

Speech of Tomer Itzig at the memorial of Gauting on April 29, 2023

I would like to thank you again for the welcoming here. I really appreciate it, it meant a world to me. I try to do so and give my grandfather's legacy. I had a different plan, but on the long run I decided to read the speech that I wrote for the „Bunker“, because I feel that it represents the spirit of my grandfather really well. Knowing how much he cared for this moment I'd like to be sure that these words make it clear and are representing the best that I could. So I have to excuse me for reading from my phone but will do it that way.

Dear audience, the story of the Holocaust could be told in many ways to those who are willing to hear. It's possible to read it from history books with all details collected carefully by experts. You could also go to a museum, observe the artefacts...to better know how to approach to that complex topic. But as you know it is not always the case that one is so easily intrigued to make a research, and also not everybody is so interested to learn right away, or even to do what is most important and just bear the memory in the heart. For that there's a need for something else, a personal history, I would argue.

My grandfather Max Volpert was a prisoner in Kaufering, a subcamp of Dachau, there for almost a year until he found freedom again at the age of 14. He carried heavy bags of cement as well as the dead bodies of prisoners who did not survive. But with every day it was a new battle to him. It was always strange to me to watch from aside and see how easy it was for him, at least on the surface, to return to those places in Germany, to share his story in lectures and ceremonies what he has done for more than 16 years. By dedicating his life voluntarily to the memorial walk reliving the horror and death that surrounded him in these years he made a choice to keep winning the battle every time again. But even he was defeated there so many times, built from dust a new family and life which he lived completely ... and even collected along the way an unbelievable number of trophies and medals from marathons. Even my grandfather, the man of iron, he was not able to keep winning forever, even though I had another impression for some reason.

Today as I found myself speaking at the same schools and ceremonies as my grandfather used to speak at while I tell about what he went through and who he was, for me the very idea that he is not there the one who is doing it by himself, this odd idea will never seem right to me, but I can only promise to keep on doing it, and maybe sometime in the future it will hit me, and it's more than a duty, really, it's a privilege, just as it was and it really is to be a grandchild.

Father Max, my grandfather, I thank you here at the land you've been tortured in slavery, where you lost your father, your mother and sister. Yet it's the same land you always look to us as your family so sparkling with life. I thank you here on behalf of us all, the honour we get here, we are presented here and have known you, and a thousand of students who were privileged to listen while you shared your story in your lifetime. You have touched us in so many ways. The list we could do to thank you would be to keep your mission on and continue that your story being told, and keep inspired a living mark by many more lives, thus making sure that the memory of the Holocaust be engraved for the generations to come. You may rest in peace now. We'll keep your story alive, I promise. (Transcribed from video by Thomas Schaffert)



Tomer Itzig during his speech at Gauting memorial on April 29, 2023