"In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."

~Anne Frank

Remembering Anne Frank...

More than 50 years ago, a 13-year-old Jewish girl named Anne Frank hid with her family in an attic above her father’s offices in the Netherlands. Outside, she could often hear the rattle of gunfire. At any moment, Nazi police might come through the door and take her and her family away to be killed. Anne’s only escape from her harsh reality was a diary she had been given for her 13th birthday. Almost every day for two years, Anne would pour out her feelings in the little book. She confided in it, as though

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it were her best friend. Little did she know when she started writing that her diary would someday become a piece of history—and an inspiration to millions of readers around the world.

Running from the Nazis
Anne Frank and her family moved to the Netherlands from Germany after Adolph Hitler (1889–1945) and the Nazis came to power in Germany and began persecuting Jews. Hitler and the Nazis ruled Germany through racial pride and intimidation. Germans, said Hitler, were a superior race; Jews and Slavs were inferior. He blamed the Jews for many of Germany’s problems.

Otto Frank, Anne’s father, moved to Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in September 1933, and set up a branch of his brother’s home products business. His wife, Edith, went with him. Anne, then 4 years old, and her sister, Margot, then 7, stayed behind with their grandmother. They joined their parents a few months later.

The Franks’s had left Germany just in time. In August 1934, Hitler began taking away the rights of Jews in Germany. Jews were kicked out of government jobs. They were not allowed to be doctors, lawyers, or teachers. Jewish students had to attend different schools from other children.

In Amsterdam, however, the Franks were able to lead a normal life. Anne and Margot attended school, and Anne made many friends, whom she would later write about in her diary.

Otto Frank’s business did well enough for the Franks to live in a comfortable apartment. In their spare time, they also took vacations at the beach.

But their happy life in Amsterdam did not last long. Hitler began expanding Germany’s territory by taking over Austria in 1938 and by occupying most of Czechoslovakia early in 1939. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Great Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later, beginning World War II.

Nazis in the Netherlands
After the conquest of Poland, German armies plunged rapidly across the borders of the Netherlands and Belgium on their way to France. Dutch troops fought fiercely and bravely, but they were quickly overcome by the Germans. The Netherlands surrendered after only five days of fighting, and became part of the Nazi empire.

During the next two years, Jews in the Netherlands had their rights taken away. In 1942, after receiving a diary for her 13th birthday, Anne wrote about how the Netherlands had changed after the Nazis took over. “Jews were forbidden to ride in cars, even their own . . . Jews were forbidden to be out on the streets between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.; Jews were forbidden to attend theaters, movies, or any other forms of entertainment . . . Jews were forbidden to visit Christians in their homes.” Jews were also forced to wear a large, bright yellow star on their coats and place a yellow star on their homes.

Anne and her family found these limitations demeaning and difficult. But, as Anne wrote, “You couldn’t do this and you couldn’t do that, but life went on.”
Less than one month later, on July 6, 1942, Margot, 16, received a notice that would change the Franks’s life. The notice, which came from the Nazi police, ordered her to report to them immediately. The Franks knew that once Margot reported, she would certainly be sent to a prison camp. The camps, now known as concentration camps, were places where the Nazis imprisoned Jews and their other enemies. Prisoners were crowded into tiny and unsanitary living spaces, giving little if any food, and forced to do back-breaking labor. Many died from starvation or disease, or at the hands of guards. Many were executed in gas chambers.

\[ \text{\textit{Into Hiding}} \]

To escape the police, the whole Frank family moved into a secret room in the attic above Otto’s business office. The only entrance to the annex, as it was called, was hidden behind a large bookcase. There the Franks stayed, day and night, never daring to venture outside for fear of being caught by the Nazi police.

Otto Frank’s business partner, Hermann van Pels, his wife, Auguste, and their son, Peter, along with Fritz Pfeffer—all Jews—joined the Franks in the annex.

