Interview with Miep Gies

1. **How did you react when you heard that you were going to be taking in Anne Frank? Did you agree right away or did it take time to convince you to do this?**I agreed right away to take care of the Frank family. I simply could not do anything else, First, because Otto Frank had been a wonderful boss all the years I had known him. Further, I had often met with his family, who were also great and received me at their home most friendly numerous times. By the way, I did not take them into my home. They were going to hide at Otto Frank's business. I also felt very sorry for them. I had to help.
2. **What was it like to watch Anne and her family in hiding? What was Anne's personality like?**
I found it extremely painful to see people who would love to go out and live in freedom now sitting in a small place and worrying all the time what the future would bring. It is truly awful to watch people living in fear. Otto had been my boss for many years. Now, all of sudden, he was dependent on me.
3. **Why did you take on the responsibility of hiding the Franks?**My decision to help Otto was because I saw no alternative. I could foresee many sleepless nights and an unhappy life if I refused. And that was not the kind of failure I wanted for myself. Permanent remorse about failing to do your human duty, in my opinion, can be worse than losing your life.
4. **How old were you? Who were you closest to in the Secret Annex?**
I was a young woman in my thirties. I was closest with Anne and with her father, Otto. Anne, because she was the one asking me questions all the time; particularly about what was going on in the world outside the hiding place. As a matter of fact, I liked talking with her. I was 20 years older than she was, but it was like talking to a much older person than a teenager. With Otto I had a close contact because together we were actually managing the logistics of their stay in the hiding place.
5. **Did anyone ever suspect that you were hiding people?**Nobody, not even my own foster parents knew about the people in hiding. Therefore, I had no reason to believe that anyone would suspect this. By visiting several different suppliers a day and not buying everything at the same place, I avoided suspicion with the grocery shops.
6. **How did you manage to live when you were giving most of your food away?**I had to buy food in the "black" market. My husband Jan also helped by providing me with so-called ration cards he had obtained illegally. I also knew suppliers, like for instance the greengrocer, who understood what I was doing and would help as much as he could.
7. **When you were going back and forth transporting food and goods to the Franks, did you have to wear a disguise or have some type of plan so the Nazis wouldn't see you?**It was difficult to bring food to the building where the Franks were hiding. I could not bring everything at once because it would raise suspicion. I never carried more than what one shopping bag could hold or what I could hide under my coat. So, I had to make several trips every day.
8. **Why didn't the Franks sleep during the day when they were in hiding in the attic?**Why did the Frank's not sleep during the day and be up during the night? A good question. I think our biological rhythm makes it difficult to do that. Further, during the night, the neighbors would have more easily noticed noises.
9. **What happened to Mushi, Peter's cat?**After they were arrested, the cat was still there. It did not run away. But the cat did not feel at home anymore. It missed Peter. But one day the office cleaner asked if she could take the cat. She took Mushi and gave the cat a new home.
10. **Did you ever feel like the suspicion was mounting and felt that you did not want to be responsible for the Franks and wanted them to leave (and all the other residents)?**
I agree that Anne's diary reflects her growing concern about the future. I myself was more optimistic, because the war was gradually coming to an end and during the two years no serious threats became evident. I certainly never considered to stop helping or have them leave. I never wanted to skip responsibility for my friends
11. **Tell us about the day the Germans arrived to take the Franks away. Did you try to warn the Franks that day? Or did you come home to visit them, and they were gone? Did you try to find them that day?**
I would have tried, of course, but it was impossible. One morning, sitting at my desk, I looked up and saw a man pointing a gun at me and saying, "Don't move, keep silent!" The next day I went to the German police office to try to find them. I offered money to buy them free, but I did not succeed. I was very scared when they came that day!
12. **Could you describe for me the last time that you saw Anne?**The last time I saw Anne was at 9:00 on the morning of the arrest. About 11 o'clock the police came. I can't remember what Anne said that last time. I think it was her usual "Hello Miep, and what is the news?"
