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Miep Gies (1909–2010): Her Legacy Endures

Marilyn L. Grady

The reports of Miep Gies' death at age 100 focus on her humanitarian efforts during World War II. The action she took to preserve Anne Frank's diary and papers was her most remarkable contribution to history. Interesting is the fact that she did not read the diary or papers. A frequently quoted comment by Miep was, "had she read the diary and papers she would have burned them" because they contained information that was dangerous to Miep and the other helpers.

Miep's friendship with Anne and her respect for Anne's writing and privacy led her to save these written materials. *The Diary of Anne Frank*, one of the most read books in the world, has been translated into 70 languages, and has sold more than 31 million copies. *The Diary of Anne Frank* was added to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in January 2010. The Register features documents marking significant contributions to world culture. There are 193 documents in the collection.

Miep rejected any mention of her role as a hero. She, however, received many awards including the Righteous Gentile title from the Israeli Holocaust Museum, Yad Vashem, for her courage. Miep traveled extensively speaking and answering questions about Anne Frank. She was involved in the work of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam until her death.

She described her actions in assisting the Frank family, the Van Pels, and Fritz Pfeffer as simply what one human being would do for another. When confronted by comments about individuals who did not lend aid to the Jews because of fear, she suggested compassion for those who are fearful.

She is an enduring role model, if not a hero. Unlike many, she assisted those in need because it was the "right thing to do" as a human being. If we all could embrace this approach rather than succumbing to fear, imagine the good we could accomplish.

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