

Rudolf Brazda

(June 26, 1913 - August 3, 2011)

This essay was written by Sam Ellyson, the Pink Triangle Legacies Project's 2025 Public History Intern in Partnership with the Reiff Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution at Christopher Newport University. It is based on the important research of Paul-François Sylvestre and the staff at the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and Arolsen Archives and feedback from Gerard Koskovich. Thank you for your work in preserving queer history.

Rudolf Brazda is recognized today as the last known pink triangle concentration camp survivor. He was born on June 26, 1913, the youngest son of a family of Czech origin living in the German town of Meuselwitz. He found a community among other gays and lesbians by frequenting local meeting houses and clubs. In 1933, the same year as Hitler's rise to power, he met his first boyfriend, Werner. Shortly after moving in together, Rudolf and Werner got married. Of course, their marriage was not legally recognized, but it was true and real to them. Rudolf's family even attended the ceremony as witnesses.

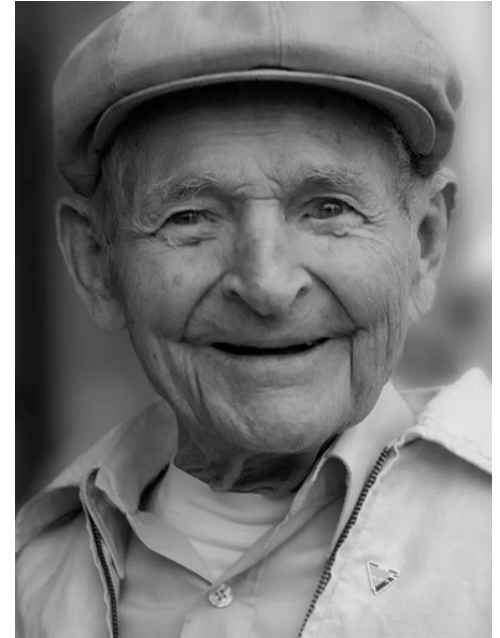
In 1937, Rudolf was arrested for violation of Paragraph 175, Germany's national anti-gay law, and sentenced to six months in prison. The love letters Rudolf and Werner had written to each other were used as evidence against him. Werner, who had enlisted in the German military, was also soon arrested, and the two never heard from each other again.

After Rudolf was released from prison, he was deported to Czechoslovakia. He soon moved to the German-speaking Sudetenland and found work as a roofer. After the Germans invaded the territory, Rudolf was arrested again under Paragraph 175 in 1941 and sentenced to fourteen more months in prison. While serving out his sentence, Rudolf was deported to Buchenwald Concentration Camp, where he was assigned the number 7952 and forced to bear the pink triangle. As soon as he was interned in the camp, he was subject to forced labor for a period that ultimately lasted 32 months.



Rudolf Brazda is the last known pink triangle concentration camp survivor.
Photo Courtesy of Alexander Zinn.

Rudolf recalled that throughout his internment at Buchenwald, guards violently beat him regularly. He witnessed the worst of humanity there. Despite this, he formed communities within the camp. He said, "There are strong friendships, solidarity, mutual aid and humanity that prevail over barbarity." Rudolf also expressed that he owed a lot of his survival to the assistance of kapos, prisoners with supervisory roles, in the camp. The kapo overseeing Rudolf's roofer kommando, or detachment, fell in love with him and protected him from deportation to the dreaded Dora subcamp after Rudolf stood up for himself to an SS guard. Another kapo hid him next to a pigsty to prevent him from being subjected to a death march to another camp. He remained hidden until Buchenwald was liberated by American forces on April 11, 1945.



Rudolf Brazda near the end of his inspirational life.
Courtesy of Gérard Bohrer.

After liberation, Rudolf followed a friend to Alsace, France. In the 1950s, he met his life partner, 18-year-old Edouard (Edi) Mayer, at a costume ball. Rudolf became a naturalized citizen of France in 1960 and lived out the majority of his life quietly. In 1965, Rudolf and Edi visited the Buchenwald memorial site, and although the visit brought back the worst memories of his life, he was able to confide in his partner. Rudolf and Edi stayed together for 30 years. After Edi was injured in a workplace accident, Rudolf took care of him until Edi died in 2003.

When Rudolf heard about the unveiling of a memorial to the gay victims of the Nazi regime in 2008, he was inspired to tell the world that he, a pink triangle survivor, still lived. From then on, he devoted his life to speaking out against intolerance and encouraged others to do the same.

On August 3, 2011, Rudolf died peacefully at 98 in Bantzenheim, France. In his final years, he stated, "If I finally speak, it's for people to know what we homosexuals had to endure in Hitler's days.... It shouldn't happen again."

Sources & Further Reading

"[Rudolf Brazda](#)." Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.

"[Rudolf Brazda: 'They didn't destroy me.'](#)" Arolsen Archives. (July 5, 2021).

Sylvestre, Paul-François, "[Témoignage du dernier survivant homosexuel de la déportation nazie](#)." l-express.ca. (July 20, 2010).

Hevesi, Dennis, "[Rudolf Brazda, Who Survived Pink Triangle, Is Dead at 98](#)." *The New York Times*. (Aug. 5, 2011).

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