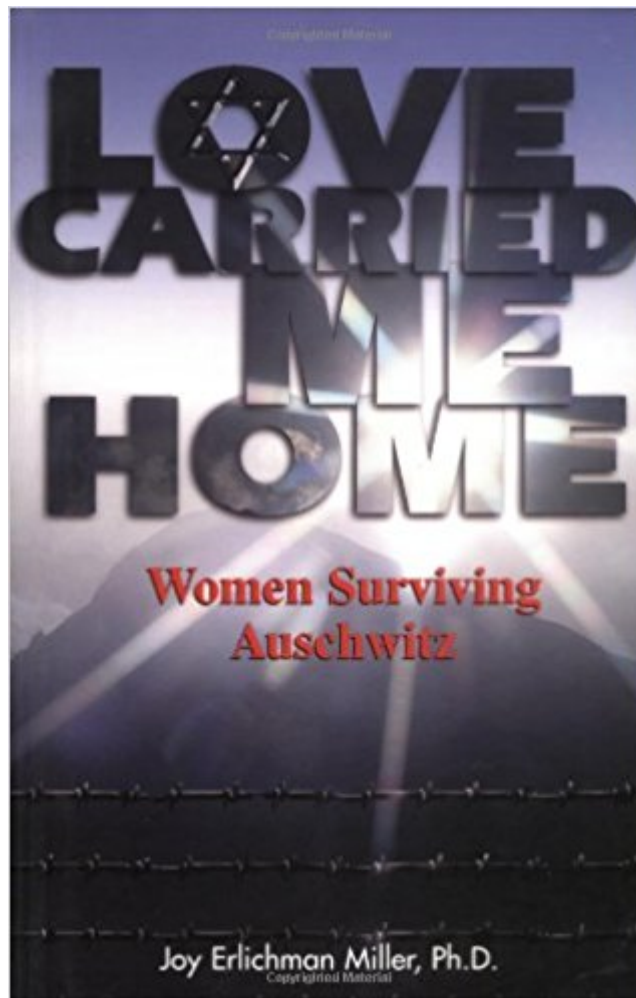




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# Love Carried Me Home: Women Surviving Auschwitz



## Synopsis

A powerful, poignant examination of sixteen women's triumphant struggles to survive the Auschwitz Concentration Camp during the Holocaust. Bearing witness to atrocities of genocide during the darkest moment in history, female survivors teach us the importance of emotional bonding and affiliation in their own personal survival, suggesting that love and human connection was the dominant force in their resiliency. Facing similar but not identical circumstances, the "voice" of female Holocaust survivors has been silenced by male counterparts. *Love Carried Me Home* is based on a two-year research study exploring the coping strategies of women from Auschwitz who gave their testimonies to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum at its inception. All proceeds from this book are being donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to specifically assist in attaining new oral histories and testimonies.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Joy Erlichman Miller, Ph.D. is an internationally known licensed psychotherapist, professional trainer and author. She is an Illinois state Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor as well as a Certified Master Addictions Counselor. Additionally, Dr. Miller is a part-time instructor at Bradley University teaching in the Graduate ELH program. Dr. Miller is a frequent expert on national television and has appeared on the Sally Jessy Raphael, Oprah, Jenny Jones, Montel Williams and Geraldo Rivera shows. Her works have been featured in various national magazines and over 30 newspapers around the country. She has hosted her own radio show for five years on a CBS affiliate and

currently presents a mental health segment on the local CBS television station. In 1996, Dr. Miller was presented with the Harold Hodgkinson Dissertation Award for her doctoral dissertation entitled the Coping Strategies and Adaptation Mechanisms Utilized by Female Holocaust Survivors from the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Her published books include: *Following the Yellow Brick Road: The Adult Child's Personal Journey Through Oz*, *My Holding You Up is Holding Me Back: Over-Responsibility and Shame*, *Celebrations for Your Inner Child*, and *Addictive Relationships: Reclaiming Your Boundaries*. Please visit Dr. Miller online at [www.joymiller.com](http://www.joymiller.com).

