

Fritz Kitzing

(December 28, 1905 - 1987)

This essay was written by Pink Triangle Legacies Project Founder Dr. Jake Newsome and is based on the important research of Dr. Jennifer Evans, Dr. Elissa Mailänder, Ana Pacheco-Kitzing, Andreas Sternweiler, and Dr. Clayton Whisnant. Thank you for your work in preserving queer history.

Fritz Kitzing was born in Neuruppin, a small town in north-eastern Germany. Fritz dressed publicly in women's and men's clothing at different times throughout their life. According to Nazi arrest records, Fritz used the pronoun "he" to describe himself. We don't know if this is how Fritz always identified or if they felt compelled to conform for the authorities. I have chosen to refer to Fritz using they/them pronouns to reflect Fritz' gender fluidity.



Police mugshot of Fritz Kitzing, March 1936.
Landesarchiv Berlin

Fritz was trained as a bookkeeper and moved to Berlin in their mid-twenties to search for work. Discrimination and social marginalization forced Fritz into poverty. In late 1933, Fritz was arrested while in women's clothing and charged under Paragraph 361, the law against homelessness and begging. Fritz served four weeks in jail and was then transferred to the Rummelsburg workhouse for six months of "protective custody."

In March 1934, Fritz escaped prison and fled to London with the help of their family. The London police soon arrested Fritz for prostitution and extradited them to Berlin in November.

The police detained Fritz in June 1935 for allegedly making a sexual advance on an undercover member of the SA (stormtroopers). Fritz told the authorities that he was homosexual but had not solicited the SA man for sex. Fritz probably knew that solicitation was a convictable offense under Paragraph 361 while being a "homosexually inclined" man did not warrant a conviction under the current version of Paragraph 175 (that would change mere days later when the Nazis amended Paragraph 175). The police released Fritz with the warning that if Fritz were arrested again, they would be sent to a concentration camp.

In July 1935, one of Fritz' neighbors told the police that a "transvestite was making trouble" in the neighborhood. For unknown reasons, Fritz was not apprehended until March 1936. While in custody, Fritz' brother Hans Joachim wrote to the police seeking information and asking if he could send food to Fritz. In a letter to Fritz, Hans Joachim wrote, "I don't know what they are accusing you of, but I will do everything in my power to help you through it."

The police wrote to the local Gestapo office and asked that Fritz be transferred to a concentration camp, noting that “complaints about the shameless goings-on of transvestites were a danger to the public. It would be a great service to the public—and even to these morally depraved people themselves—if we sent Kitzing to a concentration camp.” Two months later, they sent Fritz to Lichtenburg. It is probable that Nazi authorities treated Fritz as a male. After five months, Fritz was transferred to Sachsenhausen. Fritz was finally released on April 8, 1937, after twelve months in “protective custody.” They had never received a trial.



Police photograph of Fritz Kitzing, ca. 1936
Landesarchiv Berlin

In March 1938, someone who had been in Sachsenhausen with Fritz recognized Fritz on the street wearing women’s clothing. They denounced Fritz to the police. When the Gestapo arrested Fritz, they discovered letters in which they had told friends in London about life in the concentration camps. The Gestapo arrested Fritz and accused them of distributing “atrocious propaganda.”

After the outbreak of World War II, Fritz was conscripted into the army and stationed in Belgium as part of the German occupying forces. Fritz survived the war and lived a long life in West Berlin as an antiques dealer. They passed away in 1987.

Some of Fritz’ family had emigrated to Costa Rica in the 1930s , and they visited Fritz on several occasions after the war. According to Ana Pacheco-Kitzing, who is Fritz’ grandniece, the family always knew of Fritz’ homosexuality, although it is unclear if the family knew that Fritz also sometimes lived or dressed as a woman. Either way, Ana states that Fritz “was always accepted and loved by his family.”

Sources & Further Reading

Jennifer Evans and Elissa Mailänder, “Cross-Dressing, Male Intimacy, and the Violence of Transgression in Third Reich Photography,” in *German History* 39 Issue 1 (March 2021): 54-77.

Andreas Sternweiler, “Er ging mit ihm alsbald ein sogenanntes ‘Festes Verhältnis’ ein.; ganze normale Homosexuelle” in Joachim Müller and Andreas Sternweiler, *Homosexuelle Männer im KZ Sachsenhausen*. Berlin, 2000, pg 59-63.

Clayton J. Whisnant, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880-1945*. Harrington Park Press, 2016.

Read more about Fritz Kitzing [online](#) and watch the video on [YouTube](#). For more LGBTQ+ Stories from Nazi Germany, visit pinktrianglelegacies.com/stories.