holocaust survivor.'"

See TAUBER, B4, Col. 1

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because they got shocked. . . . On the other hand, if I lose the suit, the people who aren't going to get any money are going to be upset as well."

Also today, House and Senate conferees agreed on a \$104.4 million prison construction program for the coming fiscal year, far short of the \$402.6 million Allen sought. Del. Glenn R. Croshaw (D-Virginia Beach), who headed the six-member panel, said the appropriation still provides more money than the corrections department can spend in the 12 months beginning July 1.

attended the meeting, holding signs and distributing bumper stickers that read "Save TRIM."

In November, Curry asked legislators to overturn the 1984 voter initiative that bars Prince George's officials from raising property tax rates above \$2.40 per \$100 of assessed value. He also requested authority to create levies on charity casinos and telephone service.

At the time, Curry said they were merely precautionary meas-

real unless the county gets more money. But some legislators and residents contend the cuts were proposed to create support for Curry's tax proposals.

"A lot of these cuts are in areas of personal and emotional blackmail," said Jackie Gordon, a five-year county resident who was holding one of the "Save TRIM" signs.

Others, even some Curry critics, praised his attempts to slash the budget. The county's delega-

to prepare their budgets the cuts he has outlined.

Several legislators held hope that they would deliver more money to the court to take money from the land-National Capital Planning Commission are in both houses of the state, and the County Affairs committee will consider Curry proposals Tuesday. A final expected March 7.

Honors for an Unsung Hero of the Holocaust

TAUBER, From B1

That Tauber's heroics are little known is ironic, say family and friends, because he is otherwise well-known in the Washington area as a successful real estate investor, skilled surgeon and major philanthropist.

"It's amazing—he's had so much publicity," said his daughter, Ingrid Tauber, a psychologist living in San Francisco.

"It's always been in the background," she said. "I knew what he had done. Growing up, we always heard the stories. All of us took it for granted."

Said Laszlo Tauber: "My children asked me, 'Daddy, have you been a hero?' I said no; the

heroes were those Christian people who came to Hungary to save people's lives."

In 1944, life in Budapest had been turned upside down. Most Jews in the rest of the country had been killed. In the capital, Nazi authorities tolerated the presence of some Jews—but for how long, no one could say.

Tauber's brother, Imre, died in a forced labor camp. At one point, Tauber recalls, he narrowly avoided a similar fate by simply walking away during a chaotic moment as others were being lined up to be sent to Auschwitz. Another time, violating a curfew so he could treat a man in a private home, Tauber was spared capture because of a quick-thinking Swiss governess who pushed him into her bed and pretended to be amorously involved with him.

Authorities were aware of the makeshift hospital for Jews, and its patients and staff never knew when it might be shut down.

Tauber was second in command on the staff of 20 until the top doctor fled. He is self-effacing in describing his role.

"I had no choice. I was there. I did my duty. I did not run away," Tauber said.

Eva Bentley says Tauber did a good deal more than that. Bentley was shot in the kidney by Hungarian thugs in October 1944 and woke up on a desk that served as Tauber's operating table. Beside her, Tauber was weeping and holding the hand of a dying patient.

"He operated all day and all night until he fell off his feet," said Bentley, who came to

create support for proposals.

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himself, Mr. Barton acquired rights to it. He was succeeded as president in 1968 by his son, Randolph P. Barton. Later that year, the company was sold to General Mills. It is now owned by Hasbro Inc.

C. COLEMAN MCGEEHEE **Sovran Bank Chairman**

C. Coleman McGehee, 70, former chairman of Sovran Bank and a past

racehorse Fly So Free and went on to win \$2.5 million with it.

Mr. Valando began his career as a music publisher 50 years ago, going into partnership with Perry Como and later publishing the works of Frank Sinatra and Stephen Sondheim. Musicals he backed include "Fiddler on the Roof," "Cabaret," "Godspell" and "Sunday in the Park With George."

the Holocaust

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"He operated all day and all night until he fell off his feet," said Bentley, who came to

the United States in the 1950s and now lives in Philadelphia.

Bentley, who will attend tonight's ceremony, says it was more than Tauber's medical skills that kept her and her mother and sister alive at the hospital during the final months of the war. "He set an example by his strength," she said. "He's such a deeply human person. He tries to cover it."

Tauber insists he's no saint. He's a tough businessman who, by his own admission, built a real estate empire in part on loopholes in local zoning codes and who has been involved in some messy lawsuits, including one in which he was ordered to pay \$25 million he owed for losses in the high-risk derivatives market.

Shortly after coming to the United States in 1947, he obtained a teaching fellowship in neurosurgery at George Washington University. He later established his own clinic in Alexan-

dria, and he still works there full time. His hands, which once helped him to win scholastic gymnastic honors, remain strong.

In 1949, he invested \$1,500 in an apartment building. Today, his holdings are worth about \$500 million. He has donated more than \$2 million to Brandeis University and millions more to friends and charities. He was among the founders of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

After decades of playing down his wartime heroics, Tauber is learning to accept the belated accolades and to revisit the horrors of war without reexperiencing all the pain.

"It was the most important part of my life," he said. "You know, lately I'm dreaming about the war. I've lived with it for a very long time."

Tauber paused, and added, "The past gives you the strength to go ahead."