

# The hider's source of life

Business



Through the misty early morning fog, a train buzzed into Vienna, Austria, during the time when food was scarce and needs were hardly met.

There, standing in old, worn clothes and a big bow tied into her hair was Miep Gies. The journey from Vienna to Holland would be a long one, but in return, she would receive a hearty meal, a caring Dutch family, and a house big enough to fit two other adopted children. Over the years, the young, skinny Miep would grow into a fully Dutch woman, working as an assistant at Travies and Company. Little did she know, her boss's request for her to care for him and his Jewish family would change her life forever. This and other significant events would allow Miep Gies to become a major contributor to not only the Dutch community, but to the entire world.

Everyone knows the story about the Frank family. Actually, we've probably been introduced to the thirteen year old, Anne, before the others. They were a group of innocent Jewish people during WWII who hid in what Anne called, "The Secret Annex," for an incredible amount of time before they were captured. She and her family's legacy lie in plays, films, and books. However, no one can capture the amount of stress, pain, and exhaustion that went into keeping them alive.

Miep Gies' name has shown up here and there in the books we've read about Anne, but without Gies, people wouldn't have been able to read all of Anne's writings. Miep had been the Frank family's (as well as the Van Dan's and Mr. Dussel's) source of food, sociality, and love. Each day, Miep went out to local shops—switching the ones she went to to keep from suspicion—to but bags

and bags of vegetables, fruits, butter, bread, and other necessities. It was an ongoing task for Gies that never had an end.

She'd make these trips and return to the Annex, but soon, she'd have to retrieve more food, more daily used items. No matter the day or holiday, Mieroff 2 Miep was in the Annex. Whether in the middle of a severe flu, or on her birthday, she was there, carrying bag after bag of food, without being caught once ("Lifesaver"). Anne even quoted: "When Miep is in danger, we are all in danger" (qtd. In Gies 139). Not only was Gies the main reason all eight people in the Annex could eat regularly, her visits there were the only sense of outdoors, people, and life.

She brought stories and talked for hours with them. She and her husband, Jan, (or Henk as she refers to him in her book), stayed overnight in the Annex, providing a sense of warmth to everyone who was deep down, feeling the pressure and horror of WWII build up (Miep Gies, 147). Miep loved and cherished each person in the Annex. As the war continued, and food grew more and more scarce, she'd hold onto bits and pieces of ingredients to put together a cake for Anne. Even when there was nothing left to buy, Miep crafted gifts for the children to have on the holidays. What she had done was crucial.

Though, through all her efforts to keep the family and the others safe, a day had finally come when a soldier, also from Vienna, Austria, came to take them all away. After much pleading, begging, and hoping for the man who was born in the same location as she, the soldier passed her by and went into the Annex. Gies heard the tragic noises of rustling and bustling, papers

and things falling over. Once the office was empty, she took all the courage left inside her own heart and entered the Annex. She told Elli, her worker friend, to help her pick up Anne's writings—every last one (Miep Gies, 73). Miep kept them all in her desk in the office for two years until Otto Frank had shown up, alive.

Then, she passed them over to him, and within the next year, Otto's friends had persuaded him into publishing her work. As the people from the Secret Annex became famous, awareness was spread about the true meaning of a Jew hiding during WWII. Mineroff 3 History was scripted and passed across the world about the experiences, the pain and pressure. But Miep's experiences included more than keeping those in the Annex alive. After Miep and Jan married on July 16, 1941, they moved into an apartment not far from Travies and Company.

The landlord, Mrs. Samson, was a Jew, and decided to leave. Since Miep and Jan wanted her to be as safe as possible, they did not ask where she was heading to. About a year later, she had heard that Mrs. Samson was living with another woman, Mrs.

Van Hart, in Hilversom. There, Mrs. Van Hart explained that her son, Karel, needed to place a hide because he refused to sign a loyalty oath saying he or she would refrain from any act against the German Reich and the German Army (Paul Gies, 132). As always, Miep and Jan took him without a complaint. Now, there were eleven people to feed a day. Sometimes, all Miep, Jan, and Karel would have was a single potato for dinner.

In the winter, everything was worse. It brought sicknesses, which were deadly to everyone in the Annex. Once, Miep came home from another tiring day of work and retrieving scraps of food for those in hiding. Karel was calling her name, moaning in great pain. He called the excruciating ache, “blinding, like a knife in my head.” Miep had no idea what to do.

He couldn't go to the hospital; it was nearly impossible, since Karel was hiding anyway, but she had to do something. Though Miep never had any medical training, she got a hot wet cloth and pressed it against Karel's forehead. She continued to wet the cloth and press it against his head for hours until daylight came. Finally, he roared once last cry, and a long stream of pus flowed out from his nostrils. Seconds later, he was able to bolster himself up and say to her, “It's getting better, Miep.

The pain is going away” (Miep Gies, 147). People weren't the only things Miep Gies put her effort into keeping safe. Many Jews, knowing Miep and her husband were not Jewish, would ring on their doorbell and ask if she Mineroff 4 could take their cat and bring him to a shelter or just keep him for themselves, as long as he was safe (Miep Gies, 143). An older man had asked if she could keep a series of books and volumes of Shakespeare for him until after the war. Obtaining items possessed by a Jew was illegal, but Miep took great pride in keeping all these objects; books, pets, and other furnishings.

There was a high chance of getting caught if a German soldier chose randomly to rummage through her apartment, but Miep's prestige determination to hold onto those she cared for kept her from getting

arrested, and the possessions being taken away. Miep Gies is most known for protecting the Frank family and not for her other contributions to other Jews in desperation. The long days of work and providing needs for eleven people with little help was so exhausting, she forgot to care for herself. “ I am not a hero,” she modestly states in the beginning of her book, *Anne Frank Remembered*, “ There I nothing special about me. I have never wanted special attention. I was only willing to do what was asked of me and what seemed necessary at the time” (Miep Gies, 11).

Miep Gies was the source of life and spirit for those hiding in the Annex, as well as a person to trust and go to during such a depressing time. She was honest and determined in everything she did, and saved the pieces of Anne’s life through her writings, which lead to the awareness of what being a Jew was like in WWII. In conclusion, Miep Gies is a significant contributor to the world in that she brought history to life. Mineroff 5 Works Cited Gies, Miep, and Gold Leslie Alison. *Anne Frank Remembered*.

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