Because the Nazis did not allow Jews to own businesses, Otto had already turned his business over to two non-Jewish business associates, Victor Kugler and Johannes Kleiman in 1939. They, along with Miep Gies and Elisabeth Voskuil, risked their own lives to help the Franks stay hidden. They brought the Franks food in the annex and kept watch for the Nazi police. For the next two years, Anne and the others shared the cramped space. Writing in her diary became Anne’s sole escape. She named the diary “Kitty” and wrote her diary entries in the form of letters to Kitty. Kitty became her “best friend” in which she could confide even her innermost fears and hopes.

Anne shared with Kitty all the aspects of her life in hiding. Some parts of her life were life like those of any other teenage girl. She wrote of the difficulty getting along with her mother, sister, and father, especially in the cramped quarters of the annex. She also wrote of her feelings for her friend Peter van Pels. She often felt alone and feared that “no one knows Anne’s better side, and that’s why most people can’t stand me.”

But her diary also told of a life that few people could imagine. She wrote of the boredom of living in hiding and how frustrating it was not to be able to go outside. Her family lived in constant fear of discovery, terrified that any visitor to the office below might be a Nazi policeman. On May 26, 1944, the tension and fear in her life led Anne to write, “Let something happen soon... Nothing can be more crushing than this anxiety. Let the end come, however cruel: at least then we'll know whether we are to be the victors or the vanquished.”

\[ \text{\textit{A Positive Attitude}} \]

Through it all, however, Anne kept a positive attitude, a strong self-confidence, and her sense of humor. That, she said, was the only way to stay sane while hiding in the annex for more than two

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years. “What I’m experiencing here is a good beginning to an interesting life, and that’s the reason—the only reason—why I have to laugh at the humorous side of the most dangerous moments... I’m young and strong and living through a big adventure.”

**A Tragic Ending**

Throughout her diary, Anne wrote about her family’s listening to the news of the war on the radio at night. They learned that Germany had allied itself with Japan and Italy to form the Axis powers and had been making progress, taking France and driving deep into Russia (see Map, p. 2b). But the war began turning in favor of the Allies, led by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, in late 1942. The Soviets began pushing the Germans out of Russia. U.S. and British forces drove the Axis powers out of Italy and North Africa. On June 6, 1944, the United States and Great Britain landed on the beaches of France and pushed towards Paris, the French capital.

With every Allied success, the Franks’s hopes rose. They believed that they might soon be free. But that hope was dashed on August 4, 1944, when Nazi police knocked at the Franks’s office door. This time, the police found Anne and the others hiding in the annex and sent them to the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Anne and her sister, Margot, were transferred from Auschwitz in Poland to Bergen-Belsen in Germany, where both girls died of disease within days of each other in late February or early March 1945. The camp was liberated by British troops on April 12, 1945, just a little over a month after their deaths.

Edith Frank, the van Pels, and Fritz Pfeffer also died a few months after going into the concentration camps. Victor Kugler and Johannes Kleiman were sent to prison for helping the Franks. Otto Frank was the only occupant of the annex who survived the concentration camps.

On April 29, 1945, facing certain capture, Adolph Hitler committed suicide in Berlin, after having executed more than 6 million Jews and millions of others in concentration camps, and having plunged the world into history’s most destructive war. Germany surrendered to the Allies on May 7, 1945. World War II ended on September 2, 1945, when Japan surrendered.

**Anne’s Story Lives On**

After the war, Otto Frank returned to Amsterdam. There, he met with Miep Gies, one of the people who had helped the Franks while they were hiding. She gave Otto something she had found in the annex after the Franks were discovered—Anne’s diary!

After reading the diary, Otto wanted to share his daughter’s story with the world. He first published Anne’s diary in the summer of 1947. In the 51 years since it was first published, it has been translated into 55 languages and has been read by millions around the world. For so many, Anne’s story is at the same time triumphant and tragic. It reminds readers of the horrors of the war, but also of the hopes of a teenage girl who, trapped in a horrible war, could write, “In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.”

**Anne Frank and the others who were discovered in the attic were sent to concentration camps like this one (Buchenwald). Overcrowding and a lack of food led to widespread disease in the camps.**