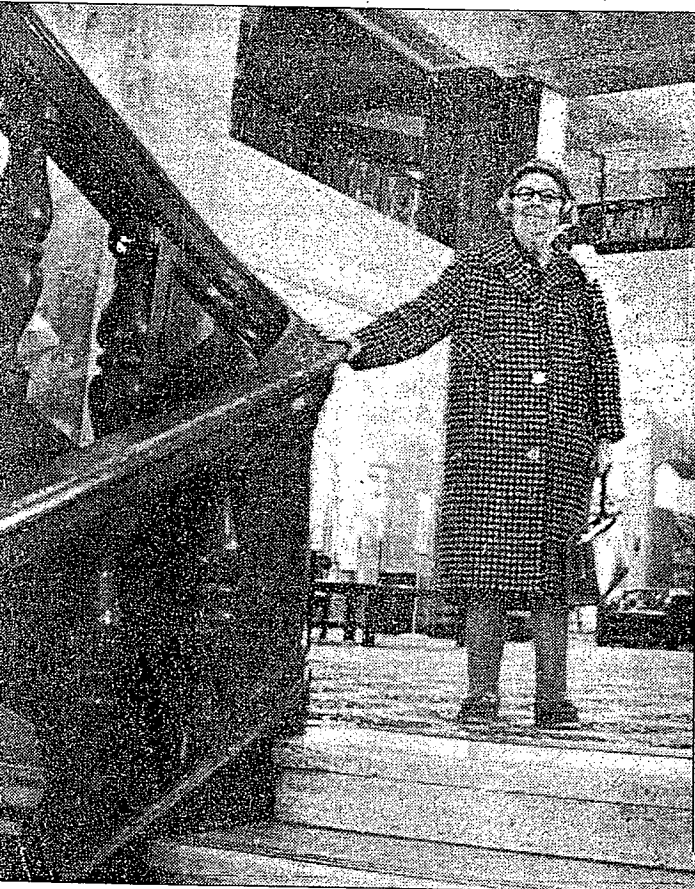


BALTIMORE, SUNDAY, JULY 25, 1982 \*



THE  
LORD  
BALTIMORE  
HOTEL

## Restoration to evict an era

By David Michael Ettlin

It was a sunny and warm August 22, 1932, when Bernard Hendler checked into the Lord Baltimore Hotel. Albert C. Ritchie was governor of Maryland, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the governor of New York, was soon to defeat Herbert Hoover for the presidency.

Next weekend, when the grand old hotel shuts down for a \$12 million overhaul, Mr. Hendler will be reluctantly checking out just a few weeks short of his golden anniversary as a resident.

No one has been there longer—not even an em-

See HOTEL, A6, Col. 1



Katharine W. Herbert, who moved into the Lord Baltimore Hotel 16 months ago, is one of several residents who will have to make way for renovations.

The Sun/Richard Childress

# Hotel's closing tears up some deep roots

HOTEL, from A1

ployee. Mr. Hendler doesn't talk much about how long he has been at the Lord Baltimore or even his age. He appears to be in his 60s, but by hotel legend he is 85.

Joseph (Sugar) Szugaj, a bellman at the Lord Baltimore for 30 years, chuckled when asked if he could remember when Mr. Hendler first checked in. "I wasn't even born then," he said.

When the Lord Baltimore announced it was closing until the fall of 1983, Mr. Hendler and four other longtime permanent residents were among the first to be told.

The last guests will be admitted Friday, but only for a day, as hotel management plans to shut down the operation Saturday.

Mr. Hendler, the only Lord Baltimore guest with his own furniture, plans to move to another downtown hotel for a month—but those who are accustomed to, and can afford, living in hotels do not necessarily stick by such plans.

Another longtime resident, who requested anonymity, said he had lived in the Lord Baltimore years ago but moved to the now-defunct Stafford in Mount Vernon. When he moved to the Stafford, the elderly man said, "they asked me how long I would be staying and I said two or three weeks. But I stayed 26 years."

Why, he was asked, would anyone choose to live for decades in a hotel? "Because when you're single and you have an apartment, you have to worry about cooking the food, having a maid, changing the linens. In a hotel, you don't have to worry about that."

Louis Schwartz, a downtown lawyer and another of the permanent residents, said the Lord Baltimore, his home since 1969, was "just like any other hotel, I guess."

Mr. Schwartz's first choice as a home was the old Emerson Hotel, but when it was demolished in 1969 he moved west on Baltimore street to the Lord Baltimore. He is still moving west—this time, to the newer Hilton.

But moving, he said, is "a nuisance."

Katharine Waxter Herbert moved into the hotel just 16 months ago. "I had an apartment at the Broadview," she said, "then I thought, oh well,



The Sun/Weyman Swagger

**"When I came here 30 years ago, we had 14 bellmen, 2 bell captains and a doorman. We were the showcase on the East Coast—there weren't no Holiday Inns, no Hiltons."**

—Joseph Szugaj, bellman at Lord Baltimore

maybe I'll sell my furniture and move into a hotel. Now I guess I'll move out."

Reminded that she no longer had any furniture, Mrs. Herbert laughed and said, "Oh, that's right!"

Mrs. Herbert, who said she was "the oldest living Waxter" and a second cousin of City Councilman Thomas J. S. Waxter, Jr., was paying \$675 a month for a room at the Lord Baltimore. "But it's a long room," she added, "with a bed at one end and kind of a sitting room with a sofa at the other."

