

A HOLOCAUST STORY UNFOLDS IN BROOKLINE BY SUSANNE ALTHOFF

THE  
BOSTON

# Globe

12.12.10

MAGAZINE

boston.com/magazine

+ Homes for Sale in Framingham / Moving in With My Girlfriend at 58

1

› Massachusetts  
rank among states  
for day-care costs  
per child

**\$18,773**

› Average annual  
day-care cost  
for one infant  
in the state

**\$2,500**

› Monthly cost  
for top-notch  
center care

**\$486**

› Average weekly  
sitter's rate, not  
including taxes  
or Social Security

**180**

› Number of families  
on the waiting list  
for one Boston  
center's 41 spaces

› **DAY CARE**

# STICKER SHOCK

HOW FAMILIES COPE IN THE HIGHEST-PRICED CHILD-CARE MARKET IN THE NATION. BY MELISSA SCHORR





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**MISS CONDUCT**

Miss Conduct gives advice live this Wednesday at noon on boston.com.



**HOLIDAY STYLE**

Recipes, dresses, and a gift guide with ideas starting at \$6, November 28 issue.



**A STAR IS BORN**

Meet the newest addition at the zoo, November 21 issue.



**COLD NO MORE**

New details about a decades-old murder, November 14 issue.



**THE TASTEMAKERS**

Boston's most influential restaurants, November 7 issue.

**FEATURES**

**COVER STORY**

**14 Day Care Sticker Shock**

In the state with the nation's highest day-care costs - this one - a look at how families cope.

By MELISSA SCHORR

**20 A Survivor's Story**

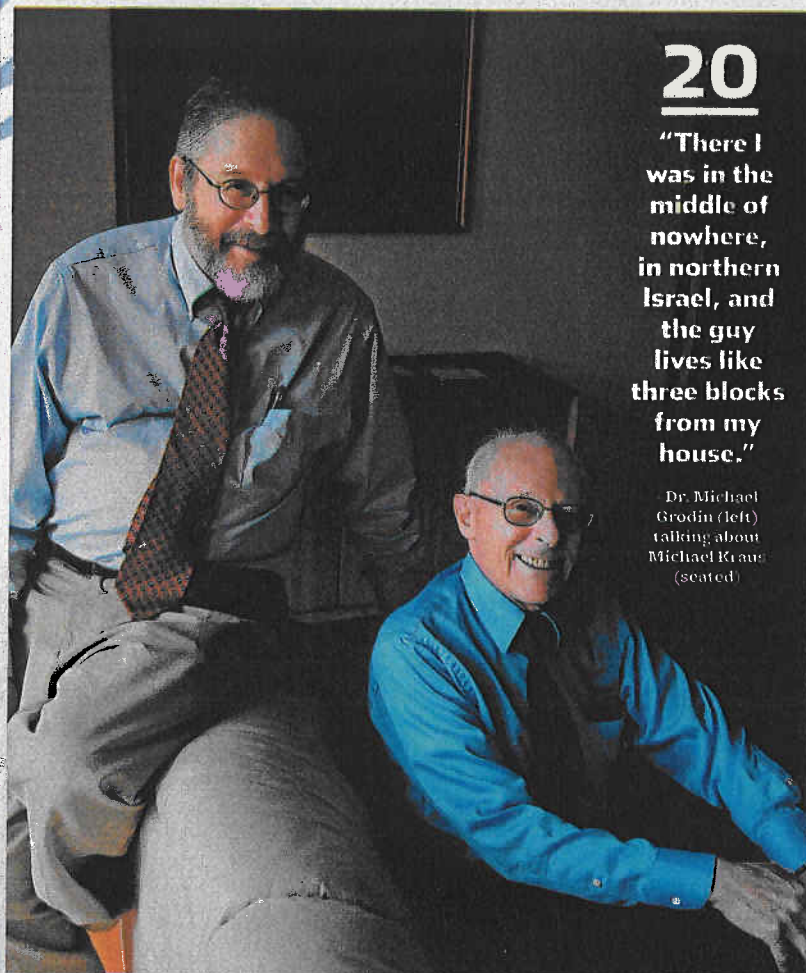
A BU researcher is studying childhood resiliency with the help of one of the creators of a remarkable Holocaust artifact.

