

REMARKS ON VETERANS DAY - NOVEMBER 11, 2013
WAYLAND'S VETERANS DAY PROGRAM

by C. Peter R. Gossels

Thank you so much, Captain Quinn, for that generous and informative introduction.

When George Bernard, who has worked so hard to produce this wonderful program, asked me to talk about Service to Country and Community, I realized that the subject matter posed quite a challenge: How can I talk about my service to country and community without preaching or boring you to death.

So, I hope you will be kind and patient.

When I arrived in this country on September 9, 1941, I was an 11 year old Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, who came to this country with his younger brother Werner, but without his parents. As you heard, we had received an American visa thanks to the kind generosity of members of the American Friends Service Committee, who were working in France, where we had fled before being overrun by the German armies. I was well aware of the miracle that had saved me and my brother, and I was determined to do what I could to serve my new country and Wayland, the community that welcomed my family to Town in 1961.

I suppose that my service can be described as falling into three categories: my service to Wayland, my service to the Jewish community and my service to the administration of justice.

My Service to Wayland.

I am sure that many of you will recall that I was elected and served as Wayland's Town Moderator for thirty years and that I codified and published, for the first time, the rules and regulations that govern Wayland's Town Meetings. In order to make better use of our time at town meetings, I established time limits for speakers and gave opponents of the main motion equal time to present their case, another innovation. And I introduced electronic voting to our town meetings, making Wayland the first community in New England to adopt a system that allows voters to vote by secret ballot and assures them a quick, accurate count. (Credit should also go to Alan Reiss, who first broached the idea and fought for it, the ELVIS Committee headed by Dave Bernstein as well as all the others, who helped to make this happen.)

You may recall my service as Moderator, but I bet that you may not recall that I served a two-year term with the legendary Bob Morgan on Wayland's Finance Committee between 1966 and 1968. I learned a lot from Bob Morgan: During the 35 years that he served as chair of the Finance Committee, Wayland's voters in town meeting assembled routinely followed the recommendations of the Finance Committee, unless Bob sensed that he might lose the vote. On one occasion, for example, the Committee had voted to recommend that Town Meeting vote no on a proposal that Wayland contribute its share of the cost of the services being offered to several towns by a Mental Health Center in Framingham. But when a voter at Town Meeting delivered an impassioned speech in favor of the proposal, Bob sensed the change of mood in the room and announced that the Finance Committee would support the proposal. Ironically this voter turned out to be an employee of the mental health center.

Mindful of the wonderful education our children had received in Wayland's

public schools, my brother, Werner and his wife Elaine, established and funded the Gossels Fund for Academic Excellence for Wayland's public schools. Nancy and I joined them some time later and augmented that fund. Werner, Elaine, Nancy and I then created and funded the Gossels Fund for Human Dignity, administered by the Library Trustees which helped, in a small way, to fund the Wayland Veterans Memorial. And we donated funds to dedicate a room at the Wayland Library to honor our mother who was murdered at Auschwitz. You may have noticed the plaque at the far end of the long room at the library.

And I still serve as host of an annual two hour WayCam cable television call-in program called, "Ask the Candidates, Live", which invites voters to question candidates for public office in Wayland before Election Day. Please watch us next Spring on Comcast Channel 9 and Verizon Channel 38 and call in your questions for the candidates at that time.

My Service to the Jewish Community.

As a Jewish refugee, I felt, and feel, a special obligation to the Jewish community that helped to sustain me and my brother during the two turbulent years we spent in France as well as during our teenage years in this country. I still serve as a director of OSE-USA , an American charity that helps to support the French organization that helped us survive during the war.

After serving two years in the US Army during the Korean War, I was asked to serve as Chair of the Young Adult Division of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies. I accepted that responsibility and was richly rewarded, because I met my incredible wife, Nancy, while attending a CJP event in 1957. We were married the following June.

When we moved to Wayland in 1961, there was no Jewish congregation in Town. There were, in fact, very few Jewish families living in Wayland at the time. So we joined a small congregation in Sudbury, called Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley. During the thirty years that we belonged to that congregation, I served as its President for two years. Nancy and I held many other offices in the congregation and served a five-year term on the National Commission on Worship of the Union for Reform Judaism.

