# Concentration Camps accountsoftheholocaust.org/

FAY LEWIN

I spent time in many different camps.  After Mielegjany I was taken to a camp in Latvia. Then I was in Kaiserwald. Then Eleja-Meitene for 9 months of hard labor.  They closed Eleja-Meitene and then I was sent back to Kaiserwald for only about a week. They had a crematorium in Kaiserwald.  While I was there all my hair was cut off. Our mouths were inspected for gold and they searched vaginas for gold. Men’s hair was cut in a cross to stop them from trying to run away.  I was then taken by truck to a boat and then to a submarine where I spent at least three days. There was no food, no facilities, and no light on the submarine. Then I was taken to Stutthof.  I was generally a good worker, so I was placed on a farm. The farm had various prisoners of war (English, Polish, Russian) and several of us women working at the farm. While working on the farm, I broke my wrist and it never was fixed. Then I was forced to dig ditches.  In Stutthof, on a couple of occasions I got an infection and didn’t have enough strength to push a shovel, so they took me to the line for the gas chamber. I got saved because someone decided I was a valuable worker and I was otherwise young and healthy. This happened twice.

RUTH CARDIN

*I also heard that people were sent from ghettos to* [*Concentration Camps*](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/concentration-camps-1933-39)*? I know that camps were established before the war but I’ve heard that after 1939 there were literally thousands of camps! Were these slave labour camps? Who was being sent there? What was it like there?*

DAVID KORZUCH (Markstadt)

If you survived one day it was as though you survived a year. We got up at 5am, got ready, got a piece of bread, were counted and marched with our German boss to the place we were working outside the camp. The work was back-breaking torture, the weather conditions appalling. The freezing cold was soul destroying but there was no respite.

RUTH CARDIN

*Were there only Jews in these camps?*

BERTHA FERDERBER-SALZ (Bergen-Belsen)

At four in the morning we were awakened by the siren summoning us for the roll-call. We stood in line for many hours while we were counted and divided into work groups. Only at seven would we go out through the camp gates.

DON KRAUSZ (Ravensbrück, Germany)

We were put into a barrack with about three hundred gypsies, German gypsies. Now the story of those gypsies is very interesting. Because they were German, nearly all the men had been in the Wehrmacht. They had fought in Poland, they had fought in Holland, in Belgium and France. And then suddenly somebody realized that they weren’t pure Aryan, so they and their families were sent to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz they gassed… them. And then a lot of them were sent to Ravensbrück, both the women’s camp and the men’s camp. In the women’s camp, eventually the women and the girls were sterilized. I wasn’t there at the time, I was already gone, but my mother told me after the war, it was done without an anaesthetic, which means that the whole camp knew about it.

RUTH CARDIN

*What kind of work were you made to do?*

BERTHA FERDERBER-SALZ (Bergen-Belsen)

People, regardless of how wasted they had become, were ordered to split stones with special picks or heavy hammers, or to carry – for long distances – very large and heavy rocks, even if transporting the rocks was simply to keep the workers busy.

YAACOV (JACKI) HANDALI (Auschwitz)

At the beginning, we had to remove sacks of cement from train wagons. Each sack weighed 50kg. As Salonikians, we wanted to show the Germans that we were strong, that they would let us live. So they carried two or three sacks on their backs from the train to the warehouse.

ROMAN FRISTER (Auschwitz)

In winter I stole an empty paper cement sack and used it as an undershirt beneath my inmate’s uniform because it was very cold. The Nazis discovered it and I was forced to stand between two barbed wire fences for eight hours. It was winter and the temperature was minus 10 or 12 degrees.

RUTH CARDIN

*How did you survive these conditions?*

ROMAN FRISTER (Auschwitz)

I stood there and knew that I had seen people who couldn’t stand there for two hours and would touch the electric barbed-wire fences in front of them and behind them, just to end their suffering. I tried with all my strength to keep a clear mind… After some time I needed to urinate. I fought my bladder because I thought that this is proof that I‘m still in control, still a human being. But of course I didn’t succeed…

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