

Dan Prinzing, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Wassmuth Center for Human Rights

“We still love life, we haven’t yet forgotten the voice of nature, and we keep hoping for ... everything.” (Anne Frank, May 26, 1944)

Etched into the stone at the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial, the quotes from Anne Frank’s diary are shared with over 10,000 K-12 students and university undergraduates each year through docent-led tours.

A bronze statue of Anne Frank is surrounded by the Memorial Quote Walls, Rose Beal Legacy Garden, Frank Church Writing Table and Universal Declaration of Human Rights that echo Anne’s message of faith in humanity.

Chancing a peek out the attic window while in her two years of captivity in the Amsterdam secret annex, Anne wrote on May 13, 1944, “Our chestnut tree is in full bloom. It is covered with leaves and is even more beautiful than last year.”

For Anne, the chestnut tree in the back garden represented her longing for freedom – it was outside and she was not. “Believe me, if you have been shut up for a year and a half, it can get too much for you some days...Cycling, dancing, whistling, looking out into the world, feeling young, to know that I’m free – that’s what I long for...” (December 24, 1943).

In a national competition, the Wassmuth Center for Human Rights was awarded a sapling from Anne’s chestnut tree. One of 11 in the US, the sapling will be planted and publicly dedicated in the downtown Boise Memorial on Wednesday, May 13, 2015 – adding another element of Anne’s story to the landscape.

However, it’s not the only tree rooted with a story.

On April 23, 2014, Buddy Elias, Anne Frank’s cousin and last surviving member of her immediate family visited the Memorial and dedicated a chestnut oak in the memory of his cousins: “Anne and Margot, beloved and unforgettable.” During the ceremony, Buddy added, “Before I did not know what Boise was; now it is in my heart.”

The sole survivor of her family, Gerda Weissmann Klein endured the ghetto, deportation, slave-labor camps, and the infamous three-month death march from the Polish German border to southern Czechoslovakia. Her story is an inspiration to every individual struggling with tragedy and searching for a reason to hope. On October 2, 2006, she planted a tree in the Memorial. Her plaque reminds us that, “Our youth are the promise of a new spring in the forest of the world.”

Hannah Pick-Goslar is best known for her friendship with Anne Frank. Both girls attended the Sixth Public Montessori School (now the Anne Frank School) in Amsterdam. In 1943, Hannah,

her father, sister Gabi, and grandparents were arrested and sent to a transit camp, then eventually to Bergen-Belsen where she was briefly reunited with Anne. Hannah and Gabi were the only members of their family to survive the Holocaust.

On November 4, 1998, she dedicated a tree in the Memorial with the plaque, "We all should try to live in peace together even if we have a different religion or a different skin color because we all are created in the image of God... 'love your neighbor as yourself'."

Jacqueline Van Maarsen, a childhood friend who attended Anne's 13th birthday party at which she received her diary as a present from her parents, planted a tree in Anne's memory on May 10, 1997. Her plaque states, "Fate decreed otherwise, I would never see her again, my vivacious friend with her zest for life. May this tree symbolize the message Anne left to the world. A message directed against discrimination and prejudice."

Risking her own life, Miep Gies helped to hide Anne Frank, her parents and sister and four other Jews in the attic. After the Security Service raided the secret annex, it was Miep who rescued and saved Anne's diary from the Nazis. While visiting Boise, she planted a tree in memory of Anne Frank on June 6, 1996.

Many stories are "planted" throughout the City of Trees. Each, like Anne's, proclaims "I want to go on living even after my death!" (April 4, 1944)

The Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial was awarded a 2014 Certificate of Excellence by TripAdvisor for consistently receiving outstanding feedback from travelers. The Memorial is located next to the Boise Public Library at 777 South 8th. To schedule a docent-led tour, call (208) 345-0304 or email info@wassmuthcenter.org.

Photo caption:

While in Boise, Buddy Elias, touching the statue of his cousin Anne Frank, remarked, "There is no tribute in the world like this."