

A STORY OF REVENGE

Author pens historical fiction novel inspired by family history

‘THE UNWANTED’

By Cameron Morsberger

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LOWELL » Peter Clenott has been writing for half a century, authoring short stories, screenplays and even full-length novels. He’s 71 years old and wakes up around 3 a.m. to write in the early morning hours before he clocks in at Community Teamwork.

All that hard work — and ink — is paying off.

The Haverhill resident recently published his latest venture, “The Unwanted,” a historical fiction mystery novel that explores the different perspectives and people of Nazi Germany. The book took him only five months to write, as he often found a couple hours over lunch or late at night to sneak in a few extra pages.

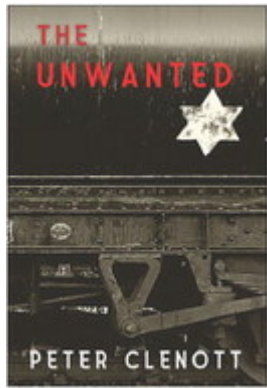
The story began as a screenplay inspired by Clenott’s grandfather, an airbase commander in Iceland during World War II who later prosecuted Nazis. While overseas, his grandfather had an affair with a Ger-

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Peter Clenott, of Haverhill, is a Community Teamwork housing counselor by day and a novelist by night, recently authoring ‘ The Unwanted,’ seen below, a historical fiction mystery book set in World War II- era Germany.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PETER CLENOTT



Author

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man woman with whom he had a child, Clenott said.

That family history motivated Clenott to pen a draft screenplay about a Jewish lawyer who falls in love with the daughter of a Nazi, but after reading a plethora of nonfiction accounts and textbooks on Adolf Hitler, the Third Reich and the Holocaust, the story transformed into the novel he has now published.

“The Unwanted” opens in September 1939, after the Nazi Party invaded Poland, and 14-year-old Hana Ziegler is being taken to a euthanasia center. The novel also follows “Aryan” teenager Silke Hartenstein, a detective and a Kennedy-esque presidential family.

Over the course of the book, “revenge will bring these four people together in ways unimagined,” Clenott read from a summary.

“It’s a mystery, somebody is murdered, and the beauty is, you don’t want to jump ahead because the resolution is in the very last sentence of the novel,” Clenott said. “But it’s more than that. It’s a story about four people.”

The 270-pager is Clenott’s fourth published novel, his most recent being 2013’s “The Hunted,” but it’s the one that Clenott said he hopes will take off.

“I always had this dream, you go onto a bus or you go into a train, walk by somebody, and they’re reading your novel, and I stop by and say, ‘What do you think?’” Clenott said. “After all these years, I’d like some recognition.”

During the day, Clenott is a senior housing counselor at Community Teamwork, where he has helped residents who have fallen behind on rent payments since 2006. Clenott didn’t even start writing until after his final college exam at Bowdoin College and said he may have chosen a completely different course of study had he recognized that interest sooner. Nevertheless, his degree in history has served him well in those late nights, typing away at the next project.

“ When people are out Friday and Saturday nights, partying, going to the clubs, I was typing away on my typewriter, hoping that this next novel will be the big one,” Clenott said.

The title of his newest book refers to the millions of “ unwanted” children and people of 1940s Germany who were sent to extermination camps. In describing the horrific genocidal practices, Clenott quoted the famous Nazi slogan: “ Life unworthy of life.”

The plot examines that critical, heavy subject matter with its main character, Hana, who saves other young people from murder at the hands of Hitler’s regime. While it was somewhat difficult to address that history in a fictionalized story, Clenott said the power of his characters allows readers to make it through the book and end on “a positive.”

And while the real-life events on which the novel is based happened decades ago, Clenott said he sees current- day parallels in the United States and leadership in the present.

“ People may object to this, but Trump, I think, is the American Hitler,” he said. “ I think that the people that follow Trump are the same people who followed Hitler and brought Hitler to power, and we’re at a very dangerous stage.”

His goal is to not just market the book but to eventually turn it into a film or miniseries — Clenott is hoping to connect with a German film company to produce the work.

“ The Unwanted” was published by Level Best Books, an independent crime fiction company, on June 28 and is available at Lowell’s Lala books, as well as Amazon, Barnes “@” Noble, IndieBound and Bookshop.org.

With the book now published, Clenott said his 50 years of writing and dedication to his craft may finally be realized. If it’s a success, Clenott already finished a sequel.

“Anytime I write a novel, the novel has to be entertaining,” Clenott said. “ Without you realizing, you’re learning something and you’re being moved. You’re being moved by the characters, by what’s happening to the people, so it’s an emotional experience.”