from the IntroductionThe Voices of Women For decades, the unique experiences and coping strategies of female Holocaust survivors were ignored. The voices of survivors were encapsulated into one voice, which was predominantly male. Thus, women's means of coping and adapting in the twentieth century to the genocidal atrocities of the Holocaust were ignored by males who generalized the experiences of all who bore witness. However, survivors, researchers and historians such as Charlotte Delbo (1992, 1993), Marlene Heinemann (1986), Isabella Leitner (1985, 1994), Joan Ringelheim (1984, 1985, 1993), Carol Rittner (1993), Nechama Tec (1986) and Bonnie Gurewitsch (1998) have discussed the Shoah from a different perspective, which focuses on the feelings, coping strategies and traumas that express the "invisible female voice." Sadly, many female Holocaust researchers and survivors have been severely criticized for their gender-related conclusions. Many female survivors and scholars have suggested the importance of relational bonding as an essential coping strategy for female Holocaust survivors. The opposition has argued that gender-specific focusing has the potential to denigrate the Holocaust, reducing it to sexism and detracting from the experiences of the survivors. Opponents believe that those perpetrating the genocide and atrocities of the Third Reich counted Jews as Jews, not as men, women or children. Viktor Frankl, one of the most noted Holocaust survivors, states (1984, 1988) that survivors of the Holocaust identified with a "meaning or will to survive" as a means of coping. Gender-based researcher Sondra Rappaport's (1991) work on the coping strategies and methods of adaptation used by Holocaust survivors suggests that women used different forms of coping techniques to develop "meaning" needed for survival. Her work reveals that women tended to cope by bonding emotionally to others, while men coped by focusing on tasks. Deborah Belle (cited in Alan Monat and Richard S. Lazarus 1991) agrees that women value relationships and define themselves in terms of their relationships, and that involvement in supportive human relationships protects stressed individuals from physical and mental-health concerns. Generally, women seek support more readily than males during times of stress. For instance, in chapter 10 you will read about Guta

W., who beseeched not only a German woman guard for help to save her mother, but Eichmann himself. Guta knew no fear in her attempts to save her mother. Women also have shown a propensity to seek out more formal and informal sources of support and affiliation than males during stress. Another gender-specific difference relates to the loss of loved ones. At such times, women Holocaust survivors appear to have been less vulnerable than male counterparts due to the support and encouragement they received from fellow prisoners. The assistance of other women helped maintain women's emotional strength and resiliency. The bonds created with others helped women cope with the dehumanizing acts of the Nazi regime. Female survivors' narratives bear witness to their own personal interpretations of "meaning" and moral choices, but women's decisions are clearly based on meaning, which includes a dimension of concern and caring for others whom they value. The personal stories within this book make it clear that establishing and creating binding relationships was a critical factor for many survivors. Reestablishing a new community or family by bonding with other women assisted the surviving prisoners in creating a reason to live (see appendix A, "The Findings"). It is important to note, however, that nearly all Auschwitz victims knew that their survival had something to do with an element of luck or chance. Many believe that luck had more to do with their survival than anything within their own control. Despite the massive numbers of females murdered, surviving Jewish women continue to bear witness and celebrate their ability to survive. Through oral histories, narratives and autobiographies, their personal stories celebrate the "meaning" that kept them ever striving to survive despite insurmountable odds. Following a brief description of Auschwitz on the following pages, the stories in this book bear witness to the resiliency of sixteen female survivors. Whether due to luck, technical skills, non-Jewish appearance, a hope of reunion, faith, humor, personal resistance, or the assistance of or through a relationship with another, these women survived, holding on valiantly to the will to live!

ÀfÀ .A Survivor A survivor wears nice clothes with a matching smile, trying to recapture the forgotten pleasures of life, but is unable fully to enjoy anything. A survivor will go on vacation and, while watching a show, will picture her mother, holding her grandson in her arms, gasping for breath. A survivor will read about a fire and desperately hope that her brother had died from the fumes before the flames reached him. A survivor will think of her sister with her three dead children and inhale the gas to feel the gasping agony of their deaths. A survivor will go to a party and feel alone. A survivor appears quiet but is screaming within. A survivor will make large weddings, with many guests, but the ones she wants most will never arrive. A survivor will go to a funeral and cry, not for the deceased but for the ones that were never buried. A survivor will reach out to you but not let you get close, for you remind her of what she could have been, but will never be. A survivor is at

ease only with other survivors. A survivor is broken in spirit, but pretends to be like you. A survivor is a wife, mother, friend, neighbor, yet nobody really knows her. A survivor is a restless tortured person; she can only enjoy her children. Yet it is not easy to be the children of a survivor, for she expects the impossible of them— to be constantly happy, to do and learn all the things denied to her. A survivor will awaken in a sweat from her nightmares, unable to sleep again. In vain does she chase the ghosts from her bedside, but they remain her guests for the remainder of the night. A survivor has no fear of death, for peace is its reward. Cecilie Klein, *Sentenced to Live*

