

**MICHAEL J. KRAUS PAPERS, 1937-1994 [BULK 1945-1947]  
1995.A.1067.1**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2126  
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**Descriptive summary**

Title: Michael J. Kraus papers

Dates: 1937-1994 [bulk 1945-1947]

Accession number: 1995.A.1067.1

Creators: Michael J. Kraus (1930-)

Extent: 1 box, 1 book enclosure (1.8 linear feet)

Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW,  
Washington, DC 20024-2126.

Abstract: The Michael J. Kraus papers contain documents and diaries concerning Kraus's experiences as a child survivor of the Holocaust. Selected by Dr. Mengele as one of the "Birkenau Boys," Kraus was interned at Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Mauthausen before being liberated in 1945. Included in his collection are records pertaining to his parent's property and assets and letters his parents wrote from the concentration camps. Among the post-war material is correspondence between Michael and his liberators, a diary describing his memories from the war written between 1945 and 1947, and a memoir written after a journey back to Austria in 1994, among other materials.

Language: Czech, English, German

**Administrative Information**

Access: Collection is open for use, but is stored offsite. Please contact the Reference Desk more than seven days prior to visit in order to request access.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification if item), Michael J. Kraus papers (1995.A.1067.1) United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Michael J. Kraus donated his papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum through three separate donations in 1995, 2004, and 2006. These three donations have since been unified into this collection.

Related materials: A memoir authored by Michael J. Kraus titled *Deník 1942-5* is also held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum under call number D804.48 .K73 2012.

Accruals: Accruals may have been received since this collection was first processed, see archives catalog at [collections.ushmm.org](https://collections.ushmm.org) for further information.

Processing history: Rebecca Erbelding, April 2008 and Colleen Benoit, April 2016

### **Biographical note**

Michael J. Kraus (formerly Miša or Michal), was born on June 28, 1930, in Trutnov, Czechoslovakia, the only child of Dr. Karel Kraus (b. 1891) and Lotte (Lola) Kraus (née Goldschmid). The Krauses lived in Náchod where Karel was a general practitioner. Upon the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939, Michael was expelled from school and his father was prohibited from practicing medicine. In September 1941 the Krauses were evicted from their villa and forced to live in a single room in a house without running water on the *Judengasse* (a street where many of the poorer Jewish families lived), until December 1942, when all Jews were sent to Hradec Kralove and from there, deported to Theresienstadt. Michael first lived with his mother in L-425, and the following March, he moved to the boy's dormitory in B-IV, the Hanover Barracks. In September 1943 the boys moved to somewhat better quarters in Q-609. There, together with the other boys, Michael contributed to the magazine "Kamerad" (Friend). On December 15th, one year after arriving in Theresienstadt, Michael's family was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Michael was tattooed with the number 168497. His father received number 168496 and his mother 71253. For six months they were housed in the so-called family camp B 11.b. In June 1944, his mother was sent to Stutthof, where she perished in January 1945. Michael's father, who was not well at the time of the liquidation of the family camp, was sent to the gas chambers on July 11, 1944.

On July 6, Michael was one of 89 boys (later referred to as the "Birkenau Boys") between the ages of 14 and 16 selected by Dr. Mengele and sent to the "Männer Lager" (B.II.d.) where they were housed in the punishment block number 13 under the command of the *Blockälteste Bednarek*. Eventually, he was moved into another barrack and worked in the *Unterkunft*, an assignment that gave him an occasional opportunity to see neighboring camps and communicate with recently arrived prisoners from Theresienstadt. In January 1945, as the eastern front advanced towards Auschwitz, he was forced on a death march to a railway station in Gleiwitz, where he was shipped in an open rail car to Mauthausen. He stayed in Mauthausen only a short time before being sent to Melk, one of many sub-camps of Mauthausen. As the front advanced, Michael and the other boys returned to Mauthausen. April 28, 1945, Michael went on a 60 kilometer forced march to Gunskirchen. A week later, on May 5, the German guards fled and American troops arrived. Severely ill with typhoid fever, Michael was taken to an American-run hospital in Hörsching. In mid-June he began his journey home by boat, on foot and by train, arriving in Prague on June 28, 1945. There, Michael learned that his mother had also perished. He spent another month and a half in a sanitarium in Střín, and then went to live with a friend of his parents, Vera Loewenbach, in Ceska Skalice. In September, he moved to Náchod to resume his schooling and lived with other family friends, Rudolf and Vilma Beck. The Becks had survived the camps but lost their son who would have been the same age as Michael. That fall Michael began composing a diary of