There is no television set, but only because she told the bellman ("You can't call them bellhops because they-

re too old!") to remove it. Mrs. Herbert said she gave up watching television after Hedda Hopper wrote that "Johnny Carson is getting too big for his britches."

Mrs. Herbert, 76, said hotel living was convenient, and it was nice that the sheets and pillowcases were changed every day "just like when you're on vacation."

"But if my mother knew I was down here, she wouldn't like it. Anything below Baltimore street—of course, we're right on Baltimore street—was like slumming."

Mr. Hendler was reluctant to talk about himself and refused to allow his picture to be taken. He would not even admit to having lived there 50 years, but hotel officials confirmed the date by examining his old yellow registration card—brittle but sealed in plastic—in the standing guest file at the cashier's desk.

"They don't have the card," Mr. Hendler insisted, clutching a folded copy of *Fortune* magazine. "I have it."

Asked again when he moved in, Mr. Hendler said, "I don't know how long I've been here. I don't count. The Lord's been good to be, and this hotel's been lucky for me."

"I only know the graveyard's a nasty place."

Mr. Hendler said he knew when he checked in 50 years ago that he would stay a long time. "I intended to stay longer. It was sort of a shock to me when I heard they were going to close."

And why did he stay there so long? "It was very nice," Mr. Hendler said, "nice from the first day I came here. It was a pleasure to do business with the Busicks."

Harry Busick opened the Lord Baltimore in 1928, and his family continued to operate the establishment until it was sold to a New York hotel chain in 1960. Nine years later, Zanvyl Krieger, a Baltimore lawyer, purchased the hotel for \$600,000 and made \$3.5 million in improvements.

Talk has circulated in the last 13 months that the Lord Baltimore was for sale, but the \$12 million overhaul announced by Mr. Krieger's Federated Hotel Corporation a week ago came as a surprise to Hope Quackenbush, a member of a group that had considered buying it.

The project will be financed with

the aid of a \$10 million low-interest, tax-free industrial revenue bond approved by the City Council last fall.

When it reopens, several employees said yesterday, the Lord Baltimore will become a luxury-class hotel, as it had been years ago.

Jeanne Taylor, manager of the hotel's rooms division, said the change would affect middle-income travelers who stayed at the Lord Baltimore because its room rates were lower than its more modern competitors.

Jim Lichtenberger has been at the Lord Baltimore nearly five months, but figures his days of downtown living will end with its closing because there is little left in the area that he can afford.

A contract engineer from Illinois with only his salary and no expense account to offset living costs, Mr. Lichtenberger said the hotel offered him its cheapest \$44-a-night room at a half-price rate for long-term residents.

"It's all I need," Mr. Lichtenberger said, his eyes conducting a tour of the approximately 10-by-15-foot room. It sports relatively new orange-rust carpeting, white walls (save for a patch of yellow-striped wallpaper over his double bed), two chairs, a night table and work desk.

There is also a small, tile-floor bathroom and a tiny closet that would never be a selling feature in a house.

"I wish I could get the same thing somewhere else," he sighed. "You can get room service, you can send the laundry out. I can eat right here in my room and go about my business. Sure it's small and cramped, but the price is right."

Hotel living is not without inconveniences—high among them the cost of parking. Mr. Lichtenberger copes with the problem by taking advantage of a \$1.40 overnight rate at Fayver's Park Under, driving in after 3:30 p.m. on weekdays and out by 8:30 in the morning.

Mr. Lichtenberger acknowledged that Baltimore's downtown has been improved in recent years, but the features that have begun attracting tourists have also driven up the price of temporary housing.

While the closing and the loss of 450 hotel rooms will cause some problems for the city's booming convention business, the most immediate



The Sun/Richard Childress

Jim Lichtenberger, a Lord Baltimore resident for five months, says of the hotel he must leave, "I wish I could get the same thing somewhere else."

hardships fall on long-term residents and the 250 Lord Baltimore employees.

But Laszlo Ravasz, the Lord Baltimore's general manager, said efforts were being made to relocate the customers with reservations through 1983, to find new lodging for the permanent residents and to help employees get new jobs.

"We might have an old hotel," Mr. Ravasz said, "but we have very fine employees—some of whom have been receiving job offers. Thirty days from now, everyone who wants to work will have jobs."

Mr. Ravasz said he was personally saddened to have to deliver news of the closing to the hotel's five permanent elderly residents.

"We have to treat them with kid gloves," he said. "There is no such thing as a deadline. If no place can be found, I will take care of them myself."

Not every employee is anxious to get a new job. Rose Bisasky, who was

a young widow when she took a two-week tryout at the registration desk, plans to travel after 26 years at the Lord Baltimore.

"I came to stay two weeks," Mrs. Bisasky said. "I never left. It was fascinating. It was exciting. It was very good for the morale," she added, noting that she had met movie stars, political figures, "people from all walks of life—that's what I liked about it."

Mr. Szugaj (pronounced shoe-guy, hence the nickname "Sugar"), one of four Lord Baltimore bellmen, was hopeful that someone among his many friends might help him find at least a part-time job and that the Lord Baltimore would rehire him when it reopens.

"When I came here 30 years ago," he said, "we had 14 bellmen, 2 bell captains and a doorman. We were the showcase on the East Coast—there weren't no Holiday Inns, no Hiltons."

But in the 1980s, Mr. Szugaj said, bellmen are "becoming rare birds."