

Felice Schragenheim & Elisabeth "Lilly" Wust

(March 9, 1922 - March 1945)

(November 1, 1913 - March 31, 2006)

This essay was written by Pink Triangle Legacies Project Intern Julia Sirkin and is based on the important research of Erica Fischer. Thank you for your efforts in preserving queer history.



Mounted photograph of Felice Schragenheim (left) and Elisabeth Wust (right), Berlin June 1944.
Jewish Museum Berlin.

Felice Schragenheim and Elisabeth Wust were a unique couple: Felice was a Jew hiding in Berlin, and Elisabeth was the wife of a German soldier. Their story is a complicated one of antifascist defiance, queer awakening, and contradictions.

Felice was born in Berlin on March 9, 1922 to a Jewish middle class family. Following Kristallnacht - the Nazis' nationwide attack on Jewish businesses and synagogues in November 1938 - Felice was barred from finishing her education. Despite attempts to emigrate, Felice was forced to remain in Germany. She received deportation papers in October 1942, and immediately went into hiding.

Elisabeth "Lilly" Wust was born in 1913 Berlin. In 1933, she married Günther Wust, who later became a recruit in the German army. They had four sons together, which qualified Lilly for Germany's bronze "Mother Cross." This awarded her a housemaid named Inge Wolf.

Unbeknownst to Lilly, Inge was hiding Felice from the Nazis. When Inge told Felice that Lilly claimed she could "smell a Jew," Felice insisted that Inge introduce the two. They met at a café in Berlin on November 27, 1942. Lilly was 28; Felice, 20. Felice's daring request passed without incident - on the contrary, Lilly was enchanted.

That winter, with plentiful rations due to her four children, Lilly regularly invited Inge and Felice to stay for dinner. Despite Inge and Felice's ongoing relationship, Felice slowly began to woo Lilly. In love letters and poems, Felice called Lilly "Aimée," meaning "beloved" in French. She also chose the nickname "Jaguar" for herself, perhaps in reference to her fierce protectiveness.

As the springtime came to Berlin, the two went out in public together, going to cafes, restaurants, and hotels. Due to worsening wartime conditions, Felice moved in with Lilly on May 2. One day, Lilly confronted Felice about where she went during her "business trips."

Felice finally admitted that she was a Jew who was part of a group that organized escape routes and stole and forged ID cards. Lilly embraced her, and a month later, in June 1943, the couple wrote a marriage contract. On September 2, 1943, they exchanged rings.

On August 21, 1944, the couple cycled down to the Havel River, where they swam and took self-timer photographs. When they returned home, Gestapo officers were waiting; they detained and interrogated both of them, but only took Felice into custody. On September 8, 1944, Felice was deported to Theresienstadt.

Lilly unsuccessfully tried to visit Felice once, and sent care packages almost daily to the camp, many of which reached Felice. As bombings of the city grew worse in early 1945, Lilly took in three middle-aged Jewish women. At the same time, concentration camps were evacuated as the Nazis anticipated defeat; Felice was forced to march between camps, and she ultimately died at Bergen-Belsen.



Elisabeth Wust and Felice Schragenheim on an excursion on the Havel, Berlin August 21, 1944. *Jewish Museum Berlin.*

After the war ended, Lilly searched for Felice, and continued to hold out hope for her return. As time passed, she fell into depression waiting for Felice's return. In the spring of 1949, she attempted suicide, but was saved by a friend. She withdrew further from society, took odd jobs to make ends meet, and lived largely in poverty.

For her efforts to hide four Jewish women from the Nazis, Lilly was awarded the German Federal Service Cross in 1981, and was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations in 1995 by Yad Vashem. In 1994, she shared her story with author Erica Fischer, who turned it into the book *Aimée and Jaguar*. This was later adapted for the screen by Max Färberböck. On March 31, 2006, Lilly passed away at the age of 92 in Berlin.

Sources & Further Reading

Erica Fischer, *Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Story, Berlin 1943*, trans. Edna McCown and Allison Brown (Harper Perennial, 2015).

Tanja B. Spitzer, "[Felice and Lilly—An Uneasy Berlin Love Story](#)," *The National WWII Museum New Orleans*, March 8, 2021.

Kate Connolly, "[I still feel her breath](#)," *The Guardian*, June 30, 2001.

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