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DEADLY MISTAKE SETS DOCTOR ON A ROCKY ROAD TO PRISON

8–10 minutes

By the time Dr. Ronald Tauber left Orlando in 1978, his medical license had been suspended, his hospital privileges revoked and his reputation ruined by a deadly slip of his scalpel.

Then things really fell apart, Tauber said last week from his home, a Michigan maximum-security prison.

“I regret I left Florida. I wish I had stuck it out. Those were the only real two happy years in my life,” he said in a telephone interview from Riverside Correctional Facility in Ionia.

Two years after Tauber moved to Detroit, he was arrested for sexually assaulting a 6-year-old girl. He got her in his car by asking for directions. He made her touch him. He touched her. There was penetration. Now he is in jail for 12 to 50 years.

“I’m literally just wasting away here. It’s terrible. It’s really terrible,” said the 38-year-old osteopath who opened Orlando’s first birthing center and abortion clinic in 1978.

Tauber was the subject of extensive publicity in Florida over the death of a woman on whom he performed an abortion. He was charged with manslaughter, but the case was dropped because of a lack of evidence. A state board later suspended his license for two years.

Today he spends much of his time handling a \$1.75 million malpractice suit he filed against his psychologist. He claims the psychologist failed to stop him from carrying out his sexual

fantasies by not giving him proper treatment. At his 1982 non-jury trial for first-degree criminal sexual conduct, Tauber admitted to more than 700 sexual episodes with young girls. He said it started when he was 14. “Been plagued with it all my life, it seems like,” he testified.

“When I see young girls . . . I feel like an electrical shock through my body, a tickling in my genital area.”

Tauber pleaded insanity. He said he was mentally ill and could not control himself. The judge did not believe that pedophilia — the sexual desire for children — stopped Tauber from knowing right and wrong. Tauber was convicted. During sentencing, he asked to be sent to a hospital for treatment. He recalls the judge looking at him and saying, “You’re going to prison.”

Today, Tauber says he misunderstood the question about 700 sexual episodes. He said

that number includes “everything from fantasy situations — going off into believing myself in love with some young girl — all the way to actual contact, of which there were two incidents.”

“Ninety percent of the 700 figure was purely fantasy without any contact. Strictly visual, exhibitionistic kinds of things. The actual number of children affected was two.”

Tauber was arrested in those two cases. The first involved the 6-year-old. It happened July 14, 1980. Tauber said the child later sued him and won \$210,000 for pain and suffering. He said he does not have the money to pay her.

The other girl was 12. It happened five weeks after the first case when Tauber was out on bail.

He was in his car again and stopped a girl who was riding a bicycle. He asked directions. Then he asked if she wanted to make “a buck or

two,” the girl told police. Tauber grabbed her. She broke free and ran. She described him and his car.

Tauber was charged with indecent exposure, attempted kidnapping and first-degree criminal sexual conduct. The charges later were reduced to indecent exposure and dismissed, Tauber said, because he did not get a speedy trial. His first trial had entangled due process on his second.

Were there any episodes with children while he lived in Orlando?

“No,” he said, “fantasies, but not incidents. I never really acted out on it until right about the time I was arrested.”

**TAUBER ‘WAS RAILROADED,’
SUPPORTERS SAY**

Tauber said he had a nervous breakdown in spring 1980, around the time of his arrests. He said the breakdown had a lot to do with the

cloud that followed him from Florida when one of his patients bled to death 30 hours after an abortion.

But Tauber had been ostracized by Orlando's medical community before the death of Gloria Small, 34, of DeLeon Springs. He was the only doctor in town performing abortions on women in the second trimester of pregnancy.

He used to admit abortion patients to the same Florida Hospital unit where women had babies. That upset a lot of nurses, state licensing records show.

Obstetricians at the hospital held a meeting and examined Tauber's handling of some cases. In November 1977 they voted to revoke his hospital admitting privileges. They said he failed "to demonstrate the satisfactory professional skills, judgment or knowledge expected of him."

Two weeks later Orlando General Hospital

revoked Tauber's privileges for similar reasons.

A doctor without a hospital, Tauber opened a birthing center on North Magnolia Avenue. It had a couple of beds for occasional overnight stays and offered an alternative to costly hospital deliveries. It was January 1978 and the idea was new.

Tauber developed a loyal following of mothers.

"He was a wonderful doctor. He cared and he empathized," said Dianne Taylor, a former patient who co-wrote a free-lance article on Tauber for The Orlando Sentinel.

Along with another patient, Taylor examined Tauber's charge of manslaughter in Small's death, and why it soon was dropped for lack of evidence. Taylor said she believes Tauber "was railroaded." State licensing officials disagree.

An autopsy showed that Small died of blood loss. Tauber had perforated her uterus during the abortion at his clinic. He stopped the

bleeding by packing the cavity with gauze. He monitored Small's condition and kept her overnight. The next day he pulled out the gauze. Blood poured out. An ambulance was called and Small was taken to Orlando Regional Medical Center. She died three hours later after an emergency hysterectomy.

After Small died in March 1978, the state Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners suspended Tauber's license for two years. Soon afterward Tauber moved back home to Detroit.

"When I came back to Michigan, I had a real rough time getting hospital privileges. Being an OB-GYN (obstetrician-gynecologist), it's extremely difficult to practice without them," he said.

A friend offered him a job at an inner-city medical practice.

"I was forced into a position where I was doing many, many abortions. This weighed heavily on

me and I think contributed to the breakdown.

“I realized something was terribly wrong. I went to a psychologist who kept telling me things were getting better.”

DOCTOR BLAMES PSYCHOLOGIST FOR TROUBLES

Tauber is suing the psychologist, Dr. Thomas Kozak, for malpractice. Kozak said his attorney had advised him not to comment on the case.

Tauber said Kozak should have put him in a hospital treatment program for sex offenders. He thought his fantasies would end if he was given the proper treatment.

“There are a number of different techniques that make the fantasies boring or very frightening so when you start to think of them, you get frightened,” he said.

Tauber was admitted to a sex offender program in Connecticut after his arrests. He stayed four months. He left to go to jail.

“I saw amazing effectiveness. The fantasies were not there. But then, after a while of non-treatment, they started coming back. Certainly nothing like they once were. It’s the kind of thing that has to be continued life- long.”

Tauber said he doesn’t know when the malpractice case will be settled. With no money, he has had trouble getting a lawyer and has represented himself. He had completed two years of law school before entering prison.

If he wins the case, Tauber said he will pay the girl’s claim of \$210,000. Tauber said he must spend at least 12 years in prison under Michigan law.

Prison is rough, he said.

“Being a physician was a problem. I think they resented even more that you were somebody they view as having had it made and then threw it away.”

Tauber said he was beat up and robbed while

at Jackson State Penitentiary. Since being moved to Riverside prison, things have improved.

He is confident he will get out one day. He wants to visit his mother in Fort Lauderdale and then practice medicine again, maybe in Africa or South America.

“I really want to practice medicine some place that really needs medical care. I have a lot of guilt over what happened. A tremendous amount of guilt. I think it would give me a feeling of paying the world back.”

He often thinks about the nurses and patients he left in Orlando. “I wonder a lot what they really think of me. We really did have nice relationships.”

What would he say to them?

“Don’t give up idealism and if you have a moment, write me.”

