

## Highlights

- My family's account from 1945 of the horrors of their experience at Auschwitz during the Holocaust
- How US Intelligence tried to recruit me
- How I facilitated a clandestine meeting between Sally Ride and Svetlana Savitskaya
- My ancestors' failed immigration to the US
- My public lecture with Isaac Asimov and Carl Sagan



## Tamas Gombosi

Was the first foreign postdoctoral researcher at the Space Research Institute in Moscow, Russia, under the direction of space pioneer Konstantin Gringauz. In 1985 he joined the faculty of the University of Michigan where he is presently Rollin M. Gerstaecker Professor of Engineering.

He participated in a number of exciting space missions, including the Venera 9 and 10 Venus orbiters and the VEGA mission to Halley's Comet. Tamas was recently involved in the Cassini/Huygens mission to Saturn and its moon Titan, the Rosetta mission to comet Churyumov-Gerasimenko, the STEREO mission to explore solar storms and the Magnetospheric Multiscale mission.

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## Rising from the ashes of the Holocaust: From Hungarian Peddlers to American Rocket Scientist

*Phoenix follows the history of a Jewish family from the early 19th century to the beginning of the 3rd Millennium, from rural Hungary to Budapest and beyond. After having endured decimation in the Holocaust, the family rose from the ashes like a Phoenix, survived life behind The Iron Curtain and two generations after the first attempt, was finally able to settle in the United States.*

*Phoenix also describes the author's scientific career from his early years in Hungary to his most formative years at the Space Research Institute in Moscow where he worked with the best space physicists of the Soviet Union. As a young scientist he also played a role as an intermediary between the leadership of the Soviet planetary research program and the West, a role that led to some memorable events. He played leading roles in the international VEGA mission to comet Halley and in the Cassini mission to the Saturn and its moons.*

## Some families have truly amazing stories

By Hope Burwell on December 10, 2013

Essentially the genealogical research of the author's family and his wife's, this book is a treasure trove of information for scholars of Hungary before and after World War II, including many primary documents from the period. A fascinating example is a dowry inventory from 1907; a gut-wrenching example, the speech given by Gombosi's mother-in-law, Juci Gunsberger, to U.S. troops after time in Auschwitz and later her liberation from the Kaunitz concentration camp. Additionally, the narrative affords a look at life in Hungary at a time few "westerners" could have known what was happening there, behind the Iron Curtain, as people tried to recover from surviving the Holocaust and gave birth to the "Phoenix Generation," of which Gombosi is a member.

The first half of this book is an interesting study of Jewish family life in Hungary before and during World War II, including glimpses into the differences between the lives of those living in major cities and those living in the countryside with explanations for the reasons that so many of Hungary's rural Jews ended their lives at the hands of the Nazis while survival rates for those living in Budapest were much higher. As an educator, I found the descriptions of education reform and the ways it helped to create two generations of world famous scientists particularly interesting -- STEM schools, a century before we even conceived of them in the U.S.

The 2nd half of the book focuses on Gombosi's education in those schools and his unusual rise through the ranks of space scientists, first in Europe and then in the U.S. to which he and his family defected in the early 1980s. Again, a treasure of information for scholars of the subject and period and for those of us simply curious about what it was like to live in Soviet satellite states.

With a 24 page index, the text readily lends itself to research. But I couldn't help thinking over and over as I read it, there's material here for a great movie script, or the backbone of a whopping historical novel.

