*Anne Frank’s Diary*

If you wanted to know more…

On 3 September 1944, the group was deported on what would be the last transport from Westerbork to the Auschwitz concentration camp, and arrived after a three-day journey.

In the chaos that marked the unloading of the trains, the men were forcibly separated from the women and children, and Otto Frank was pulled from his family. Of the 1,019 passengers, 549—including all children younger than 15—were sent directly to the gas chambers. (That was more than half!) Anne had turned 15 three months earlier, and was one of the youngest people to be saved from the gas chambers immediately. She was soon made aware that most people were gassed upon arrival, and never learned that the entire group from the Achterhuis had survived this selection. Anne decided that her father, in his mid-fifties and not particularly strong, had been killed immediately after they were separated. (He hadn’t been.)

With the other females not selected for immediate death, Anne was forced to strip naked to be “disinfected.” She had her head shaved and was tattooed with an identifying number on her arm. By day, the women were used as slave labor and Anne was forced to haul rocks and dig rolls of sod; by night, they were crammed into overcrowded barracks. Some witnesses later testified Anne became withdrawn and tearful when she saw children being led to the gas chambers; others reported that more often she displayed strength and courage. Her gregarious (outgoing) and confident personality allowed her to obtain extra bread rations for her mother, sister, and herself. Disease was widespread; before long, Anne’s skin became badly infected by scabies. The Frank sisters were moved into an infirmary, which was in a state of constant darkness and infested with rats and mice. Edith Frank stopped eating, saving every crumb of food for her daughters, and passing her rations to them through a hole she made at the bottom of the infirmary wall.

In October 1944, the Frank women were slated to join a transport to the Liebau labour camp in Upper Silesia. But Anne was prohibited from going because she had developed scabies, and her mother and sister were allowed to stay with her.

On 28 October selections began for women to be relocated to Bergen-Belsen. More than 8,000 women, including Anne and Margot Frank and Auguste van Pels, (Mrs. Van Dann) were transported. Edith Frank was left behind and later died from starvation. Tents were erected at Bergen-Belsen to accommodate the influx of prisoners, and as the population rose, the death toll due to disease increased rapidly. Anne was briefly reunited with two friends, Hanneli Goslar and Nanette Blitz, (remember them from the beginning of her diary from before she went into hiding), who were confined in another section of the camp. Goslar and Blitz survived the war and later discussed the brief conversations they had conducted with Frank through a fence. Blitz described her as bald, emaciated, and shivering. Goslar noted Auguste van Pels (Mrs. Van Dann) was with Anne and Margot Frank, and was caring for Margot, who was severely ill. Neither of them saw Margot, as she was too weak to leave her bunk. Anne told Blitz and Goslar she believed her parents were dead, and for that reason she did not wish to live any longer. Goslar later estimated their meetings had taken place in late January or early February 1945. (It was hard to keep track of time.)

In March 1945 a typhus epidemic spread through the camp, killing 17,000 prisoners. Witnesses later testified Margot fell from her bunk in her weakened state and was killed by the shock and trauma from her injuries (she was that weak). A few days later, Anne died. This was only a few weeks before the camp was liberated by British troops on 15 April 1945; the exact dates were not recorded. After liberation, the camp was burned in an effort to prevent further spread of disease, and Anne and Margot were buried in a mass grave; the exact whereabouts remain unknown.

After the war, it was estimated of the 107,000 Jews deported from the Netherlands between 1942 and 1944, only 5,000 survived. An estimated 30,000 Jews remained in the Netherlands, with many people aided by the Dutch underground. Approximately two-thirds of this group survived the war.

Otto Frank survived his imprisonment in Auschwitz. After the war ended, he returned to Amsterdam, where he was sheltered by Jan and Miep Gies as he attempted to locate his family. He learned of the death of his wife, Edith, in Auschwitz, but he remained hopeful that his daughters had survived. After several weeks, he discovered Margot and Anne had also died. He attempted to determine the fates of his daughters' friends and learned many had been murdered.

After everyone in the Annex and Kleiman and Kugler were arrested, Bep and Miep were left behind. They picked the pages of Anne’s diary off the floor and hid them in a drawer in Miep’s desk. Shortly afterwards, the Germans completed emptying the hiding place. In the summer of 1945, when Otto Frank finds out that Margot and Anne died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, Miep gives him Anne's diary. In her diary, Otto reads about the plan Anne had to publish a book after the war about the time she spent in the Secret Annex. She had even edited and rewritten a large portion of her original diary. Initially, Otto Frank feels uncertain about the idea but he finally decides to fulfill his daughter's wish.