By SUSANNE ALTHOFF

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Moving in at 58



**20**  
"There I was in the middle of nowhere, in northern Israel, and the guy lives like three blocks from my house."

Dr. Michael Grodin (left) talking about Michael Kraus (seated)



14

**THE HANDOFF** Tamara Holloway waves goodbye to son Jack at Boston's Ellis Memorial day care.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC BEAN/GETTY IMAGES

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25. II. 1944.

**KAMARÁD**

**A**

**TYDENNÝ ČASOPIS**

**ČÍSLO 16.**

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Michal Kraus

**POKLAD RALFA LANGDONA**

Román na pokračování.

**I.**

Ralf Langdon byl mladý, štíhlý a světlý mladík, který se narodil v jednom z těch malých městečků, kde každý zná každého. Jeho rodiče byli obyčejní lidé, ale Ralf byl od dětství nadaný a jeho mysl byla vždy zaměřena na vědy. Vlastníval si, že jednou se stane vědci a objeví něco, co změní svět. Jeho život byl jednoduchý, ale plný naděje a touhy po poznání.



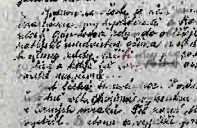
Michal Kraus

**POKLAD RALFA LANGDONA**

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**II.**

Ralf Langdon se vydal na cestu, která ho měla přivést k jeho cíli. Jeho cesta byla plná neznámých a nebezpečí, ale Ralf nebyl člověk, který by se vzdal. Jeho mysl byla stále zaměřena na vědy a na objevy. Jeho život byl jednoduchý, ale plný naděje a touhy po poznání.



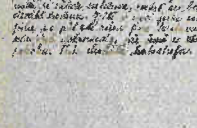
Michal Kraus

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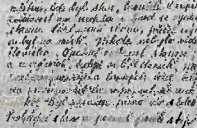
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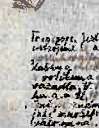


Michal Kraus

**Z MĚHO DENÍKU**

o Kaptile.

První kapitola. Ralf Langdon se vydal na cestu, která ho měla přivést k jeho cíli. Jeho cesta byla plná neznámých a nebezpečí, ale Ralf nebyl člověk, který by se vzdal. Jeho mysl byla stále zaměřena na vědy a na objevy. Jeho život byl jednoduchý, ale plný naděje a touhy po poznání.



Michal Kraus

**CIRKUS**

Fredy Dito.

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Michal Kraus

**POKLAD RALFA LANGDONA**

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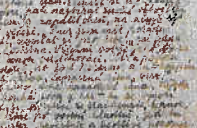


Michal Kraus

**Předmluva**

o Kaptile.

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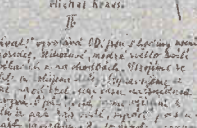


Michal Kraus

**Z MĚHO DENÍKU**

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# The Past Is

Michal Kraus

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Román na pokračování.

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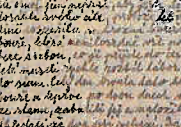
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Román na pokračování.

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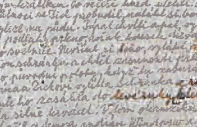
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Michal Kraus

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# Present

A Boston University researcher stumbles upon a remarkable Holocaust artifact – and discovers that one of its creators lives just a few blocks away from him in Brookline.

BY SUSANNE ALTHOFF



**HISTORY LESSON** A group of Czech-speaking Jewish boys incarcerated during World War II produced a literary magazine called *Kamarad*. These pages show the contributions of Michael (Michal) Kraus, now 80 years old and living in Brookline.



