

# Remembering victims of a genocide

At a local Holocaust ceremony, a man recalls Nazi terror

By Brian Benson  
Staff Writer

C. Peter Gossels encouraged people to imagine for a moment that their mothers were victims of genocide.

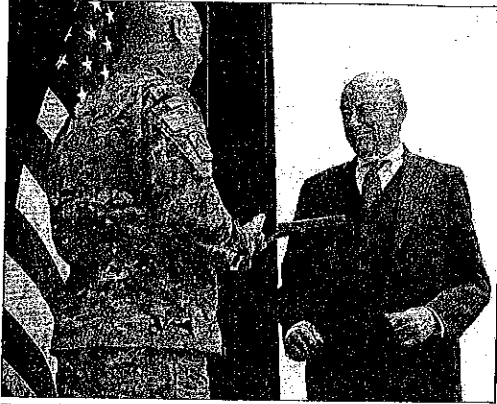
Imagine they were abruptly arrested, taken to South Station, put on cattle cars and sent away to be murdered. "Your mother," he said. "Think about that..."

At a Holocaust Remembrance event Monday at Natick Labs, Gossels shared his story of fleeing his native Germany in 1939 and eventually coming to the United States. His mother, Charlotte Lewy Gossels, was among the millions of Jews and others murdered in the Holocaust.

"Evil is nothing new," said Peter Gossels, an Army veteran and Wayland resident who served about three decades as that town's moderator. "It's in the newspapers and on television every day."

But, people can't fully grasp the reality of evil until it becomes personal, he said.

Remembering the Holocaust is a solemn moment, but, it is also "a story of good and how we overcame the evil," said Lt. Col. Ryan Raymond, the garrison commander of the U.S. Army base. Nothing can compare to the Holocaust, which is "a warning of what can occur if evil is allowed to operate unchecked," Raymond said. Gossels' mother helped by the groundwork so Gossels and his brother, Werner, could flee from the Nazis by joining with other children to escape, Gossels said.



Peter Gossels, of Wayland, right, guest speaker at the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Systems Center Holocaust Remembrance Monday, receives a gift from Lt. Col. Ryan Raymond, garrison commander. [DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL STAFF PHOTO/ART ILLMAN]

Peter and Werner Gossels escaped Germany in 1939. The organization Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants and French residents helped them avoid the Germans. And, in 1941, they came to the United States thanks to work of the American Friends Service Committee and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Peter Gossels lived in Brookline and Mattapan, attended Boston Latin School and Harvard and became an attorney. He moved to Wayland in 1961 and has sought to give back to his town, his Jewish faith and organizations that helped him. He contributed to a range of efforts, including co-editing the first egalitarian Jewish prayer book and donating to local Wayland causes.

To overcome evil, Gossels encouraged people to support first responders and the armed forces as well as organizations dedicated to helping people in need.

People should also contribute to government, he said.

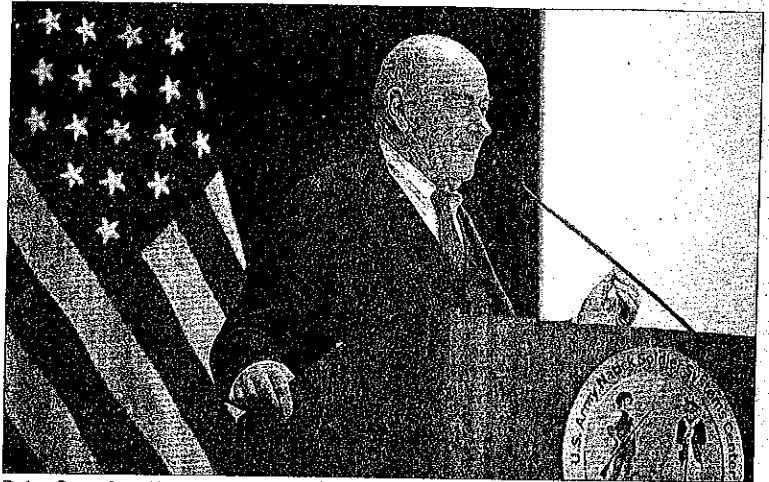
After the program, Wayland's George Bernard, a civilian employee at the base, said Gossels influenced him to become more involved in civic life in Wayland. He knew Gossels would be a perfect speaker for the ceremony.

Raymond said he hopes people who attended the event learned about the importance of counteracting evil with good.

Gossels, responding to a question from the audience about acts of anti-Semitism today, said he hopes people around the world will triumph over evil.

"This is a room full of good people," he said. "Good people will always stand up, I hope, for goodness and for decency toward other people."

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Peter Gossels, of Wayland, attorney, former Wayland town moderator, and Army veteran, was guest speaker at the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Systems Center Holocaust Remembrance Monday. He and his brother Werner escaped as children to France in 1939 from Nazi Germany. [DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL STAFF PHOTO/ART ILLMAN]



Werner Gossels listens to his brother, Peter Gossels, guest speaker at the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Systems Center Holocaust Remembrance Monday. The brothers who now live in Wayland escaped as children to France in 1939 from Nazi Germany. [DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL STAFF PHOTO/ART ILLMAN]