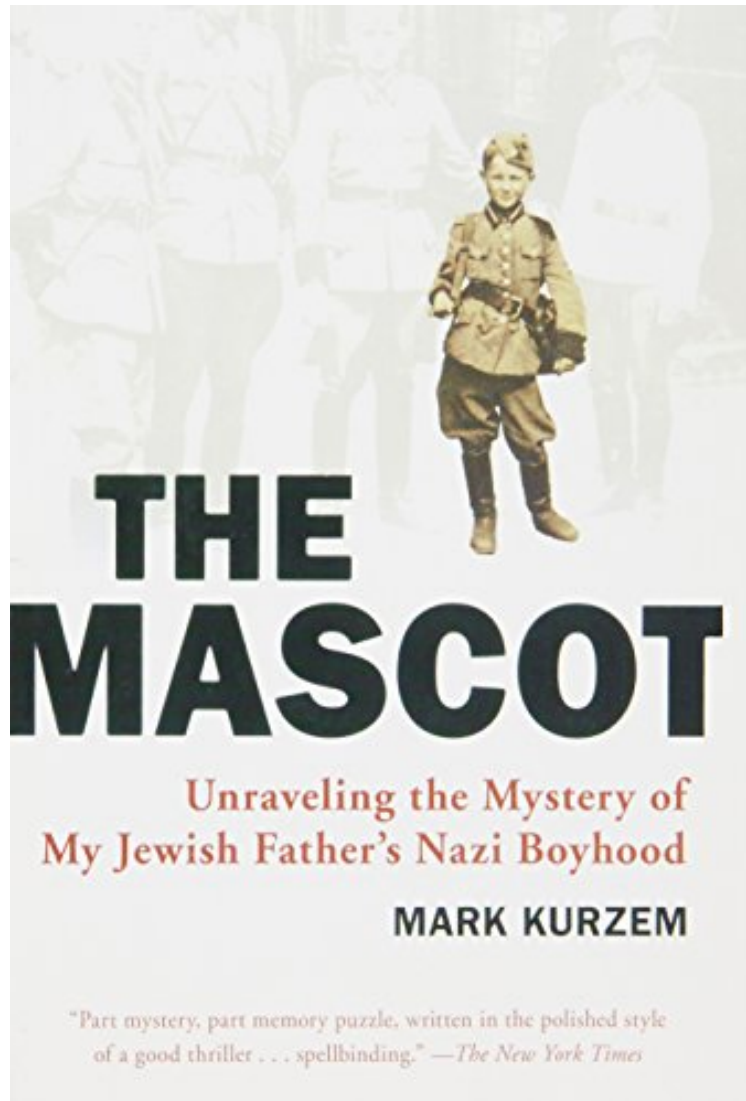


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# The Mascot: Unraveling the Mystery of My Jewish Father's Nazi Boyhood

Mark Kurzem

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**Mark Kurzem : The Mascot: Unraveling the Mystery of My Jewish Father's Nazi Boyhood** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mascot: Unraveling the Mystery of My Jewish Father's Nazi Boyhood:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Remarkable BookBy Matthew BrennanThe true story of a Russian Jewish child who observes and survives the execution of most of his relatives, wanders in the forest for a time, and is

