



Anne Frank

Anne Frank was born Annelies Marie Frank on June 12, 1929, in Frankfurt, Germany. Her father, Otto Frank, was a lieutenant in the German army during World War I, later becoming a businessman. Anne also had a sister named Margot who was three years older.

In the early 1930s the Franks enjoyed a comfortable life as an upper middle-class German-Jewish family living in the outskirts of Frankfurt. But things began to change.

Otto Frank later recalled, "I can remember that as early as 1932, groups of Storm Troopers came marching by, singing, 'When Jewish blood splatters from the knife,'" When Hitler became chancellor of Germany in 1933, the Frank family decided it was time to flee.

The Franks moved to Amsterdam and for a time enjoyed freedom in their new hometown. Anne Frank began attending Amsterdam's Sixth Montessori School in 1934. She was identified as a bright and inquisitive student.

Everything changed in May, 1940 when the German army invaded and occupied the Netherlands. Beginning in October, 1940 the Nazi occupiers imposed a series of anti-Jewish measures. Jews were required to wear a yellow Star of David at all times and observe a strict curfew. They were also forbidden from owning businesses. Anne and her sister were forced to transfer to a segregated Jewish school. Their lives became increasingly tense and insecure.

On June 12, 1942, Frank's parents gave her a red checkered diary for her 13th birthday. She wrote her first entry, addressed to an imaginary friend named Kitty, that same day: "I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support."

Weeks later, on July 5, 1942 her sister Margot received an official summons to report to a Nazi work camp in Germany. The very next day, the family went into hiding in makeshift quarters in an empty space at the back of Otto Frank's company building, which they referred to as the Secret Annex.

They were accompanied in hiding by Otto's business partner Hermann van Pels as well as his wife, Auguste, and son, Peter. Otto's employees Kleiman and Kugler, as well as Jan and Miep Gies and Bep Voskuijl, provided food and information about the outside world.

The families spent two years in hiding, never once stepping outside the dark, damp, sequestered portion of the building. To pass the time, Anne wrote extensive daily entries in her diary. Some betrayed the depth of despair. "I've reached the point where I hardly care whether I live or die," she wrote on February 3, 1944. "The world will keep on turning without me, and I can't do anything to change events anyway." However, the act of writing allowed Anne to maintain her sanity and her spirits. "When I write, I can shake off all my cares," she wrote on April 5, 1944.

On August 4, 1944 a German secret police officer accompanied by four Dutch Nazis stormed into the Secret Annex, arresting everyone who was hiding there. They had been betrayed by an anonymous tip. The families were sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland.

After several months of hard labor hauling heavy stones and grass mats, Anne and Margot were transferred, this time to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany.

At Bergen-Belsen, food was scarce, sanitation was awful and disease ran rampant. Both Anne and Margot came down with typhus in the early spring and died within a day of each other. They died in March 1945, only a few weeks before British soldiers liberated the camp.

Anne's father, Otto survived. When he returned to Amsterdam, he found Anne's diary, which had been saved by Miep Gies. He eventually gathered the strength to read it and was awestruck by what he discovered. "There was revealed a completely different Anne to the child that I had lost," Otto wrote in a letter to his mother. "I had no idea of the depths of her thoughts and feelings."

Anne's memory has endured. This is largely based on her diary and her extraordinary gifts as a writer. Her diary has been read by millions of people around the world and is the basis for many theater productions. Anne Frank is a symbol of the strength of the human spirit, as revealed in a child.