

Annette Eick

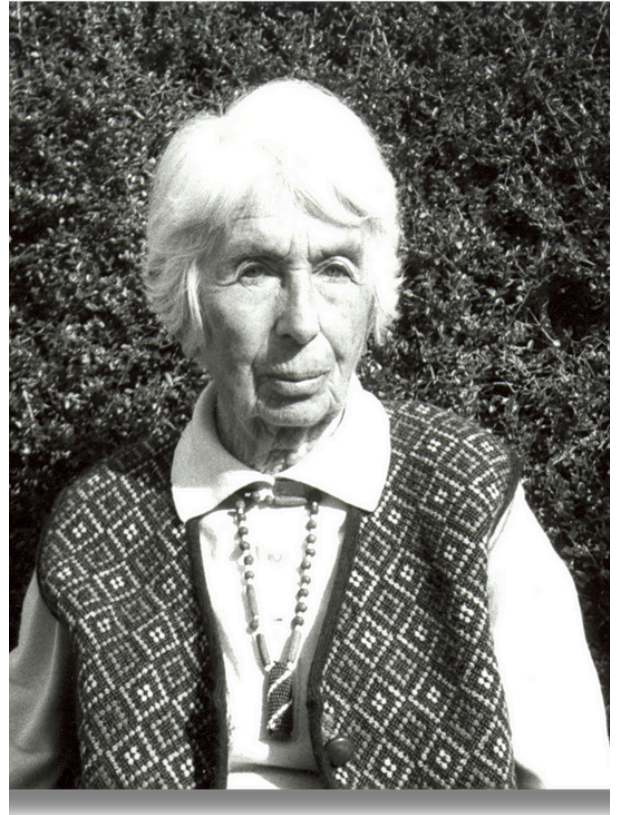
(September 13, 1909 - February 25, 2010)

This essay was written by Pink Triangle Legacies Project Advocate Sarah Ernst. It is based on the important research of Claudia Schoppmann and Meghan Paradis as well as the documentary Paragraph 175. Thank you for your work in preserving queer history.

Born in 1909 in Berlin to an assimilated Jewish family, Annette attended a private school in the city. In an interview with renowned historian Dr. Claudia Schoppmann, Annette noted how her experience was much like the 1931 film *Mädchen in Uniform* (Girls in Uniform). In the fiction - as well as her real life - the tolerance of one teacher led to a budding crush and an introduction to the poet Sappho that shaped Annette's understanding of her own lesbian identity. This early awakening to her self-identity allowed Annette to experience the emerging queer landscape of Berlin in the late Weimar Republic. The introduction to a space with like-minded people allowed Annette to produce poetry and short stories for the weekly newspaper *Frauenliebe* (Women's Love).

The life Annette lived during this time quickly changed, however, with the rise of the Nazi government under Adolf Hitler in 1933. Because of their Jewish identity, Annette's family soon faced economic strife in the boycotting of their furniture store in the Charlottenburg District of Berlin. After 1933, she began to prepare to move abroad. She kept in touch with an acquaintance in England, as well as getting involved learning agricultural and manual skills on a Hachsharah farm to prepare to move to the British Mandate of Palestine.

On the day of November 9, 1938 - what became known as the November Pogrom or *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) – the farm Annette was staying at with Jewish youth was surrounded by the Nazis. With the barn destroyed, they were brought to the local police prison under “protective custody” and were only able to escape through an open door about two or three days later. In that moment of freedom, she not only found her passport in the wreckage of the barn, but intercepted the mailman who had a letter from her friend, Ditt, in England, which held her ticket out of Germany: an immigration permit. In both her interview with Claudia Schoppmann and her appearance in the 2000 documentary *Paragraph 175*, Annette noted how important this interception was: “Had I missed the mailman, I would have



Annette Eick in Brixham, England, 1992.
Courtesy of Claudia Schoppmann.

ended up in Auschwitz along with my parents and almost all my relatives. They were all killed.”

From there, Annette began her life in England, where she would live until her death in 2010. At this time, Annette also tried to convince her parents to emigrate too, but the increasing restrictions made it impossible. After the war, she discovered that her parents - alongside other relatives - were murdered at Auschwitz. This left only herself and her brother (in Denmark) as survivors.



Annette Eick (left) with Gertrud Klingel,
Courtesy of Annette Eick.

Amidst this pain, however, after several years she met her long-time partner, Gertrud (Trud) Klingel, a non-Jewish German living in England since the 1930s. Although at first Trud was “not Annette’s type,” she soon became so: “Our friendship developed into a really close emotional relationship. She had a very strong character, was very respectable, absolutely trustworthy and dependable.” Annette would remain with Trud until Trud passed from complications of Alzheimer’s in 1989. In February of 2010, at the age of 100, Annette passed away in Devon, England.

Annette’s story is one of survival and finding oneself, of using the arts to understand and grapple with the immense emotions. We end here with Annette’s own words in a poem dictated to Claudia Schoppmann about *Heimat* (home):

Home
Home is people
That you don’t forget
And sometimes someone
Who can offer the best
Profound understanding.

Heimat
Heimat sind Menschen
Die man nicht vergisst
Und manchmal einer
Der das Beste gibt
Tiefstes Verstehen.

Sources & Further Reading

Claudia Schoppmann, “‘Had I Missed the Mailman, I Would Have Ended Up in Auschwitz’: Annette Eick (b. 1909),” in *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians During the Third Reich*, translated by Allison Brown (Columbia University Press, 1996), 102-115.

Meghan Paradis, “Shame, Desire, and Queer Jewish Girlhood in Annette Eick’s Semiautobiographical Fiction, 1929-1930,” *Feminist German Studies* 39, no.1 (2023): 73-98.

Paragraph 175, directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (Channel Four Films, 2000).

Immortal Muse, directed by Sue Giovanni (Culture Unplugged, 2005).

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