**D**r. Michael Grodin, who's spent the past 33 years studying the Holocaust and other atrocities, stumbled on an unusual bit of history during a trip to Israel in the summer of 2009. The discovery was a museum exhibit featuring a literary magazine called *Kamarad* – produced by the boys confined by the Nazis in Building Q609 in a Jewish ghetto/camp in the former Czechoslovakia from 1943 to 1944. The magazine issues, created without adult supervision or censorship, were filled with stories about wilderness adventures, pranks, and soccer matches. The boys, ages 12 to 14, patched together the magazines from scraps of paper. All 22 editions, rendered in neat penmanship, have survived.

The story of *Kamarad* alone was enough to pique Grodin's interest. "This is pretty incredible stuff," says Grodin, a professor of psychiatry, family medicine, and human rights at Boston University. He was impressed that the boys had created an outlet that let them explore their fantasies and cope with the hardships of the Holocaust.

Then Grodin noticed something else incredible. The exhibit noted that one of the creators of *Kamarad* – believed to be the sole survivor – was living in Brookline, Massachusetts. "There I was in the middle of nowhere, in northern Israel, and the guy lives like three blocks from my house."

Back at home, Grodin looked up Michael Kraus and gave him a call. The two men began meeting at Kraus's home, accompanied by a few of Grodin's colleagues, and the result over the last year has been a warm relationship that goes beyond researcher and subject. Grodin hopes that in some small way he can help Kraus, now 80, better understand his childhood war experience. Grodin plays the part of prodding counselor and Kraus that of a reluctant guinea pig who nonetheless seems to enjoy the attention.

Grodin also has larger ambitions. As someone who counsels contemporary survivors of torture from areas such as Tibet and Sudan who have immigrated to Boston, he believes studying *Kamarad* and talking to one of its creators could illuminate why some people can be resilient in the face of tremendous hardship and maintain a semblance of normalcy.

Susie Rodenstein, a lecturer in Jewish education and early childhood education at Hebrew College in Newton, is one of two researchers helping Grodin examine *Kamarad*. "Mind-boggling" is how she describes the coincidence of Grodin and Kraus both living in Brookline. "That alone made it feel like it was meant to be, that we all get to discover and get to know this man," she says. "I think his story and his experience is a treasure for us."

Susanne Althoff is the editor of the Globe Magazine. Send comments to [magazine@globe.com](mailto:magazine@globe.com).



**PICTURING FREEDOM** Kraus's *Kamarad* offerings include a poem about a mouse that rescues a captured lion.

*"It is not the size that matters; And even a tiny mouse can be a savior"*

**MICHAEL KRAUS**  
FROM HIS LION AND MOUSE POEM



**THEN AND NOW** Kraus as an 8-year-old in 1938, four years before the Nazis sent him and his parents to the Jewish ghetto/camp Theresienstadt. Facing page: Kraus is joined in his home by Boston University professor Dr. Michael Grodin, who is studying *Kamarad*.

**O**n December 14, 1942, the Nazis sent Kraus and his parents from their home in Nachod in the former Czechoslovakia to Theresienstadt, a ghetto/camp from which many were ultimately transported to death chambers. Kraus was 12, and an only child. His family left behind a comfortable existence – father Karel had been a physician – for a crowded collection of buildings inside fortress walls. Incredibly, Theresienstadt came to be known for its cultural life, which included concerts, theater, art, and poetry readings. These were a genuine expression of the inmates, but were also capitalized upon by the Nazis for propaganda purposes. Living conditions were poor, food was scarce, and illness was common. After staying in two different buildings, Kraus was transferred to a room in Q609, occupied by about two dozen 12-, 13-, and 14-year-old boys sleeping on three-level bunk beds. Here Kraus was reunited with Ivan Polak, a friend from Nachod.

It was in Q609 that Polak hatched the idea of *Kamarad*, or "friend." Czech-speaking boys in the room would submit stories, some fictional, some true. Polak would recopy them and add illustrations, and his mother would bind the pages with string. The first issue appeared October 29, 1943. At Friday evening Sabbath gatherings, Polak would read from new editions of the magazine to entertain his bunkmates. Kraus says Polak complained when copies were borrowed but not returned and when he couldn't find willing contributors. "He singled me out as one of the most diligent collaborators," Kraus says.

