

Gerd Katter

(March 14, 1910 - 1995, exact date unknown)

This essay was written by Pink Triangle Legacies Project Founder Dr. Jake Newsome and is based on the important research of Dr. Katie Sutton, Dr. Birgit Lang, Samson Dittrich, and Thomas Jander. Thank you for your work in preserving queer history.

Gerd Katter was born in Berlin. He was assigned female at birth and given the name Eva. But Katter lived as male from early in life and went by his chosen name of Gerd (also sometimes spelled as “Gert”).

At sixteen years old, Gerd first visited the Institute for Sexual Science founded by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin, together with his mother. Clearly aware of the Institute’s reputation for assisting people whose sex or gender identity did not align with that assigned to them at birth, Gerd had approached Dr. Ludwig Levy-Lenz at the Institute with a request to surgically remove his breasts. At a cost of 500 Reichsmark, the operation proved too expensive at the time, and he had to wait another two or three years before undergoing a full mastectomy.

Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld had coined the term “transvestite” nearly two decades earlier in 1910. Originally, Hirschfeld used it as a broad term that included anyone who wore clothes usually worn by people of the opposite gender. People in the community used the term themselves, including those who today might identify as transgender. Today, the term transvestite has a very specific meaning and is not the same as transgender.

In the early 1900s, staff at the Institute for Sexual Science began working with the Berlin Police Department to educate police leadership about the lives and needs of trans people. As a result, the Institute would provide medical certificates for trans patients, and the police department would issue a “transvestite certificate” (Transvestitenschein) that acted as an ID document that aligned with the person’s gender identity and protected them from being arrested under laws such as Paragraph 183, Germany’s law that classified “cross-dressing” as a public nuisance and criminal offense.



Gerd Katter, circa 1929.
Magnus-Hirschfeld Gesellschaft

A “transvestite certificate” (*Transvestitenschein*) issued to Gerd Katter on December 6, 1928 by the Berlin Police Department. Translated from German, it reads: “The worker Eva Katter, born on March 14, 1910, and residing in Britz at Muthesiushof 8, is known here as someone who wears male clothing. [Signed] Strewé, Police Commissioner.”
Magnus-Hirschfeld Gesellschaft



In 1928, when Gerd was eighteen, the Berlin Police Department issued him such a trans certificate. One year later, in 1929, Hirschfeld’s Institute also issued Gerd a medical certificate attesting to his male gender identity, noting that his “psychological wellbeing and capacity to work” required that wear men’s clothing. Katter in turn needed this medical documentation as part of the formal application to change his name with the local Neukölln district court.

With the protection of his trans certificate and formalized name change, Gerd went on to live a full life as his true self. He earned a living as a carpenter in Berlin. Archival evidence does not tell us what happened to Gerd during the years of Nazi rule. We do know that he survived and then lived in East Germany after the war, where he was known in his local community for his talent as an actor, singer, and MC. In 1995, Gerd Katter passed away at the age of eighty-five.

Sources & Further Reading

Samson Dittrich, “Gerd Katter (1910–1995) – Trans-Mann, Patient und Lobbyist.” *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* 64 (Feb. 2020): 18–25.

Thomas Jander, “A License to Be Different: ‘Friends and Helpers’ of Trans People in the Weimar Republic.” *Deutsches Historisches Museum blog* (July 23, 2019)

Birgit Lang and Katie Sutton, “An Ethics of Attentiveness: Photographic Portraits and Deviant Dwelling in German Queer and Trans Archives,” *Monatshefte*, Volume 114, Number 3, Fall 2022, pp. 363-383.

“Transgender Experiences in Weimar and Nazi Germany,” Museum of Jewish Heritage YouTube (June 3, 2022).

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