his war years to honor the memory of his parents. He completed the three volume work in 1947. In the summer of 1948, Michael's guardian arranged for him to join a Joint Distribution Committee orphans' transport to Canada. Michael traveled to England and from there he sailed on the S.S. *Aquitania* to Canada. Michael completed high school and one year of university in Montreal and in September 1951, immigrated to the United States, where he enrolled in Columbia University's School of Architecture. In September 1957, he returned to Europe and traveled through several countries until June of the following year when he accepted a position with an architectural firm in London. In October of 1959, Michael found a job with a Swiss architect in Geneva, where he eventually met Ilana Eppenstein, an Israeli medical student. They married in May 1963 and returned to New York the following year, eventually settling in the Boston area three years later. Of Michael's large extended family, only an aunt and one cousin survived the Holocaust.

### **Scope and content of collection**

The Michael J. Kraus papers contain diaries and papers collected by Kraus during and after World War II. Papers from the wartime period include his parent's property lists, receipts, and financial information. Also included is postcard sent by Karel from Auschwitz in 1944 and a letter sent by Lotte to her sister in 1945 under a false impression that she had survived. Documents from the immediate post-war period include a series of correspondence exchanged between United States liberators and medical personnel and Michael between 1945 and 1947. Michael met the correspondents in 1945 when they rescued him and treated him for typhoid. A scrapbook with notes and various post-war identification documents pasted in is also included here within. The diaries comprised in this collection were written and illustrated by Michael in Náchod, Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1947 and describe his memories of the German occupation of Czechoslovakia and of the Holocaust. A short memoir written by Michael titled "Austria Revisited – Fifty Years Later" is also included among these materials and recounts Michael's visit to the concentration camps in which he was interned with his family in 1994.

### **System of arrangement**

The Michael J. Kraus papers are arranged as a single series.

### **Indexing terms**

Kraus, Michael (1930-).  
Kraus, Karel (1891-1944).  
Kraus, Lotte (1898-1945).

Theresienstadt (Concentration camp).  
Auschwitz-Birkenau (Concentration camp).  
Mauthausen (Concentration camp).

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Czech Republic-- Terezín (Ústecký kraj)--Personal narratives, Jewish.  
Jews--Czech Republic--Biography.  
Jewish children in the Holocaust--Biography.  
Child concentration camp inmates--Biography.  
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Personal narratives.

Náchod (Czech Republic : Okres).

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1: Michael J. Kraus papers, 1937-1994 [bulk 1945-1947]

Box	Folder	Title
		Correspondence:
1	1	Albert Kokoruda, 1947
1	2	David Filtzer, 1945-1947
1	3	Gene Orme, 1945-1957
1	4	Karel and Lotte Kraus, 1944-1947
		Diary:
BE	1	Ila, 1945-1947 [See oversize box 1]
1	5	IIb, 1945-1947
1	6	IIc, 1945-1947
1	7	Drawings and Poems, approximately 1945-1947
1	8	Financial documents, 1937-1942
1	9	Memoir "Austria Revisited – 50 Years later," 1994
1	10	Notes, undated
1	11	Photographs, 1946 and 1974
1	12	Plat, undated
1	13	Postal receipts and envelope, 1940-1941
1	14	Property receipts and inventories, 1939-1942
1	15	Scrapbook, approximately 1945
1	16	Student identification card, 1945