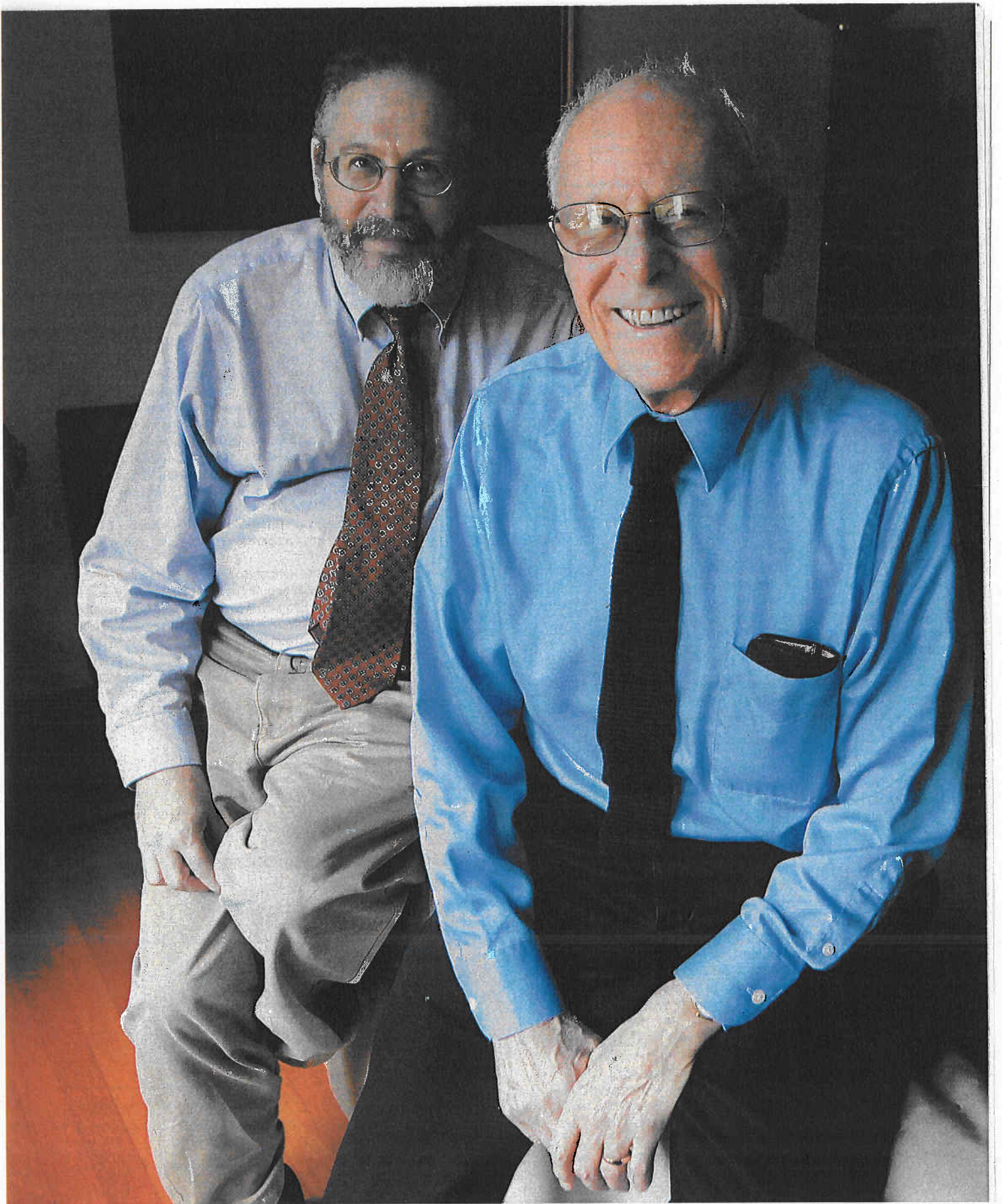
The boys didn't sugarcoat their experiences. They wrote about the near starvation and illnesses experienced in Theresienstadt and the punishment meted out to everyone when someone attempted to escape. They also wrote about the petty arguments they had with one another.