Chapter 1 Mady D. The Spirit of Goodness Madeline (Mady) D. was born on April 29, 1930, in Berehovo, Czechoslovakia. Within this small city, she and her older brother were raised in a tight-knit, middle-income family. Mady's father was a businessman who worked out of his home. Brought up in a family that valued education, Mady received both formal schooling during the day and religious education in the late afternoon. In 1938 anti-Semitic sentiment was increasing in her world. Her father was an avid reader of the newspaper and listened to news of world events on the radio. The family heard about what was happening in Poland but for the most part believed that the reports were nothing more than tales of horror that had been exaggerated to scare the Jews. For the most part, the Jewish community disregarded the stories. In November 1938, Germany rewarded Hungary by annexing territory to Hungary. Mady's hometown of Berehovo was part of this annexation. Educational opportunities began to dwindle as teachers became increasingly anti-Semitic. Jewish doctors and lawyers were not allowed to practice their professions, and Jewish doctors were limited to treating Jewish patients. Businesses were slowly taken over by the Hungarian government and Aryan businessmen. In March 1944, Hitler invaded Hungary. Mady was thirteen years old. All Jews were ordered to wear a yellow, six-pointed Star of David on the fronts and backs of their garments, a symbol that designated them as second-class citizens. In April of that year, Jews, including Mady and her family, were rounded up and told to leave their homes with only a small satchel of belongings. While forced to live in a small ghetto with no beds or cots, the families lived in covered areas similar to market stalls or carports. After being coerced into giving all valuables and money to the German authorities, Mady's father narrowly escaped being shot when some forgotten money was discovered in one of his vest pockets. This occurred on Mady's fourteenth birthday, and she recalled that it was one of the happiest moments of her life when her father was released and not shot, as threatened, by the Germans. Mady observed that the Hungarian police were much more brutal than the Germans and that they were rewarded for beatings and cruelty to Jewish prisoners. "We didn't have any guns. We had nothing to protect ourselves with. So when we were herded out of our homes and into this ghetto, all we had with us

(was) that little change of clothing and nothing else. So we had no way of protecting (ourselves) and we had no way . . . it just made no . . . no sense to really protect (ourselves) although we tried, and those that did were beaten up something terrible. But we had no way of protecting against all these guns and against these SS and against these soldiers . . . you know, the police." About two weeks later the Nazis liquidated the ghetto and moved Mady and her family in cattle cars to an unknown destination. Countless people died in the cattle cars while packed into cramped quarters with no food or sanitation. After three days and three nights, the train stopped at the gates of Auschwitz. Mady vividly remembered entering the camp in the dark, smelling the odor that filled the air and seeing the flames in the distance. "The odor that was coming in through those little windows into those cattle cars was horrible. We didn't know what that was. It was burning, like burning flesh, but who would . . . whose mind would enter something like this?" The group heard howling dogs and German voices as they waited in the train until daybreak. When the cattle-car doors opened, they saw electrified barbed-wire fences. People in German uniforms and people in striped uniforms began pulling them off the trains. "We just saw them take off these dead people, and we were still to stand in line there because the police— I mean the SS— at this point already were there with their police dogs and we were standing there because nobody dared to move. They (would) just release the dogs, who tore people apart." Men and women were separated while people in striped uniforms whispered to the group that they were in Auschwitz where "all your parents and your grandparents and your babies were killed and will be killed." The prisoners were falsely reassured by the SS— told to stay calm and that they would be cared for— while the striped-uniform inmates warned them that they would never make it out of Auschwitz alive. Mady's father and brother were taken to one side and Mady and her mother to another line, where guards directed them along a ramp. The healthier people were separated from the older people and little children. "But my mother was a very, very intelligent woman. . . . And when she saw this well-dressed officer who had a couple of . . . assistants near him . . . and when she saw that this officer was directing the older people to go in one direction and the younger people in the other direction, she must have had some kind of intuition." She pinched Mady's cheeks and instructed her to stand tall so she would look healthy. In perfect German, Mady's mother informed the officer, who happened to be Dr. Josef Mengele, that she was forty-three and that Mady was fourteen. Mady and her mother were then directed to the line of those who would live and were sent to the showers. Mady, along with the rest of the group, was told to enter the showers for washing and disinfection. Unknown to the survivors, the other group was being exterminated in the gas chambers nearby. All head and body hair was shaven after the women exited the showers.

