

Dr. Zassenhaus, of Towson, named Nobel candidate

By MICHAEL P. WEISKOPF

Dr. H. Margret Zassenhaus, a Towson physician who was an underground resistance fighter in Nazi Germany, has been proposed as a candidate for the Nobel peace prize, reliable sources in Oslo confirmed last night.

Dr. Zassenhaus was nominated last week by members of the Norwegian Parliament for her role in helping more than 1,000 Scandinavian resistance fighters avert death in German jails during World War II, the sources said.

She recently has published a book in Norway entitled "Walls." It details her humanitarian efforts in the last world war and states her philosophy of the "invisible walls built by prejudice, fear and hate" that led to that struggle.

Dr. Zassenhaus, 57, received news of her nomination late yesterday evening. In an interview at her home, in the 7000 block Bellona avenue, she said she was "just overwhelmed ... very grateful and very honored."

"I'm just honored that they seem to understand my ideas," she said. "Walls," a 248-page book, has been a best seller in Norway since its release last October. It will be published in this country in March.

"The war never ended," she said in her well-furnished living room. "We're still living at a time of cold war. If we finally remove the walls in our mind, the walls of prejudice, hate and suspicion, we will finally live in peace."

Dr. Zassenhaus performed her wartime humanitarian work while she was employed in the German Department of Justice assigned as a liaison between the government and thousands of Scandinavian prisoners in jails throughout Germany.

In visits with prisoners, she frequently brought food,

cigarettes and medicine. She also compiled a filing system to identify the prisoners, an action that later was important in arranging their release.

After learning that Hitler had secretly ordered the execution of the prisoners, Dr. Zassenhaus got word to Count Bernadotte, of Sweden, who bargained with a high German official to exchange their freedom for cash. Dr. Zassenhaus's file system was used to identify the 1,200 Scandinavian prisoners involved in the deal.

In the postwar period, Dr. Zassenhaus has received numerous honors for her underground work, including Norway's Royal Order of St. Olaf, Denmark's Order of Dannebrog and West Germany's Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit, the highest award for a private citizen in West Germany.

"A high order"

"I felt there is a high order in each of us," the physician said in yesterday's interview. "When you come into that situation, you really have to follow your conscience."

"I was raised with the ideas of Albert Schweitzer—'reverence for life'—she added in her thick German accent. "If you were raised in that way, you had to follow your conscience."

Dr. Zassenhaus was born in Hamburg, the daughter of a historian. She received her undergraduate education at the University of Hamburg and began her medical training there until the war interrupted her plans.

She finished her medical training at the University of Copenhagen, the first German to cross the Danish border after the war. Before leaving her native country, she spent a year aiding homeless orphans.

Dr. Zassenhaus arrived in Baltimore in 1952 and took postgraduate training at Baltimore City Hospitals. She began practicing internal medicine in 1954 and is now associated with Greater Baltimore Medical Center.

Travels to West

She enjoys classical music and art and travels to the Western United States frequently, often stopping at her favorite city, Taos, N.M. Two brothers also live in the United States, one in Ohio, the other in Los Angeles.

Dr. Zassenhaus began writing her best-selling book four years ago, spending weekends in her long, rectangular library. At the time of the book's release, she gave an address at the University of Oslo that was later transmitted throughout the country.

She points out in the book's prologue that the "walls of cement, brick and wire" in the Thirid Reich were matched by "invisible walls built by prejudice, fear, hate and what is worse, indifference."

The lessons of Nazi Germany, she said in the prologue, are applicable today because "again we are living in a world torn by some of the same forces that either activated or paralyzed the German people."

"We still live in a time of fear, hatred and suspicion. We still think in terms of nations, states and religions, instead of finding our way to each other," she said, concluding yesterday's interview.



H. MARGARET ZASSENHAUS
... nominated for prize