Kraus's offerings included a poem about a mouse that rescues a captured lion ("It is not the size that matters; And even a tiny mouse can be a savior") and the serialized fictional story "The Treasure of Ralph Langdon," about trappers looking for fortune in the Canadian northwest. Kraus remembers that he and Polak "did fantasize about having not an empire but a territory in the northwest part of Canada near the Great Slave Lake. . . . And I think that my article was kind of a replay of this." Rodenstein believes the Langdon story provided more than mere entertainment. "In the pages of this story," she says, "he's able to play out this scenario where you can get justice for injustices and sometimes even violent vengeance by the story's hero on people who have hurt him or killed people close to him."

"You don't have to be an analyst" to interpret Kraus's story, Grodin says, when you consider that he was a child confined by hostile

KAMARAD PAGES (THIS PAGE AND PREVIOUS SPREAD): FROM BETT THERESIENSTADT; CHILDHOOD PHOTO FROM MICHAEL KRAUS; KRAUS AND GRODIN PHOTOGRAPH BY ESSDRAS M SUAREZ/GLOBE STAFF







"It certainly gave us something creative to do," Kraus says. "Maybe that was the most important thing at that time. We were not prepared that the war would take many more years. We were not thinking about death, because at that time I don't think we were that aware what awaited us in the so-called East, because nobody talked about Auschwitz."

After six months at Auschwitz, Kraus's father was sent to the gas chambers and his mother was transferred to two other camps, dying at one of them. Kraus, then almost 14, was spared from the death chambers when Dr. Josef Mengele selected him to go to a neighboring men's camp, where he was assigned to run errands and do other jobs. Kraus eventually was sent to other camps and forced to participate in death marches. When the war ended, Kraus, nearly 15, returned to his hometown of Nachod and attempted to rebuild his life. "After surviving the war," he says, "many of us were traumatized by the fact that we lost our parents." During the war, Kraus had kept a diary but it was confiscated in Auschwitz. Once back in Nachod, he re-created the journal, and four years ago he donated it to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Kraus says he thinks of himself "as a scribe, or as somebody who perhaps thought that something should be left to posterity."

All 22 editions of *Kamarad* ended up at Beit Theresienstadt, a nonprofit organization formed on an Israeli kibbutz by those who survived Theresienstadt. It's a mystery who saved the magazines.

But aside from the Indianapolis project, the existence of *Kamarad* has not received much attention in the United States. And Grodin knows of no one else who has studied the magazine as an example of childhood resiliency.

*"The boys used the magazine to fight their boredom and calm their anxiety. Children played in order to maintain a sense of normalcy."*

cause they were young," Rodenstein says. "But now he's able to read the materials that he and his friends wrote, and it has in some cases been able to bring back some memories. . . . I think he's really enjoying discovering what he was about at that age and what the things were that were of import to him."

**I**n Grodin's book-filled office near Boston Medical Center is a map of the world dotted with pins, each marking a country or region from which one of his patients hails. There are pins in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tibet, and the former Yugoslavia. "My whole career I've been very interested in resiliency," Grodin says. "I've always been interested in why some people do better than other people. I care for contemporary survivors of torture, and it's really unclear. . . . Some of it is obviously situational, just this crazy thing that somebody happened to be in a certain place. But there are also personality traits that allow people to survive."

"The boys used the magazine to fight their boredom and calm their anxiety," Grodin adds. "Children played in order to maintain a sense of normalcy, this is my sense, as well as to be creative and exchange ideas of an imaginary escape in order to dull their suffering."

Grodin recognizes how valuable it is to his research that a contributor of *Kamarad* is still alive and living so close to him. Rodenstein, too, is eager to continue the meetings with Kraus: "We walk out every time inspired and wanting to know and understand more." ■

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