Mady remembered the women's humiliation as they stood naked, trying to cover their bodies, while men shaved them. Completely shaven, each woman was given a large gray shirtdress and exited the showers. People were unable to recognize their now-bald family members and had to call out names to find their missing relatives. Women were moved to a crowded barracks with wooden sleeping bunks and packed into the space so tightly that it was impossible for anyone to turn over. To counter their dehydration the next day, many people grabbed desperately for a little water from puddles or a fountain, not knowing that the water supply was contaminated from the fluids of the dead seeping underground into the water system. The water poisoned some and others became very sick and unable to stand, and the women in the roll-call lines assisted each other to create the illusion that they were strong enough to continue through the day. Mady and her mother, having been selected by Mengele, were transferred one week later to a work-camp ammunition factory in Breslau (Mady has always believed this was because her mother was a blue-eyed blonde who spoke fluent German). The work camp utilized approximately five hundred to six hundred women, most from Poland, who survived longer than average because they were particularly strong and previously hardened by harsh conditions. The majority of these Polish women had been ghettoized or imprisoned in other concentration camp settings for many years. All were awakened each day at 5:00 in the morning, counted, and given a small piece of moldy, dark bread and some lukewarm brown water. Her mother was fearful for Mady's health and rationed the bread during the day. Mady discovered later that her mother had been giving Mady a portion of her own bread to increase the chances of her daughter's survival. Mady said her mother would do anything possible to protect her daughter from harm and suffering. On many occasions Mady's mother encouraged her to try harder to continue working: "Try. Make believe you are doing it even if you . . . you're unable to. . . . Try a little harder. . . . Maybe we'll get out of here soon. Maybe we're gonna see your father and brother. . . . Maybe we'll see your grandparents and aunts and uncles when we come back. . . . Just hold on a little bit longer." Mady knew they were making parts used in bomb settings for airplanes and other pieces of ammunition but that they had no choice except to do as they were told. "And we were working in this factory and you have to understand what we were . . . what we had to do in order to survive because whoever resisted was killed on the spot so there was no if . . . it was a choice. Either to live or to die. If you did what you were told, then temporarily you know that you are alive. . . . We had to make . . . help manufacture that if we wanted to survive. And human nature is very funny. We all want to live. The oldest and the sickest person in this world wants to go on living. That is human nature." Mady and her mother remained in a women's camp called Peterswaldau (part of Gross-Rosen) for almost one year while working in the ammunition factory. Near the end of the war,

