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## **Dedication ceremony held in Nashua for New Hampshire's first public memorial to victims of the Holocaust**

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NASHUA – When German soldiers seized control of the Netherlands in May 1940, former Nashua aldermen Fred Teeboom was still a child.

At the time, an estimated 140,000 Jews resided in the country. By the close of the second world war, the majority were gone – victims of a mass genocide that is considered one of the worst atrocities in history.

Jews in the Netherlands experienced one of the lowest survival rates anywhere in Europe during the Holocaust; more than 70 percent were killed.

After the war was over, Teeboom questioned why he was among the roughly one in four Jews in the country who was spared.

It's a dilemma some Holocaust survivors have never reconciled. But for Teeboom, the answer became clear after he relocated to his new home in Nashua. He set out to ensure that for generations to come, people in New Hampshire never forget the lessons of the Holocaust and never again stay silent in the face of human tragedy.

After working to achieve that mission for five years, Teeboom presided over the dedication ceremony Sunday for New Hampshire's first public memorial to victims of the Holocaust.

"I believe that I survived the Nazis to build, and I humbly suggest that God guided us in the building of, this memorial," he told a crowd of more than 100 people gathered at the memorial site inside Rotary Common in Nashua.

Teeboom was joined by spiritual leaders, elected officials and three generations of his family as he helped to open the New Hampshire Holocaust Memorial to the public during a ceremony at the park, located at 315 Main St.

The program included a ribbon cutting carried out by students from Hollis Montessori School, which supported the memorial by donating the proceeds from a plant sale. State Sens. Bette Lasky and Peggy Gilmour read a message from Gov. Maggie Hassan, and dancers from New England Dance Ensemble performed a roughly 30-minute long piece interpreting the events of the Nazi genocide, titled, "A Child's View of the Holocaust."

Some 11 million people were killed by the Nazis, including 6 million Jews. Teeboom, his parents and his brother survived by being sheltered in Holland by a family of devout Dutch Christians.

It was during a visit to the Dachau concentration camp in Germany that Teeboom started getting ideas for what a Holocaust memorial in Nashua would look like.

Brookline sculptor John Weidman stepped in about five years ago to help him design the memorial and bring it to fruition.

The main portion the site measures 28 feet in diameter, and consists of six granite walls, surrounding a brick stand with a black cube in the center.

The six walls weigh up to 5 tons each. They represent the six concentration camps originally built by the Nazis for the purpose of genocide: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.

The names of the camps are inscribed on the inside of each wall. Each stone includes bent brackets at the top and is etched with barbed wire, representative of the fences at the camps.

The black cube in the center alludes to the fact that the Holocaust marked a dark period in history. It also shows the reflection of all who visit, a feature Weidman hopes will connect viewers with the memorial and give a sense of responsibility for the future.

"We are a part of everything, and we cannot let it happen again," Weidman said.

The site is ringed by six engraved benches. A 4,000-pound vertical monument installed in late 2013 was one of the final additions; it bears the words "Never forget."

Leading up to the monumental stones is a set of railroad tracks donated by Pan Am Railways. The rails represent the trains many Holocaust victims rode before arriving at the camps where they were killed.

The land for the memorial was donated by the city. The Board of Aldermen agreed to pay about \$6,500 for general site work, and to create four parking spaces. Remaining funds came from private donors.

Rabbi Jonathan Spira-Savett of Temple Beth Abraham in Nashua discussed the significance of encountering the memorial in Nashua. In some ways, he said, it reminds viewers of an open wound – the murder of millions, including not only Jews, but those who were different, such as homosexuals, people with disabilities and the Roma people, often called gypsies.

While it is difficult to encounter a reminder of one of humanity's greatest shames in the middle of Nashua, Spira-Savett said, the monument also is a reminder to speak out. He called on people gathered at the site to let the six stones act as focusing mirrors, concentrating the powers of humanity, love and justice and forging them into a force more powerful than any evil.

Pastor Paul R. Berube of Grace Fellowship Church said he and other Christian clergy members have wondered why the church didn't speak out against the Holocaust. Some faith leaders fought against the atrocities, but it was "tragically just a few," he said.

"We're here to offer our apologies, our condolences, and we're here to say 'Never again,'" Berube said. "We stand with the Jewish community in Nashua. We stand with the Jewish community in New Hampshire, and we stand with the Jewish community in Israel, even today," he said.

Mayor Donnalee Lozeau offered thanks to Teeboom and others who helped to bring the state's first public Holocaust memorial to Nashua.

She encouraged those in attendance to never forget that the violence of the Holocaust began with words – the hateful speech of a leader who convinced people to turn on their neighbors and friends.

Lozeau paraphrased the words of Anne Frank, who, like Teeboom, lived in hiding in the Netherlands during the German occupation. Despite her hardships, Frank wrote in her diary that she still believed in the goodness of people.

"Be people good at heart," Lozeau said.

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