13. **How did the Nazis find the attic? Who do you think turned the Franks in to the Green Police?**
Someone must have betrayed them to the Nazis. We never found out. Don't forget that many people lived in that neighborhood and possibly noticed something by day or heard something at night. It could have been one of the burglars that came to that place. It could have also been one of the people working in the building. We will never know.
14. **How did you find out about the Franks' capture?**I was in the office at the moment the police came. I regret to notice that the play — and from other publications — give a wrong perception regarding the arrest. There was no phone ringing prior to the arrest. This is just dramatization by the playwright.
15. **How did you feel when the Franks got caught?**When the police found the hiding place I mainly felt a tremendous disappointment that so close to the end of the war my friends were caught. We honestly thought that we had made it. Paris was already captured by the Allies. Their troops were less than 250 miles from Amsterdam. Germany had actually lost the war. And then this happened
16. **Did you get in trouble when the Nazis found out that you were hiding them?**Of course I was in trouble, but my luck was that the police officer in charge came from Vienna, the same town where I was born. I noticed this from his accent. So, when he came to interrogate me, I jumped up and said, as cheerfully as I could, "You are from Vienna? I am from Vienna too." And, although he got very angry initially, it made him obviously decide not to arrest me. Apart from the shock, the fear and my heart-breaking concern regarding the fate of my friends, nothing happened to me.
17. **Which camp did Anne and Margot go to when they were caught?**Anne and Margot went first to a transit-camp called Westerbork in the Netherlands. From there they went to Auschwitz and finally to Bergen-Belsen, where they both died.
18. **Did Anne know anyone in the concentration camp besides her sister?**Much to her surprise she discovered that in another part of the camp (Bergen-Belsen), her friend "Lies" was sitting, the one she writes about a lot in her diary. Her true name is Hanneli Pick-Goslar, who now lives in Israel.
19. **Do you know how Otto Frank escaped death when the rest of his family and the other families in hiding didn't?**Otto's escape from death is a miracle. When the Russians finally liberated him in Auschwitz, he was ill, very weak, and extremely skinny.
20. **Did you and Mr. Frank remain friends?**My husband and I were close friends with Otto until he died in 1980, at ninety-one years old.
21. **Did Anne like to do some of the hobbies children her age do, like playing sports and doing crafts?**
Anne was not really a sports girl. As a matter of fact, she was not what you would call a strong or sturdy person. As far as I know she was not doing crafts, but enjoyed working at her diary and writing short stories. She also liked illustrating them. Further she took a keen interest in movies and actors.
22. **Where did Anne go to write her diary? How did Anne keep the others from reading her private information?**
Most times Anne wrote her diary in her bedroom. This room she had to share with the dentist, so she had to work out an arrangement with him. From her diary we know that this was not always easy, because Dussel could not imagine that a young girl really needed a workplace. During the weekends her father allowed her to go downstairs and sit in his former office. This space was not part of the hiding place.
23. **What memories do you have of the relationship between Anne and Peter?**I never noticed a close relationship between Peter and Anne. Once Peter asked me to buy flowers for Anne. That was the only time I understood that Peter liked Anne.
24. **When did you find out that Anne had died?**In August 1945 a letter came for Otto Frank from a nurse who had been with Anne in the same part of Bergen-Belsen, telling him that his two daughters had died.
25. **What were the last words Anne said to you before she got captured?**At the time of her arrest, I was not with her. That morning I had seen her for the last time, when I came to the hiding place to pick up the shopping list, as I usually did. At that time, she greeted me the way she always did: "Hello Miep, what is the news today?"
26. **Why did Mr. Frank change the names of the people when he wrote the book?**It was Anne (and NOT Otto Frank) who changed the names of the people. Like other authors do too, Anne felt she should not use the real names. This gives me the feeling that she planned publication of the diary after the war.
27. **How old are you now?**I am eighty-eight now. (THIS WAS PUBLISHED IN 1997. MIEP DIED JAN 2010 AT 100).