Prompted by the Bar Mitzvas of our three children, Lisa, Amy and Daniel, during the 1970s, Nancy and I became fascinated by Jewish liturgy, which was then dominated by ancient formulas composed by rabbis living in a world where Jews were oppressed and referred to God as a male monarch. With the help of Joan Kaye, who also lived in Wayland, and the work of many other congregants, Nancy and I wrote, edited and published the first egalitarian Jewish prayer book for the Sabbath and the Jewish festivals named, "Vetaher Libenu" (Purify Our Hearts), in 1980. The proof text for our groundbreaking prayer book was Genesis 1:27, which declares that "... God created human kind in God's image; male and female God created them." The publication of our prayer book was noted on the front page of the Wall Street Journal and newspapers across the country and has sold more than 10,000 copies world-wide, including thousands of copies to Christian clergy and nuns. And the invocation composed by Joan and Nancy, "Holy One of Blessing, Your Presence Fills Creation", has been incorporated in prayer books published by Jews and many Christian congregations as well. You can check that phrase on Wikipedia if you like.

And virtually all Reform, and many Jewish Conservative congregations, including Wayland's "Or Atid", have now added the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, when they say their prayers, an innovation

introduced by our prayer book for the first time. Nancy and I subsequently wrote and edited prayer books for Rosh Hashanah and week day mornings, which were published by Congregation Beth El, before we joined Wayland's Temple Shir Tikva about eight years ago. And we are still working with our liturgy there to make Jewish prayers more accessible and meaningful for congregants.

I might add that Nancy and I have also worked hard to make the Jewish community more sensitive and welcoming to interfaith families.

Are you bored yet?

My Service to the Administration of Justice

During the fifty-seven years that I have served my clients as a lawyer, I have also contributed my skills to the legal profession and the larger community:

1. I organized and produced the annual New England Conference of Legal Problems of Doing Business Abroad on behalf of the Boston Bar Association between 1962 and 1967. That conference attracted hundreds of lawyers and business people, including Senator Saltonstall.

2. You may not know, for example, that I worked with Mike Dukakis, before he became Governor and ran for President, to bring condominiums to Massachusetts in 1963. There was no such thing as a condominium in the United States fifty years ago, except in the State of Hawaii. The development of Wayland's Mainstone condominium communities ten years later was made possible by the legislation we drafted.

3. Working with Professor Robert Keaton and my classmate at Harvard Law School, Jeffrey O'Connell, we persuaded then State Representative Mike Dukakis to sponsor a novel system of "no-fault" automobile insurance legislation known as the Personal Injury Protection Act, which was enacted in 1970, the first of its kind in the nation.

4. I served for five years as a hearing officer for the Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers and ten years as Chair of the Boston Bar Association's Fee Disputes Committee.

5. I have also served as a master of the Superior Court and as a guardian ad litem of the Probate and Family Court.

6. And I have served on the New England Regional Board of the Anti-Defamation League.

7. In order to help improve the judicial system, I have contributed numerous articles to the Boston Bar Journal, Banker & Tradesman and Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly, which were designed to improve our judicial system. Among these, are articles entitled, "Knowing the Law Before Starting a Small Business", "Has the Supreme Judicial Court Emasculated the Laws Protecting Consumers?", "Have the Courts Overlooked the Problem of the Predator Spouse?", and my most recent piece entitled, "Flaw in the Criminal Justice System Needs to be Fixed. A copy of those articles can be found on my website, www.gosselslaw.com.

8. The increasing cost imposed on the public, who use our courts as plaintiffs, or fall victim to it as defendants, has led me to devote a great deal of my time to make

our judicial system more accessible, less costly and time-consuming. This has been a frustrating task, frankly, because some of the judiciary and many of the larger law firms prefer the status quo. But we are making progress: After two years of study, our Work Group on Cost and Time Efficiencies in the Massachusetts Courts published a report, which was adopted by the Boston Bar Association in 2005. As a result, a number of the recommendations in our Report have been implemented, at least in part, in the Superior Court.

9. Much more needs to be done, of course, so, I am currently serving as co-chair with a retired judge of the Appeals Court, of a subcommittee of the Boston Bar Association's Section on the Administration of Justice to review and update the recommendations of our 2005 Report. We hope to publish next Spring.

So, you see, I am still engaged in public service . . . I have not been paid for any of those services, but I must say that my life has been enriched beyond anything I might have imagined by my contributions to our country and community. There is, after all, joy in giving back.

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Now, lest you think that you have been listening to a draft of my obituary, you can find me practicing law every business day at my office at 84 State Street in Boston and, by appointment, at my Wayland office. And if you are wondering what sort of law I practice, please check my website: www.gosselslaw.com, which contains more information about my professional experience and skills than you will want to know.

So, let me conclude by quoting Winston Churchill, who wrote:

*“We make a living by what we get;
We make a life by what we give.”*

Thank you so much for listening.