adopted as a mascot by the Nazi Latvian unit that was supposed to shoot him. Watch the 60 Minutes segment on Alex Kurzem and then read this remarkable book. Kurzem now receives compensation as a Holocaust survivor, as well he should. His memoir (or memory) was contested for a time. The story is very unusual, but just because a person's life experience does not fit into a convenient mold is no reason to call it false. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. wow, just wow By Tribe fan Wow, just wow. I don't know how to describe this book. It is in some ways like a detective story or putting together a jig saw puzzle. You read it and you wonder how the pieces will fit together. I've been in two death camps -- Auschwitz (five times) and Majdanek (twice). The first time I travelled to Auschwitz in 1991 I went with a Polish Army Colonel whose uncle was killed there. I've read several books about the 'Shoah including "Night" and "The Diary of Anne Frank." I've pored over David Roskies' "Against the Apocalypse" and read a little history like the "Last of the Just." I stood with my wife and son during the 50th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in Warsaw where that ghetto stood. I once did a seminar at the Jewish Theological Seminary on the Holocaust. So, I came to this book with some background. I remember what Dr. Alan Mintz told me about dealing with it. He said you can't comprehend it, you can only talk to God about it. Yeah, this brings all that back. Some might suggest that the events recounted in this book are too improbable to be true. I totally disagree. The events recounted are all too real. Especially the witness recounting about how the Einsatzgruppen carried out the killing in Koidanov. If for no other reason than the recounting of the Koidanov massacre on pp. 323-4 you ought to read this book. Warning, this book does not resolve anything, it only recounts one (then) young Jewish boy's story -- what happened to him and how he survived it. But, the book is so much more than that. This book also makes us think about who we are, where we come from and who we come from. It may be the best recounting of a survivor's story that I have read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Mascot: Unraveling the Mystery of My Jewish Father's Nazi Boyhood: Purchased at .com By dep This is one book that I am so very glad I bought. When I first saw it on , the title of the book really puzzled me. That, plus the picture on the cover of the book. Four Nazi soldiers with a young boy dressed as a miniature of them. How fascinating and yet repulsive at the same time. This is the story of how Alex Kurzem turns to his son to help him unravel the mystery of his past. Who was he and what happened to him. In 1941, at around five years old, Alex saw his mother, brother, and sister murdered, along with all the Jews of his home town of Koidanov, Latvia. He escaped and was eventually rescued, possibly by the same soldiers that murdered his family. Even though one and maybe more of the soldiers knew he was Jewish, they still saved him, why nobody knows for sure. The Nazi's used him as a kind of a mascot for the soldiers and for free publicity for themselves. As a result, Alex lost himself along the way. To be told to be grateful for what you have, to be used as a kind of robot, and worst of all to be one of the enemy that these soldiers are trying to destroy. What an evil thing to do to such a young child. No wonder Alex lost himself, along with much of his memories and even his real name. He managed to survive, though, ending up in Australia as a refugee of the war. He managed to get through his life, married and raised a family. In his sixties, his life started to come apart, with all kinds of memories from his past coming up which frightened and almost overwhelmed him. At that point, he went to his oldest son for help. In reading this book, I came to really like Alex. Even with his tortured past he really seemed to like people and was very tolerant of them. I also thought his son Mark did such a good job writing this book. He obviously cared so much about his father. He tried not to push his father about his memories, or to overwhelm him as they searched for information about his past. Some of the reviews of The Mascot are very negative, they don't believe such a young child could remember what he did or that the information was accurate. All I know, is that I believe the story. To me, it seems very real. Besides, who am I to question memory? It is such an elusive thing and you can't really pin it down. Also, in writing this book many questions are answered, but it also leaves some unanswered, and even raises new questions. That's ok, some things just aren't going to have an answer. I am just very glad that I was able to read one of the most fascinating books that I have ever read. I highly recommend The Mascot, we can all learn from it.

The "spellbinding" (The New York Times) true story of a Jewish boy who became the darling of the Nazis When a Nazi death squad massacred his mother and fellow villagers, five-year-old Alex Kurzem escaped, hiding in the freezing Russian forest until he was picked up by a group of Latvian SS soldiers. Alex was able to hide his Jewish identity and win over the soldiers, becoming their mascot and an honorary "corporal" in the SS with his own uniform. But what began as a desperate bid for survival became a performance that delighted the highest ranks of the Nazi elite. And so a young Jewish boy ended up starring in a Nazi propaganda film. After sixty-three years of silence, Alex revealed his terrible secret to his son Mark. With his son's help, Alex retraced his past in search of answers and vindication. His story is at once a terrifying account of survival and its psychological cost as well as a brutally honest examination of identity, complicity, and memory.

Part mystery, part memory puzzle, it is written in the polished style of a good thriller, and it is spellbinding. This is a book to keep you up at night. Dinitia Smith, New York Times Astonishing. Caroline Sanderson, The Bookseller Powerful. Olga Craig, The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON) About the Author Mark Kurzem grew up in Melbourne, Australia. He studied anthropology at the University of Oxford, where he was a Commonwealth Scholar, and also

studied at Melbourne, Jochi, and Tokyo universities, where he was a Monbusho Research Scholar. He worked in the fields of political research, international relations, teaching, and filmmaking in Japan, Australia, and the United Kingdom. He wrote and co-produced a documentary about his fathers life, also titledThe Mascot, which was the subject of international attention. He died in 2010.