no supplies were available to manufacture ammunition, so the workers were forced to dig foxholes. "I must have weighed maybe fifty or sixty pounds. I was like a skeleton . . . and whoever couldn't perform, they just killed." One morning, the small camp was especially quiet, and the prisoners soon learned that the SS had fled during the night (May 8, 1945). Russian soldiers liberated the group and cared for the prisoners for two or three weeks. Mady and her mother attempted to regain their strength so they could return to their family. Hoping that father and husband, brother and son, would still be alive, mother and daughter traveled home to discover that their neighbors had taken their home, their business and all their valuables. While waiting in their hometown, hoping to reunite with their family, Mady and her mother were told that both the men had perished in a labor camp and that Mady's father had witnessed the death of his son and given up all hope when he was told that the Germans had killed all the women. Mady later discovered that only three of her mother's eight siblings had survived, along with four of her cousins. Mady and her mother stayed in a displaced persons' camp for four years and then emigrated to the United States on March 9, 1949, where they lived with Mady's aunt and uncle in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A year later Mady and her mother moved to New York City to be in a larger Jewish community. Mady suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (fear, nightmares, vomiting) for a number of years. "I was afraid that the Nazis were still out there. I was having nightmares . . . for many years. I was still reliving everything. The trip to Auschwitz, the beatings, the killings, the dead people taken off the train . . . the dogs that were released and jumped on people . . . and tore them apart." At age nineteen, Mady met a young man who encouraged her to return to school and accompanied her to the first classes at Theodore Roosevelt High School. She met another Holocaust survivor at night school and married him six months later in 1956, and their family grew to include two sons and two grandchildren. Mady continued her education and later became an interior decorator. Her mother remarried, then died of cancer in 1978. Mady has been very active in the activities of the Holocaust Memorial Museum Houston and is one of four survivors who created a permanent exhibit there. She also has been part of the museum's speaker's bureau since 1980. In 2000, Mady attended "The Gathering of Survivors" in Washington, D.C. She is dedicated to teaching the lessons of the Shoah and often quotes George Santayana, an American philosopher: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." ã Æ (c)2000. All rights reserved. Reprinted from Love Carried Me Home by Joy Erlichman Miller. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the written permission of the publisher. Publisher: Simcha Press, 3201 SW 15th Street, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442.



Love Carried Me Home is the story of 16 women sent to Auschwitz and how they survived. A very interesting book by Joy Erlichman Miller, Ph. D. who interviewed and studied how these women managed to survive the most infamous camp of all. I found the stories very interesting, by coincidence I had already read two books written by the 16th survivor in the book, Helen W. a few years ago. I was already familiar with much of the research in this book, the stories of the women, though, are real stories of survival in the face of incredible odds. A really good read.

I rate every testimony five stars. Book is excellent and academic in flavour. This book should be on a college reading list.

A wonderful book on a sad topic but will read again, these women were truly heroic

I just finished reading Joy Miller's book: "Love Carried Me Home: Women Surviving Auschwitz". As a person who loves words and frequently employs them to express my feelings, thoughts and emotions, I was deeply moved by the "voices" of these women. To say that this book is powerful is not strong enough. This book does more than record the testimonies of these 16 women regarding their experience in concentration camps---it serves as insight into the very nature of being a woman. This is the first time I have ever read about the Holocaust from a woman's perspective. Joy Miller was right in writing this book and in giving women a chance to be heard. To say that I enjoyed reading this book sounds flippant, but it is not the experiences of these women I enjoyed reading about (they were difficult to take)---but the women themselves---their courage, their strength and their creativity. Miller should be proud of her contribution in keeping the message alive and in such a unique form. It is truly a work of art and a must read for anyone who wishes to view a glimpse of the emotional strength of women. (I am a 47 year old woman--not 12--and limited in my computer skills! A 12 year old would have been able to type in their age...)

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Love Carried Me home by: Joy Miller was a good book to read if you want to learn about the Holocaust. The stories of sixteen women that survived the concentration camp Aschuwitz. This book described the stories of the women in women to show people how their lives and other people's lives were during the Holocaust. All of the stories in to book are explained very well and I think it was a good idea to write a book about the women in the Holocaust because not many books tell about women's lives. The lives of the women in this book are sad but also happy because of them surviving. I liked this book and I am glad I chose to read it.

A tender, loving tribute to 16 women who survived Auschwitz! It shows the coping methods used by these wonderful ladies who survived and had the courage to share their stories with the world. We must remember what they say.....so that nothing like this will ever, ever happen again! Even the picture on the cover is a moving statement with the colors and barbed wires which carries through at the beginning of each chapter. Dr. Miller has written a book that is a "must read" for all who have trouble coping.....what a lesson they can learn from this book!

I was looking forward to reading this book which I expected to add new insights into some different ways that women survived Auschwitz. From some of the excerpts I had read, I felt that this book might offer a deeper more emotional introspection of the women survivors that were interviewed. Unfortunately, this book was superficial, the personal stories were outlined with little detail, and included little emotional material. Coping methods of survivors were indicated, but it was difficult to understand how the author's conclusions were reached. Don't waste your money.

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